

A NORTH RYDE FARM, 1902.

By Julie Dawson

In the *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrower's Advocate* on 6 November, 1902 is an editorial entitled "Our Surroundings – North Ryde. Its Orchards – Its Picturesque Spots. Frederick Bailey Heard and the Model Farm." It is long article and tends to somewhat overblown with its lyrical descriptions of the North Ryde landscape but it does give a wonderful picture of the Heard farm at North Ryde in 1902. A pair of single storey semi-detached cottages at No 62 Wicks Road, North Ryde is known as Heard's cottages. It is estimated to have been built about 1895 and is listed on Ryde Council's Heritage List (No. 97). The Heard family's other cottage on the property was that at 505 Twin Road, near the golf club, and it receives a mention in the following article:

"When standing on some coign of vantage, one sees a panorama of rocks and dells, of glittering water and the russet-and-purple hues of maturing crops, with the white-and-pink blooms of budding and flowering trees, when, at intervals, shady and green turfed glens open to view, with the towering iron-bard, spotted gum, white gum, black butt and woolly butt and the umbrageous oak standing giant sentinels, and the dim outline of mountain ranges blue and hazy in the distance, then the conscience wakes to the lessons learnt at the mother's knees: and the comparative impotence of human knowledge and human power is borne in upon one, and the soul cries aloud for the relief born of faith and reliance in an Almighty.

With the growth and expansion of the metropolis, many places in its vicinity which would otherwise have been mere summer resorts for the wealthy, began to assume the appearance of little townships and gradually grew in importance till some of them have become centres of fairly large populations, and every day is seeing a greater and greater demand for building sitesand were it generally known that some of the loveliest scenery in Australia is to be met with about Ryde, North Ryde, Epping, Beecroft and Pennant Hills, the demand for land ... would increase in arithmetical progression.



The Heard Cottage in Twin Road (Kevin Shaw)

In the very heart of a rural scenery that could challenge comparison anywhere, with orchards in full bloom on every hand, stands Mr Heard's orchard, named the Model Farm ...Mr Heard, whose father, Henry Heard, came to Sydney from Devonshire where his father was a farmer, a fortnight before the wreck of the Dunbar, was born a few yards from his orchard at North Ryde. His father, on arrival at Sydney, obtained work on a farm till,... he purchased four acres of land on Twin-road

... and planted an orchard. Fortune smiled on him, and he added acre after acre to his little property until 68 acres were acquired ... Last February twelve months, Mr Henry Heard died and two out of the three sons he left behind him gained possession of the orchard It was in the house put up on the original four acres that Mr Fred Heard was born. He received his elementary education at the North Ryde school ... Years ago, he, together with one of his brothers, undertook the management of the farm property, allowing his deceased father to rest on his oars. Eighteen months ago, some difference arising between the brothers, an agreement was come to, under which Mr Fred took over 24 acres, bounded on the north and north-east by Mr J Cox's property, on the south and south-east by Wick's-road, on the south-west by Twin-road. In addition to this orchard he also obtained 12 acres of bush land, which will, no doubt, some day be utilised for orcharding purposes.

On turning into Town(Twin?)-road from the main road, on the left hand is seen a neat cottage nestling amidst flowers, ... impresses one with the idea that the house and grounds are owned by a man of comfortable means, but one of taste and some refinement The vineyard mentioned is planted with the late white sherry, white muscat, black muscat, and black hambro, the yield of grapes going chiefly to the Sydney market. Behind the front vineyard are seen the famous Heard ("Mammoth") loquats, and succeeding these, patches of mandarins and oranges. (The loquat trees produce) as many as ten cases ... pulled per tree. Lemons and oranges follow the loquat beds, the Lisbon predominating in the former and the St Michael in the latter. The Seville is fairly represented. So far as mandarins are concerned, the pride of place is given the Emperor. Adjoining the above beds is a patch of oats 4 acres in extent, which ere now has been cut and stacked for hay... . Some rye and other cereals, ... showed by their growth that the land thereabouts is of a rich character... . Behind the oat paddock is a summer fruit patch of nectarines, peaches, plums and other fruit; then follows a bush of five or six acres in extent, shielding the orchard, and affording the means of replacing fences and providing fuel. Next in succession comes a bed of one and a half acres of summer fruit trees, one acre of vines and half an acre of loquats. ... On the right of the house, the whole land is given up to summer fruit, of which there are numerous varieties of twenty distinct kinds. Over 2000 cases of mixed fruit are packed yearly.

The land is undulating, with rich and deep subsoil; and from all parts of the property the most magnificent views of diversified scenery are to be seen. Standing on a slight knoll and looking north, Red Hill comes into ken, with its sloping uplands laid out in fruit and crops. The sun, pouring his fervid rays with fleecy clouds of steel and gray, now and again hiding the glory of his swift career, casts into shadows and lights acres upon acres of cultivated and bush land, which forms a picture which may be equalled but not surpassed. Looking south(!?) the Sydney post office can be distinctly seen and, on a bright day, a pair of glasses will enable the sightseer to clearly mark the time depicted on the dial of its clock: in the foreground may be seen thickly clustering buildings with stretches of bush and cultivation interspersed. Looking north-east, the incomparable sight of Chatswood, with its red, slate and variegated roofs, the heights of Pymble, Gordon, Turramurra and Hornsby, with the indentation where the Lane Cove river runs its course, enslaves the eye, and one can scarcely withdraw his gaze from a kaleidoscope which elevates the mind to thoughts of the mysteries of nature Looking west [south!?!], Ryde looms into sight, and to the east [west or south?!], a gap between scrub and forest carries the eye along meadow and knolls and glens and valleys, till a faint blue line in the distance shows where a mountain chain cuts the sky line.

... the packing shed is next inspected, and we find it a compact, well built, and well ventilated room, raised some two feet from the ground, and having a loft which holds the cases Still further, and going back to the entrance to the grounds in Twin-street, the chef d'oeuvre, so far as building on the place is concerned, stands – a shed 40 ft x 37 ft., ... divided into a two stalled stable, hay shed, cow shed, chaff-cutting rooms, harness room and a buggy shed. The 12 acres of bush land are situated

some half mile from the orchard and are thought to be an exceptionally good sample of the rich and fruitful land that environ Ryde.



The Heard Cottages in Wicks Road (Kevin Shaw).

With a firm belief in pruning, most of the trees on the Model Farm are cut back, and the fruit thinned, since quality and not quantity is the desideratum. The whole of the cultivated land is thoroughly manured every year and the ground hand worked since Mr Heard is no advocate of the plough. He married Miss Goodsir, a native of Newcastle, in 1896. Being very popular and much esteemed, he was elected vice-president of the Progress Association and a member of the committee of the School or Arts and could have been office-bearer in many societies and associations, but his time and attention being claimed by the work of the orchard, he has hitherto held aloof from all matters that would tend to divert his labours in connection with his place: which is one of the healthiest and best cared for orchards in the district."

After reading this ask yourself which you would prefer, North Ryde c.1902 or c.2002! It is interesting to note a number of things brought up in the article. It mentions that the "city" can be seen clearly from the farm, which today is still possible. It may also explain why North Ryde school and environs was originally called "City View" – not as easily understandable today. Another "local myth" is that Twin Road was named after the twins Laura and Mabel born to Henry Heard and his wife in 1873. However, some maps which have recently come to light show that Twin Road was actually two roads off Lane Cove Road and linked by a loop at the end – so perhaps it is more likely that the name is descriptive rather than named after the Heard twins.

Biographical Notes –

The original family member to arrive in the colony was Henry Heard. The *Dunbar* was wrecked on 20 August 1857 and, according to the article, Henry arrived in NSW a fortnight before. With his wife Mary Jane, he had nine children, four sons and five daughters born between 1859 and 1876. Apart from the first child, William, who was born and died in 1859 and registered in St Leonards, all the other children were registered in Ryde. Therefore, the growing Heard family must have come to the district just before 1860. Despite the fact that the newspaper article refers to Fred as Frederick, the birth register and other records give his name simply as Fred. He was the fourth son and fifth child of Henry and Mary Jane Heard and was born in 1867. In 1896 he married Ellen M Goodsir at Ryde. Ellen M Goodsir was born in Newcastle in 1874 to Alexander and Ellen Goodsir. The couple had four children, Nellie G born 1897; Roy F born 1898; Lillas M born 1901 and Mary M born 1905. Fred B died at the relatively young age of 40 in 1907 and was buried in the Anglican Section of the Field of Mars cemetery on 29 April, 1907. Ellen remarried in 1910, to Alfred Thomas Pearse, and had another daughter Helen in 1912. She died around 1952.