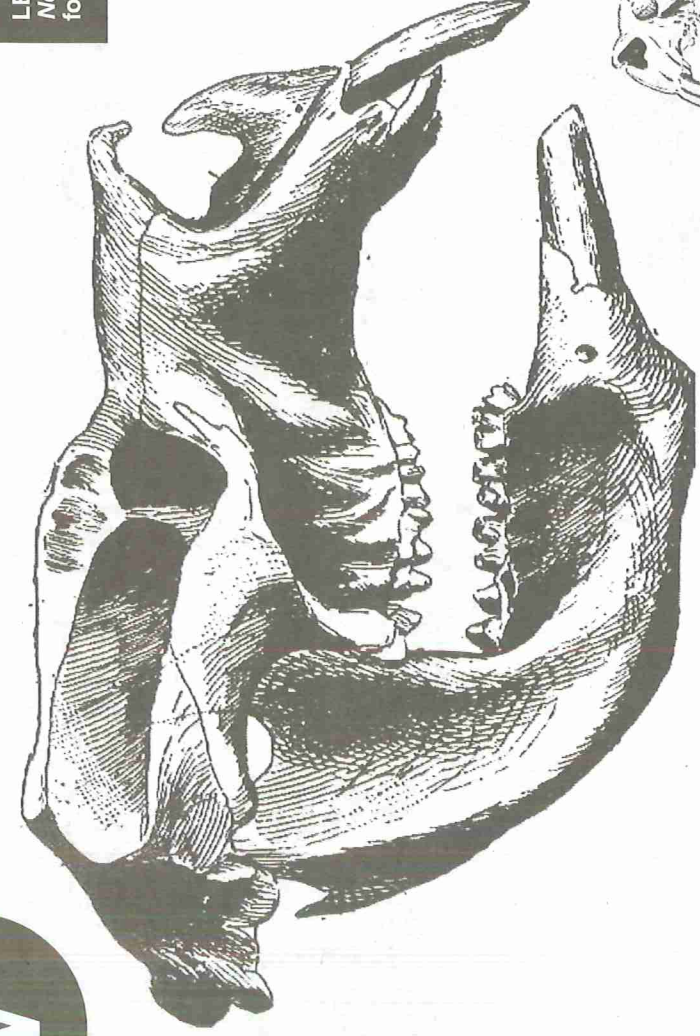
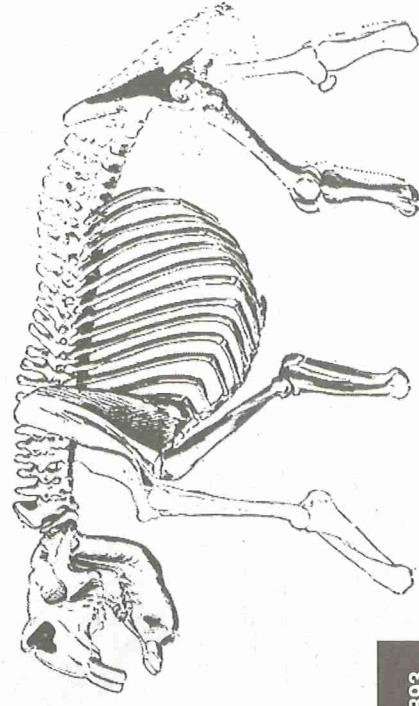


## what you need to know

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday – Friday, 9am to 5pm, and the first Saturday of every month from 10am to 3pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the University, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. 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 straight forward enquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information please phone 6925 3666, email [archive@csu.edu.au](mailto:archive@csu.edu.au), or visit our website at [www.csu.edu.au/research/archives](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/archives) for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



LEFT: A diprotodon skull, from the *Illustrated Sydney News*, May 6, 1893. Two molars and a piece of jaw were found at the Houllaghan's Creek site.

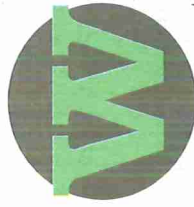


RIGHT: A diprotodon skeleton, from the *Illustrated Sydney News*, May 6, 1893.

# A fossil find



at the  
archives  
Wayne Doubleday



While searching for a hidden story to discover in Wagga's short history, I came across an account of a great discovery in itself – the local unearthing of prehistoric fossils belonging to an extinct species, the diprotodon.

On Tuesday, April 4, 1893, Mr William Dennis of Houllaghan's Creek, near Downside, came upon some very large bones while excavating a well on his property. The bones were exposed once sinking had reached a depth of 30 feet from the surface.

The bones found were a large number of detached, massive bones, clearly belonging to an extinct species, unlike any of the existing fauna in Australia. Of particular interest in the discovery were two very large molars measuring inches in length, and a piece of jaw measuring half a foot.

Many of the fossils were eagerly seized by all the passersby who could get hold of them. In the meantime, Mr W A Dennis being so impressed with what was found on his property, conveyed samples of the specimens to Wagga, where they were inspected by the notable Mr C H Croaker. Fortunately, Mr Croaker had nous enough to forward them through to Dr Ramsay, the curator of the Sydney Museum.

Once the fossils reached the hands of Dr Ramsey in Sydney, they were immediately recognised as the bones of the extinct diprotodon, the herbivorous marsupial which



An artist's impression of the diprotodon, by Dmitry Bogdanov, 1998.

was first discovered in 1880 by Sir Thomas Mitchell in the Wellington Caves, New South Wales.

Diprotodon means, "two forward teeth" and has been referred to as the giant wombat or the rhinoceros wombat. It is believed that the diprotodon is the largest known marsupial to have lived.

There have been a number of diprotodon fossils found in sites all across Australia, some being full skeletons and complete skulls, allowing for a realistic impression of the animal. The diprotodon stood approximately 2.1 metres high, 2.7m long, and its skull measured 90 centimetres in length.

The diprotodon has been described as being "big, strong and stupid", bigger and stronger than his contemporaries, and yet was unable to survive the struggle for existence during the extreme climate changes of the Pleistocene period.

It is believed these unusual "megafauna" were still in existence until about 10,000 years ago, which means that they were cohabitants with the first humans to arrive in Australia.

It is also believed by some that the diprotodon is the inspiration behind the Aboriginal legend of the Bunyip.

Possibly one of the most curious things in this whole story is that potentially, there are households in the Wagga area that have inherited from an opportunistic relative, a very large bone or two.

### ■ Compiled by Lauren Carroll

■ References: *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, April 6 1893; *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 8 1893, 15 April 1893; *Illustrated Sydney News*, May 6 1893; Diprotodon, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diprotodon> (last visited June 6, 2011); Morris, Sherry, (1999) *Wagga Wagga – A History*.

## See you Saturday at the CSU Regional Archives

The CSU Regional Archives is currently extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of every month. On these days the archives will

be open from 10am to 3pm. The next Saturday opening will be on July 2. This trial initiative has been put in

place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours.

It is hoped that enough researchers and visitors will avail themselves of this service to warrant it becoming a permanent thing.