

Locating the home and printing office of Samuel Gill in 1879

When Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* won the 2001 Booker Prize the so-called Jerilderie Letter gained greater prominence, particularly as Carey's first person narrative style used was modeled on the word structure dictated by Ned and faithfully recorded by Joe Byrne. The focus of Kellyphiles had already been sharpened a year earlier when the original Letter, which had disappeared from public view after Kelly's trial in 1880, was anonymously donated to the State Library of Victoria.

It was another author, Max Brown, in his 1948 *Australian Son*, who first named the 8,000 word manifesto for the small Riverina town where Kelly tried, without success, to have it published by the local newspaper proprietor, Samuel Gill. Gill, in editorials in his newspaper, the Jerilderie and Urana Gazette, had been critical of the ineptness displayed by the police in the efforts to capture the Kelly gang, but also somewhat less than flattering in his description of the "**desperadoes who are a terror to Victoria**". So when Gill learnt the gang was in town he either, to put a kind light on his actions, fled the town to spread the word, or fled in fear for his life and leaving his stoic wife, Eliza, to rebuff Kelly's overtures. The manuscript was eventually given into the custody of the bank teller, Edward Living.

More recently, townships which figured in the Kelly gang's two-year campaign have come to recognize the tourist potential of the Australian legend and in June 2006 produced a Ned Kelly Road Trail, complete with commentaries, site markers and maps.

Jerilderie has more surviving authentic Kelly sites than any other site along the trail, but for the town who takes its place in Australian history through the exploits of Ned Kelly, and the naming of his account "**of the occurrences of the present past and future**" by author Max Brown, a question has until now hung over the saga – just where was it that Eliza Gill stood her ground?

Jerilderie local historian, Cr Laure Henery, with the assistance of Historical Researcher John Lanser of Sydney, has been able to determine the very site where this now famous confrontation took place.

The oral tradition

Keith McMenemy [*Ned Kelly – The Authentic Illustrated History*, 1984 and 2001] and Kevin Passey [*In Search of Ned*, 1988] both have the printing office located on lot 3, section 22 [figure 1], the area of parkland redeveloped in 2010 as a Memorial Park housing the Cenotaph and other war memorabilia. It once housed the Ned Kelly Iron Horse used in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games opening and closing ceremonies. Neither author cites any reference or authority for his conclusion but McMenemy's 2001 edition acknowledges Passey and Passey plainly drew upon oral tradition as relayed by Ian Gilbert, former Jerilderie Shire Clerk (1945 to 1978), President of the Jerilderie Historical Society (1970 to 1979) and its Secretary from 1983 to 1996. In discussion with the author, however, Gilbert freely acknowledged the lack of any evidence to confirm this site, other than "what [he had] been led to believe."

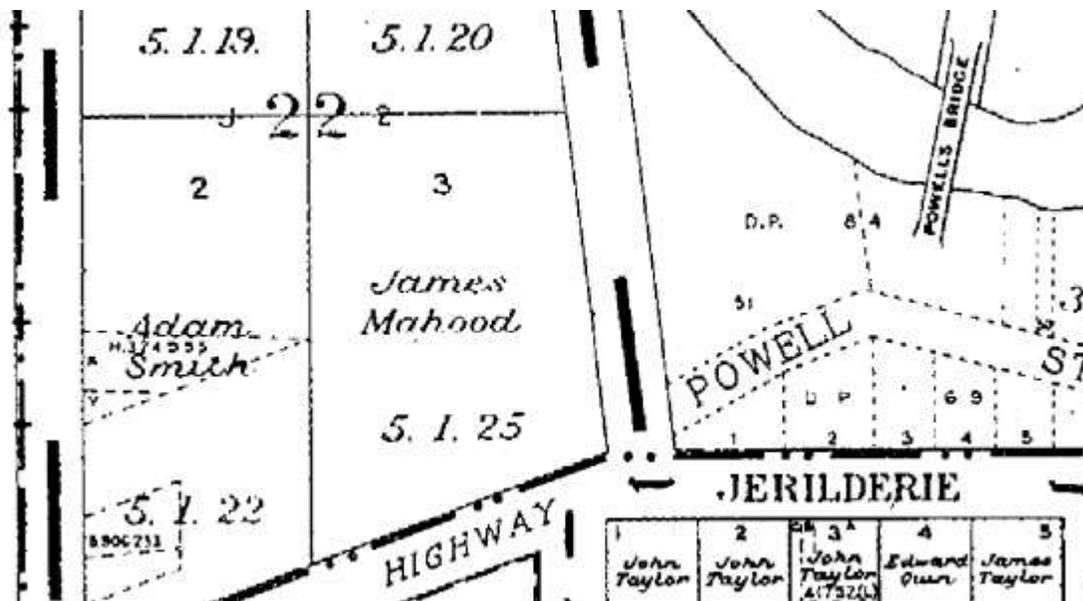


Figure 1 Section of town map showing James Mahood's land at Lot 3 Section 22, and part of John Powell's sub-division, top right-hand

An alternative location?

Contemporaneous accounts of the raid suggest a site closer to the 1879 temporary bank premises (which in part was located where the lounge and gaming area of the Royal Mail Hotel is now).

- William Elliott drew on his diaries to write *The Kelly Raid on Jerilderie, by One Who Was There* (serialised in the *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser* from 4 July 1913 to 3 April 1914, and republished in the town's centenary booklet *Jerilderie 100 Years* [1958]). He says [chapter 11]:

“[Kelly] asked where Gill had gone, and Mr Rankin said that in all probability he had gone across to his home, which was *on the other side of the street*” [emphasis added];

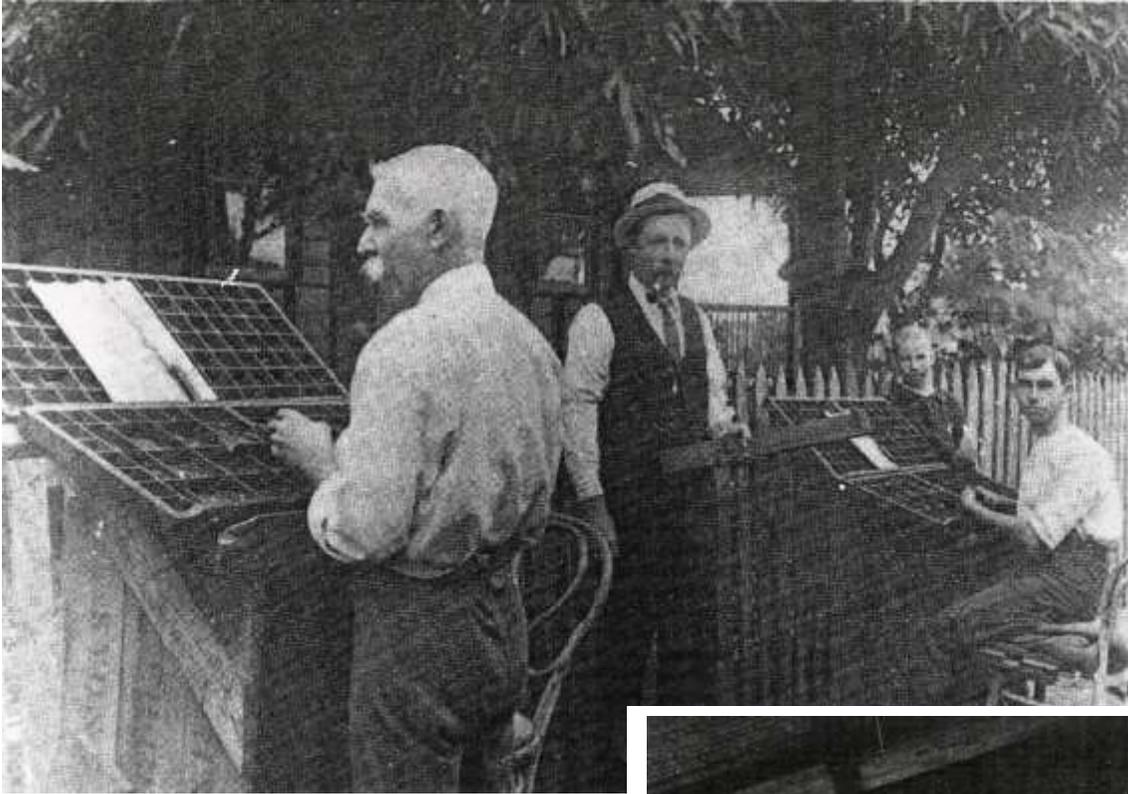
Elliott later records [chapter 13]:

“He [Kelly] went out in quest of the editor (Mr Gill), taking Trooper Richards, and the bank teller, Mr Living, with him. They walked *across the street* to the editor's private residence, and Kelly knocked at the front door. Mrs Gill opened up” [emphasis added].

- The press of the period was also in no doubt. Two days after the robbery (12 February) *The Argus'* correspondent reported “Ned Kelly, in company with Mr Living and Constable Richards, *came over* to the printing office” while *The Age* quoted bank teller Living: “We went over to Gill's house, *which was just across the street*, but Gill was not there” [emphasis added to both quotes]. Six days later (18 February) *The Age* was even more specific: “Gill's office is about 30 yards from the hotel.”

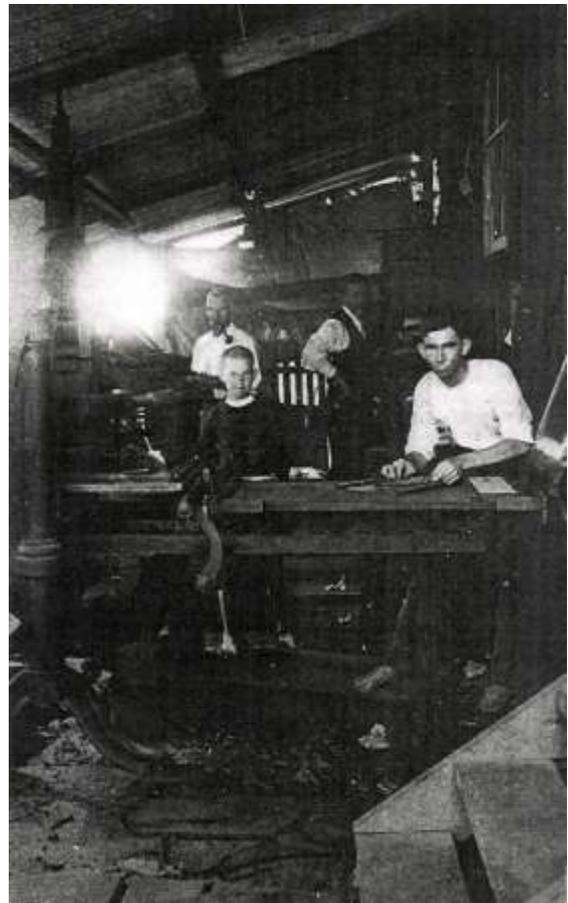
The interchangeable references to Gill's "home" and "office," which also run through the text of several Kelly books, is not considered significant. In those days it was relatively common for a residence and place of business to be situated at the same location, whether they were separate buildings or not. There are no known photos of Gill's operation but the following pictures of George Kingsberry's *Federal Weekly* in South Townsville, Queensland, give a good idea of a country newspaper being produced from domestic premises, even

to setting type out of doors, where the light would be better for reading small fonts upside down (as the hand compositor must do).



Mail Hotel, be it to Gill's home, or his office, or his home and office, with Mrs Gill answering the door.

At that time Mrs Gill had three children of the approximate ages of 2, 7 and 8 years, and was pregnant with a fourth child (which died at birth later that year). This certainly suggests that Kelly went to Gill's home and, if it was not the printing office as well, why didn't Kelly then go to the printing office rather than abandon his search for Gill and surrender the Jerilderie Letter into Living's keeping?



Max Brown, the author who first gave Kelly's treatise the name "Jerilderie Letter," retraced Kelly's trail to research his much respected *Australian Son* during 1946-7, when some townsfolk who lived through the raid would still have been alive, and he expressly says that "the printing office ... abutted the Gill home." Let the last word be with Mrs Gill herself, in her statement made for the prosecution authorities prior to Kelly's trial: "Edward Kelly came to the Gazette Printing Office in company with Mr Living and Constable Richards."

So where was the *Gazette* printing office?

Because leases of property for a period of less than three years were not required to be registered it is not always possible to determine short term occupancies of land from historical title searches. That is the unfortunate situation with Samuel Gill's period of residence in Jerilderie, so we are forced to reconstruct from circumstantial evidence.

The oral tradition that Gill's premises were on lot 3 of section 22, land then owned by James Mahood, probably stems from

- Elliott's and Gill's separate versions of Gill's movements after he fled the bank; and
- subsequent confusion about *which* block of land owned by Mahood, and *which* of Jerilderie's former printing offices, is being referred to by Elliott.

Elliott's and Gill's accounts

- Elliott says that Gill ran out of the Bank, turned west, continued on down the street past the Royal Mail Hotel

"and reached Mr James Mahood's (saddler) private residence – now occupied by Dr Robinson – and opening the front gate went through the house to the dining room, where the family were at dinner."

A title search shows that James Mahood did own lot 3 (and lot 4) of section 22 in 1879 and Dr Robinson purchased the portion of lot 3 containing Mahood's shop and residence in 1891. Therefore, *when Elliott wrote his account in 1913*, Dr Robinson did reside there, having his

surgery on the eastern end of the building that was later to become known as Chapman's Flats, and later still, Creedy's Flats.

- Gill's own account of his movements, as told in *Life* [1 March 1910] states:
"when I made good my escape I went to a saddler's shop which was kept by a sensible man....."



James Mahood's saddlery and residence, located on Lot 3, Section 22



Chapman's, or Creedy's flats before demolition, once the residence of James Mahood, and residence and surgery of Dr Robinson.

He is clearly referring to Mahood, and probably to lot 3 of section 22. Significantly, he says nothing of his home or office also being in that general area and it is his later movements, after Mahood reacted with disbelief to Gill's agitated account of the raid then in progress, that takes us to where, in all probability, his premises actually were. For those details, we are again dependent on Elliott who, as always, is meticulous in his continuing account:

"The editor went down Powell Street towards the Albion Hotel, and rapping at a window of a butcher's shop on the opposite side of the street to the hotel he called Mrs Pride - the wife of the butcher - and asked her to tell Mrs Gill - his wife - that he was safe, and was then going to send away information that the outlaws were in town. He crossed over the bridge, and skirting the creek, made all possible speed ... for Carrah homestead..."

It is the appearance of Mrs Pride in the narrative which points to where she conveniently could, and probably did, find Mrs Gill to pass on the message.

Jerilderie Street in 1879

The vocabulary of land titles can be confusing so, before continuing, it is important for the reader to keep in mind the distinction between the previously discussed lot 3 of *section 22* (near the lake) and lot 3 of *portion 4*, a quite separate subdivision of deposited plan 69 which had frontages to both Jerilderie and Powell Streets [figure 2]. The changing ownership, in 1879, 1883 and 1893, of lots 1 to 7 in portion 4 is reproduced in figures 3A, 3B & 3C, while figure 4 provides, for easy identification, an overlaid, colour-coded key to buildings now standing on 1879's lots 1 to 4.

Gill's route, after leaving Mahood's premises at section 22, took him east along Powell Street past lots 1 to 3 around which, we can conclude, there must then have been substantial fencing because:

- other reports say Ned Kelly, later in the day, had to go "around" from the Royal Mail to the stables (where Luke Park now is) of the Traveller's Rest

(later Albion) hotel (Noack's property near the bridge over the creek in Powell street);

- a report in the *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser* dated 2 December 1920 refers to travellers alighting from the coaches in front of the Traveller's Rest hotel having to walk "around" a fence if they wished to stay at the Royal Mail hotel; and
- given his timidity, Gill must have been confident that after fleeing from the bank he could not be seen from the Royal Mail hotel when he went *eastward* along Powell Street from Mahood's residence at section 22 towards the bridge over the creek. If there were a chance of his being sighted would he not, on fleeing Mahood's for Carrah Farm, have continued *westward* away from town to the natural ford over the creek which was located behind the cemetery on Conargo Road?



Figure 2. Part of J C Powell's Land Grant sub-division (portion4), in 1870.

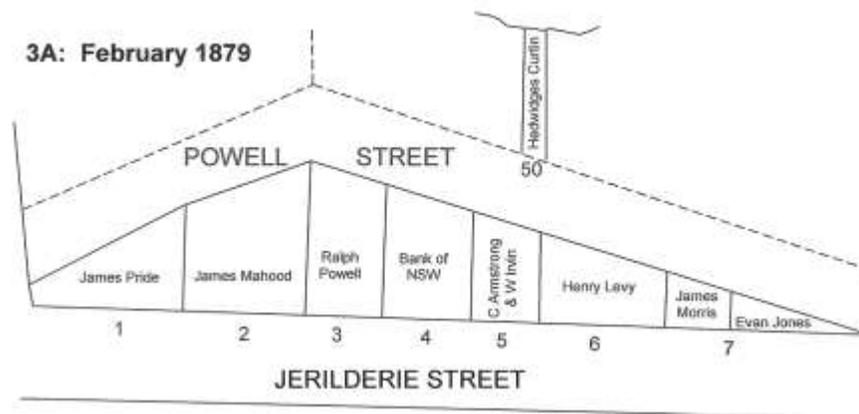
We can now place under the microscope the ownership history of lots 1 to 3 in portion 4, which takes in the land from the present Civic Hall eastward to the lane linking Jerilderie and Powell Streets.

The sub-divisions of lots 1, 2 and 3

In 1870 John Caractacus Powell, the founder of Jerilderie, decided to sub-divide his 1865 land grant. In some instances the sub-divisions were made so as to accommodate buildings that Powell had already allowed to be built on his land. No doubt the reason was to assist in the establishment of the township around his businesses, rather than around the businesses established by his arch rival, William Davidson, in the 'Cape' area, some three kilometres upstream.

Lot 1

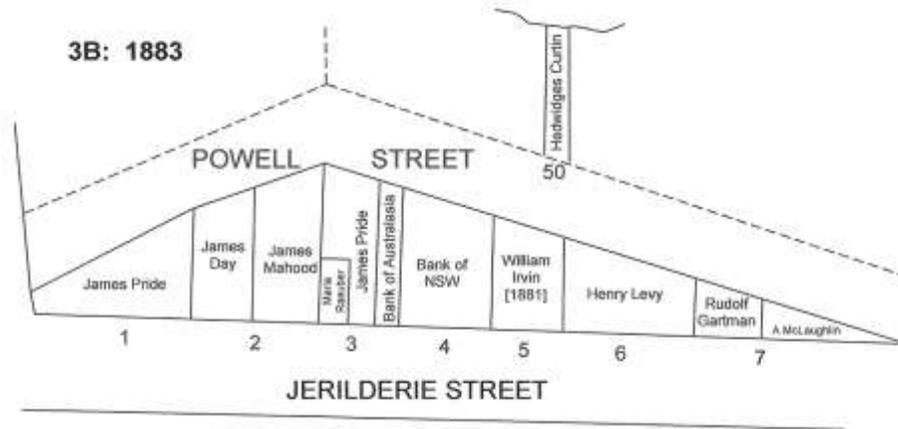
This lot, now the site of the Civic Hall, was sold to James Lindsay Pride, (described in the transfer as "farmer"), in September 1877 [figure 3A].



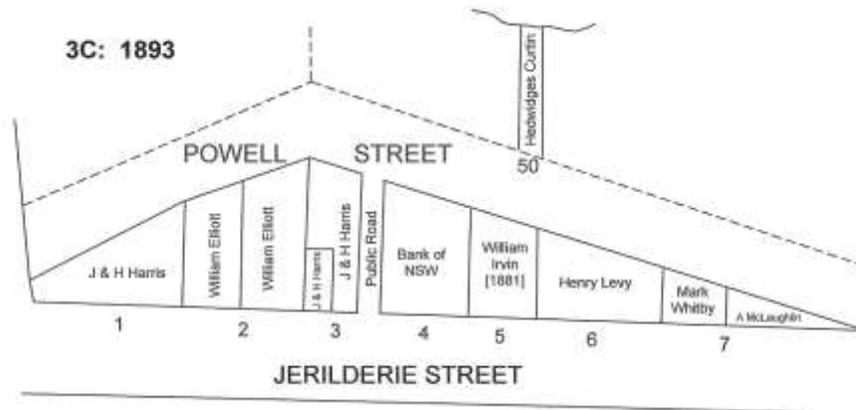
Lot 2

The Council offices and Chambers, and the office of Stubbs Wallace and Partners, now occupy this lot. It was sold in August 1871 to Ralph Powell ("hotelkeeper", and no relation to John Powell) who, in turn sold to James Mahood ("saddler") in December 1877 [figure 3A]. On 8 December 1883

Mahood further sub-divided the lot, transferring the western portion (Council offices) to James Day (“carrier”) while retaining the eastern portion (now Council Chambers and accountants’ office) for himself [figure 3B].



In March and June 1890 William Elliott (“printer”) acquired both sub-divisions of lot 2 [figure 3C].



These later transfers are all well after the Kelly raid but, as will emerge, their significance lies in Ian Gilbert's being “led to believe” that Gill’s printing office was located on “Mahood’s land.”

Lot 3

This lot originally included the private residence on the corner of Jerilderie Street and the laneway (home of the late Leo Crimmins) *and* the land either side: on the west, now occupied by the derelict structure separating it from the present office of Stubbs Wallace and Partners, and to the east, the present laneway itself. It was also sold to Ralph Powell in August 1871 [figure 3A] and during 1881 to 1883, as figure 3B shows, he further sub-divided it in a rather strange way, probably because of the existence of buildings already on the allotment.

The western part

The western part of lot 3, after subdivision, had a frontage of only 30 feet to Jerilderie Street and extended just 80 feet in depth, because immediately behind it and fronting the right of way (later Powell Street) there was (as a plan of John Powell's sub-division of 1870, part of which is reproduced as figure 2, notes) "a nearly new wooden building; which was erected at a cost of about £70 and is new in good repair." This building was Pride's butcher shop. Pride's, facing Powell Street, was immediately behind a brick and weatherboard structure fronting Jerilderie Street, which was just across from the Royal Mail hotel and the bank; and is now 41 Jerilderie Street. *This, almost certainly, was the home and printing office of Samuel Gill at the time of the Kelly raid on Jerilderie.*

The centre part

On 10 February 1883 James Pride became owner of the centre part of lot 3. It was an inverted L-shaped block, having a frontage of 33 feet 5¼ inches to Jerilderie Street, and 65 feet 9 inches fronting the right of way (Powell Street), where his butcher shop already stood [figure 3B]. Not until September 1969 were the small western portion and the central "L" shaped portion of lot 3 reunited on the one title.

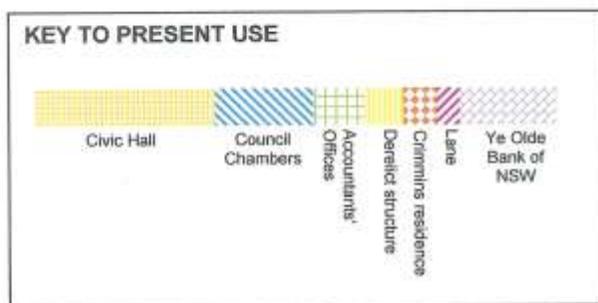
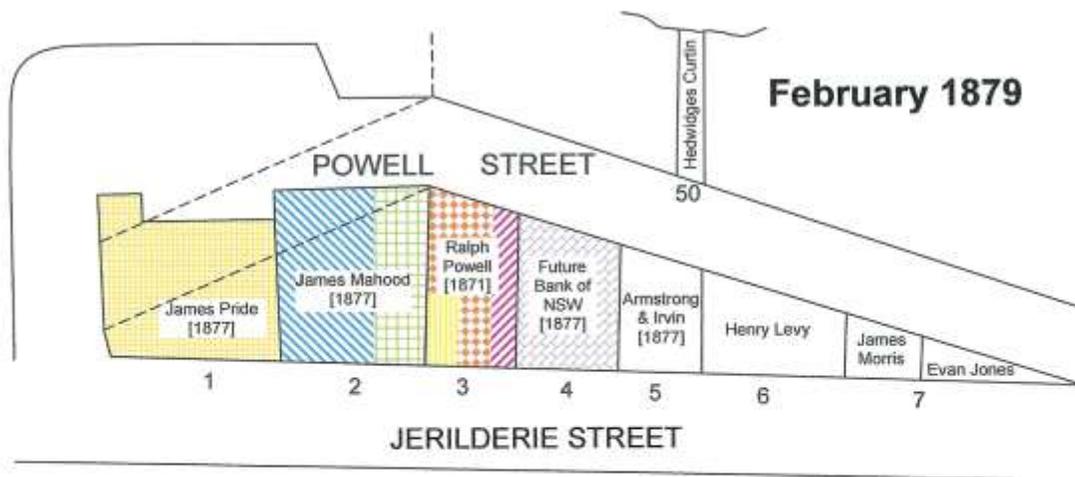
The eastern part

This was acquired by the Bank of Australasia (merged into the ANZ Bank in 1951) on 9 September 1881 [figure 3B] and, on 16 September 1886, was dedicated as a public road, becoming known locally as Bank Lane [figure 3C].



Photograph of Samuel Skevington, who was the local chemist between 1907 and 1929, and his wife Clara, in front of their residence. The timber building in the background was used at various times as the chemist shop. It is contended that this timber building is that which Ned Kelly visited in search of Samuel Gill, the editor and publisher of the Jerilderie and Urana Gazette, and later the residence and jewelry shop of Charles Raeuber. Jerilderie Shire Council purchased this property in 2008 and a new town Library was constructed on this site. It is proposed to retain and restore the wooden structure back into a Printery.

Figure 4 – Current site occupation of 1879 portion 4 subdivision



- The new town Library has now been constructed and officially opened in 2010 on what is described in the above key as the Crimmins residence (and Lane)

The oral history revisited: which block of Mahood's land and which printing office?

- The Rev. H C Lundy's *History of Jerilderie* has Samuel Gill coming to Jerilderie in 1876, although his paper, the *Jerilderie Gazette*, was not registered until September 1877. Now both those dates precede December 1877, when James Mahood purchased lot 2 of portion 4 from Ralph Powell. Mahood, remember, later sub-divided lot 2, retaining the eastern portion and selling the western portion to carrier James Day [figure 3B].

- It is not known precisely when Gill departed Jerilderie for Narrandera to establish that town's first paper, the *Narandera Argus*, but what is recorded is that:
 - a. the *Argus* was registered as a newspaper in early January 1880;
 - b. the *Gazette* was still being published in April 1880 (the writer has a fragment from an issue recording the death of Henry Leek, father-in-law of the founder of Jerilderie, Mr J C Powell, on 21 April 1880); and
 - c. on 6 October 1880 Gill acquired at public auction for £5/5/- a property in Twynam Street, Narrandera.

So Gill must have vacated his Jerilderie Street home and office sometime during 1880.

- Now we also know (from hotel licence returns in the *Government Gazettes*) that in 1881 Charles Raeuber relinquished the licence of the Turn Back Jimmy hotel and in August of that year his wife became the owner of 41 Jerilderie Street [figure 3B], where Raeuber commenced a business as a jeweler (his occupation listed on the formation of the Masonic Lodge in 1882). On 18 July 1884 the Raeubers sold 41 Jerilderie Street and moved to the Albion hotel, formerly known as the previously mentioned Traveller's Rest.
- It seems that sometime during the time of Raeuber's jewelry business at 41 Jerilderie Street James Mahood had seen the need for offices to rent in Jerilderie so he built two offices on the eastern subdivision of lot 2 [figure 3B], leaving a gap between them and a building located on lot 3. The undated photograph displayed hereunder shows this gap between the twin gabled building on lot 2 (housing both William Elliott's printing office and the Pastures Protection Board) and (on the western part of lot 3) the wall of what this article contends to have been the 1879 home of Samuel Gill and printing office of the *Jerilderie Gazette*.



Pastures Protection Board office (left) and William Elliott's Printing Office (right). These offices were originally owned by James Mahood and made available for leasing. Note vacant space between offices and building to the right – the western wall of Gill's home and printing office.

- It partially survives in the weatherboard structure and adjoining ruins now occupying 41 Jerilderie Street. The gap disappeared in 1958 when Les Flett, the then owner and editor of the *Jerilderie Herald and Urana Advertiser*, constructed a new printing office which is now the accountancy office of Stubbs Wallace and Partners.
- In 1883 John Mitchell of the *Yarrawonga Mercury* launched the *Jerilderie Herald* in premises on the eastern half of lot 2, rented from James Mahood. He installed William Cureton Boddy as resident manager, but in January 1885 Boddy died suddenly and John Mitchell prevailed upon local school master William Elliott to produce the paper on his behalf. Obviously Elliott liked the newspaper business because in that year he resigned from the Education Department to take it up full-time. In 1890 he

purchased both parts of lot 2, the western part from Day and the eastern part from Mahood [figure 3C].



Photograph taken in 2007 of, from left to right, Council Chambers, Accountancy office of Stubbs Wallace and Partners, the derelict home and office of Samuel Gill, and residence of the late Leo Crimmins, now demolished to make way for the town's new library.

Conclusion ... unravelling the confusion

So, drawing the threads of the oral tradition together, the land and building which housed a printing office of *the Elliott family* from 1885 until 1951 was indeed once owned by James Mahood. To that extent, the oral history is confirmed, *but it refers to Mahood's lot 2 of portion 4 [Jerilderie Street], not his lot 3 of section 2 [parkland-Memorial Park], and the printing office was Elliott's Jerilderie Herald not Gill's Jerilderie Gazette.*

Gill: a postscript

And what of Samuel Gill, after he left Narrandera in 1884, having sold the *Narrandera Argus* to George Eldred of Wagga Wagga? In 1893 he appears again as the printer of the *Warragul News*, in Victoria. In 1894 he was listed as the publisher of the *Richmond Australian* in Melbourne, and in 1898 he was associated with the *Rosedale Courier* in Gippsland. From there he went into partnership in the *Morwell and Mirboo Gazette*. In late 1913 father and son bought the *Seymour Express*, with the father operating that paper whilst the son continued to operate the *Mirboo and Yinnar Gazette*. In 1917 the son, Norman Gill, became a partner in the *Box Hill Reporter* which his father edited until his retirement in 1925.

Cr L J Henery

Local Historian

May 2007

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