



Andrew Barton (Banjo) Paterson [1864-1941]

BIOGRAPHY

Andrew Barton Paterson was born on the 17th February 1864 at Narambla, New South Wales. He was the son of a Scottish immigrant from Lanarkshire, who had arrived in Australia in the early 1850s. There were seven children in the Paterson family: Andrew Barton ("Barty"), Hamilton, Florence, Jessie, Edith, Grace and Gwen.

He passed his earliest years at a station called "Buckenbah" at Obley, near Yeoval in the western district of New South Wales. When he was five, the family moved to Illalong. In 1874, Andrew was enrolled at Sydney Grammar School where he lived with his grandmother at Gladesville.

At sixteen, Paterson worked as an articled clerk in a solicitor's office. By the time Paterson came to submit his first verses (in 1885) to the *Bulletin*, he had been admitted to the Roll of Solicitors. Paterson adopted the pen name of "The Banjo" after a so-called racehorse his family had owned.

In January 1895, Andrew and his fiancée, Sarah Riley, visited the Dagworth Homestead, a station in western Queensland. The station was owned by the family of Christina Macpherson. While at the station, Christina played a tune called the "Craigeelee" on an autoharp which inspired Andrew to pen the words to *Waltzing Matilda*.

Towards the end of 1898, he took an opportunity to make a tour of the Northern Territory (Australia). He was commissioned by the Eastern and Australian Steamship Company to contribute an article to its Tourist Guide.

During the Boer War, he worked as a war correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Melbourne *Argus*. He set sail for Capetown on the troopship *Kent* with the volunteer New South Wales Lancers in October 1899. Numerous adventures and international travel covered the period 1901-02 as Paterson turned his attention to the East and especially to China, where the Boxer War offered him further opportunities as a war correspondent.

He arrived back in Sydney in April 1902 and in the latter months of 1902, during a visit to the New South Wales town of Tenterfield, he met and fell in love with Alice Walker.

Andrew Barton Paterson, now known and loved as "Banjo" or "A B", died at a private hospital in Sydney on Wednesday, 5th February 1941. He was 77 years old.