

THE MAN IN THE STREET

By Colleen O'Sullivan
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Learning about street names is fascinating, as *Mudgee Guardian* readers have discovered over the last few months. And digging around in Google and Trove to find the man behind the street name is even more fascinating (as I think Sam Paine will attest).

I use the term “man” advisedly because there aren't too many women who are memorialised in street names though there are plenty of streets that have female names: Margaret Street is one such in Kandos, the only one, origin unknown as yet.

White Crescent at the entrance to Kandos is a distinctive street. With its crescent shape forming two triangular parks with Davies Road and Angus Avenue, it was always meant to be a public space, whether for public buildings or for a reserve we can't be sure. It is and was meant to be an aesthetic focal point; a grand entrance.

I thought at first that it was named for the colour (or non-colour), though I couldn't imagine why. Then I gradually discovered that Hunter White from *Havilah* had a strong connection to the town. That was a surprise – a member of the landed gentry having interests in an industrial town; commercial and philanthropic interests, I discovered.

It was he who at the first land auction purchased the hotel site for a record price of £2,700. I am not sure whether he intended being the owner of the only hotel in town or if his aim was to engender confidence and raise the price of land in Kandos. He later on-sold to Tooth and Company.

Hunter White also purchased another six blocks of land in the first subdivision and later donated four blocks to the Church of England. As it turned out the church officials selected Mrs Dangar's gift of two blocks on the corner of Angus Avenue and Jaques Street. No hard feelings though – Hunter White laid the foundation stone for the new church. [addendum: this information was reported 4/10/1920 *Mudgee Guardian*. A news report 11/3/1921 *Lithgow Mercury* shows that the foundation stone was laid by Bishop Long; the foundation stone itself shows this information]

White also participated in the building frenzy of the first few years at Kandos, when housing was scarce and the workforce increasing. There are records of him building four or five cottages in May 1917 and two semi-detached cottages a year later. These he rented out to workers and in 1921 he donated twelve months of rentals towards the erection of a rotunda in White Crescent. However that wasn't finally built till 1929.

Why am I so sure that White Crescent was named after him? Because he was a long-term director of the Kandos cement company. I have records of his directorship for the years 1918, 1924, 1925, 1938, 1939 and 1947 (the year he died) and I don't doubt there are records somewhere for the intervening years.

Today it is accepted practice not to name streets and public spaces after a living person because community attitudes can change and people can go out of favour. A century ago it

was common practice. In particular, when a company developed their own private town, they had the prerogative of memorialising themselves through naming, as they did in Kandos streets: Angus, Rodgers, Buchanan, Jaques, Davies, McDonald, Noyes, Campbell and White.

Personally I am pleased they did. They are a fascinating group of entrepreneurs who founded our town, and the street names direct us to its history.

It wasn't just White Crescent that was named after Hunter White but also the reserve bounded by that crescent. This has always been a place for a community gathering. In the early years people gathered on Sunday afternoons and evenings, hundreds of them, to listen to a popular band program. Each year there were children's Christmas parties with visits by Santa Claus, and "creature comforts" for the men provided by Mr Cooper (licensee of the Kandos Hotel) "at a convenient location". Often there were meetings.

In those years it was referred to as White Crescent Reserve, sometimes White Crescent Park. Council records show that the company gave this piece of land to the Council in 1919 on condition that it was used as a park. A *Mudgee Guardian* article in 1926 refers to it as having been dedicated to the council by Mr Hunter White. Perhaps that is why, in the 1930s, it was referred to as White's Crescent.

So why was the name changed to Coomber Park? And when? I have yet to find out.
[For the answer see *Streetwise: Finding History in the Streets of Kandos*, Colleen O'Sullivan 2016 pp 130 and 165]