

Christina's
Matilda



Edel Wignell Elizabeth Botté

Cover illustration:

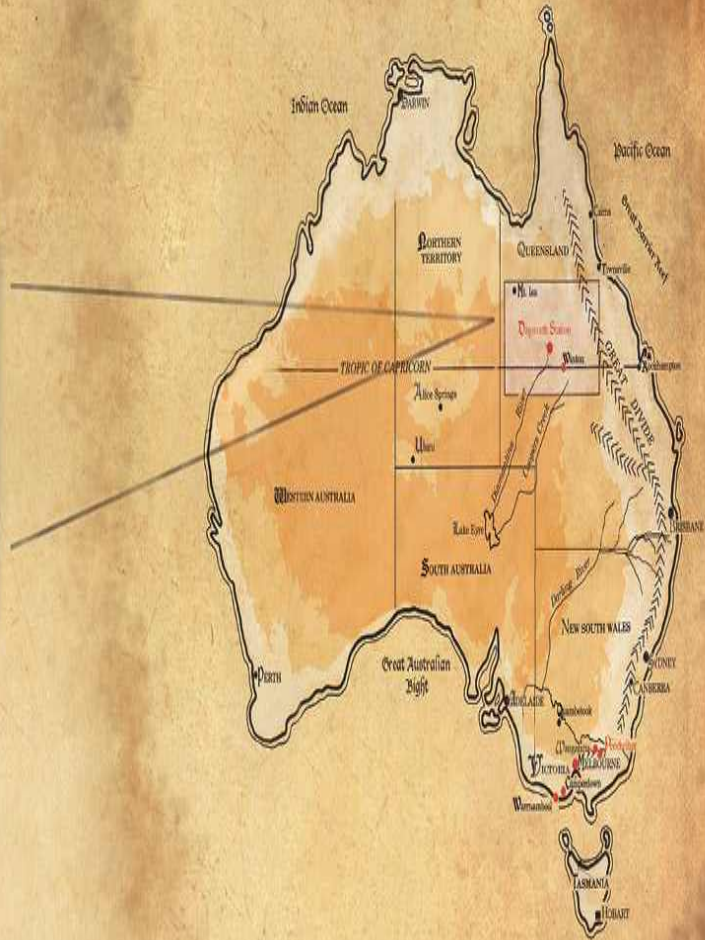
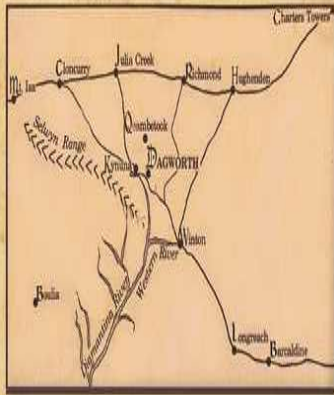
The statue of 'The Jolly Swagman' was commissioned to commemorate the creation of 'Waltzing Matilda'. It was sculpted by Daphne Mayo in 1959 and is dedicated to 'Banjo' Paterson, who wrote the words of the song, and to the many swagmen who lie in unmarked graves throughout Australia. (Photo: courtesy of the Winton Visitor Information Centre)

Edel Wignell and the publisher express gratitude to Mrs Diana Baillieu for generously sharing her memories and papers, and for giving permission to reproduce photographs from the Macpherson Archive (2002).

For the universe and all of our marvellous little adventures within it.

–E.B.

Australia with "Waltzing Matilda" locations



For the late Diana Baillieu, great-niece of Christina Macpherson and
generous contributor to this book.

-E.W.

For the universe and all of our marvellous little adventures within
it.

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Christina's Matilda



Written by Edel Wignell

Illustrated by Elizabeth Botté

Who was Christina Macpherson?
Most people say, 'I've never heard
of her.'



Portrait of Christina Macpherson
ca. 1900. National Library of
Australia, MS 9065, Item 5.

Who was Banjo Paterson?
Most people say, 'A famous
Australian poet.'



Portrait of AB Paterson ca. 1890.
National Library of Australia,
nla.pic-an22199070.

They know that Andrew
Barton ('Banjo') Paterson
wrote the words of Australia's
most popular song, 'Waltzing
Matilda'.

Banjo Paterson created the lyrics at the home of Christina
Macpherson's brother, and she provided the tune, so why
isn't she famous too?

Christina was the ninth child in a wealthy pastoralist family
of eleven children. The Macphersons came to Victoria from
Scotland in 1854 and took up land near Geelong, then in
north-eastern Victoria and New South Wales and, later, in
Queensland.

When Christina was born, her family lived in a
large house in Melbourne. Her father, Ewan
Macpherson, owned
a grazing property,
Peechelbar, on
the Ovens River,
20 miles (32
kilometres) south
of Wangaratta
in north-eastern
Victoria.

Christina became
famous as a baby,
ten months old,
when some members
of her family had
an encounter at
Peechelbar with a
bushranger, Daniel
Morgan.



Christina at around the age of 4.
Photo from the Macpherson Archive,
courtesy of Diana Baillieu.

In the early 1860s, Daniel Morgan, a violent bushranger (nicknamed 'Mad Morgan' and 'Morgan the Murderer'), operated for three years in the Riverina district of New South Wales. He became notorious for shooting unarmed and sleeping men and for escaping from the police. Once he held up a coach, and made a squatter dance for his employees and several swagmen.

Dan Morgan said he would shoot any farmer who would not give rations to swagmen. They idolised him, and would never tell the police where he was hiding. In 1864, the reward for his capture was £1000.

In April 1865, he crossed the Murray River and, for four days, mounted on a splendid racing mare, terrorised the district. He set fire to granaries, shot cattle, held up carriers on the Melbourne road and robbed travellers. Soon everyone knew that Morgan had arrived, and all were armed and ready.



During the evening of Saturday, 8 April 1865, intending to steal a thoroughbred horse, Dan Morgan rode up to Peechelbar and bailed up the Macpherson household. He ordered the family to gather immediately in the homestead dining room.

With Mr and Mrs Macpherson were their eldest daughter Annie (aged 10), two elder sons Gideon (17) and Angus (nearly 14), baby Christina and several women, including the nursemaid Alice Keenan.

In the mood for an evening of entertainment, Dan Morgan asked for music and food. The women provided supper and the family sat down at the dining table and ate with him. Meanwhile, Annie played the piano.

As the evening wore on, Morgan nodded off to sleep occasionally, but he kept a revolver in his hand. Soon Alice Keenan pretended that she had heard Christina crying in the nursery, and asked to be allowed to attend to her. Morgan refused. Alice stood up, slapped his face and marched out. Morgan shrugged and did not stop her.

Alice raced to the Rutherfords' property next-door. Immediately all the men were mustered with firearms, and Mr Rutherford dashed on horseback to the Wangaratta police station, arriving at 10.30 pm. Soon 40 troopers, under the command of Superintendent Cobham, were on their way to Peechelbar, and the house was surrounded by armed men. For fear that Morgan may have started a massacre, they decided to stay where they were until dawn.

Meanwhile, as Alice returned to the house, she warned John Quinlan, a young Irish station hand, about the situation indoors. When Alice went inside, Morgan said he had heard her voice, and asked who she had spoken to. Alice replied that she had spoken to the dog. All the while, baby Christina slept.



Dan Morgan ate and drank and dozed all night. In the morning he washed, combed his hair and had a glass of whisky. Then, at 8 o'clock, he ordered Ewan Macpherson to saddle his best horse. The Macpherson men accompanied Morgan as he stepped outside and sauntered toward the stockyards.

Before the police had time to move, John Quinlan sprang out from behind a stump and shot Morgan between the shoulders. He spun around and fell on his face. As the police disarmed him, he protested, saying it was a cowardly attack and he should have been challenged. He died at 1.30 pm.

Safely indoors, Christina was too young to know about these events, but, no doubt, they were discussed by her family and school friends as she grew up.



Christina at 16, with her mother and sisters Jane and Margaret. Photo from the Macpherson Archive, courtesy of Diana Baillie.

Christina Macpherson's upbringing was similar to that of many girls in large, wealthy households. Nursemaids cared for them and servants tended the houses and gardens. Two more babies - Ewan and Margaret - were born in the next four years, making a total of ten living children in the family.

Christina, her sisters and their mother lived in Melbourne, while her brothers spent time with their father at Peechelbar.



Christina and her sisters, with other society girls, attended Elise Pfund's Ladies' School in the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda.

Madame Pfund (1833-1921), a Swiss lady, came to Australia in 1863, accompanying Lady Darling, wife of the newly appointed Governor. She married James Pfund, Victorian Government Architect, and, in 1867, established an exclusive school for girls. Titled 'Oberwyl', which means 'at the top', the school functioned until about 1930.



Wolfgang Sievers. Oberwyl Mansion, corner of Barkly and Grey Streets, St Kilda, Victoria, 1958. National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn4740115.

Day girls and boarders attended, from Kindergarten to Senior Secondary levels. The subjects for study included arithmetic, reading, writing, spelling, elocution, history, geography, mapping, scripture, nature study, music, singing, drama, dancing, drawing, needlework, physical culture and tennis.

The girls competed in interschool basketball and tennis matches and performed plays to entertain their parents. They enjoyed excursions to Studley Park and the Zoological Gardens. Charitable work was important, with the girls sending books, clothing and toys as Christmas gifts to the Junior Red Cross to be distributed to poor children. They collected eggs for the Melbourne Hospital and raised money for the Seamen's Mission Institute, the Brighton Children's Home, the Children's Hospital and the Blind Asylum.



Christina at the age of 8. Photo from the Macpherson Archive, courtesy of Diana Baillieu.

When the Macpherson girls grew up, Christina's younger sister, Margaret, married Stewart McArthur (later Justice Sir Stewart McArthur) of Meningoort, Camperdown, in western Victoria. Christina stayed at home and cared for her mother, who was an invalid.

In April 1894, aged 29 years, Christina visited Margaret and Stewart, and they attended a three-day race meeting at Warrnambool: daily picnics and races, and balls at night. A band played constantly, and one of the tunes Christina heard several times was a march, 'Craigielee', which was based on an old Scottish ballad, 'Thou Bonnie Wood O' Craigielea'.



Invitation and
 Music Program
 for the
 Warrnambool
 Races.



Craigielee march. National Library of Australia, MS 2765, Series 7/1, Item 10.

(The march arrangement was made by Godfrey Parker, whose real name was Thomas Edward Bulch. It was first played in Australia at the Warrnambool Races on 24 April, 1894.)

Christina liked the tune and, having a keen ear for music, often played it on the piano when she returned home.

By then, Ewan Macpherson owned Dagworth Station on the Diamantina River about 80 miles (128 kilometres) from Winton in north-western Queensland, and his son Robert was the manager, assisted by Gideon and Jack. The property was huge – 44 million acres (101,171 hectares) – grazing at least 120 thousand head of sheep and 450 horses.

Mrs Macpherson died on 4 December 1894 and, soon after, Ewan Macpherson took Christina and Jane to Dagworth for a reunion with their brothers. No matter how they travelled – by train, coach and gig or by coastal steamer, train and coach – this was a long trip.

On arriving at Winton, the Macphersons met Sarah Riley, who had been one of Christina's school friends. With her was her fiancé, the solicitor and poet, Banjo Paterson. (They were engaged in 1888.) The Macphersons invited them to visit the family at Dagworth.

Andrew Barton Paterson was born near Orange, New South Wales, in 1864. His parents belonged to the wealthy squatter class, but had lost property and money. Andrew was sent to the local primary school and completed his education at Sydney Grammar



School, then studied to become a solicitor.

He began to write under the pen name 'Banjo' – the name of one of his father's horses. From 1886 his ballads were published in *The Bulletin*, a journal which encouraged

Australian writing and illustration.

In 1895, Banjo went to stay with his fiancée Sarah Riley and her family on Vindex Station near Winton.

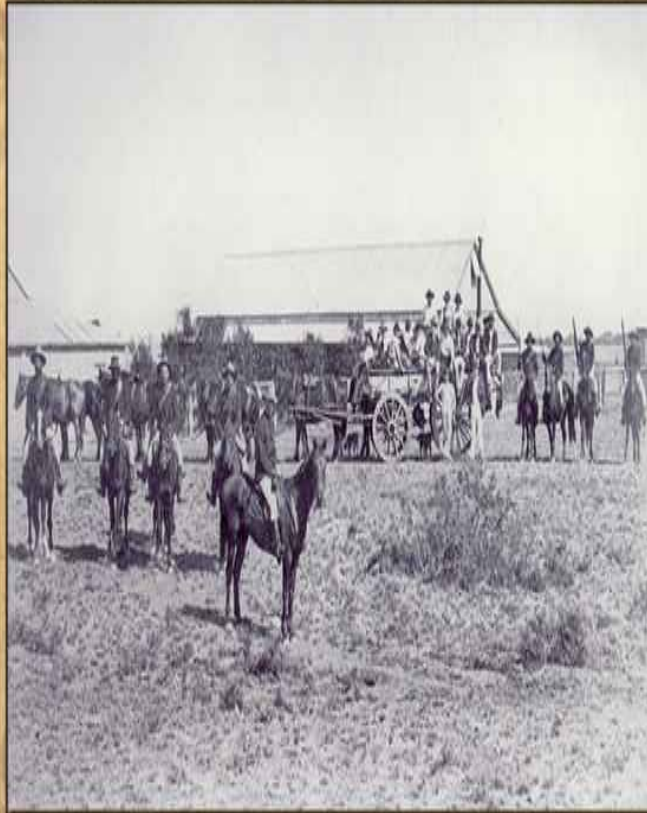


The early 1890s was a time of great economic depression, with many people unemployed. Squatters lowered the wages of shearers and, in 1891 and 1894, the shearers went on strike.

The squatters brought in 'scab labour' – hundreds of workers from the cities in the south – and the Queensland Government sent both police troopers and the military to keep order.

Feeling powerless, the strikers burnt down several shearing sheds in New South Wales and Queensland. At least six in the Winton area, including the Dagworth woolshed, were torched. The Dagworth shed was huge – built for forty shearers to shear at least 120,000 sheep, and to class and press the wool.

The Macphersons had asked for government help, and armed men had been sent. But, on Saturday night, 1 September 1894, a party of sixteen shearers crept up at night and, under gunfire, set the shed alight, burning 140 lambs – penned and ready to be shorn by 'scab' labour – as well as partly destroying the shed.



Dagworth Station, 1894.
Photo from the Macpherson Archive, courtesy of Diana Baillieu.

Banjo Paterson, possibly accompanied by Sarah Riley, visited the Macphersons at Dagworth early in 1895. (Historians dispute both the details and the date.) At that time, the Great Shearers' Strike of 1894 was being discussed throughout Australia.

Riding on the property with Bob Macpherson, Banjo saw the partly-burnt woolshed. He also saw a dead sheep with a shoulder and a leg missing, and Bob explained that it was quite common for swagmen to kill a sheep and take part of it to eat.



While Banjo was staying at Dagworth, Jack Carter, the overseer, introduced him to the term 'waltzing matilda'. No doubt Banjo heard many other tales at that time, too. Rebel shearer/swagman Samuel Hoffmeister, suspected of lighting the Dagworth woolshed fire, had been found dead in the strike camp. Also, in 1891 a swagman had killed a Dagworth sheep near one of the Combo waterholes. Noting that he had been observed, he had jumped into a waterhole to escape, and had drowned.



Dagworth Station, 1894 (Bob Macpherson on far right).
Photo from the Macpherson Archive, courtesy of Diana Ballieu.

In the evenings at Dagworth, the Macphersons and their guests entertained themselves with lively conversation; Christina played the zither or the piano, Banjo recited poetry and everyone sang.

One of the tunes that Christina often played was the march, 'Craigielee', which she had heard the previous year. Listening to the catchy tune, Banjo put the 'Waltzing Matilda' ballad and the melody together, and soon Christina and her family were singing it.

While this was a happy time for the Macpherson family, Sarah Riley broke off her engagement to Banjo Paterson.

"One day I played (from ear) a tune which I had heard played by a band at the races in Woomambush, a country town in western Victoria. Mr Paterson asked what it was. I could not tell him, and he then said he thought he could write some lines to it. He then and there wrote the first verse. We tried it and thought it went well, so he then wrote the other verses."

Extract from a letter (1931) by Christina Macpherson to Thomas Wood, after reading a newspaper report of a talk to give. Thomas Wood published the extract in his book, Colliers (1934).

Letter from the Macpherson Archive, courtesy of Diana Baillieu.

In Winton today, a bronze statue of a swagman boiling his billy, sculpted by Daphne Mayo in 1959, is dedicated to Banjo Paterson and the many swagmen who lie in unmarked graves throughout Australia.

A plaque on the North Gregory Hotel celebrates the first public rendition of 'Waltzing Matilda'. (However, both date and place are disputed by historians.) In 1998, a museum – called the Waltzing Matilda Centre – was established in the town.



Photo courtesy of the Winton Visitor Information Centre.

Next, 'Waltzing Matilda' became a singing commercial!

Although the words were written in 1895, the song was neither copyrighted nor published at that time. In 1903, Banjo sold the ballad to his publishers, Angus & Robertson, along with some other 'literary bits and pieces' which he called 'old junk'.

In that year, Inglis & Co, a firm of Sydney merchants, decided to publish the song, hoping to increase sales of their tea.



Thank you to Tetley Australia for giving permission for the publication of the Billy Tea image.

In May 1895, at Banjo Paterson's request, Christina Macpherson had written a musical arrangement of 'Waltzing Matilda', but, not knowing this, Inglis & Co asked Marie Cowan, the wife of the Company Manager, to do it. She changed the words in several places, ensuring that 'billy' would be sung more often, and capitalised several nouns, including 'Billy'.

In 1903, Inglis & Co wrapped printed copies of 'Waltzing Matilda' around each packet of Inglis Billy Tea.

Soon Marie Cowan's name became familiar to everyone seeing the music in print.

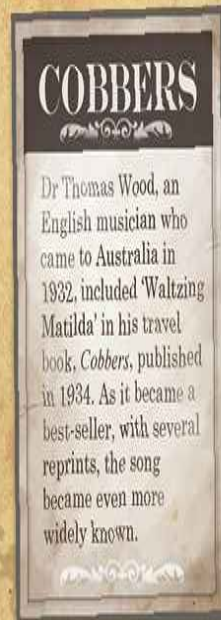
By 1911 'Waltzing Matilda' was well-known, and the

'Billy Tea' version was included in *The Australasian Students' Song Book*, of which five thousand copies were sold. The song was sung by soldiers fighting in the Boer War (1899-1902) and was even more popular during World War I (1914-18).



The Song Book Board,
The Australasian Students' Song Book.
Melbourne: George Robertson & Co., 1911.
Front cover. National Library of Australia.

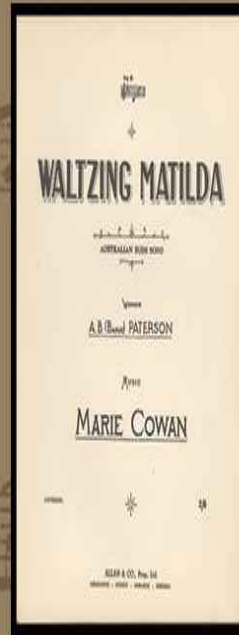
In 1917 the ballad was included in *Saltbush Bill, J.P., and other Verses*, a collection of Banjo Paterson's poems published by Angus & Robertson.



She was a reserved woman and, in those days, a well-mannered society lady did not draw attention to herself.

In 1936 the music publishing company, Allan & Co, published the 'Billy Tea' version of the song in sheet music. They acknowledged A. B. Paterson for the words and Marie Cowan for the music arrangement. Marie Cowan did not claim to have composed the tune, but most people thought she had, for Christina's involvement was not widely known.

In 2002, Christina's great-niece, Mrs Diana Baillieu, remembered her great-aunt's frequent visits when she was growing up at Meningoort. 'Aunt Chris spoke occasionally, in a good-humoured way, about the creation of the song,' she said. 'And she was thrilled at the popularity of *The Australasian Students' Song Book*.'



Marie Cowan and A.B. Paterson *Waltzing Matilda: Australian Bush Song*. Melbourne: Allan & Co., c1936. Front cover. National Library of Australia.

In the second half of the 20th century, another version of 'Waltzing Matilda' became popular. With Banjo Paterson's words and a completely different melody, it is called the 'Buderim tune', the 'Cloncurry variant' or the 'Queensland version'. Folklorists and historians suggest that it may have been composed in about 1917 by Josephine Pené, a French music teacher living in Cloncurry – a friend of both Banjo Paterson and Bob Macpherson.

For many years, the origin of the original 'Waltzing Matilda' tune was a mystery and the subject of much research and speculation by folklorists and historians. Two books and many articles provided explanations, but none was correct in all its details.



Meanwhile, Richard Magoffin, historian and bush balladist, sleuthed the mystery of the tunes for many years. Finally, he contacted members of the Macpherson family and discovered Christina's contribution. He published *Fair Dinkum Matilda* in 1973, and revised it as *Waltzing Matilda: Song of Australia* in 1983, placing Christina Macpherson in her rightful niche in history.

In her final years, Christina lived in South Yarra, a Melbourne suburb, on a stipend provided by her father. She died in March 1936 and was buried in an unmarked grave in St Kilda beside the graves of her parents.

Almost 60 years later, during the centennial celebrations of the writing of 'Waltzing Matilda', her great-niece, Diana Baillieu, marked the grave with a brass tablet to record her achievement.



Photo from the Macpherson Archive, courtesy of Diana Baillieu.

Turn the pages and compare two versions of 'Waltzing Matilda'. Which one do you usually sing?

"Waltzing Matilda"

Then one was a swag-man camped in the billabong, He ate the shade of a cool-i-bah tree, And he sang as he looked at the billabong, 'Till he came a-waltzing Ma-tilda with me. 'Till she came a-waltzing Matilda with me, 'Till she came a-waltzing Matilda with me, 'Till she came a-waltzing Matilda with me.

2nd Verse

Down came a jumbuck to drink at the billabong, Up jumped the swag-man & grabbed him with pleasure, And he said as he put him away in the tucker bag "You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!"

3rd Verse

Down came the squatter a riding his thoroughbred, Down came policemen, one, two and three, Whose is the jumbuck you've got in the tucker bag? You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!

4th Verse

But the swag-man he up & he jumped in the water-hole, Growing himself by the coolibah tree, And his float may be heard as it sings by the billabong, 'Till she came a-waltzing Matilda with me.

Chorus: 'Till she came

Christina's arrangement of Waltzing Matilda.
Original manuscript of Waltzing Matilda music and lyrics signed by Christina Macpherson. National Library of Australia, MS 9065, Item 3.

172

WALTZING MATILDA*

A. B. PATERSON. Arranged by
MARIE COWAN.

Allegretto.

Once a jolly swag-man camped by a billabong, Under the shade of a cool-i-bah tree, And he sang as he watched and waited till his bilby boild, 'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me! Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing Matilda, 'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me! And he sang as he watched and waited till his bilby boild, 'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me! 'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me! 'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me! 'You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me!'

* "Waltzing Matilda" is synonymous with "Bumping Buggy" i.e. "Carrying a Swag"
* By kind permission of Messrs James Light & Co., Ltd., Sydney.

Billy Tea sheet music of Waltzing Matilda.
The Song Book Board, *The Australasian Students' Song Book*. Melbourne: George Robertson & Co., 1911. p.172. National Library of Australia.

Glossary

ballad – a story in verse
banquet – a feast
billabong – a loop of a river, receiving water only when the river level is high
billy – a small can, usually made of tin, with a tightly fitting lid and a wire handle
bushranger – a criminal hiding and operating in the bush
celebrations – parties
centennial – 100th anniversary
coolabah, coolibah – a eucalypt tree growing along waterways in northern and inland Australia
Dan Morgan (1830–1865) – after he was shot, 9 April 1865, his head was cut off and sent to Melbourne so that scientists could examine his brain
elocution – speech
exclusive – fashionable, but only for the best people
fiancé – a man engaged to be married
fiancée – a woman engaged to be married
jumbuck – a sheep
lyrics – the words of a song
matilda – a name for a swag
merchant – a businessman who buys and sells
military – soldiers
niche – place or position
notorious – infamous
origins – beginnings
pastoralist – a person who owns grazing land
physical culture – physical education
scripture – sacred writings, such as The Bible
sleuthed – behaved like a detective
squatter – a wealthy landowner
station – a large grazing property
stipend – a regular, fixed payment
swag – a bundle of belongings wrapped in a blanket
swagman – a traveller (often a shearer) carrying a swag and looking for work
thoroughbred – a well-bred horse
troopers – policemen on horseback
waltzing matilda – carrying a swag – perhaps from the German 'walzen' (strolling, hiking or tramping) and 'Matilde' (a nickname for a female companion)
zither – a stringed musical instrument, also called an auto harp

IP Kidz

an imprint of Interactive Publications
Treetop Studio • 9 Kuhler Court
Carindale, Queensland, Australia 4152
sales@ipoz.biz
ipoz.biz/IP_Kidz/Kidz.htm

First published by IP Kidz, 2010
Kindle edition, 2010
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Printed in 16 pt Georgia.

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry.

Author: Wignell, Edel.

Title: Christina's Matilda / written by Edel Wignell ; illustrated by Elizabeth Botté.

ISBN: 9781921479878 (hbk.)

Subjects: Macpherson, Christina Rutherford, 1864-1936. *Waltzing Matilda*.
Paterson, A. B. (Andrew Barton), 1864-1941. *Waltzing Matilda*.
Waltzing Matilda (Song)
National songs--Australia.
Folk songs--Australia.
Australia--Social life and customs.

Other Authors/Contributors: Botté, Elizabeth.

Dewey Number: 781.6224

Book design by Anna Bartlett and Elizabeth Botté

Cover design by Elizabeth Botté



Edel Wignell is interested in history and folklore. Her first two collections were: *A Boggle of Bunyips* (1981) and *A Bluey of Swaggies* (1985).

In the last chapter of *A Bluey of Swaggies*, Edel told the story of the creation of the song 'Waltzing Matilda', and included Christina Macpherson who provided the tune. Luckily, in 2002, Edel met Diana Baillien, a great-niece of Christina, who generously shared information and photographs from the Macpherson Archive. See Edel's website: www.edelwignell.com for more information on the research and writing of this book.

Edel (the name rhymes with 'medal') is a freelance writer, compiler, journalist and poet who writes for both children and adults. She has more than 90 published books, the latest being the picture-stories *Long Live Us!* (Interactive Publications) and *Bilby Secrets* (Walker Books Australia).

Elizabeth Botté works long hours in her Melbourne studio, her eyes engrossed in the world of illustration, and her ears enthralled by lectures and talks from the world's wisest, together with a good dose of Radio National.

Once predominantly a painter, Elizabeth has now been lured to the wondrous realm of digital illustration. She produces work for film and tv, children's games, graphic design and visualisation projects, and the odd community mural.

The illustrator of over 25 titles including *Giggle Gum Tree* (Interactive Publications) *Green Stuff For Kids* (MUP) and the *Touché* schoolbook series (Pearson). Also the Extensive Reading Foundation awards finalist in 2008 and 2009.



IP Kidz

an imprint of Interactive Publications
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Carindale, Queensland, Australia 4152
sales@ipoz.biz
ipoz.biz/IP_Kidz/Kidz.htm

First published by IP Kidz, 2010

Kindle edition, 2010

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Printed in 16 pt Georgia.

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

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Title: Christina's Matilda / written by Edel Wignell ; illustrated by Elizabeth Botté.

ISBN: 9781921479885 (ebk.)

Subjects: Macpherson, Christina Rutherford, 1864-1936. Waltzing Matilda.

Paterson, A. B. (Andrew Barton), 1864-1941. Waltzing Matilda.

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