



**John Joseph William
Molesworth Oxley**

Apsley Falls and Gorge

John Oxley Walcha

8 SEPTEMBER 1818

Surveyor General of New South Wales

Ranks amongst the great explorers of Australia

His journals *Two Expeditions Into the Interior of New South Wales* (published in London, 1820) are significant historical documents, being the first detailed description of the Australian interior.

1784 Born at Kirkham Abbey, Yorkshire, England – exact date unknown.

1784 Baptised July 6, at Bulmer, Yorkshire, England

1799 Joined Royal Navy (aged 15), successfully gaining promotions throughout his career

1812 Appointed Surveyor General of NSW (second application)

1817 Discovered course of Lachlan River

1818 Led an expedition from Bathurst on May 28 to investigate the Macquarie River. The river disappeared in an 'ocean of reeds' (Macquarie Marshes).

From July, Oxley's party proceeded north-east until they discovered the Castlereagh River. Turning east they then found the rich Liverpool Plains, reached and named the Peel River, crossed the southern part of the New England range near Walcha, discovering the Apsley Falls. They then found the Hastings River and followed it to its estuary which was named Port Macquarie.

1822 Married Emma Norton (1798 – 1885)

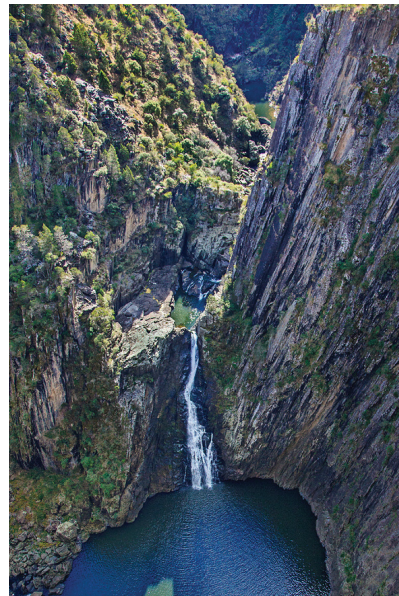
1823 Explored Moreton Bay and Brisbane River

1828 Died May 25; Kirkham, Camden NSW, aged 44

Buried; Devonshire Street Cemetery, Sydney (where Central Railway Station now stands). Oxley now lies in the Botany Cemetery.

REFERENCES

John Oxley, "*Journals of Two Expeditions into the Interior of New South Wales, 1817-1818*", London, 1820 – setis.library.usyd.edu.au
Australian Dictionary of Biography – adb.anu.edu.au
Joseph Lycett, National Library of Australia, nla.obj-135704114
Armidale & District Historical Society



Apsley Falls and Gorge, originally named Bathurst's Falls and Beckett's Cataract, are located 20km east of Walcha and 1km off the Oxley Highway. Access is sealed, with RV and wheelchair-assist accessibility.

TOP FALLS, 85M

The top falls have wheelchair-assist accessibility, with the main viewing platform just 20m from the carpark.

On September 14 Oxley wrote in his journal "*We were lost in astonishment at the sight of this wonderful natural sublimity*".

LOWER FALLS, 65M

The 2.5km return walk to the lower falls is accessed by a footbridge upstream from the top falls.



Walcha Visitor Information Centre
29w Fitzroy St, Walcha NSW 2354
Phone 02 6774 2460

www.walchansw.com.au



JOHN OXLEY and his expedition were the first "official" Europeans to the district. In search of new farming lands he climbed the steep, rugged ranges, traversed from west to east over the southern end of the tablelands known as the New England. On September 8, he camped by a good waterhole on the Apsley River, 1.5kms south of the current Walcha township. He named the river after the Secretary of the State of the Colonies, Lord Apsley. He wrote in his journal *"the finest open country, or rather park, imaginable. A country of running waters, on every hill a spring and in every valley a rivulet"*.

Oxley's 1818 Expedition

THE EXPEDITION'S PATH THROUGH WALCHA

The deep ravines of the gorges encumbered all the expedition's attempts to descend the ranges before eventually reaching the Bathurst Falls (Apsley Falls). Here Oxley was finally able to continue his journey east, discovering his route to the coast.

CROSSING THE GREAT DIVIDE

- September 4** Discovered and named the Cockburn River
- September 7** Climbed ranges and named Sydney River – now Macdonald River
- September 8** Camped on Apsley River, 1.2km south of Walcha, near where present day Langford House stands
- September 9** Continued east for 14 miles
- September 11** Blocked by the impassable deep canyons of the gorge country
- September 12** Rode the rim of the gorge
- September 13** Discovered and named Becket's Cataract
- September 14** Discovered and named Bathurst Falls – now Apsley Falls
- September 23** Named Sea View Mount – now Mount Seaview



Above: Joseph Lycett – painted from a sketch by George Evans of 'Bathurst Cataract on the River Apsley, New South Wales'.



'THE CAIRN'
 Located 500m south of Walcha,
 near the Apsley River's Millhole

Plaque reads:

John Oxley
 Surveyor General
 on his journey of exploration to the
 coast camped approximately
 1 mile SE of here
 8th September 1818.