Jennie Towans Research Notes

DEATH OF PENINSULA PIONEER. THE LATE MR  JAMES CONNELL. MEMORIES OF BAXTER'S FLAT RACECOURSE.

The passing away of the late Mr. James Connell on June 10 has left a blank in the Tuerong district, and he will be greatly missed by all neighbors around that part.  His death came as a surprise, as only the day  before he was engaged in doing some fencing.   Awakening at daylight he spoke to Mrs. Connell but shortly afterwards he drew a long breath and passed away.  The esteem in which he was held was shown by the very large attendance at the funeral on Saturday afternoon.  The members of the Foresters' lodge (of which deceased was a member) joined the funeral at the Point Nepean road, and marched to the graveside in advance of the hearse.  Archdeacon Aickin, of the Church of England, read the burial service, and Bro. F. Berglund the last rites of the Foresters' lodge. The pallbearers were members of the lodge - Bros. J. and E. Turner, H. Downward, P. Olsen, C. Parsons and W. Cavell.  The deceased was a native of the Peninsula, having been born at Kangerong 73 years ago.  He was associated in the early days with the first racing club of the Peninsula at Baxter's Flat, and acted as starter there for many years.  He was also starter at Mornington until 1919, when the   V.R.C. officials filled all the important positions at that course; he acted as starter at Emu Plains and Moat's Corner right up till the last meeting held this year, also at Flinders ever since the race club was re-formed there in 1906. He was, with the Hon. A. Downward and Mr. J. C. Griffeth, Snr., of Dromana, one of the last three surviving members of the first Baxter's Flat Racing Club.  Being of magnificent physique, he was an athlete of no mean repute, and took part in the first historic football match-played on the Peninsula.  This was when two teams, captained by the Barker brothers, of Barker's station, Flinders, just home from college - from the Flinders and Balnarring districts met at Balnarring. Football was played for ten minutes and then the two teams fought each other until dark, some players even being chased to their homes. He then took up land at "Tuerong" and by energy and perseverance had at one time 1000 acres of land and a large number of stock.  In recent years he sold 408 acres at Kangerong to Mr. Matthewson and 200 acres near Hastings to Mr. Heggan and lived a quieter life.  As a shearer in the "nineties" he used to shear along the Darling and the Murrumbidgee Rivers. In later years he and Mr. Albert Wilson, formerly of Moorooduc, put up a record at John Cleeland's, Phillip Island, which his not since been beaten on the Peninsula.  They shore 292 come-back wethers in one day - Mr. Wilson 150, and "Jim" (as he was known all over the Peninsula) Connell 142.  He was one of the leading stone contractors of the Peninsula - all the first metal roads were made by Messrs. J. Connell, T. Male and J. Turner.  His declining years were cheered by an affectionate wife and a united family, consisting of Messrs. James and John G. Connell, of Brunswick; William, of W.A.; Albert and Louis, of Green Island, Mornington; Mrs. M. Mooney, Brunswick; Mrs. A Simpson, Brunswick; and Mrs. J. McNulty, Echuca.

Frankston & Somerville Standard (Vic.) Friday 25 June 1926

**Illicit Gin Still A**

It appears that for some time past the police have had their suspicions that all was not right at the establishment of Messrs. F. Harrison and Co., wine and spirit merchants, occupying a range of buildings extending from 110 to 114 Spencer-street. Accordingly at a late hour last night, Superintendent Nicolson, accompanied by Detectives Foster, Mainwaring, and Brown, effected an entry into the premises, and discovered, as they anticipated, an illicit still in full work. Two vats capable of holding from 600 to 800 gallons of spirit were taken possession of by the officers. Mr. F. Harrison, together with William Wilson, his partner, and Bell, his storeman, were captured, and lodged in the lock-up. Upon the entry of the police, the prisoners resorted to the desperate expedient of turning off the spirit, and setting the place on fire, but the exertions of Mr. Nicholson and the detectives succeeded in extinguishing the flames before the Hotham Fire Brigade, which promptly attended, arrived. We understand that the police have had the Messrs. Harrison and Co. under surveillance for nearly 18 months, but it was not until last night that they felt certain of making a successful descent upon them.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Tuesday 22 November 1870

**Illicit Gin Still B**

One of the most important seizures which has yet taken place in Melbourne in connexion with illicit distillation was made the other day at the establishment of Messrs. F.Harrison and Co., wine and spirit merchants, who occupy a range of buildings extending from 110 to 114 Spencer-street. At a late hour at night, Superintendent Nicolson, accompanied by Detectives Foster, Mainwaring, and Brown, effected an entry into the premises, and discovered an illicit still in full work.

Two vats capable of holding from 600 to 800 gallons of spirit were taken possession of by the officers, together with a quantity of raw spirit of the value of £1,000 to £1,200.  Mr. F. Harrison, together with William Wilson, his partner, and Bell, his storeman, were captured, and lodged in the lock-up.  Upon the entry of the police, the prisoners resorted to the desperate expedient of turning off the spirit, and setting the place on fire, but by the exertions of Mr. Nicolson and the detectives the flames were extinguished.  It is believed that the spirit manufactured at this still, which the police have ascertained has been in operation for something like two years, has been sent in large quantities to various places in the country, besides being extensively sold to certain Melbourne publicans. The defendants have since been brought up at the Melbourne City Police Court, and fined - Harrison £600, or two years' imprisonment; Wilson £300, or 12 months' imprisonment ; and Bell, £50, or six months' imprisonment. Notice of appeal has, however, been given.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Monday 5 December 1870

**THE ILLICIT STILL.C**

At the City Court yesterday, before Mr. Call, P.M., and Mr. Wragge, J.P., William Wilson, one of three prisoners arrested at the seizure of an illicit still in Hotham, was charged with a breach of the 121st section of the Customs and Excise Act, in having in his possession a still for the distillation of spirits, without having a licence for the same.  Mr. Frank Stephen prosecuted, and Mr. Casey defended.

Mr. Stephen opened the case, and explained a plan of the premises which had been prepared.  He then called Stewart Warrender Viney, who deposed that he was a surveyor, and produced a plan which he had drawn from survey made on the 24th instant, of the promises where the still was seized.

Cross-examined.-There was no communication between the three stores forming the premises, which stores were separated by brick partitions and by fences at the back.

Charles Hope Nicolson, superintendent of police, deposed that he was an inspector of distilleries, and that the plan produced of the premises in question was correct.  On the morning of Tuesday, the 22nd instant, at about 1 o'clock, witness accompanied Detectives Mainwaring, Brown, Forster, and Kidney, to No. 114 Spencer street, and entered the place by the back window, which they broke open.  Saw 13 1/2 bags of sugar on entering.  As soon as witness got into the place, the prisoner Wilson opened a door, and the next room was found to be a still room, containing a still.  Previously they had attempted to force open the door, but it had effectually resisted.  Heard some one smashing something inside, and witness called out that he was a police officer.  After a delay Wilson opened the door, and they found the still in the northern part of the building, and found also a tub which was under the wastepipe, and was in flames.  The wastepipe was open, and the spirit was running through it from the still into the tub, and thence overflowing and burning all over the floor.  There was no number on the still, but the tub was numbered 17.  Witness now produced various portions of the still, some of which were on fire when the place was entered.  The three pieces produced were found forced into the fire in the furnace.  Samples of the spirit were taken away by Detective Kidney and two others.  Witness told Wilson he must show how to put out the fire, and where the Yan Yean was.  He would not say how to extinguish the flames, or where the water was, merely saying, "Oh, you have got all you want," several times.  The fire was extinguished with water found in a tub, the only help given by Wilson being to show how to turn off the tap of burning spirits, and then only when asked several times. Witness had no practical knowledge of spirit distilling or vinegar making.

Leslie A. Moody, chief inspector of distilleries, deposed that he directed the present prosecution.  Witness had fitted together the pieces produced, and could testify that they formed an apparatus for the making of spirit.  The prisoner had no licence for a still, nor had anyone a still licence for those premises.  Witness had a theoretical knowledge of the manufacture of vinegar.  No still was necessary for making vinegar, though vinegar was spirit oxidised.  The spirit must first be made, and then turned into vinegar.  No one was allowed to use a still for making vinegar without a licence. Witness took away from the still-room a sample of crude spirit produced.  It would do for making vinegar as well as for making rum or gin, &c. The spirit was one over-proof.

George Heath, inspector of distilleries, stated that he visited the place in question after the pieces of piping, &c, had been removed, and saw the vessel set in brickwork.  The pieces produced, if put together, with the vessel in brickwork would form a still and condenser together.

Cross-examined.-Witness had made vinegar himself.  Had never seen vinegar-making on the Continent or in Germany, but had at Prahran.  The spirit produced was taken from the second vat in the still-house, and was distilled spirit.  It was 1 -7-10ths over proof.

This was the case for the prosecution.

Mr. Casey urged that there was no case, as the information did not allege the still to be over three gallons, or any other capacity, and pointed out that it was not illegal for a person to have in his business a retort, or other apparatus not exceeding three gallons in capacity.  He urged that the onus of proving the capacity of the alleged still was thrown upon the prosecution.

Mr. Call said that the information alleged the prisoner to have in his possession an unlicensed still, which plainly showed that the apparatus must be over three gallons capacity.  Under these circumstances, the onus lay upon the prisoner of proving it to be under that capacity.

Mr. Casey asked to have a special case stated on the point, but Mr. Call said this was not the time for doing so, as the prisoner might not be convicted.

Mr. Casey replied that he did not intend to go into any further defence.

Mr. Call, after consulting with the other magistrate, said that they considered that the evidence in this case clearly brought home the charge preferred against the prisoner, and that it was of a very gross character.  The prisoner was distilling from a very complete apparatus, and carrying on a very large amount of business, in the very centre of one of the largest congregations of population in the whole colony.  Very likely he thought that he would throw abroad all suspicion by carrying on operations in a most central position.  The prisoner was fined £300, or 12 months' imprisonment.

Mr. Casey gave notice of appeal.

Frederick Harrison, the second prisoner, was then charged under the same section with having on his premises spirit upon which full duty had not been paid.  Mr. Stephen said that in this case the onus of proving that the spirit found was duty-paid fell upon the prisoner.

Chas. Hope Nicolson, sworn, stated that he found on entering the premises No. 110 beer, porter, spirits, and vinegar in casks in large quantities.  There were numbers of empty bottles, and similar ones full of spirit.  There was a yard common to 110 and 112, and a string from 114 opened the only back door in the latter place.  The string came into the yard of 110 and 112, and by being pulled, opened the door in 114 from the inside. There was a fence between the yard common to 110 and 112 and that of 114, but a gate was so placed against the fence that it was easy to get over.  There was a stretcher bed in 110.

Leslie A. Moody deposed that he found in No. 110 three or four casks.  One contained an imitation of brandy, another an imitation of gin, and a third pretty good rum.  Considered the imitations of brandy and gin were not imported.

Cross-examined.- Knew the Warrenheip Distillery Company, which was licensed.  Had tasted their gin, and could not swear to any difference between their gin and that found in 110. The document produced was a receipt, showing that Harrison had bought gin from the Warrenheip Distillery.  The other document produced was a wine and spirit licence granted to Harrison for the year 1870.  The vat in No. 114 was over 100gal. capacity.

George Heath stated that of the spirit found in No. 110, the rum was 10-1/10th overproof. Another, a mixed spirit, which could not be defined, was 14 under-proof, and very inferior.  A third, like gin somewhat, was 25-5/10ths under-proof. There were from 50gal. to 60gal. of spirit in No. 110.

Detective Mainwaring stated that at the time of the seizure, when getting over the dividing fence, he saw Harrison coming out of 110 in his shirt, and arrested him.  In answer to witness, Harrison said that he carried on business in 110 and 112, but knew nothing of what was done next door.  The vats in 114 were painted the same as the casks in 110.  There was a large quantity of raisins of a similar character in both 110 and 114.

Peter John Wilson, solicitor, of McKean and Wilson, deposed that he produced the indenture of an agreement, dated 20th May, 1869, between the prisoners Harrison and Wilson, to become partners for seven years as vinegar and cordial manufacturers.  The firm was to be styled Harrison and Co., and business to be carried on at 112 Spencer-street, or at any other place or places which might be agreed upon.

Witness's firm had a lien on this agreement, and on the previous day to the present, witness had shown Harrison and Wilson the agreement, and had asked them to pay off the lien, and take possession of the document.  Harrison told him that it was in their favour, and had better be produced by the prosecution.  Witness believed the agreement had never been carried out.

John Whiting proved delivering coke at No. 114 Spencer-street.  He was ordered to deliver it to Mr. Harrison, and took it to his place. Alexander Cameron proved that he was employed as collector for Mr. Lamond, and had received orders for coke from Harrison.

Henry Dykes deposed that he was one of the firm of Dykes and Edwards, copperworkers, and in July last sold Harrison a brewer's copper or boiler, and afterwards witness put a tap on it.  Believed the one forming part of the still was the one in question.  Made another for Harrison, which was to be sent to Castlemaine, but after the seizure witness saw the copper in the shed at No, 114 Spencer-street.  It was smaller than the first.

Benjamin Cook deposed that Harrison had purchased wood from his father, who was a timber merchant ; and Detective Kidney deposed to finding the lead-piping and copper wire produced in the still-room. Some other evidence which was taken, showed that the piping had been prepared to Harrison's order and paid for, and that Harrison was in the habit of purchasing sugar from Bell, Bruce, and Company.

Detective Brown stated that he found the book produced in the still-house.  It contained a letter from Malmsbury addressed to Harrison, and a number of bill-heads. This concluded the case for the prosecution, and Mr. Casey submitted that there was no evidence of the spirits found on the premises not being duty paid.

Mr. Stephen said that, according to the 132nd section, if any question arose on a seizure as to the payment of duty, the owner or claimant must prove the goods to be duty paid, and not the seizing officer prove the reverse. Mr. Casey replied that Harrison did not claim the spirit, or the onus of proving it duty-paid would, he admitted, fall upon him.  The law said that unless he claimed it the defendant could not be called upon to prove it duty-paid, but at the same time the law did not allow the defendant to give evidence in his own defence.  They could not, therefore, call on him to say whether he claimed it or not, and if he did not claim it, the prosecution must prove the goods seized belonged to him.

There was no evidence to connect Harrison and Wilson, or that the partnership, the deed of which had been produced, had ever been carried out. There was, moreover, nothing from which even the inference could be drawn, that Harrison was cognisant of the illegal practices next door.  The evidence as to the purchase of a copper, &c, only went to show that a partnership for the manufacture of vinegar had been proposed, but had fallen through.  Because perhaps Harrison wanted to "doctor" his stock as a wine and spirit merchant, that was no reason why he should be prosecuted in the present manner, merely on account of the necessary articles for such doctoring being found upon his premises.  The evidence, so far from rebutting every presumption of Harrison's innocence, was in favour of such a presumption.  Harrison might even have seen the still without knowing that it was used for anything but vinegar-making.

He then called George Davis, who, being sworn, stated that he was a cooper, and in December, 1868, made some vats for vinegar for Harrison.  Had made some since for him.  Made them on a principle which was similar to that of Musprat, as shown in the engraving produced.

Cross-examined.-The vats in question were those which had been found in the still-room when the seizure was made.

Wm. Ornby, architect and builder, said that he superintended the building of the place where Harrison carried on business.  There were no drains there now which were not there when he built the place.  Only built two out of the three houses - the one at the south end was already built.  About six months ago the original place was burnt down, and witness then built the two referred to, to correspond with the one already built. Made the drains without knowing that Harrison was going there.  The hole in the partition wall, between Nos. 112 and 114, was made by witness for drainage purposes.  Harrison was living there before the fire took place.

Robert A’Herne, clerk in the office of Titles, said that the three houses, Nos. 110, 112, and 114 Spencer-street, belonged to Mr. Henry.  Witness collected the rents.  Harrison told witness that he and Wilson had dissolved partnership.

John Mackay, coppersmith, sworn, said that he could not make a still out of the apparatus in Court.

The Bench fined Harrison £300, or 12 months in gaol.

A second charge of having an illicit still in his possession was then preferred against Harrison. The evidence was the same as in the previous case, and the prisoner was again fined £300, or 12 months in gaol, the penalty not to be enforced if the former conviction were upheld on appeal. A third charge of being found on the premises containing an illicit still was withdrawn.

Thomas Oliver Bell, the storeman, was then charged with being found on premises containing an illicit still.  The evidence was of the same nature as that preceding, showing that he had been a year at the place.  It was stated that on Monday week he had obtained a publican's licence for a house at the corner of Smith and Charles streets, Collingwood. He described himself as a storeman. The Bench fined him £50, or six months' imprisonment.

Notice of appeal was given in this as in all the other cases.

I am horrified to realise that he was sentenced only a couple of days before Eliza died.  Her death certificate states she died of hepatitis, & had been ill for 5 weeks.  This explains the fragment of letter Shirley was able to transcribe, in which it is evident William has been asking Eliza to come to him in Melbourne.  What an absolutely ghastly set of circumstances – Margaret, the eldest of the children, was only 12 at the time.  No wonder 12 month old Adelaide Ellen was taken by the Tasmanian relatives to bring up.

Cheers, Jennie

MISSING FRIENDS.

WILL any person knowing the whereabouts or having any knowledge of FREDERICK WILLIAM SORELL WILSON, formerly of Perth, Western Australia, and of Hastings, Victoria,   farmer and labourer, and last heard of ] from Frankston, Victoria, about thirty seven years ago, please communicate with William S. Cook and McCallum, Solicitors, 422 Collins St., Melbourne.

Western Mail (Perth, WA) Thursday 10 September 1931

IN the SUPREME COURT of the COLONY of VICTORIA: Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction.-In the Will of JOHN WAKE, of Red-hill, in the parish of Truganina, in the Colony of Victoria, Farmer, Deceased.-Notice Is hereby given, that after the expiration of fourteen days from the publication hereof, application will be made to this Honourable Court, in its Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, that PROBATE of the WILL of the abovenamed John Wake, deceased, be granted to Elizabeth Wake, the widow of the said John Wake, and William Robinson, of Tarneit, farmer, the executrix and executor named in and appointed by the said will.

Dated this sixteenth day of June, 1866.

JENNINGS and COOTE, 87 Queen-street, Melbourne, proctors for the said Elizabeth Wake

and William Robinson.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Monday 18 June 1866

THIS DAY.

Sale of Dairy Cattle and Horses, at Red-hill Farm, Truganina, Junction of Geelong and Skeleton Creek Roads.

M M'CAW and ANOTHER have received instructions from Messrs. Wilson and Wake to SELL  by AUCTION, on the farm, Red-hill, Truganina, junction of Geelong and Skeleton Creek roads, on Tuesday, 16th January, at twelve o'clock,

10 head well-bred cows, in milk and springing

20 do heifers, two to three years old

4 heavy draught colts and fillies, by Matchless

2 heavy draught horses, staunch.

No Reserve.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Tuesday 15 January 1867

THIS DAY.

Clearing Sale of Farm Stock, Implements, &c, At Red-hill, Truganina, Junction of Geelong and

Skeleton Creek Roads.

M M'GAW and ANOTHER have received instructions from Messrs. Wilson and Wake, to SELL by AUCTION, on the farm, Red-hill, Truganina, junction of Geelong and Skeleton Creek roads, on Monday, 24th June, at eleven o'clock, the whole of their farming stock, implements, &c., comprising- ,

15 cows, in milk and springing

11 draught horses, thoroughly staunch

3 hack and light-harness horses

5 hay drays

Ploughs, harrows, roller

2 reaping machines, horse-rake, and other farming implements.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Monday 24 June 1867

NOTICE is hereby given, that the PARTNERSHIP hitherto existing between William Sorrell Wilson and the late John Wake, trading as " Wilson and Wake," farmers, Truganina, is this day DISSOLVED, by mutual consent.

All debts due to the late firm, or owing to same, will be paid and collected by William Sorrell Wilson.

Dated, September 6,1867.

WILLIAM SORRELL WILSON.

WILLIAM ROBINSON

(For Eliza Wake.)

Witness-Jno. E. Griffiths.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Tuesday 10 September 1867

JUDICIAL AND LAW NOTICES.

AFTER the expiration of fourteen days from the publication hereof application will be made to the Supreme Court of the State of Victoria, in its Probate jurisdiction, that PROBATE of the LAST WILL and TESTAMENT of WILLIAM SORELL WILSON, late of Hastings, in the state of Victoria, grazier, deceased, may be granted to Jane Turner Wilson, of Hastings aforesaid, spinster, the sole executrix named in and appointed by the said will.

Dated this twentieth day of May 1901.

W. R. R. BLAIR, 328 Collins-street, Melbourne,

proctor for the said executrix.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Tuesday 21 May 1901

GENERAL MEETINGS

In the estates of the following insolvents general meetings were held and closed -James M Bryant, late of Sale, publican, now a prisoner in gaol, Michael Foley, of Carlton,  waggonette proprietor , Woolf Barnett Isaacs of Melbourne, late hotelkeeper, proofs of debt presented amounting to £1,081 8s 9d, Jas Swallow, of Emerald hill butcher, Alice Martha Bryant, of Collingwood, late publican, Archibald Johnston, of Fitzroy, painter , Frank Rogers, of North Sandridge, publican, John Bowman Wilson, of Schnapper Point farmer and grazier, James Emery, of Hawthorn, butcher.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Friday 6 June 1879

Cheers, Jennie

Laurie - I sent this on to John Davie yesterday, I transcribed it from the photo of the page/s of the book Lesley brought to show us.  At this stage, I hadn’t found out anything about the Sunday trading etc, & it’s obvious that Valerie did not know about his life as a publican.  Or Lesley, this will be a surprise to her too!  FYI.  Cheers, Jennie

**From:** [Jennie](mailto:mtowan@bigpond.com)

**Sent:** Wednesday, January 11, 2012 7:28 PM

**To:** [John & Robyn Davie](mailto:jdavie24@bigpond.com)

**Subject:** John Niven info

Hi John – here’s what I’ve got for JN – a lot more than we knew before!  Must check out where they were married (Laurie:  that’s what got me started!! I got their marriage cert & they were married at the Registry Office – his occupation was hotel licensee – did I sit up!!)  .... Cheers, Jen

John Niven

Born: 12 October 1852 Clackmannan, Fifeshire, Scotland

Married: Margaret Williamson WILSON, 1887

Died: 16 August 1918, Swan Hill, Victoria, Australia

When John was still a baby, he voyaged in to Australia along with his parents and older sister, Agnes, arriving in Australia in 1853.  After travelling to various parts of Victoria with the family, he was a boy of nine when his parents took up land at Cherry Tree Creek in the Natte Yallock area, and began farming there.  John and his sister were first-day pupils at the opening of the first school in the area in 1862, known as The Rural School No. 24 and this school served the area until a new school (Natte Yallock No. 1347) was opened in 1874.  No doubt John did farm chores before and after school and, as a youth worked alongside his father.

John was still at the Cherry Tree Creek farm in part of the 1890s when there is documented evidence of his presence there during family visits.  It has been said that the family were 'very fond of him although he was a dreadful tease and very sarcastic'.  At the Niven farm they grew wheat and also grazed sheep.  Men were employed on the farm, which has been described as a big wheat and wool farm on the Avoca River.  There would have been plenty of scope for John to learn about farming first hand.

During 1887, when John was around 35 years of age, he married Margaret Williamson WILSON. No details of children born to John and Margaret have been found on Victoria index records to date.

In 1885, John's younger sister, Isabella, married a wealthy landowner, Elias Warne.  Although the Warnes are known to have settled at Morton Plains (near Birchip) family notes record 'The Warnes had a big property at Horsham', in the Wimmera district, a long distance north-west from the Niven's Cherry Tree Creek property.  Eight miles north from Horsham was the Lonerenong Agricultural College - established in 1889.  This college played an important part in the development of the Wimmera as one of the greatest primary producing districts of Australia; its cereal growing, irrigation experiments and animal husbandry contributed largely to the revolutionary changes in farming techniques.  John's brother-in-law, Elias Warne, would have been familiar with the college's role in assisting research in the development of sound farming practices, and may have been instrumental in John's decision to move to the area in the 1890s.

When the college opened in March 1889, the initial enrolment was thirty five.  The students did a two year course leading to a Certificate of Competency in Agriculture.  A large weatherboard building housed the students and College facilities.  Unfortunately, this building was destroyed by fire in 1940 and many early records were lost.  However, brief mention has since been found of John Niven's position at the Longerenong Agriculture College where he was the farm manager.  John would have been near 40 years of age when he took up his appointment there.

A new farm manager was appointed in 1908.  What John did after that time is not known but one family source said, "he always insisted on having spirited horses.  He also used to keep a couple of racehorses."

John died on 16 August 1918 and was buried at the Swan Hill cemetery, Methodist section (Row 4, No 424), on 24 August 1918.  He was aged 65 years.  His wife, Margaret, died in Brighton, Melbourne, in 1939, aged 80 years (Reg. No. 5621)

Note:

After the fire of 1940, a new building was erected at the Longerenong Agricultural College, (this time in brick) to accommodate 50 students, and this was completed in 1942.  A major rebuilding programme in 1964 provided accommodation for a further 50 students, a new administration wing and an assembly hall.  The College still functions and is today, year 2002, a part of the University of Melbourne.

Longerenong College

Around 1897, the effects of a depression were being compounded by a catastrophic drought.  The farm was then vulnerable to drought and the school was temporarily closed.  The book, 'An Asset to the State - Longerenong Agricultural College 1889-1989' by David Maunders, M.A., M.E., Ph.D. and Donella Jaggs, B.A.(Hons), MA, states:  "Longerenong remained closed for teaching between 1896 and 1905.  The college buildings were allowed to run down, but farm operations continued under the farm manager, Niven, who also undertook some small scale education through visits and meetings of local farmers."

From "A Tribute to the Past" by Valerie Richards - A History of the RICHARDS family from Mount Hawke, in the Parish of St Agnes, in the District of Truro, Cornwall, England and the NIVEN family from Clackmannan, Fifeshire, Scotland.

HORSHAM.--Mr. John Niven, the retiring manager of the Experimental Farm at Longerenong, was on Thursday entertained at the Horsham Wesleyan Church , and presented with a marble clock.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Thursday 10 April 1902

Melbourne Markets

Cattle

23 February 1910

60 mixed cattle John Niven Swan Hill

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.) Thursday 24 February 1910

Hi again Laurie,

Isn’t it funny, just when you think there is nothing more to find – I’ve been having a very busy, interesting time, started out with researching John Niven, who you will recall married Margaret Wilson in 1887.  We (Cousin John & myself & our spouses) had met up with Lesley Maher in Swan Hill in June last year.  We met her & her husband Bill & Lesley’s cousin & her husband for dinner at the RSL and Lesley brought a book with her, called "A Tribute to the Past" by Valerie Richards - A History of the RICHARDS family from Mount Hawke, in the Parish of St Agnes, in the District of Truro, Cornwall, England and the NIVEN family from Clackmannan, Fifeshire, Scotland.  There was a whole page devoted to John, which enlarged my knowledge enormously.  I went on & found he was a widower, no children from the previous marriage, and that he was a hotel licensee.  That really surprised me – had no inkling of that.  What further surprised me was that James & Elizabeth Boulter were also hotel licensees, and that the Boulters & the Nivens were obviously very close during the 1880s/1890s.  I’ve been checking out the NLA newspapers & Elizabeth & James were involved in a very shady deal, seems they had been Sunday trading, caught twice, and then, to avoid losing their licence (it was in Elizabeth’s name at that time) had sought the help of a magistrate ... Fitzroy was full of it in 1896 it seems!  The Rob Roy was the hotel involved, in Fitzroy.  So, while I thought they were all down in Hastings, leading a quiet rural life, it was not so at all!!  There is even a reference to Mr W Wilson playing the piano for the revels of the Corkers Club, which met regularly at the Rob Roy ... could that POSSIBLY be WSW???  Surely not, in my mind he is a stern, god fearing methodist, who refused to allow his daughter to marry a man who got drunk the night before their wedding!!  Ah well, stranger things have happened.

So I think I FINALLY have a lot more to offer – it has troubled me that the WSW line has been so quiet, except for Jenny finding out about Rosa Alba & Nancy’s memories – that’s a treasure trove, although she doesn’t mention anything about any hotels ... I don’t know if she even knew or not – certainly I do not remember either Mum or Shirley mentioning it, or my grandmother – maybe it was something ‘we don’t talk about’.  It’s certainly going to be an interesting, colourful story to tell – and my head is still spinning, it is all so different from how I imagined it! Hope all is well with you & Judy & the family – Cheers, Jennie