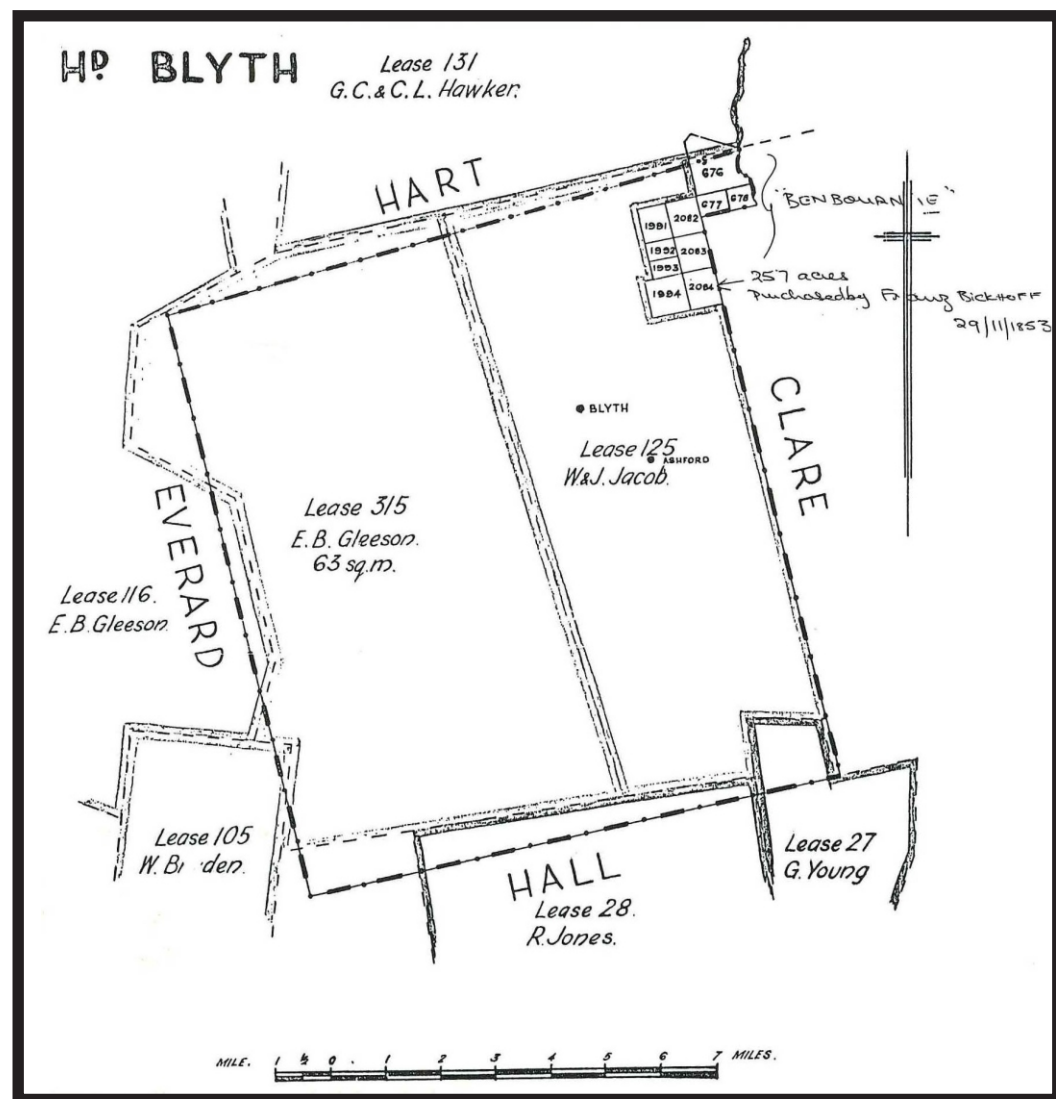
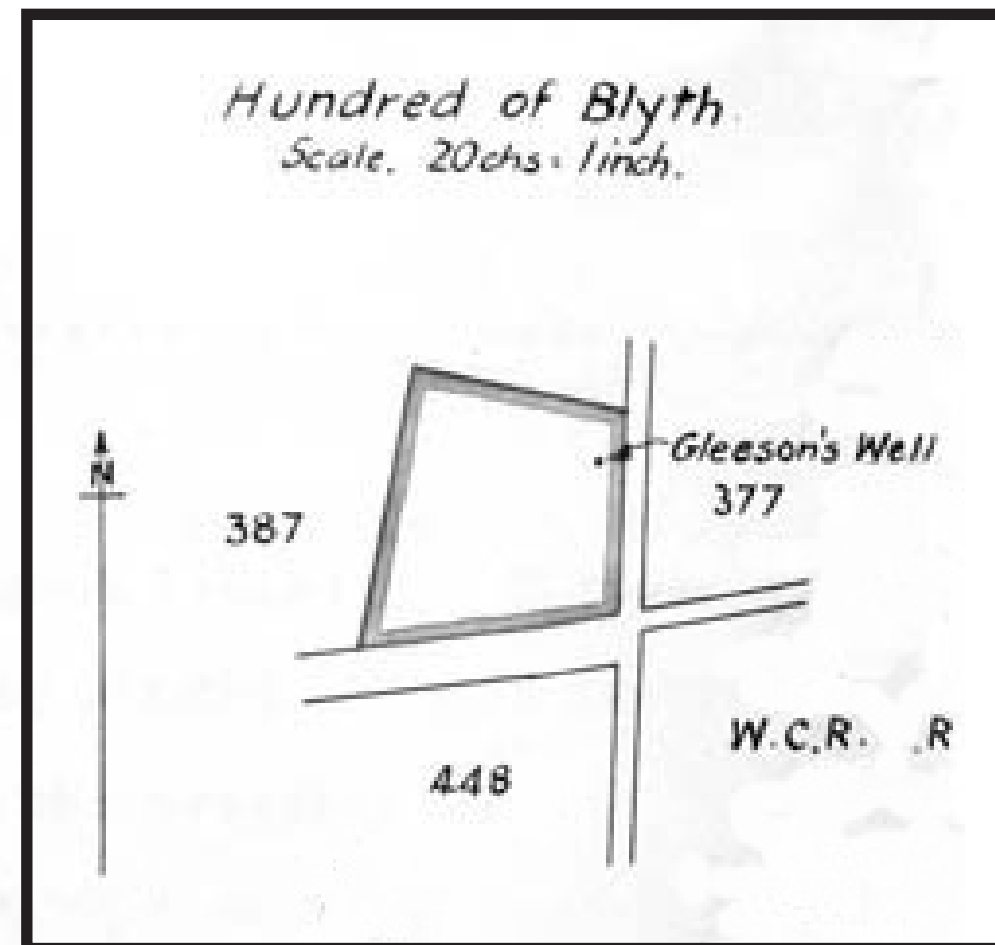


GLEESON'S WELL

Former Water Reserve



The location of EB Gleeson's lease of 102 square miles in the Hundred of Blyth from 1854 to 1860
[Source: Gerald Lally]



Map of Gleeson's Well
[Source: Jeff Pratt]



James Sampson of Boskey Dell
[Source: Jeff Pratt]

Located adjacent to Section 387 on Pratt Road, this was a source of water for farmers, drovers and stock. As rainfall tended to be more reliable on the plains of Blyth than on the scrublands further west, it was the responsibility of the District Council of Blyth to ensure the availability of water in public wells. It is assumed that the well was named for Edward Burton Gleeson, first Mayor of nearby Clare, who held a lease over the western half of the Hundred of Blyth in the early years of European settlement.

Since 1882, local and state newspapers and council minutes have chronicled the history of Gleeson's Well.

"I am afraid unless the settlers here make an early stir to get the other well (or, as it is called, Gleeson's Well) repaired, the men who are now repairing the one at the old eating-house will soon be gone from there, and then there will be but small chance of it being repaired this season, which I am sure will prove in summer time a great loss to the public. There is a large supply of good water to be obtained from it if it were repaired, and it seems a great pity where there is such a want of water it should not be made use of. There is now a large settlement on the scrub lands, with but a scant supply of water, and who are put to great straits in summer time, being obliged to go here or there as best they can to obtain water, who would be substantially benefited by it." (*Adelaide Observer* 29 Jul 1882)

"Gleeson's Well is now being repaired, which will prove of great advantage to many during the summer." (*SA Register* 8 Sep 1882)



Windlass operating over well
as used at Gleeson's well

A sale of miscellaneous leases took place at the Land Office on Thursday, and the following lots were disposed of (including):

Hundred Blyth – Reserve south-east corner of Section 387, including Gleeson's Well, 23 acres, C. Freeman, £10 5s.; Crown lands north of sections 332, 333 and 334, including the Government Well (formerly Lease 19), 320 acres, C. Freeman, £15. (*SA Register* 8 Dec 1882)

Council minutes (circa mid 1880s) recorded that "When Mr Gelligan was the lessee of Gleeson's Well, adjacent to the main road due west towards Lochiel, the District Council of Blyth had considerable trouble ensuring the availability as Mr Gelligan consistently padlocked the gates."

The continuing history of Gleeson's Well included an account in the Northern Argus (19 Nov 1886) of a recent court hearing, during which a dispute was aired between Mr James Sampson and Mr Gotthard Rathke, who was described as the lessee of the government well and occupant of the premises known as Gleeson's Well. Sampson was accused of breaking the padlock securing the windlass at the well and obtaining water without payment. The windlass of the well was described as about eight feet long and the well about ninety feet deep. The verdict, favour of the plaintiff, ordered Sampson to pay £5.

The *SA Chronicle* (4 Feb 1893) reported that Local Member of Parliament Mr Peter Paul Gillen waited upon the Commissioner of Public Works, requesting that the Government clean out the Gleeson's Well, in the Hundred of Blyth and then lease it to a local trust.

The *SA Chronicle* also mentioned "Land sales - Lease of Gleeson's Well, adjoining Section 387, Hundred of Blyth" (23 May 1896) and "The sale of the leases of lands under the water Conservation Act of 1886 and the Water Conservation Amendment Act of 1889 – Gleeson's Well adjoining Section 387, Hundred of Blyth." (25 Sep 1897)

In 1902 James Sampson was again in court, in relation to a dispute involving Gleeson's Well. At this time the Government-appointed lessee of Gleeson's Well was William Walton, of Blyth, farmer. He stated that he was bound to keep all the appliances on the well in good order for the convenience of the public. James Sampson stated that he was the original lessee of the well, and six or seven years ago he had allowed the lease to be forfeited so that he might get it at less rent, and then five years ago, to his surprise, the lease of the well was granted to William Walton. He considered an injustice had thereby been done to him. However he had used the well since and helped to repair it, and about three years ago he put a new bucket and wheel on the well which he had lately removed, and felt that he had a right to do so. This was the basis of the summons. Sampson was ordered to pay a total of £24 and to return the wheel and bucket. (*Northern Argus* 18 Apr 1902)

No longer required as a water conservation reserve, in 1939 the area including Gleeson's Well became Crown land and was governed by the South Australian Lands Department.

Joseph Lindsay Pratt became the lessee of this area for a period of 21 years from 1939, at a cost of £2/10/- (\$4.19). The 24 acres of land was to be used for grazing and cultivation purposes only. On the expiry of this lease, the land was gazetted for purchase conditions. Two applications were received, one from Joseph Pratt, the other from a Mr Corcoran, a blocker on the Lochiel Road, who was the successful applicant.

Further relating to the well and water reserve, there is a stream of water passing by the bulk handling shed in Blyth which was built in 1956. Builders had problems with water leaking into the elevator well and this leak had to be plugged by experts from Adelaide. It is believed that this stream continues in a westerly direction, close to the Blyth Road and then northerly to run under the water yard and "Boskey Dell" homestead on Section 377, continuing west to Pratt Road. Where the original well was dug and lined with bricks, diviners have located a stream on the western side of the homestead. Two trees planted in the garden in 1974 have enormous growth, a palm tree which is 17 metres high and a Queensland Golden Showers tree covering most of the garden area.

Today, Gleeson's Well continues to be used for grazing and cultivation as part of the adjacent farm holding.



Cow with triplets at water trough
[Source: Wallace Drennan]

A NEIGHBOURLY DISPUTE

Ref. *The South Australian Advertiser*, 2 Jan 1886, p5 and 5 Jan 1886, p5

ATTEMPTED MURDER AND SUICIDE AT BLYTH

(By Telegraph)

Quite a gloom was cast over the district today by the attempted murder of Mr James Samson, farmer, of Blyth, by Charles Freeman, lessee of the Government Wells. Mr Sampson called on Freeman this morning to ask for payment of an old account that had been standing between them for some time. High words ensued, and Sampson was standing just outside the door of the hut when Freeman made use of a vile expression. Sampson then told him that if he repeated it he would hit him. On this Freeman stepped back and picked up his gun and fired it at Sampson, inflicting a frightful wound on the side of the neck. Sampson then ran to his own house bleeding all the way. Dr. Smith was soon in attendance, and under his skilful treatment Sampson is doing as well as can be expected. Freeman, after shooting Sampson, walked to the house of Mr. Nottle, a neighbour, about three miles off, and told him of the occurrence, assuring him that the police would not take him alive. Mr Nottle tried to get possession of the gun, but Freeman would not come near him or give up the weapon. Some hours after, his body was found in the scrub with the top of this head blown off, and the gun lying between his legs. An inquest will be held on the body tomorrow morning.

James Sampson said – Am a farmer, and live about 500 yards from the deceased's house. Was not good friends with him for a week or fortnight before his death owing to an old account which had been due to me for about two years. It was for seed wheat and other things. Did not press him for the account until he gathered his crop and I saw that he was able to pay. When I asked him for it he repudiated it. Was indignant, and sharp words arose. The only person present besides myself and the deceased was his wife. The reason I asked him yesterday was I was going to Clare, and if he did not pay was going to take legal proceedings, and wished to give him a chance to pay before doing so. Had the discussion just outside Freeman's back door. He had no gun in his hand at the time. He said, "If you summons me I will make you remember it". He then ran inside and came out with the gun, raised it, and said, "Take that". I fell, and remained on the ground some little time. Coming to myself a little, heard footsteps, and thinking that Freeman was going to his workshop (where I knew he kept his powder) laid quite still until I thought he had reached the workshop. Then I made an effort to get home.

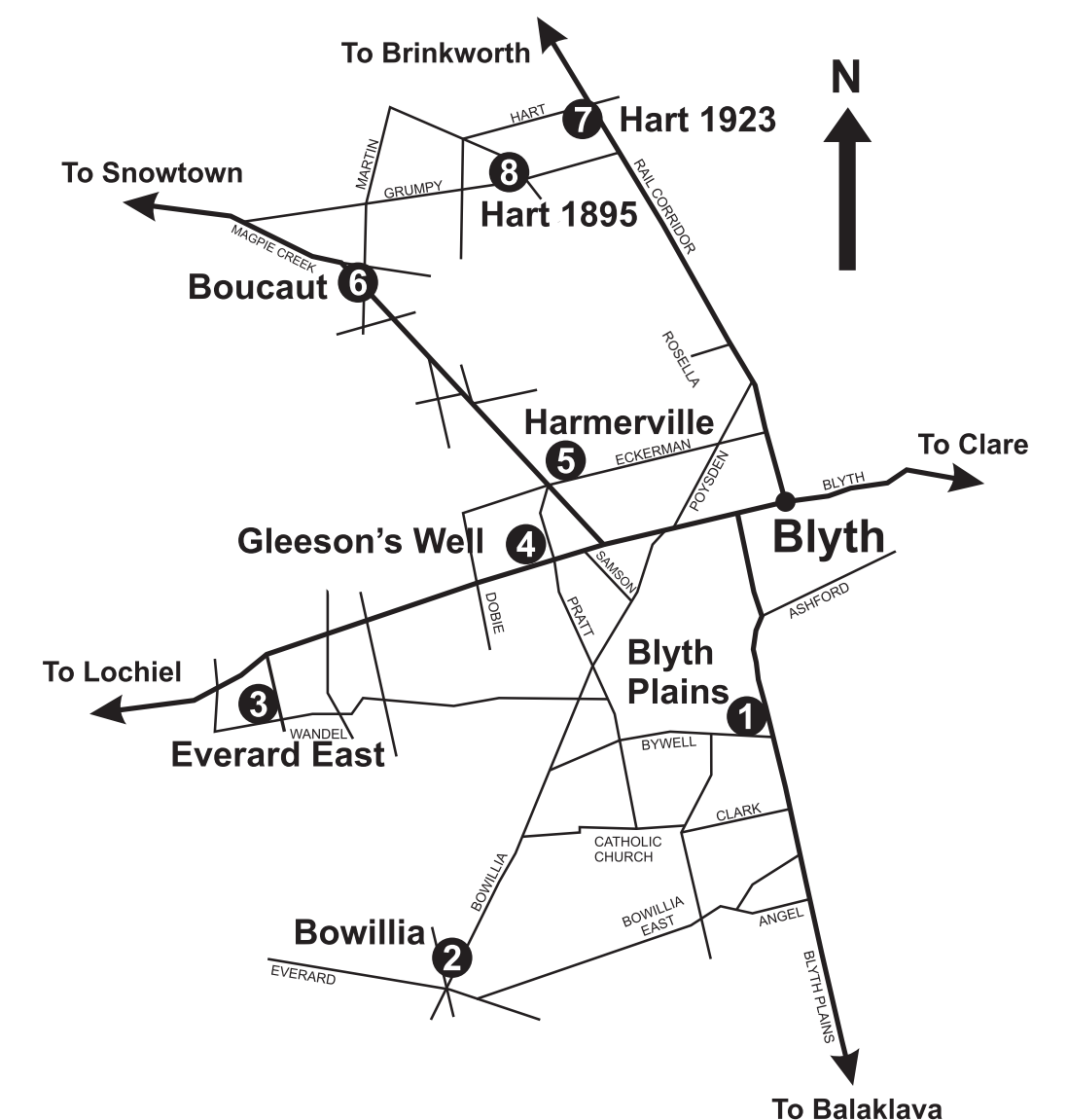
On reassembling, Mr Sampson's evidence was read to the jury.

Dr O.W. Smith said – Have examined the body of the deceased, and found a compound fracture of the skull extending to the back of the ear. There was a blackening, due to the gunpowder I think. Could find no other injury on the deceased. The wound was caused by a gunshot. Believe the gun must have been in contact with or a few inches off the head, and death must have been instantaneous. About 11 O'clock yesterday was called to see James Sampson, who was suffering from a gunshot wound in the back of the neck. He is in a precarious state at present. He told me he had been shot by the deceased. The wound on the deceased might have been self-inflicted.

Michael McKeever, sergeant of police, stationed at Clare, said after hearing that Sampson had been shot in the Blyth scrub, he went in pursuit of Freeman, but on his way Daniel Fraser informed him that Freeman was lying dead under a tree at their place. Proceeded thither, saw the body, and noticed a forked stick which had evidently been used by deceased to discharge the gun.

Mrs Sampson and M.C. Kerin also gave evidence.

The jury found "That the deceased came to his death by a gunshot wound, being self-inflicted, while laboring under temporary insanity".



Map showing location of Blyth district school signs