



PERKINS PAPERS

John Arthur Perkins was born at Gocup, near Tumut, on 18 May 1878, the eldest son in a family of 10 children to Edward Perkins, hotel-keeper and his wife Annie née Connolly.¹ He was educated at Tumut and Cooma Public Schools. When he was 16 Perkins took up a selection near Cooma, although he leased it in order to become a bookseller, stationer and tobacconist, he retained his interest in farming, being listed in Yewen's Directory for 1900 with crops including oats and potatoes. His continuing interest in agricultural matters shows in his research where he always included the current prices at the Sydney Markets.

Perkins' interest in public affairs commenced when he was young. As a boy, he joined the Cooma Debating Society and prior to 1909, assisted in establishing a local band, a rifle club and a camera club. Perkins was the President of the Cooma School of Arts during the years 1910 -1924. Between 1902 and 1909, Perkins was a member of the Cooma Municipal Council and elected Mayor in 1904 and 1908. He was also a director of the Monaro Grammar School between 1914 and 1922.²

On 15th September 1909 John Arthur Perkins married Evelyn Mary Bray at St Clements Church, Marrickville. Evelyn, his wife was the 20 year old daughter of Henry Bray, a builder of Cooma³At the time of his wedding, Perkins gave his occupation as stationer of Cooma. In directories into the mid 1940's, Perkins occupation is described as stationer, bookseller and newsagent of Cooma.⁴

In 1921 Perkins held the seat of Goulburn and then in 1926 successfully contested the seat of Eden-Monaro, losing it in 1929 with the change of government. However, he regained the seat in 1931 and held it till 1943 when he retired. From 1932 he was Minister for the Interior, and also the Minister for Trade and Customs 1938-9.⁵

Upon his retirement Perkins sold his blocks of land in Cooma and in September 1951 moved permanently to his house located at 1 James Street, Manly which he had purchased in December 1923 and had been using as his city house. Here he followed his interests in gardening and historical research. He began to collect material relating to the history of the districts in which he had been brought up and which he served as member of Parliament. Upon the completion of his research in 1949 Perkins joined the Royal Australian Historical Society but let his membership lapse two years later.

Perkins died on 13 July 1954 at his home, 1 The Crescent, Manly. He was given a state funeral at the Manly Methodist Church, the cortege then moving to the Northern Suburbs Crematorium.⁶ Evelyn Perkins stayed at her home in Manly until 1960 when she moved to 95 Homebush Rd, Strathfield where she died on 21 September 1982. She was cremated at Rookwood Crematorium two days later. When Evelyn Perkins moved from Manly to Strathfield in 1960 the research papers her husband had intended to donate to the 'Historical Society' (Perkins does not specify which one) were disposed of at the local rubbish tip where an alert visitor found them packed in a suitcase and rescued them. The original



typescripts were donated to the Mitchell Library soon afterwards while the duplicate carbon copies were donated to the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG).

When Perkins moved to Sydney in 1943 he began to collate information from material available in the Mitchell Library. He cited his sources as accurately as possible, and listed them at the head of the page so most of them can be located and checked by today's researcher. When a source is not specific he was as accurate as he could be under the circumstances. He had no call number, for instance, for one particularly useful scrapbook in the Mitchell Library. Perkins called this source *Book of Cuttings in the Mitchell Library*. In the later volumes when he was using newspaper almost exclusively he grouped all the references from the one source together. One work page has survived to show his methodology. After listing his two main sources for Governor Bourke's trip to Twofold Bay in 1835 he typed a note reminding himself to check other papers for an account of the trip.

Perkins cast his net rather widely in his early volumes and included information for areas south of Goulburn, the South Coast and the Upper Murray River. This covered his seat of Eden-Monaro. In doing so he placed his Monaro and Tumut/Adelong material in its appropriate context as part of an expanding frontier followed by a period of consolidation. Once some form of settlement had occurred the sources provided names for these new localities and Perkins was able to focus more on his area of interest. Towards the end of his research Perkins focused on the local newspaper as a source of information, not consulting neighbouring papers.



Tumut, New South Wales

SAG Manuscript and Image Collection 05/003345

Sources of information for the Monaro series

The first volume of *Monaro District Items*, as Perkins called his first series, is dated 28 November 1949. However, no other volumes of his work were dated. It seems probable that the first two series were planned and researched together to save duplication of research time. In the first volume of his research Perkins used four types of sources. The first group was contemporary published reminiscences and observations. The second group was newspapers. The third group was secondary published sources and the fourth were manuscript archival sources.

The Contemporary published sources date from 1825 to 1845, the date range of the first file. These publications augment the articles appearing in England in such publications as *The Gentlemen's Magazine* and the *Annual Register*. Their titles are designed to attract readers interested in the growth and exploration of the Colony of New South Wales; John Lhotsky's, *A Journey from Sydney to the Australian Alps* February to March 1834, James Backhouse's *Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies* (1843) and William Westbrook Burton's *State of Religion and Education in New South Wales* (1840). All of these works contain information relevant to the settlement of the Monaro region and the people who settled there whether they be stock keepers and graziers or the first arrivals in the towns which sprang up at river crossings in the wake of the explorers. These contemporary published works used by Perkins are generally not used by historians today. There are a number of reasons for this. Books published in the early 19th century are rare and valuable and have not necessarily been published in facsimile. They are hard to obtain and are not indexed and have to be read through from cover to cover. Some books are not used because of their titles. Who would think that Farquhar Mackenzie's *Journal* published in 1837 would be a useful source of information for the Monaro region?

Perkins uses a wide variety of newspapers. Some are contemporary newspapers published in Sydney such as the *Sydney Herald* and *The Australian*. He also uses country newspapers such as the *Illawarra Mercury* and the *Maitland Mercury*. People in country regions were interested enough in what was happening in other parts of the colony for the editor to include such material. Other newspapers used are local newspapers such as the *Monaro Mercury* published in the twentieth century and containing historical information often in the form of reminiscences. Of the above mentioned newspapers only the Sydney newspapers have been indexed. There is a project underway at the moment to index the *Maitland Mercury* so researchers should benefit from Perkins' experience and be aware that this newspaper may contain information relating to places other than the Hunter Valley.

Perkins used some contemporary local histories such as Wyatt's *History of Goulburn* (1941) and Watson's *History of Queanbeyan*. Such histories should be used with some caution. They were published over sixty years ago and a lot more information has come to light since then. People's outlooks change and we may not agree with the author's conclusions today. Perkins has avoided this problem. He has not written a history of the Monaro District but has provided us with his chronologically arranged sources for us to interpret in our own way.

The only manuscript sources Perkins used are currently available. The Mitchell Library has the Dispatches from Governors Bourke and Gipps. They have been indexed into the Mitchell Library manuscript catalogue. The other two: *Butts of Publicans Licenses*⁷ and *Pastoral Licenses*⁸ are available on microfilm at the Society of Australian Genealogists. Perkins is not strong on the manuscript sources we use so freely today. The Archives Act was still in the future and most Government departments held valuable manuscript material in their various repositories.

Perkins is perhaps one of the first people to systematically extract information from a church register. He transcribes the birth, death and marriage information for Christ Church Cooma. He also visited the cemeteries and note that the headstone of Murray Mitchell, the son of Sir Thomas Mitchell was still readable in April 1943.⁹

Subsequent volumes concentrate more on newspaper sources as Perkins homes in on his areas of interest. One useful introduction in the second volume is the transcription of published lists. For instance, there is two and a half page listing of people in Cooma and the district who subscribed to the



Russian War Patriotic Fund (4/000011,714 pp 458-60). There is a list of subscribers from Cooma and district to the St Mary's Cathedral Rebuilding fund in 1866 (4/011717). This has not been indexed. A later volume lists the names on the local War Memorial.

Perkins makes scant use of oral history but he does include some Facts at the bottom of some pages. These are unsourced and he probably meant to trace the origin of the information later on. In the later volumes he includes a number of biographies which he signs JAP - presumably he did the research himself without disclosing his sources.

He includes the census statistics for all censuses from 1833 onwards. This gives population details for many country towns. In the 1901 census Perkins includes population statistics for some Sydney suburbs. From about 1900 Perkins work is basically an indexing of the Monaro Mercury and the Cooma Express and Moore's almanac. Perkins includes the results of the Prohibition Referendum for 1928 (4/000011,722 pp 3026-7). Although the referendum was defeated, the electors at Brindabella were evenly divided on the matter and electors at Charley's Forest and Jinglemoney unanimously voted no.

After more than three and a half thousand pages of typing the Monaro series concludes in 1948.

Sources of information for Tumut & Adelong series

The four volumes of the Tumut and Adelong series (situated in the neighbouring electorate of Hume) parallel the Monaro series but the number of sources used is less. The first volume uses five published sources; three almanacs and gazetteers and two other published works. These are George Bennett's *Wanderings in NSW* and Charles Sturt's *Two Expeditions - Into the Interior of Southern Australia* published in 1833. Nineteenth century publications are now classified as rare books and the information in them is difficult to get at because there is generally no index in the original. The one archival source consulted is the series of Butts of Publicans Licenses now housed at State Records with a microfilm copy held at the SAG. Perkins uses at least 15 newspapers - nine Sydney newspapers and six country newspapers.

The succeeding volumes, like the Monaro series, use only newspapers as a source of information. No published books or archival sources are used. Perkins in his later volumes uses Sydney newspapers like the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Town & Country Journal* and the *Sydney Mail*, many other Sydney newspapers by this time having ceased publication. The *Goulburn Herald* and the *Gundagai Times* are used while the last two volumes of the Tumut Adelong series are basically an indexing of the *Tumut and Adelong Times* from 1871 onwards.

Guide to the Collection

The Perkins Papers fall into two series. The first series relates to the history of the Monaro district (Arthur Perkins' seat was Eden-Monaro) between 1823 and 1948 and consists of 11 volumes of nearly 3,500 typescript quarto bank pages with indexes. There are, however, no indexes for the years 1919-1948 in the originals so these two volumes were indexed by the Cooma-Monaro Historical Society in 1994. Unfortunately, no copy of this index is available at either the SAG or RAHS.

The second series consists of four volumes relating to the history of Tumut and Adelong where Arthur Perkins grew up. There are four files in this series covering the years 1824 to 1939 with some 1500 pages but there are no known indexes to these files. The papers were sorted into chronological order and bound with cardboard covers. The first volume is signed and dated 28 Nov 1949, presumably the date of completion of the work.



Perkins' included typed indexes are very thorough, though the researcher must be aware that he used a number of sub-headings. There are separate headings for persons, places, advertisements and deaths in most of the letters of the alphabet. Locations are indexed as spelt in the original and are usually cross-referenced: Mulwary Creek is cross-referenced to Mulwaree; Mungarlowe to Mongarlowep; but not Muscledbrook to Muswellbrook, perhaps because it is not within the specific area of interest.

04/011713 MONARO DISTRICT - Notes on Monaro District 1823-1845, see also 4/011715 for index

04/011714 MONARO DISTRICT - Notes on Monaro District 1846-1858, see also 4/011715 for index

04/011715 MONARO DISTRICT - Index to notes on Monaro District 1823-1858, see also 4/011713 & 4/011714 for notes

04/011716 MONARO DISTRICT - Notes on Monaro District 1859-1865, see also 4/011718 for index

04/011717 MONARO DISTRICT - Notes on Monaro District 1866-1871, see also 4/011718 for index

04/011718 MONARO DISTRICT - Index to notes on Monaro District 1859-1871, see also 4/011716 & 4/011717 for notes

04/011719 MONARO DISTRICT - Notes & Index in reference to the Monara District of NSW, taken from the Sydney Morning Herald Papers, also Town and Country Journals from 1872-1880 - Book1. People places and events recorded in Book 1, are indexed in Book 2.

04/011720 MONARO DISTRICT - Notes & Index in reference to the Monara District of NSW, taken from the Sydney Morning Herald Papers, also Town and Country Journals from 1881-1900 - Book1. Index to people, places and events recorded in Book 1, 1881-1900 in Book 2.

04/011721 MONARO DISTRICT - Notes & Index to Monaro District 1901-1918

04/011722 MONARO DISTRICT - Notes on Monaro District, 1919-1930

04/011723 MONARO DISTRICT - Notes on Monaro District, 1931-1948

04/011724 TUMUT AND ADELONG NSW - Notes on Tumut & Adelong 1824-1870, taken from Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney Mail, Town & Country Journal, Goulburn Herald, Moores Almanac and Evening News. Although a number of properties mentioned in this file are shown as stations, many are much smaller and would be classed as runs. Without knowing their size, it is difficult to distinguish which is which. It is also worthwhile checking 'Claims on Leases of Crown Land' in early digitised copies of the Sydney Morning Herald. See also 04/011725 to 04/011727

04/011725 TUMUT NSW - Notes on Tumut & Adelong 1871-1888 taken from Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney Mail, Town & Country Journal, Goulburn Herald, Moore's Almanac and Evening News (442 pages). Although a number of properties mentioned in this file are shown as stations, many are much smaller and would be classed as runs. Without knowing their size, it is difficult to distinguish which is which. It is also worthwhile checking 'Claims on Leases of Crown Land' in early digitised copies of the Sydney Morning Herald. See also 4/11724, 4/11726 and 4/11727

04/011726 TUMUT & ADELONG NSW - Notes on Tumut & Adelong 1889-1910 taken from Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney Mail, Town & Country Journal, Goulburn Herald, Moore's Almanac and Evening News (442 pages). It is worthwhile to note that many of the towns' officials hold more than one civil position. Although a number of properties mentioned in this file are shown as stations, many are much smaller and would be classed as runs. Without knowing



their size, it is difficult to distinguish which is which. It is also worthwhile checking 'Claims on Leases of Crown Land' in early digitized copies of the Sydney Morning Herald. From 1899 lists of advertisers in local papers shown. See also 4/11724, 4/11725 and 4/11727 page 1 of 2

04/011727 TUMUT NSW / Notes on Tumut & Adelong 1911-1939 taken from Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney Mail, Town & Country Journal, Goulburn Herald, Moore's Almanac and Evening News (260 pages). It is worthwhile to note that many of the towns' officials hold more than one civil position. As many of the early pioneers to the district are aging, this file contain many death notices with a short history, sibilings and children listed. See also 4/11724, 4/11725 and 4/11726. Final 3 pages of this file is the 1939 Moore's Almanac listing for Tumut, Adelong and Grahamstown (258-260)

Value as a research tool

In his two series of source material Perkins brings together a wide variety of sources and presents them in chronological order. He is not writing a history where useful information is sometimes abbreviated or paraphrased, or has some interpretation placed on it. Rather, the papers are typescripts of original source material. A researcher consulting this material can save a lot of time by not having to request and search through resources which are not necessarily indexed. Perkins typed out information from published sources which today are difficult to access. For example, Perkins included the following obituary published in the little used *Sydney Monitor*.

Nov 3 DEATH - at his son's residence, Goulburn, on Monday night last (1st Nov) after an illness of several months, Mr JONAS BRADLEY, aged 71. He arrived in the Colony by the Third Fleet, as one of the NSW Corps, he disembarked [sic] just 50 years since; he has left considerable property, acquired by those means which reflect credit upon its possessor, who was remarkable for his strict integrity and honourable conduct. Mr. Bradley distinguished himself about 20 years ago, as the first successful grower of tobacco in this colony, for which he received the First Prize of the A.A. & H. Association.

He also includes many useful titbits like the following:

An hotel at Adaminaby kept by J.H.Austin was destroyed by fire[in 1862]. This was the second hotel erected there, the first being "The Travellers Rest", kept by Jos. Hy. Chalker.¹⁰

On a recent visit to Bega, Mr. Patrick Manning met a son of one of the builders of the old English Church on the Bobundara road, who informed him that Messrs. A. and D. McDonald who are cousins (one a stonemason and the other a carpenter) arrived in NSW in 1835, and between that year and 1848 the church situated on Cooma Creek was built, both being engaged in its erection.¹¹

By browsing through the Perkins Papers a researcher will gain an overall view of events in the neighbourhood and will be better able to understand their ancestors' time and place. "How might my people have lived in this place say, during the goldrushes or the great depression?"

It must be borne in mind that Perkins was consulting sources of information which were available in the mid-1940s and from our point of view there are shortcomings. Although he had better access to early published works he rarely used the Government Gazettes, even though they were indexed and, despite his status as Member of Parliament, appeared to have had no access to the wide variety of archival sources available to the researcher today. His papers should be used in conjunction with sources of



information available today. Although Perkins was a member of the RAHS he rarely used its Journal in his work, even though there had been a few articles published on his area of interest. Although he listed names extracted from the various Post Office Directories he did not index them. On one occasion he noted that an extract of information was not indexed (4/011720 p 1919).

Footnotes

1. New South Wales Birth Death & Marriage Indexes.
2. John Arthur Perkins entry in Australian Dictionary of Biography
3. Marriage certificate of John Arthur Perkins
4. Land Titles Office, Torrens Title Register Vol 3470 folio 176
5. ADB, op.cit.
6. Sydney Morning Herald 14 July 1954
7. Society of Australian Genealogists Reels 3462-86 Publicans Licenses
8. Society of Australian Genealogists Reels 3447-61 Pastoral Licenses
9. Society of Australian Genealogists B7/11/71 p 139
10. no source given
11. Monaro Mercury 17 Nov 1924

