

William Henry Ogilvie

1869-1963

William Henry Ogilvie was born at Holefield, Kelso on 21st August 1869. At that time his father was tenant of the farm which was owned by the Duke of Buccleuch. His grandfather was chamberlain to the Duke and lived at Branxholme near Hawick. His mother's parents had been killed in a massacre at Cawnpore in India when she was a child.



William Henry Ogilvie

As a small child Will, along with his brothers and sisters, was taught by a governess at home. He was the eldest son and second child in a family of eight. For a short time he was sent to Yorkshire to be tutored by a clergyman. After a term at Kelso High School as a day boarder, he attended Fettes College where he studied Greek and Latin, winning the school prize for Latin verse. However, he also excelled on the sports field, playing rugby for the College 1st XV.

At the age of nineteen he was sent to Australia to help friends of the family, the Scotts of Belalie, who had a large sheep station. It was fashionable at that time for aspiring young farmers to emigrate to the young colony where the wool trade was booming. It appears that he had a deep love of horses, wild buckjumpers as the drovers called them. He stayed in Australia for twelve years working at Belalie and Maroupe Station in South Australia. Whilst learning about droving he also learned a lot about observation and writing which was the foundation for his poetry.

In Australia, he began to write romantic and lyrical poetry known for its balladic style. He was renowned in Australia and was considered comparable with the native writers of that time Banjo Patterson, Henry Lawson and Adam Lindsay Gordon.

He returned to Scotland in 1901 and lived in Edinburgh for a short time, during this period he was offered a post in America. This was a dual role, as the chair of Agricultural Journalism at the State College of Iowa and Editor of the *Experimental Station*. However he soon discovered that academic life was not for him and also that America did not have the same appeal as Australia and that neither held his affection like his own native Borderland.

After two years he returned home, and in 1908 he married Madge, daughter of Tom Scott Anderson of Ettrick Shaws and began to earn his living by his pen. He wrote non-stop, in all publishing twenty books of poems and several songs set for solo singing. His routine was after he finished breakfast and read prayers he would sit down with pencil and pad. Usually he started with a couplet, about some thought that had taken his fancy, sometimes he would interrupt his writing with a walk in the garden before returning to his writing. Once the piece was finalised he would write out a copy, never using a typewriter. As soon as the poem was printed he would cut it out and paste it in a book and destroy the original, there are very few of his original manuscripts in his original handwriting.

In 1909 he wrote *Whaup O' the Rede* a long riding ballad which expressed his love for his native Borderland. One of his other great loves was horses, with his sporting verses, *Galloping shoes, Scattered scarlet, Over the grass* and a *Handful of leather* being published in the 1920's. His *Collected Sporting Verse* was published in the early 1930s.



Outback Hall of Fame. Longreach

During World War 1 he accepted a job at a Remount Depot run by the artist G.D.

Armour in Wiltshire. Raw horses were transported from Canada to be broken in for use by the British Army, Ogilvie put to good use the skills gained in Australia with the wild buckjumpers. He also worked with Armour and the poet/illustrator combination contributed weekly to *Punch*. This resulted in 115 of his poems being printed in the journal.

Will H Ogilvie never achieved the same recognition in his native Scotland as he did in Australia. He died at his home Kirklea, Ashkirk on 30th January 1963. His ashes were scattered along with wattle leaves from the Bushmen of Australia on The Hill Road to Robertson, where a cairn has now been erected to his memory.

KELSO BRIDGE

THERE is one spot where memory guides
From time to time my restless heart –
A fair, fair spot, where silver tides
Break on grey piers and drift apart
Round pillars spun with water-weed,
Down channels where the foam is whirled;
So beats my love of home, O Tweed!
Against the barriers of the world!
Sunlit or swept by winter's blast
The old bridge stands, a link between
The Abbey's hoar and wrinkled past
And the young elm-bud's waking green;
The nesting rooks above it wheel
From elm to elm on sable wings;
Beneath it, racing round the reel,
The line upon the bent rod sings.
Across the world hope's bridges bear
The wanderer's never-resting feet,
But peace and rest are mingled where
Earth's fairest rivers, mingling, meet.
On pillars twined with water-weed
Your silver tide is ceaseless hurled;
So beats my love of home, O Tweed!
Against the barriers of the world!