

THE TRUE STORY OF GUNDAGAI'S DOG ON THE TUCKERBOX

Tourists, Truth, and the Insouciance of Souvenirs

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Abstract

Gundagai's statue of the Dog on the Tuckerbox, about half way between Melbourne and Sydney, was arguably Australia's most popular purpose-built tourist attraction for half a century from its unveiling in 1932. This article uses the monument as a case study to consider the ways in which the past is visualized as it is turned into tourism. In what has been called the "circle of representation," tourists' understandings of the places they visit are shaped by the preconceptions created by pre-existing media representations through art, postcards, photography, posters, tourist brochures, souvenirs, and so on. In the case of the Dog on the Tuckerbox, the expurgated language of souvenirs, as they multiplied through the twentieth century, came to displace oral dissemination of earlier more vulgar meanings attached to the original story that was the inspiration for the monument.

Keywords: authenticity and tourism, "circle of representation," "dog on the tuckerbox," folklore, Gundagai, pioneer monuments, souvenirs, tourist attractions

On 28 November 1932 the Australian prime minister Joseph Lyons unveiled the statue of the Dog on the Tuckerbox, five miles from Gundagai, NSW.¹ As the town's "pioneer memorial," the statue would become a popular tourist stop, helped considerably by its location on the Hume Highway roughly half-way between Sydney and Melbourne. It was arguably the twentieth century's most successful purpose-built tourist attraction in Australia,

The True Story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tuckerbox

at least until Coffs Harbour's Big Banana of 1964. For tourists journeying between Australia's two largest cities, it became a standard stop, a conversation piece, and the subject of a million tourist snapshots. Yet its meaning was always—arguably intentionally—clouded in obscurity.



Figure 1: Postcard c.1955, Jim Davidson Australian Postcard Collection. National Library of Australia, nla.obj-153095605.

The statue celebrated a historical fiction. A popular story was told—in an 1850s ballad, and possibly earlier oral versions, and later in poetry and song—about an unlucky bullocky whose team had become bogged “nine miles from Gundagai.” There then followed a litany of further calamities until, to cap it all off, his dog “sat” on the tuckerbox in which he kept his food. But there was always a more scatological climax to the story, well-known or half-known in popular culture. Originally, and continuing in various discourses parallel to this quite benign behavior, the dog shat.

As the dog became a standard tourist stop, its meanings and the very understanding of the story itself were shaped in various ways. The politics

of its representation meant that the original roguish story was confronted with a more respectable version. Which version was to be preferred varied according to who told the story to whom: the fact that the tourist stop was especially popular when the car trip became a common form of family holiday and parents sought out diversions for stropky children was probably crucial to its continued bowdlerization. But the issue of which version dominated also depended on the various media through which the story was conveyed, from the walls of shearing sheds and tourist literature through song and poetry to souvenirs and shop layouts. Tourists went away with diverse understandings of what it all meant.

Gundagai had long been a stopping place. The banks of the Murrumbidgee River were a meeting place for the Wiradjuri, a site for ceremonies and trade. Following explorers Hume and Hovell, who crossed the Murrumbidgee there in 1824, Europeans began settling in the district. Charles Sturt crossed the Murrumbidgee there on his 1829 exploratory expedition down the Murray River. Through the 1830s, when wool developed as a staple industry, Gundagai was the junction of the road to Melbourne and the gateway to the wool lands of the Riverina. It was thus a great gathering place for bullock teams. The town was surveyed and laid out in 1840 and was also a natural hub for stagecoaches, boasting four hotels by 1843. The main southern railway line by-passed Gundagai further west but a branch line from Cootamundra reached Gundagai in 1886. Then in the twentieth century, as cars increasingly traveled the Hume Highway between Sydney and Melbourne, Gundagai's position on the highway, 376 kilometers from Sydney and 498 kilometers from Melbourne, made it a convenient stopping point when there really was not much else to stop for.

By 1932 Gundagai had a population of around 2,000, a fairly typical country town, once reasonably prosperous through sheep and cattle and its position as a transport hub, but now suffering in the Depression. The 1920s had seen a rash of small town festivals (at least 46 prior to Gundagai's), often celebrating genuine or invented centenaries. They were an opportunity to promote the town to tourists and to encourage return visits from past residents, who had left in the "drift to the cities." These "Back to ..." celebrations, which continued into the 1930s and beyond, were important in promoting tourism and in convincing the townsfolk of their progress, but also in reflecting back on the past. The printed souvenir program would usually contain a history of the town or district, often the first serious

The True Story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tuckerbox

attempt to write a history. The first “white” child of the district would be honored; the oldest residents would be feted; a parade would see people dressed in vintage clothing and floats commemorating significant events in the town’s history, and grown men would put on old too-tight school uniforms. Some dignitary would also often unveil a memorial dedicated to the district’s pioneers (Mierendorff 2011; White 2011).

When the worthies of Gundagai came to plan their “Back to Gundagai” week for 1932, the Depression was well entrenched. The hospital was short of funds and while celebrations for celebration’s sake were hard to justify, fundraising activities were acceptable. The decision was made to hold a “Back to Gundagai” celebration to raise money for the local hospital. And further, the centerpiece was to be an ongoing source of funds: the unique idea was that Gundagai’s pioneer memorial should be a money-making proposition.

Now pioneer memorials were not generally great tourist attractions. A memorial park might encourage tourists to stop awhile to rest and recuperate; a memorial hall might provide useful facilities for the town. More often pioneer memorials were fairly conventional, eminently respectable but uninspired blocks of stone, celebrating the local elite families whose fame rarely extended much further than their immediate locality. Such memorials fulfilled a local commemorative function but were of little interest to passing traffic. Few monuments attracted tourists in their own right.

Gundagai’s pioneer monument was different. The organizing committee set out not only to attract passing tourists but to find ways of making money from them. They created, from its unveiling in 1932, one of Australia’s most successful purpose-built tourist attractions. It is difficult to measure such things precisely but in terms of visitors stopping at, snapshots posed with, souvenirs produced of and postcards sold from, the Dog on the Tuckerbox, while perhaps not challenging the Sydney Harbour Bridge or the Three Sisters as iconic Australian tourist sites, was still in the same league. And the point is it was not a natural wonder or a mighty engineering achievement or a sacred historic site, nor did it offer tourists the indulgence of play on fun rides or beaches or ski-fields. It existed only to attract tourists—who were to do little more than look and perhaps throw a coin into a wishing pool—and it did so very successfully. According to the *Australian Encyclopedia*, published 26 years later, it was one of the best known of Australian memorials; indeed “The making of ‘Dog-on-Tucker-Box’ souvenirs has assumed almost the proportions of a local industry” (Chisholm 1958).

Gundagai was luckier than many towns in that it had already come to acquire a few claims to popular cultural significance and recognition. There was the somewhat accidental celebrity of Jack O'Hagan's well-known popular song, about the track winding back to an old fashioned shack along the road to Gundagai, published in 1922 and selling over 100,000 copies. It proved a great and lasting hit of the new recording age, in which a folk culture successfully negotiated with modern technology (Martin 2015). O'Hagan initially intended the track to lead to Bundaberg but Gundagai benefited from being more singable and having a river with the requisite number of syllables (Van Straten 2012). There were already mentions of Gundagai in the work of Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson. Going still further back there was a poem about a dog and a tuckerbox, which had a local notoriety. And that would become the focus of the memorial.

I have been arguing elsewhere that popular culture exhibited a growing interest in Australian history around the beginning of the twentieth century, mainly through its more disreputable and subversive aspects. On the one hand, there was a history of explorers, statesmen and pioneers promoted by governments and respectable opinion. But what attracted a more popular response—in for example the early film industry and popular tourism—was a history of convicts, the more gruesome the better, of bushrangers and of rebellious diggers on the goldfields (White 2013a, 2013b, 2016). In that context, one virtue of the story of the dog on the tuckerbox from the point of view of its promotion to tourists was that it was disreputable.

There were various versions of the story told by bullockies—a notoriously foul-mouthed profession (Ward 1958). Among the doggerel they shared around camp fires—and recall the great symbolism that surrounded boiling the billy as kindling camaraderie (Harper 2010)—was a story of Bill the Bullocky. He had had a string of bad luck:

His team got bogged at Nine Mile Creek,
Bill lashed and swore and cried:
“If Nobby don't get me out of this,
I'll tattoo his flaming hide.”
But Nobby strained and broke the yoke,
And poked out the leader's eye;
Then the dog shat on the tucker box
Five miles from Gundagai.

The True Story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tuckerbox

As with all worthwhile oral myths there is some uncertainty about origins. The first printed version allegedly appeared in 1859 in the *Gundagai Independent*. Other versions ran on with other misfortunes, but the dog's nefarious deed was always the last straw.

Lou Prowse has given the most detailed recent account of the development of the memorial (2015). What I want to focus on is the way different media led to different versions of the story behind it. These would then be passed on in a “circle of representation,” the “rumour” of the place, the assorted scraps of popular culture references, word-of-mouth and personal experience that make up the identity of a site of tourism (Hutnyk 1996; Jenkins 2003). Olivia Jenkins has shown how tourist photography tends to replicate the images of tourist brochures and the advertising that attracted visitors in the first place. Certainly the Dog on the Tuckerbox became one of Australia's most photographed tourist icons in its heyday, that is its first half-century. What also entered the circle (or spiral) of representation were the meanings attributed to it. Visually the mere object and its photograph are devoid of meaning: the dog appears to be simply sitting. Only very rare cartoon depictions of a defecating dog exist: the statue version dominates the visual representation. However in media where the visual is less dominant—in spoken verse, word of mouth or written accounts—verbal representations can circle and spiral just as effectively, and here the respectable and disreputable versions of the story competed more equally.

The story clearly had a popular local fame among Gundagai locals. It was, for example, depicted in an exhibit at the Gundagai Pastoral and Agricultural Show in around 1902. Just what kind of exhibition the dog made at the show we do not know, though its presence suggests that Gundagai people already regarded the dog—and presumably his original exploits—as an important part of the town's identity. In 1926 a crude metal dog on the tuckerbox was attached to a fence post (Scarff 1994) and at a fancy dress ball in “St Pat.'s R C hall” in 1927, the prize for the most comical costume went to N. Carberry for “Dog on Tuckerbox” (*Gundagai Independent and Pastoral, Agricultural and Mining Advocate*, 7 July 1927: 3).

The exhibit at the Gundagai Show inadvertently led to the story's greater renown. Jack Moses attended that year. Moses was a traveling wine and whisky salesman with a reputation as a raconteur, an associate of Henry Lawson and the dedicatee of *The Bulletin Book of Humorous Verse and Recitations* (1920). He claimed the exhibit inspired him to pen his own ver-

sion of the story in verse. How much he knew of the original poem is unclear: Frank Clune claimed he found it on the toilet door of a local pub (Prowse 2015). It is also not clear how much of the original story he told when he regaled his audience at smoke concerts. However when he published his poem in 1923, it was understandable that, given the furious censorship of printed material at the time (Coleman [1960] 2000; Moore 2012), the dog merely *sat* on the tuckerbox. As the climax of the poem, that really just does not make much sense. The fact that it became so popular despite being blandly nonsensical suggests that there was a widespread recognition that there was more to the story than the act of sedately sitting.

This story and poem became the focus of the memorial. What is remarkable is the way the two elements coexisted, as parallel versions of the same story. Generally in print the dog could only ever be sitting but the accompanying oral versions presumably contained the more expansive act. This remained the case when Gundagai set about commissioning its pioneer memorial. But it is not just that those commissioning the statue would have known both versions: there is a strong case for assuming they intentionally made use of the dog's Jekyll and Hyde character.

It was a respectable pioneer memorial in aid of a respectable public institution. A competition was held to find an appropriate inscription to commemorate the pioneers of the district. The winner was the journalist Brian Fitzpatrick, recently arrived in Sydney from Melbourne and soon to become Australia's most prominent Marxist historian—another case perhaps of the disreputable and respectable sitting side by side. His verse acknowledged the pioneers as “conquerors” who were nevertheless themselves subdued by mother Earth:

Earth's self upholds this monument
 To conquerors who won her,
 When wooing was dangerous
 And now are gathered unto her again.

No less a dignitary than “the Rt. Hon. J. A. Lyons, P. C., Prime Minister of Australia” (*Back to Gundagai* 1932), former schoolteacher and father of 11 children, could be invited to unveil it, once a procession of “Bullock Teams, Buggies, Motor Cars, etc.” had meandered the five miles from Gundagai. The language at the opening was for the most part a variation on John Hirst's

The True Story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tuckerbox

"Pioneer Legend" (1978), with tributes to "those splendid pioneers who by their indomitable courage and perseverance had wrested from the virgin bush-lands homes for themselves and their families" (*Sydney Mail*, 14 December 1932: 11), "the gallant band, the 'old stock' ... trusting only to their splendid manhood and sturdy bullocks to 'hew a way through nowhere'" (*Guyra Argus*, 22 December 1932: 2). Lyons used the occasion to refer to the difficulties of the Depression which could be overcome if only people were more self-reliant, like the pioneers—"When people became ever more ready to lean on Governments they were coming very close to Communism"—and he hoped the monument would "prove an incentive to the youth of to-day" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 November 1932: 8).

But amid the "tremendous cheering" that greeted the unveiling (*Daily Advertiser* [Wagga Wagga], 29 November 1932: 2), there was always the wink, the knowing smirk, the titter behind the hand. Locals knew the more scatological version of the story. My guess is that most people at the unveiling—there were 3000 according to the press—knew what the dog had done. No press report of the opening made anything of the story—it did not rate highly as news despite the presence of the prime minister. Yet the knowledge of the real story, most commonly passed on by word of mouth, was also clearly suggested by the organizers, even if they remained somewhat circumspect. The official souvenir program published for Back to Gundagai week referred to the popularity of the "amusing skit" about "the deeds and exploits of a sundowner, his dog and the tucker box" (*Back to Gundagai* 1932). "Deeds and exploits" is clearly a tongue-in-cheek hint at the original story: "exploits" would seem to be overstating it had the dog merely sat, and had the exploits been heroic the "skit" would not simply be amusing. The official souvenir booklet also acknowledged the original story. Titled *The True Story of Gundagai's ...* with a picture of the Dog on the Tuckerbox, it was sold for one shilling, later 10 cents, still later 50 cents, in order to raise further funds for the hospital. It is unclear when it was first issued—the first I found was between 1939 and 1956—but it went through many editions with minor changes each time. Some for example show the unveiling of the kiosk in 1956, while earlier ones do not; they also note that Lyons, who died in 1939, is "the late."² But all versions made the point that "few people know the correct story" and provided a version of the poem in which "the dog – in the tuckerbox." They all explicitly stated "That original doggerel was crude and vulgar" and the earlier versions ended with a flourish: "Gundagai people ...

realise that had it not been for the vulgar doggerel concocted by a bush bard some eighty years ago, who was inspired by a dog's misbehaviour, there would have been no Pioneer's Memorial, and Gundagai would be minus the greatest publicity medium that has been given to any town in the Commonwealth" (*The True Story* ca. 1950). It should be noted that the enterprise was financially successful, clearing the hospital's £2,000 debt with the celebrations and earning the hospital around £100 a year in 1940 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 February 1940: 7). And presumably the notoriety of the dog had more to do with that than the respectability of the pioneers.

This would seem to be a classic case of MacCannell's back region, where tourists are invited into a staged intimacy in which "authentic" local knowledge can be acquired. And interestingly, it is precisely knowledge about "truth" and "nontruth" that is at stake. Typically, for a price—one shilling with a 20 per cent royalty to the hospital—the tourist could be initiated into the local knowledge (MacCannell [1976] 1989).

Yet puzzlingly, in the broader popular culture, that knowledge seems to have disappeared. For the past five years or so, when I have mentioned the dog on the tuckerbox in casual conversation and talks to various audiences, from university students to community groups, I have asked what their understanding of the story was. Older Australians and a majority of younger people knew of the dog on the tuckerbox, but surprisingly most seem not to have thought at all about what its meaning might be. This lack of curiosity is in itself an interesting commentary on the role of monuments and their meaning in tourism. Of those who thought they knew what the dog stood (or sat) for, most understood it as some sort of testament to canine loyalty. Some, perhaps because their knowledge of the story derived from childhood trust in the authority of parents or teachers, were quite dismayed at the thought of a more sinister possibility, professors of history even suggesting I was making it up. Consistently, in audiences ranging from about 20 to over 100, only one or two, if any, would raise the possibility of a vulgar meaning, and generally they were people who not simply knew another version of the story but knew they had superior insider knowledge of the "authentic" one.

This is a phenomenon that needs some explanation. The lessening familiarity with the monument itself is easily explained. Its heyday as a tourist stop-over coincided with the heyday of the long-distance family driving holiday (White 2005), from the 1950s to the 1980s, when the Hume Highway

The True Story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tuckerbox

offered the cheapest and most convenient means of traveling between Sydney and Melbourne. As the long family car trip lost much of its appeal and as domestic airfares on major routes dropped dramatically (and Sydney-Melbourne is the world's third busiest air route), fewer children had the experience of the long awaited stop.

But why did the knowledge of the "real" story disappear? Part of the explanation lies in the very child-centeredness of the post-war era (Murphy 2000). Perhaps in the prim 1950s, the story being conveyed to *children* was more likely to be the expurgated one, though I have a very vague memory of being let into the secret as a ten-year-old—perhaps by a teacher. More significant has been the way the media in their many forms have shaped the tourist experience. The meaning of the monument was conveyed through range of media, some of which were able to tell the original story when others could not. The most common way the original story was told was by word of mouth. It began as a bush ballad that was meant to be passed on within an essentially oral culture. It was presumably also told by locals to tourists who asked. This was still a time when tourism involved far more oral interchange between host and guest than was allowed in the more mediated world of the tourism industry as it developed in the later twentieth century.

It could also be conveyed by more clandestine—and more ephemeral—media. The first printed version of the story, a ballad by "Bowyang Yorke," was apparently printed "on a *Gundagai Times* typeset" in 1859; no copy can be found at present but apparently a question mark followed the word "sat," a hint to the disreputable meaning (Gaunt [1944] 1979: 33). Gundagai locals spoke of it being pinned to the wall of a Gundagai pub at least until 1932 (Scarff 1994). Another ballad version, similar to that by Moses, was printed on souvenir postcards sold by a Gundagai newsagent, Ephraim O'Sullivan, prior to 1923. It too made it clear the dog shat on the tuckerbox (Scarff 1994). A version also appeared on matchboxes (Butcher 1956).

It is possible to identify three distinct discourses in which it was possible to tell the original story, either with the actual use of "shat" or more coyly with a dash or a euphemism to nevertheless make the meaning clear. Local tradition as we have seen maintained the original story as part of local knowledge and this has continued since. Local historians of Gundagai such as Lyn Scarff in 1994 and Cliff Butcher in 2002 (though not in 1956) have not hesitated to tell the original story. Jim Gordon, the son of the storekeeper

in nearby Nangus, who wrote verse as Jim Grahame, also had a poem telling how the story was popular among all comers, and ended with:

I've often wondered why,
That dog sat on the Tucker Box
Nine Miles from Gundagai. (Butcher 1956)

Though possibly obscure, the pivot is the notion that the dog's action needs interrogation. Local knowledge also appears in a dissertation written by local schoolteacher Albert Gaunt in 1944, though he did his best to minimize the significance of the original story. In his account of "the only event of apparent historical importance that occurred during the past forty years" he argued that soon after the initial suggestion, the idea of dedicating the memorial to the pioneers took over. That required a more serious approach: "so they decided to dedicate the monument to the pioneers to whom a faithful dog was as indispensable as a faithful servant. So the monument was erected, not in light of the original incident, but, happily, to the memory of the pioneer settler and his faithful companion." (Gaunt [1944] 1979: 34)

One senses here the respectability of the schoolteacher coming into play: the thesis after all was a requirement for promotion and respectable history generally is framed around "intrepid explorers" and "stalwart pioneers." The conclusion, however, that "the building of the monument was, in fact, a hoax to entice large numbers of visitors to the district to assist in raising funds for the local hospital" was not so far from the mark (Gaunt [1944] 1979: 1, 35). The local museum—very much a traditional local museum with lots of old things gradually getting out of control—also enjoyed the opportunity to tell the "true" story. One of its exhibits is a silk tassled banner, perhaps from the 1970s, which acknowledges the dog's misbehavior. By the 75th anniversary in 2007, there was no longer a problem with the souvenir booklet using the word "shat" (Allnutt 2007).

The second medium that did not flinch when it came to telling the original story was the writings of folklore collectors: again a medium that put a high premium on an oral culture. Folk specialists such as Hugh Anderson (2001), John Meredith (1967, n.d.; see also Meredith and Francis 1956), and Warren Fahey (2015) took the original story for granted. On the 1968 compilation *The Restless Years*, an LP record and book of songs, verse and prose compiled by Peter O'Shaughnessy, Russel Ward and Graeme Inson, "shat"

The True Story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tuckerbox

was sung. In the 1980s, Meredith rated the dog as “Probably the best known folk hero in Australia” and claimed “there are not many people who don't know what the bullocky's hound really did in the tuckerbox. He certainly didn't sit on it!” (Meredith n.d.). That interest in bush tradition and folklore has long roots. The 1932 unveiling of the monument led to some discussion in “On the Track,” a syndicated column devoted to curiosities of Australian folk culture when it was still within popular culture rather than a more self-conscious quasi-academic study. “Bill Bowyang,” who conducted the column publishing correspondence from others, was a Queensland journalist, Alexander Vennard, one of the founders of the *Kia-Ora Cooee*, the Anzac troops' newspaper that sprung up in Egypt in 1915. One contributor raised the possibility it was a bullock rather than the dog that did the dastardly deed. Another recalled “two versions stuck on the hash boundary walls” of a Goulburn cattle station and recalled hearing many versions “most of which would fail to pass the censor, even after judicious doctoring.” “Bill Bowyang” himself wrote of how “My memory goes back to a tall, wiry, hairy-faced teamster singing it in a bar at Blackall, between Normanton and Crowden [in northern Queensland], in 1891” when it was already a “hoary old veteran.” The newspaper used a dash in place of the crucial verb (*Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 9 October 1934: 9; *Northern Miner* [Charters Towers], 26 November 1934: 4).

The third medium was the tourist guide. While not all tourist literature would tell the complete story, the “Back to Gundagai” souvenir guide and the “official” booklet, as we have seen, happily let tourists in on the local knowledge. Any tourist guide claiming to give tourists full background information could not afford to avoid the truth and still claim to be authentic. Generally guides to the Hume Highway made reference to the story. In 1970, Mark Richmond's Sun/BP touring guide noted the dog only “sat in the tuckerbox” but added that by the time the monument had been opened, “the special significance of the dog in the original ballad had given way to the general importance of dogs as companions, workmates, and guardians of their master's possessions” (Richmond 1970: 65). Brian Carroll's chattier “Heritage Field Guide” noted the sculpture was a very successful “publicity stunt” and that “You can easily start an argument about just what the statue is all about.” Then he suggested “one popular version” told how “For one particular bullocky, just about everything that could go wrong had gone wrong. Or so he thought, until the dog did something on the tuckerbox

which sounded very much like sat, but wasn't" (Carroll 1983: 90). Sandy Paine's 2005 guide remained coy, referring to Moses' "sanitised" version of the earlier song about "a dog's natural behaviour while guarding his master's tuckerbox" (Paine 2005: 169). Even the comprehensive 1993 *Reader's Digest Illustrated Guide to Australian Places* was bolder, noting how "The anonymous poem of 'Bullocky Bill' first rendered the tale of the dog which did something unpleasant *in* the tuckerbox in down-to-earth, bullock-driver style: 'and the dog s[h]at in the tucker box, Five miles from Gundagai'" (1993: 206). More often such compendiums gave sanitized and sometimes misinformed versions, such as "Monument to pioneer teamsters and their dogs, celebrated in the song by Jack O'Hagan" (Church [1980] 1991) and "a tribute to the bullock drivers who camped here" (Wilson 1982: 38).

But far more powerful than these three forms of transmission were others in which the dog's misbehavior was written out of the story. The first of these was Jack Moses's poem. In a culture where the recitation was still an important amateur form of family entertainment, Moses's version had widespread currency. Moses himself was also an assiduous promoter of his version, laying claim to the wider story as his own and complaining of copyright infringement. Like O'Hagan, who wrote further Gundagai songs after the success of the first, Moses milked the theme, publishing another more elegiac poem about the dog in 1938. Also in 1938 he sought copyright for a somewhat thin "sketch" called "Around the Tucker Box Nine Miles from Gundagai" and in 1927 for a more substantial three-act "comedy drama," "Nine Miles from Gundagai or The Dog on the Tuckerbox," written with the actor and filmmaker, Arthur Sterry (Moses 1927, 1938). There was even some talk of this version's "picturisation" (*Maryborough Chronicle*, 23 November 1932: 6). Working through formal channels of mainstream publication, theatre, film and copyright regulation, Moses was hamstrung in the kinds of stories that could be told.

His bowdlerized printed version of the story prompted a new round of explanations of the point of the story. There appeared quite convoluted exegeses showing how the story made sense if the dog merely *sat* on the tuckerbox. These were the meanings that most of my casual survey participants reverted to—if they had thought about the meaning of the memorial at all. Some suggested that the dog was lazy and instead of helping his master merely sat doing nothing (*Chronicle Adelaide*, 25 August 1938: 60; *Western Mail*, 22 September 1938: 46). More often the suggestion was that the

The True Story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tuckerbox

dog was guarding the tuckerbox, the monument a tribute to the vital role dogs played in pioneering rural life or to their characteristic loyalty to a master (*Northern Times*, 2 June 1939: 6; *Argus*, 30 August 1937: 8; *Northern Miner*, 26 December 1933: 4). A 1933 *Sydney Mail* feature article on sheep-dog trials assumed the monument was “the first in Australia to acknowledge the part played by the cattle and sheep dogs in the opening up of the back country” (*Sydney Mail*, 12 July 1933: 33). Some told of a faithful dog doggedly waiting and guarding the tuckerbox of a master who never returned (Rivera 2015). Most elaborate, elevating the dog by folding it into the hyper-emotional national mythology around Anzac, was the story of how the teamster had gone off to fight in World War I and had been killed, but his dog, faithful to the last, had patiently sat on his tuckerbox awaiting his return until he too died. Moses himself produced two other fictional versions of dogs and masters: one of “The bravest dog that ever was” that saved the local schoolteacher in a flood and was buried in the tuckerbox (Moses 1927), the other from a skit in which an old sundowner tells a “new chum” that teamsters’ dogs sat on tuckerboxes to keep “all them bush pests away ... goannas and wombats and all them meat eating birds ... and the worst of all, them soldier ants ... with his tail he sweeps them ants off the box in millions and millions and millions” (Moses 1938). They drew on a tradition of similar stories of dogs’ devotion to masters, some of which also provoked outbursts of tourist statuary, such as Edinburgh’s Greyfriars Bobby (1873), Hachiko in Tokyo (1934), Fido in Borgo San Lorenzo near Florence (1957) and Shep in Fort Benton, Montana (1994).³ While some of these alternative Tuckerbox stories appeared in print, for the most part they seem to have rarely been written down. Instead they existed as part of a renewed oral tradition in a new more primly respectable cultural milieu.

Yet such was the power of the icon it was not necessary to have an alternative story to hand. I would argue that the most compelling force in the perpetuation of the respectable over the disreputable version in tourist consciousness was the souvenir: part of what John Urry has called the “artefactualiation” of history (Urry [1990] 2002). In the first place, the statue itself shows the dog sitting rather than squatting on a box usefully labelled “tuckerbox;” the sandstone plinth has the words “Pioneer Monument Gundagai,” a plaque commemorates Lyons’ opening the “tribute to our pioneers” and another provides Fitzpatrick’s text. So in the monument itself, and in all the thousands of snapshots of it, there is no suggestion of

anything other than sitting being involved. As the visual came to take on an ever-increasing burden of the dissemination of meaning through the twentieth century, the more limited oral and textual accounts of the monument's origins diminished in importance. That dominance was intensified by the commercial exploitation of the image—now already well-known—in souvenirs.

Prior to 1932, the occasional souvenir could suggest the original story. Postcards with the Jack Moses poem and a cartoon image of a swagman with a dog whose sitting position is more ambiguous had been sold in the 1920s; another superimposed a cartoon swagman and dog, now clearly defecating, over a photograph of a bullock team (Prowse 2015). Some also had a poem with a dash indicating the dog's contribution. But the unveiling of the memorial produced a proliferation of souvenirs that continues today and in these the dominant feature is the image of the monument. Souvenirs were always part of the rationale for having a monument. Oscar Collins, the newsagent who promoted the idea of the dog being the focus of a memorial, saw souvenirs as being one way the monument would raise funds for the hospital. In an interview he recalled: "I realised that we could go on raking off the profits of that dog to eternity ... I got the hospital to copyright the photos of the monument and collect 20 per cent of the sales of all souvenir stuff. We started on picture post-cards. Then we got out silver dog-spoons, dog-folders, and dog-cups and saucers, and plates, made by Doultons" (*Smith's Weekly*, 31 July 1937: 13).

Today most of the dog-on-the-tuckerbox souvenirs are decidedly kitsch; but the early souvenirs were a remarkable range from fine bone china to rather crude examples such as the postcards. Particularly significant is the fact that Royal Doulton no less produced a range of souvenirs soon after the unveiling. They produced a full tea set (plates, cups, saucers, milk jug, and bowl: I am not sure whether there was a teapot). Royal Doulton's connection to Australia dated back to the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition and they were enthusiastic participants in later exhibitions in Melbourne. John Shorter was appointed as their Australian marketing manager. By the 1920s they had discovered that Australians seemed especially "eager to purchase patriotic pottery" and were producing quite a lot of work for the Australian market. Their line was mostly flora and fauna and a few generic rural scenes. It was unusual for them to produce souvenir ware directly connected to a specific tourist site: the one other exception was a series illus-

The True Story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tuckerbox

trating Port Arthur, well established as both a historic and picturesque tourist site but also—in 1907 when it was introduced—not entirely respectable (White 2016). The Dog on Tuckerbox series was probably commissioned and though it was only produced for a decade it seems to have done well (Irvine 1988). Needless to say, the Royal Doulton tea service was not going to suggest the dog might have acted improperly. Its range shows the monument itself within a dog collar inscribed “THE DOG SAT ON THE TUCKER BOX,” and underneath, as a gesture to the pioneer significance that echoed Fitzpatrick’s inscription, the motto “By Work and Will they Won.” A fine china tea cup is not the best setting for a scatological joke.

Most later souvenirs followed the Royal Doulton lead. There were a number of other delicate renditions of the monument on relatively expensive china tea cups, pin dishes, ashtrays, and display plates. Studio Anna, one of the more adventurous post-war up-market potteries, also produced a series of stylishly modernist souvenirs featuring the statue. In all of them there was no question that the Dog did anything other than sit on the tuckerbox. As time went on—and as the dog as a monument began to lose its cachet as fashionable with the development of mass car ownership—other souvenir items such as snowdomes, keyrings, ashtrays, pencil sharpeners, and rulers came to dominate. Most simply showed the monument with the inscription, if any, “The dog sat on the tuckerbox.” Any that included more extensive text—and thus could potentially have covered the story’s origins in some way—still kept to a bowdlerized version. A souvenir tea towel for example contains this verse attributed to “Anon”:

You’ve heard about the famous dog
Some miles from Gundagai,
Who always guards his master’s lunch
From hungry passers-by ...
Exactly where—9 miles or 3
Away from Gundagai
We cannot say—but there he sits,
The truth we can’t deny!

Its claim to “truth” is a neat, presumably unintentional, irony.

Of all the variety of souvenirs, perhaps the most telling are stubby holders. One would think that if any modern souvenir could cope with—or even

benefit from—the vulgar bullocky mentality behind the story, a beer drinker’s stubby holder might. But no, sadly, the dog only *sits* on the stubby holders of Australia. A 2015 website has sought to corner the market in Australian “dog” stories, with Gundagai’s dog sitting alongside Red Dog, immortalized in the 2011 feature film, and South Australia’s “Bob the railway dog,” both of which were memorialized with sculptures in 1980 and 2009 respectively. Stubby holders, including “luxury” leather ones, can be bought online, but while the site itself tells of the story’s disreputable origins, the stubby holder only offers a drawing of the monument and the Bowyang Yorke poem with “sat” inserted; the caption states that the inspirational poem “celebrates the life of an allegorical driver’s dog that loyally guarded the man’s tuckerbox” (Loveridge 2015).

In the kiosk, built beside the monument in 1956, there is similar ambivalence. One section contains all the souvenirs of the monument for sale, and they show and refer to the dog as merely sitting, as does the historic display of older souvenirs. However as a commercial enterprise the kiosk has diversified, with sections devoted to other souvenirs. One section somewhat inexplicably contains Ned Kelly souvenirs, another kind of “disreputable” tourism. Another is a section of dog souvenirs, appealing to dog lovers and implicitly reinforcing notions of canine faithfulness. A third section however obscurely references the original story by being devoted to what they call “crap humour”: dunny calendars, joke toilet rolls, anthologies of toilet humor, and so on. So there is an odd disconnect between the souvenirs of the monument available for sale and the more knowing layout of the shop, winking to the monument’s other meaning.

Souvenirs are important as objects because their whole intent is to encapsulate the meaning of a particular tourist site, but they also dramatically shape that meaning. So the souvenir—as the visual representation of an object subject to the tourist gaze—of necessity closes down alternative meanings, certainly anything that might touch on the subversive or disreputable. The more vulgar elements of the colonial story, which were well-known or half-known in popular culture in the 1920s, were bowdlerized in the process of turning colonial history into tourism. And furthermore, because of the penetration of souvenirs into popular culture—and perhaps particularly as culture becomes less an oral culture (where stories circulate) and more of a commodity culture (where objects circulate)—the limited meanings conveyed by the souvenir have come to dominate.

The True Story of Gundagai's Dog on the Tuckerbox

It has sometimes been implied that the bowdlerized version simply took over and displaced the older oral tradition. And so in recent years, while authoritative histories acknowledge the original source, they do so with a sense of discovery of a salacious truth, a belief that only the present can stand the truth. So in the *Oxford Companion to Australian History* Helen Doyle (1998: 192) brazenly states that the dog sat on the tuckerbox “and defecated in it,” and then inserts “shat” into the poem. In 2006 Hilda Kean (10–11) suggested that the admission that the dog was “shitting” on the tuckerbox dates only from the 1990s and suggests it was “dismissed” earlier because of social constraints. Online tourism sites and blogs, which have less concern about respectability, are also now more willing to mention the origins of the story (e.g., Bytes Daily Blog Spot 2010), though they can still be coy. Consider, for example, Larry Rivera’s GoAustralia website:

But it’s been said that in the ‘actual’ original, it wasn’t ‘sat’ that the dog did. (Think of a one-syllable word starting with ‘s’ that rhymes with ‘sat’—consider the misfortunes that befall the bullocky—and think what other misfortune occurs to, in a manner of speaking, top it off) (Rivera, 2015).

Wikipedia still maintains that the monument “celebrates the life of an allegorical drover’s dog that loyally guarded the man’s tuckerbox ... until death” (Wikipedia 2016).

What this article has shown is a more complicated story. The “true” story of the dog was always well-known in particular circles and it was readily publicized within a local context, among folklore aficionados and even within some tourist publications. Yet a more powerful bowdlerized version came to dominate the popular understanding of the dog’s significance. In part it was primness but more the dominance of the visual and the role of different forms of media, above all the souvenir. The medium is—if not entirely the message—capable at least of playing a significant role in the dissemination and suppression of meaning.