

**WHO CAME DOWN WITH DR CHARLES THROSBY?
JOHN WAIT, JOE WILD & JOHN ROWLEY AS ILLAWARRA'S
1815 WHITE PIONEERS.**

Many local historians have told the tale of Dr Charles Throsby coming down the mountain into Illawarra in 1815.

Dr Throsby's nephew, Charles Throsby Smith, tells the firmest version of the story of his uncle in his 1863 Reminiscences:

“...in the year 1815 the County of Cumberland was suffering from the effects of drought...My late uncle, Dr Throsby...met with some of the Aborigines who told him there was plenty of grass and water at the Five Islands. From their representations of the area he at once made up his mind to proceed hither and see for himself – and so, accompanied by a couple of men, two native blacks, and a pack horse carrying his provisions, he started on his journey...” [published in full in the Illawarra Historical Society Bulletin May-June 1990]

Unfortunately, this reminiscence is not a pure primary source (it is a second-hand account recorded in 1863) and it does not name any of the other individuals who came down with Dr Throsby. Not only was it written long after the event it describes but its author, Dr Throsby's nephew, Charles Throsby Smith, did not arrive in New South Wales until April 1816 – a full year after his uncle's (Dr Charles Throsby's) pioneering walk.

Charles Throsby Smith's “Reminiscence”, therefore, is not based on his own experiences – even though he may have actually met ALL of the men involved.

Even so the reminiscence may even be in error about precisely how many white men came down the mountain with Dr Throsby in 1815.

It turns out that another Illawarra source argues there were actually “three” men who accompanied Dr Throsby rather than the “couple of men” Charles Throsby Smith indicates.

That source is Frank McCaffrey and it is found on page 93 of his *The History of Illawarra and its Pioneers*, (self published, 142 Barton Avenue, Haberfield in 1922).

For too long, McCaffrey's historical information relating to Illawarra has been depicted by some later historians as both unreliable and the work of a sometimes laughably obsessive antiquarian.

My experience of McCaffrey, however, has been that, when investigated closely, his work often produces gems of 'fact' which are available from no other source.

McCaffrey's informants could not often quote verse and chapter (and so neither can he) but when it comes to recounting the story of early Illawarra some of these informants had clearly lived the stories they imparted to McCaffrey.

McCaffrey (on p. 93 of his pioneering history of Illawarra) claims that **JOHN WAIT** was one of three to come down the mountain with cattle in 1815 with Charles Throsby. The others two were **GEORGE ROWLEY** and **JOE WILD**.

Amazingly, the prejudice among many Illawarra historians against McCaffrey's accuracy has, to date, been so great that no-one has seriously investigated his claims.

It has been generally accepted by many that Joe Wild was "probably" with Dr Throsby as he came down the Illawarra escarpment in 1815 - but no-one has produced any hard evidence that he actually was one of the party. [James Backhouse, in his published "A narrative of a visit to the Australian Colonies (1843) writes of "an aged man, named Wyld...who discovered the district of Illawarra (p.438). Intriguingly, George Washington Walker in his diary of the "6/10 Mo. 1836" mentions calling at the farm of "John White", a "successful settler" between Bong Bong and Goulburn and this may actually be a misspelt reference to "John Wait".]

The fact that Wild was appointed constable of the "Five Islands" (AONSW Reel 6038; SZ759 p.165) as early as December 9, 1815, tends to suggest he may have come down in the mountain with Dr Throsby in April of that year – but it doesn't prove it.

All the actual historic record tells us is that Joe Wild came to the colony as a convict in 1797 on the Ganges - the same ship that brought another early Illawarra constable, Joseph Dransfield.

On August 6, 1810, Wild is recorded as “Servant to Robert Brown, botanist” and is seeking “renewal” of his ticket of leave. (Reel 6042; 4/1725 pp.324-5)

But two days later Wild is also recorded as “Servant of George Crossley” to whom the colonial administration is writing with regard to a ticket of leave for Wild (Reel 6002; 4/3490C p.153).

By December 1812, Wild is said to be “of the district of Richmond” and is seeking a mitigation of his sentence because he has attended Messrs “Bryalere [Barrallier], Brown and Humphreys” in the “exploration of the interior.”

He is duly appointed “constable in district of Five islands” in December 1815 but there is no mention of Wild in colonial records which relates to Dr Throsby’s pioneering descent of the mountain into Illawarra.

Certainly, Joe Wild accompanies James Meehan & Charles Throsby on expedition to Jarvis Bay between March 3 and April 14, 1818 (Fiche 3276, SZ1046 pp.1-77; Reel 6034, 9/2743 pp.9-62) and on “an expedition of discovery to Bathurst with Charles Throsby” in 1819 (Reel 6034; 9/2743 p.77).

But, importantly, there is no reference to his trip to Illawarra in Government records - even though on May 31, 1819, Joe Wild is “granted 100 acres for services on Throsby's expedition of exploration” (Reel 6038; SZ1044 p.49). [Strangely, he almost immediately sells it to his fellow expeditioner John Wait.]

Joe Wild was involved in numerous other exploratory endeavours and there is even a note in botanist Allan Cunningham’s journal that in August 1815 (only three months after his supposed sojourn down the mountain with Throsby) that “Wild...cut [a] road from Little mountain to Cow Run” (Reel 6038; SZ1044 p.49).

Nonetheless, it has been generally accepted that Joe Wild was one of the white 'explorers' with Throsby who came down the Illawarra escarpment in 1815. But it is a 'fact' that has been accepted on faith rather than having been confirmed by the historic record.

The only other individual to repeat the assertion is James Backhouse in his diary entry for 6/10 1836 where he also mentions that Wild is "now in receipt of a pension of 6d p diem from Government and having spent many years in the employment of the Throsby family is supported by Charles Throsby and allowed the use of a horse and a gun with which he amuses himself. He is 73 years old."

What then of the second individual nominated by McCaffrey as having come down to Illawarra with Dr Throsby in April 1815 – George Rowley?

There is no "George Rowley" in early colonial records – later, there was a George Rowley in the colony but he arrived as a convict on the General Stuart in 1818 and couldn't have made the 1815 trip. However, there is a John Rowley who fits McCaffrey's bill as strongly as does Joe Wild.

John Rowley was born at either Sydney Cove or Norfolk Island on 28th November, 1797, the son of Captain Thomas Rowley, who arrived on the Pitt in 1792 and had formed a stable *de facto* relationship with Elizabeth Selwyn, a convict who also arrived on the Pitt. Rowley Senior was a Captain of the 102nd Regiment and served for a time as Acting Commandant of Norfolk Island and, later, resided at Liverpool.

His son, John Rowley, married Sarah Pear in 1819 at St John's, Parramatta, and he died in 1873 at Scone NSW. John and Sarah had 10 children.

John Rowley first actively enters the colonial record in January 1816 when he is on the "list of persons to receive grants of land". (AONSW Fiche 3266; 9/2652 p.24).

During April and May, 1819 he is "on expedition to Bathurst with Charles Throsby" (Reel 6034; 9/2743 p.77) and on May 31 1819 he is "granted 200 acres of land in new country between Cowpastures and Bathurst for service on Throsby's expedition of discovery". (Reel 6038; SZ1044 pp.48-9). This is the same date that Joe Wild receives his grant of 100 acres but Rowley does

much better. Presumably, he gets 100 acres more than Wild because he was born in the colony and not tainted with the stain of being a former convict.

But what then of McCaffrey's third nominee for accompanying Dr Throsby into Illawarra in 1815 – John Wait.

He had come to the colony in 1804 on the Coromandel, the same ship on which Dr Charles Throsby had earlier served as a naval surgeon.

By the 14 February, 1810, Wait (also referred to as “White” in colonial records) is the “servant of Charles Throsby” and is petitioning “for mitigation of sentence”. (Fiche 3168; 4/1847 p.229) By December 1817, Wait is still the “servant of Charles Throsby” and still petitioning “for mitigation of sentence” (Fiche 3182; 4/1853 p.348).

In April and May 1819, Wait is on the same “expedition to Bathurst with Charles Throsby” (Reel 6034; 9/2743 p.77) as John Rowley and Joe Wild. Wait also gets the same 100 acre grant “for services on Throsby's expedition of exploration” (Reel 6038; SZ1044 p.49) as Joe Wild. Again, probably because he is a former convict, Wait gets one hundred acres less than John Rowley who was born in the colony. He is fortunate, however, in that Joe Wild almost immediately agreed to sell the hundred acres he had been awarded to Wait.

Apart from the fact that neither Rowley nor Wait are appointed constables at the “Five Islands”, they share exactly the same early documentary claims to being part of the party that came down to Illawarra with Dr Throsby in 1815.

Along with the two unnamed Aborigines in the party, Wait, Rowley and Wild share the honour (with Dr Throsby and the unnamed “packhorse” mentioned by Charles Throsby Smith in his *Reminiscences*) of being the true white pioneers of Illawarra settlement. There only possible rivals are the group of white men and women – presumably escaped convicts – mentioned by Bass and Flinders and said by the Aboriginal named “Dilba” to be living near Lake Illawarra as early as 1797.

The Aboriginal pioneers on Throsby's 1815 journey into Illawarra are unnamed but Michael Organ has suggested they might possibly be “Bundle and Broughton, who later accompanied Throsby to Shoalhaven in 1818” (see

Illawarra & South Coast Aborigines 1770-1850, Aboriginal Education Unit at University of Wollongong, 1990, p. 48).

I am of the view that at least one of them could just as possibly be "Cookoogong" and another could (perhaps more doubtfully) be an individual called "Dual" - both of who accompanied Throsby on his 1819 expedition to Bathurst.

Like Wait, Rowley and Wild, "Cookoogong" and "Dual" were rewarded for the assistance they gave to Dr Throsby.

COOKOOGONG, the "Aboriginal Guide on Charles Throsby's expedition in 1819" was, in May 31, 18... "rewarded for service on expedition" and was "appointed chief of Burrah-Burrah tribe" (Reel 6038; SZ1044 p.50). In September of the same year he received "a breast plate for his part in Charles Throsby's expedition" (Reel 6020; 2/8130 pp.238, 48).

The reason it is less likely that "**Dual**" (sometimes recorded as "Dical") could have accompanied Dr Throsby to Illawarra in 1815 is that an "Aborigine" called "Dual" was, in April 1816, recorded on a "list of hostile natives" (Reel 6065; 4/1798 p.44). In May of that year he was "taken prisoner" during an "expedition against hostile natives" (Reel 6045; 4/1735 pp.60-2). By July 30, he had been "apprehended for robbery & exiled to Port Dalrymple for seven years" (Reel 6038; SZ759 pp.232-3). He was banished to Port Dalrymple, from Sydney per "Kangaroo" (Reel 6005; 4/3495 p.71) on August 1, 1816.

On December 1, 1818 he was transferred from "Port Dalrymple to Sydney" (Reel 6006; 4/3499 p.188) and arrived per "Sinbad" on January 30, 1819 with his "hostility" somewhat chastened for by May 31, 1819 he was being "rewarded for services as a guide on Charles Throsby's expedition." (Reel 6038; SZ1044 p.50).

But Dr Charles Throsby was probably the most humane and enlightened individual in the entire colony (witness his letter to D'Arcy Wentworth of 5th April 1816: quoted in full in Organ, *op.cit.*, 1990 pp. 61-2)) when it came to treatment of Aboriginal people. It is, therefore, just possible that he was on good terms with "Dual" before that individual was branded "hostile in 1816.

Certainly, the speed with which “Dual” was released from confinement and returned to Sydney, along with the speed with which he joined Throsby’s expedition, does tend to suggest Throsby intervened in his case and had him returned so that he could assist with his 1819 expedition.

Dr Joseph Davies