

The Produce Stores in Riverstone

Clarrie Neal

Through the late 1800s and early 1900s most of the general stores in the town sold a wide range of goods, including produce. It was not until 1914 that the produce store became a store specialising in all farm and garden needs, selling tools, stock feeds, poultry feed, seeds, fertilisers, etc.

The *Gazette* notes that a Robert Fell opened a produce store on the 5th April 1918, but the location and period of operation is not known.

It is not known if this was the same produce store, located near the corner of Garfield Road and Railway Terrace that Joe McKenna managed with his long time assistant, Bill Edwards. This produce store, along with the bootmakers next door, was demolished in 1928 to make way for Lyle Rosenthal's new store.

N S W Produce

The NSW Produce store commenced in Garfield Road Riverstone around 1932. It appears that they moved into the premises once occupied by the Auctioneer and Land Agent H. Saundercock who retired in 1928.

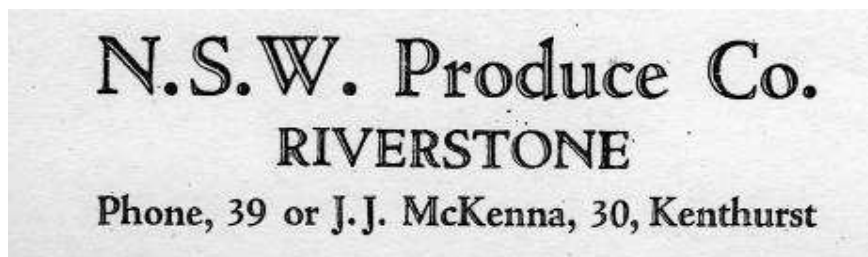
It was a single storey weatherboard and fibro store. The first manager was Baden Ford. The *Gazette* reported in 1936 - Baden Ford was leaving the NSW Produce store after several years as manager.

Bert Lillia became the manager in 1935 and his family came from Blacktown in 1936, to live in Castlereagh Street, directly behind the produce store. Prior to that Bert had worked as a storeman and driver with NSW Produce at their various other Sydney stores.

The feed was brought up in rail trucks to the station where it was loaded on to a road truck and delivered to the store. The bags of feed weighed more than 180 pounds and were manually unloaded. Wooden planks were used to walk up to get the bags to the top of the stack, it was very heavy work.

Some of the workers and drivers at the store with Bert were Greg Turner, Vic and Eric Gallen, Charlie Reece, Charlie Magennis, Dave Lloyd, Jack Fitzgerald, and Russell Langlands.

NSW Produce closed the store on the 10th July, 1963. Later it became a hardware store and today it is owned by Home Hardware.



Ad from 1937 Riverstone and District Agricultural & Historical Society 2nd Show Programme.

Taylor's Produce Store in Riverstone Parade

Records show that the site, located at the western end of the railway station, between the road and the railway line, was bought by H.R. Reid on the 11th June 1913. He built a large galvanised iron structure that opened for business as a produce store on the 11th December 1914.

It was closed for a short period prior to the Taylor Brothers taking over the business in January 1924. They finally bought the store on the 24th May 1927. The Taylors Bros. at the time also owned other produce stores at Windsor, Rooty Hill and Castle Hill.

One of the early managers for Taylors was Gordon Arnett who died suddenly in 1936, aged 37. His brother in law, Claude Schofield took over as manager and remained there until he retired. Claude was well known throughout the district as a good sportsman, having played Rugby League as a youth with Riverstone and then played First Grade with the Western Suburbs team in the 1920s.

Claude married Thelma Brown and lived in one of the two houses in the paddock opposite the produce store where they raised their ten children. In 1946 the family moved to a larger house in Elizabeth Street.

As manager of the store he was allowed to use Taylor's truck at weekends to transport the family on picnics and on their annual holidays to Woy Woy. Eldest daughter Betty recalled these happy times with most of the family travelling on the table top tray of the truck, (no seat belts in those days).

Betty also recalled the family at play in the store, clambering over the stacked bags and the hay stacks. Other memories include -

- her father going to work each day, donning his hat and putting the daily paper under his arm, even though he had less than 100 yards to walk.

- the day Claude, who liked discipline, decided he had had enough of a pesky horse that kept feeding from the feed stacked for delivery at the side of the store. Armed with a stick and a kerosene soaked rag, he sneaked up, lifted the horse's tail, and applied the treatment. The horse changed restaurants and was never seen at Taylor's again.

Men that worked with Claude over the years include long serving employees Roy Cooke, Malcolm Anderson (over 30 years) and Colin Cubitt (11 years). Others to work there for shorter periods were 'Toodles' Anderson, Tas Neal, Ernie Conn, Jimmy Locke, Ron Neal, with Alec Goddard, 'Bung' Boyd and Vince Murray working as casual hands when the mutton board at the meatworks was slack. Eileen Brown worked in the office there for many years.

Work at the store was very demanding, men being required to carry bags of wheat, etc, weighing more than 180 pounds. Elevators were not introduced until the 1940s. The bags were unloaded off the rail trucks direct into the store, then loaded onto Taylor's trucks for delivery to the surrounding farms. The trucks used for these deliveries were 3 ton International table tops.

Colin Cubitt recalled the problems of rats, poisoning every week-end failed to control them, and that everybody in Riverstone seemed to dump their unwanted cats at the store.

Taylors sold the store in 1961 to Steggles, who in turn sold the store to Stockmans. Elders closed the store in 2001.

Schofields Produce Store

Another well known produce store in the district was that run by Wally Williams at Schofields. The store was located on both sides of Railway Terrace, adjacent to Schofields station, with the feed store shed sited on the railway siding, and the shop across the road.

Wally and his wife Lil conducted this store for over 40 years. Wally was a staunch supporter of the community, particularly the Schofields Cricket club of which he was patron. Wally died in 1981 at the age of 85. Long term workers in this store included Joe Laughton and Charlie Magennis.

Sam Lane reported in the *Riverstone Press* on 24 September 1981 -

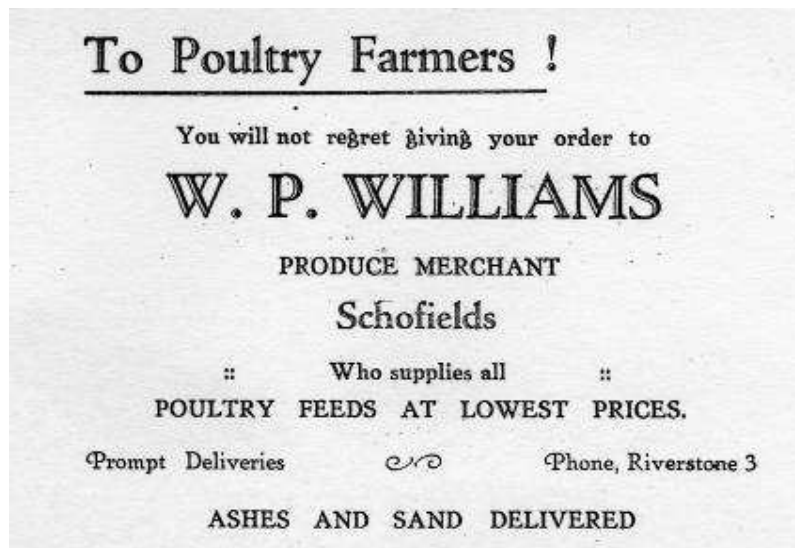
Vale Walter Williams - Passing of Schofields Identity

Residents of Schofields were saddened to learn of the death of well known local identity, Wally Williams. For over 40 years, Wal and his wife conducted a Produce and Hardware Store in Schofields, and during that time associated themselves with many local activities.

Perhaps Wal's greatest interest was Cricket, a game which he played in his younger days with considerable success, having his name on the record book as one who had scored over 500 runs for the club. He was very conscious of the honour conferred on him when invited to become a patron, a position he held for a number of years, and was never happier than when discussing cricket with anyone who displayed an interest in the subject, whether they be 8 or 80 years old.

Vale Wally, 85 - a good innings

Sam Lane



Ad from 1937 Riverstone and District Agricultural & Historical Society 2nd Show Programme.

Compiled by Clarrie Neal from information provided by Irene Gaddie (Lillia), Colin Cubitt, Betty Hope (nee Schofield) and the Windsor and Richmond Gazette.