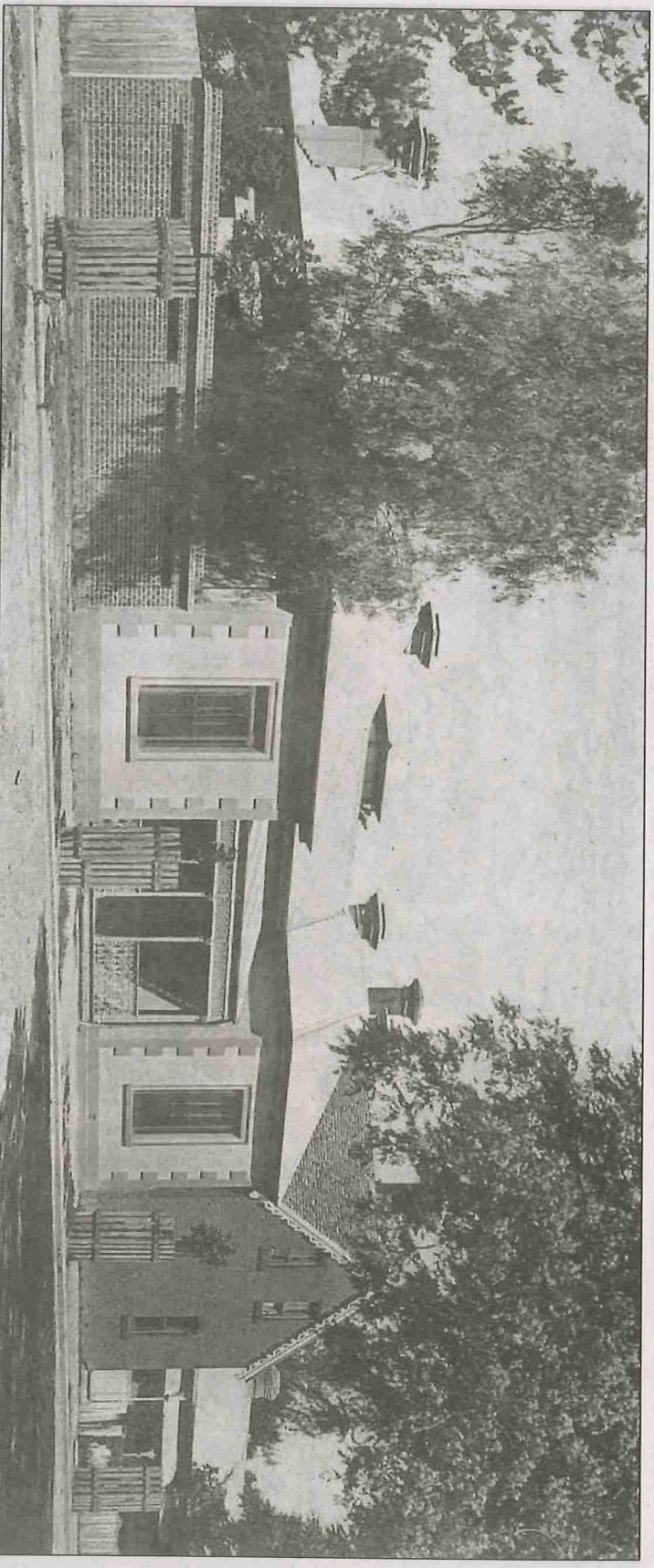


What you should know

■ The CSU Regional Archives is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Ave.

■ Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with enquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward enquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour, including copying and postage.

■ For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



This photo of the Riverine Club was taken circa 1900. The photo is from the Wagga Wagga & District Historical Society collection held at the Regional Archives. (RW5/103/32)

Willans' legacy

Colourful character left mark on city



at the archives
Wayne Doubleday

William Willans, attorney at law, left a life-long legacy in Wagga. Born in Dublin in 1824, Willans followed in his father's footsteps and earned a law degree. After gaining a legal education in Ireland, he made the journey to Australia around 1858 with his wife Fredricka Elizabeth and their infant son John.

Willans' first recorded court appearance in Wagga Local Court was on December 14, 1860. In 1862, Willans became a permanent resident of Wagga, as well as its first resident solicitor. Willans quickly devoted himself to the community and became involved in many local matters. He was a dedicated and passionate member of committees such as the Local Railway Extension Committee, St John's Anglican Church and the Wagga Wagga Hospital Committee from 1865-66.

Willans purchased a substantial amount of land on which today stands the TAFE campus, Museum of the Riverina and Willans Hill School. Willans named his home "Hillside" and eventually the hill became known as Willans Hill.

A colourful character, Willans often found himself in trouble. He was suspended from practising for six months for "disrespectful and insulting conduct to the bench".

Additionally, he once claimed he was on his way to church to avoid paying the bridge toll from North Wagga, a toll which he vehemently opposed. However, as Willans lived in Wagga it became obvious he was not on his way to church; he was instead returning from Wantabadgery.

The most infamous of his actions was his attempt to horsewhip the editor of the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, Harold Stephens. Stephens ran an article which sarcastically referred to Willans as "Mr. Willans, solicitor and gentleman (by Act of Parliament)".

The article in mention was "apologising" to Willans for their error in judgement regarding a young lady that Willans "was not" representing. The article made mention of Willans' relationship with the young lady, stating "we could not know of the intimate



Current day Willans Hill is named after William Willans, a solicitor and a colourful character.

relations subsisting between them ... " Willans, who was overcome by anger and frustration, found Stephens at the local Australian Hotel and proceeded in his attempt to whip him with a cane.

The *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* ran a colourfully descriptive article the next day entitled, "How Our Editor got Horsewhipped".

The article again referred to Willans as a 'gallant gentleman (by Act of Parliament)' and wrote, "Mr Willans in the majesty of his wrath, deigned no reply, but made repeated efforts to inflict the purposed castigation ..."

Willans practised law in Wagga until ill health saw him move to Tumbarumba in 1886. He died in 1900.

Unfortunately no pictures have been located of William Willans or his family. If anyone has any further information regarding Willans, please contact the CSU Regional Archives.

Compiled by Kath Morris
References: *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* 31/01/1874, 07/02/1874; *The Daily Advertiser* 03/10/1968; Sherry Morris' Biographical Index; Keith Swan, *A History of Wagga*

THE Riverine Club recently made a deposit of a number of fascinating records at the CSU Regional Archives.

The records include minute books going back to 1888, financial records beginning in 1882, and registers of members from 1881-1964. As you could imagine, the collection provides a wonderful glimpse of the social life of professionals and businessmen (and later women) in Wagga in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The club officially began on November 24, 1881, with a members list that included 24 graziers, seven commission agents, four solicitors, four surveyors, four doctors, three newspapermen, an architect, and a miller.

John Leitch of Berry Jerry was elected as the first president. Dr. Erasmus Wren of Wagga and Edmund Westly of Pullitop were both vice-presidents. The secretary was Robert Wood and the first treasurer was William Taylor, a banker.

The other men elected to the original committee of the Riverine Club were Henry Fitzhardinge (solicitor), Gerald Baker (banker), Phineas Hann (grazier and commission agent), Dr Morgan O'Connor (doctor of medicine), George Patterson Wilson (grazier), and Joseph Rebello (commission agent).

Records from the Riverine Club collection that are older than 30 years are available to the public for viewing in our search room.