

THE BATTLE OF THE BLAND



Sir Frederick Pottinger

At this site on 8th July, 1862, the "Battle of the Bland" took place between Gardiner's bushranger gang and the law; Police Inspector Sir Frederick Pottinger, Det. Patrick Lyons, and Richard Mitchell, Clerk of Petty Sessions, Condobolin.

The battle followed the capture on the previous day of bushrangers Johnny Gilbert, Charlie Gilbert and Henry Manns near Mrs Hardy's "Ariah" station homestead at Beckom. The bushrangers were returning from the border area along the Great Western Stock Route after trying to cash gold stolen in the Eugowra Rocks gold robbery. At that time this was the largest gold robbery in Australia's history.

Johnny Gilbert avoided capture and rode over 70 miles in 10 hours to alert members of the Gardiner gang hiding in the Weddin Ranges.

Pottinger, Lyons, Mitchell, the two prisoners and a pack horse carrying the gold, overnighted at "Quandary" homestead with George Harmon.

The next morning as they approached Mrs Sproule's homestead, they ran into an ambush. In the shoot-out, which lasted between ten and fifteen minutes, Lyons was thrown from his wounded horse, the prisoners escaped, and Pottinger retreated 12 miles westward to "Quandary" for more ammunition and assistance. On his return he found Lyons unharmed but the bushrangers had fled.

Pottinger had captured 213oz. of gold, which with the help of an armed guard, he returned to Forbes, arriving to a hero's welcome on 14th July, 1862.



Johnny Gilbert



Mrs Frances Sproule

