

The original collection of buildings at Moira from a watercolour believed to have been painted by Caroline, a half sister of Henry Lewes.

## A history of Moira Station

Moira Station, about 15 kms south of Mathoura was the first white settlement in the Mathoura district.

It was taken up in 1842 by an Englishman, Henry Sayer Lewes, in partnership with Charles Throsby of Bong Bong near Mittagong NSW.

He reached Moira on August 15, just as the first flood in many years arrived and wrote "As the sheep were just beginning to lamb, we were compelled to halt here."

Most of the following timeline was kindly compiled by the present owner, Mr Rex Watson.

- 1842** Multiple attacks on shepherds and stock by Aborigines who naturally resented the intrusion on their traditional lands. A serious attack on September 27 was repelled with gunfire by a sergeant of the Border Police who were stationed near Moira for a short time.
- 1843** John Oldbury Atkinson, Moira's overseer for the next 17 years, arrived with more stock.
- 1847** Lewes became a magistrate for the Deniliquin district and was active in public affairs. He improved productivity at his station and built a famous wool press.
- 1848** The boundaries of Moira were defined. The run was estimated to consist of 100,000 acres, carrying 3,000 head of cattle and 4,000 sheep.
- 1850** The bushranger Captain Melville who had crossed the Murray on Maiden's punt, committed two robberies, leaving one victim with a shotgun wound in the ankle before holding up Moira. He forced the cook to prepare a meal and stole some of the station's horses before going on to Deniliquin.
- 1852** Improvements to the property included a board and shingle cottage with detached kitchen and laundry, servants' quarters, a woolshed with loft, wool store, 24-stall stables. 759 acres of land had been purchased surrounding the homestead. Stock numbered 7,000 cattle and 10,000 sheep enclosed by 50 miles of post and rail fencing.
- 1858** The Moira Inn, also called the Moira Restaurant, was built out of stone. It had eight bedrooms and was the second drinking stop out of Moama. The first licensee, William Clifton left in 1860 when it was taken over by Hugh Gracey who advertised that it had one of the finest grazing paddocks on the stock route. Although it was a Cobb and Co stopover, it was predominately used by overlanders (drovers) and teamsters and like other inns along the track, closed when the Deniliquin and Moama Railway commenced operating in 1876.
- 1860** When Henry Lewes's partner Charles Throsby died Lewes, an executor of the will, was legally compelled to put the station up for sale and was not allowed to bid for it.

# A history of Moira station

**1862** The Hon. John (later Sir John) O'Shanassy, a former Premier of Victoria, bought 5,500 cattle at five pounds a head with the leasehold of 148,000 acres given in. An opponent of the NSW land laws he came into conflict with William Joachim who had selected land on Moira in the names of his children. The court case ended up in the Privy Council, then the highest court of appeal, which found in Joachim's favour.

**1866** O'Shanassy built the present 18 room homestead with extensive outbuildings. The bricks were burned on the property and a large garden was laid out.

**1899** The property was sold to F S Falkiner and Sons. By this time closer settlement by selectors like William Joachim had reduced its size to 40,485 all of which had been converted to freehold.

In addition to other grazing enterprises, Falkiners ran an impressive Clydesdale draught horse stud on Moira. In 1910 56 mares and one stallion were valued at 4,200 pounds.

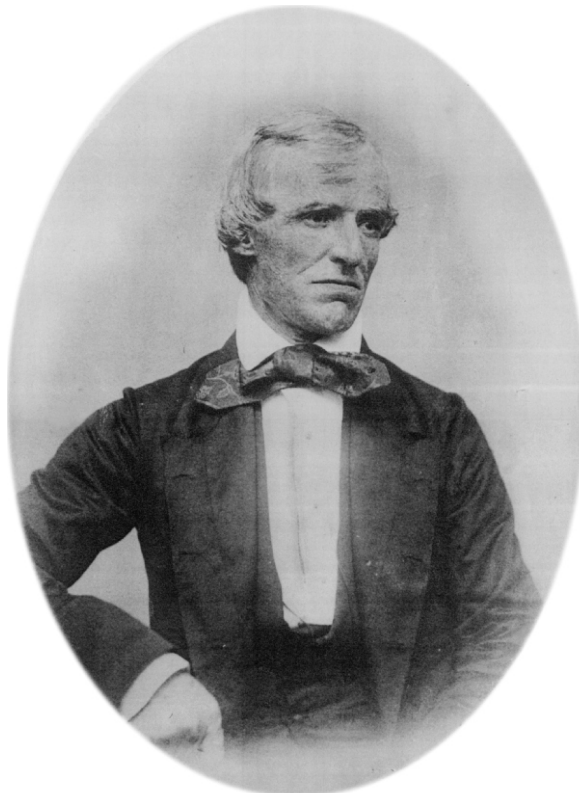
Fillies and colts when branded were valued at 20 pounds each.

F S Falkiner and Sons Minute number 2 in 1910 shows details of selectors on Moira included the names Tomlinson, Berryman, Scott, Joss, Slelly and Allyne. Improvement leases had been granted to Holschier, McKindlay, Mallone, Leitch, Stokes, Skelly and Tomlinson. Many of these names remain in the Mathoura district.

**1910** John Clark bought what remained of Moira, the homestead block of 10,200 acres for six pounds ten shillings an acre, running it as the Moira Pastoral Company. There was a 15 stand woolshed in use. Around the homestead a famous garden was developed.

**1935** Moira Station was put up for auction at Scott's Hotel, Melbourne. It then comprised 10,200 acres of freehold and 35,000 acres of leasehold. However it was not sold and remained in the Clark family until the 1960s.

Several owners controlled Moira after the Clark family, sometimes from Melbourne. Sheep and cattle were run with some cropping attempted in better seasons. The Moira Pastoral Company was purchased in 1971 by Rex Morton. The following year it was bought by Les Wison and Sons and by Tony Nigri in 1976. About 1996 it was sold to Mr and Mrs Frank Millar of Echuca and was bought by Rex Watson, a drilling contractor, in 2003.



The founder of Moira station, Henry Sayer Lewes. Both pictures by courtesy of Mrs Elizabeth Carroll.