

Banjo Paterson

His Life

Andrew Barton Paterson was born on 17th February 1864 on his family's property, 'Narrambla', near Orange, New South Wales. He was the eldest of seven children. To his family, he was known as Barty. His father, Andrew Bogle Paterson, was a Scottish immigrant. His mother, Rose Isabella Barton, was Australian-born and related to Australia's future first prime minister, Edmund Barton. His parents worked as graziers though his father loved to write poetry and shared this passion with his children.

His early childhood was spent on the farm. He received his early education at home from a governess. A governess was a private tutor who lived with the family. However, once he could ride a pony, he attended a simple local bush school. He was a keen horse rider and took the nickname Banjo from his favourite horse of the same name. At the age of 10, Andrew moved to Sydney and attended Sydney Grammar School. He was an excellent student and fine sportsman, excelling at polo. During this time, he lived with his grandmother in a cottage called 'Rockend' in the Sydney suburb of Gladesville that you can still visit today.

In 1880 and at the age of 16, having failed to win a scholarship to the University of Sydney, Banjo Paterson took a job as a law clerk with a Sydney law firm called Spain and Salway. Six years later, in 1886, he was admitted as a solicitor. With a business partner, he started his own law firm called Street and Paterson.

It was while working as a lawyer that Banjo Paterson started writing poetry. He had numerous works published in the Bulletin and Sydney Mail under the pseudonyms The Banjo and simply, B. His big moment came in 1895 when he wrote his most famous poem, Waltzing Matilda, and had his first book published.



Birth:

17th February 1864, 'Narrambla' near Orange, New South Wales

Death:

5th February 1941, Sydney, New South Wales

Occupation:

Poet, lawyer, journalist and soldier

The book, *The Man from Snowy River*, sold out in the first week. Soon he would be widely regarded as the most famous living poet writing in English, second only to Rudyard Kipling, author of *The Jungle Book*.

In 1899, Banjo Paterson began a career change from law into journalism. He went to South Africa to cover the Boer War as a war correspondent. Not long after, he was sent to China to cover the Boxer Rebellion but arrived too late and missed the action. By 1903, his career change was complete and he took a job as editor for the *Evening News* in Sydney.

In that same year, he married Alice Walker in Tenterfield, New South Wales where she was from. They bought their first house together in Woollahra, Sydney. They had two children: Grace born in 1904 and Hugh born two years later in 1906.

The Paterson family lived happily until the start of the First World War when Banjo Paterson went to Europe to find employment as a war correspondent. Failing to find work, he joined the army as an ambulance driver in France. Wounded, reported missing, then found again, he transferred to Egypt. Not long after, his wife Alice came to Egypt with the Red Cross and worked with an ambulance unit. Banjo Paterson spent the rest of the war as a vet on ships transporting horses between Australia, China, Egypt and the rest of Africa and was eventually promoted to the rank of Major.



After the war, Banjo Paterson returned to Australia to work as a journalist. He retired in 1930. He continued to write poetry until his death. He died on 5th February 1941 from a heart attack in Sydney.

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His Legacy

Banjo Paterson was a prolific writer. He wrote seven volumes of poetry, two novels, innumerable newspaper and magazine articles, lyrics for songs and even a children's book called *The Animals Noah Forgot*.



His most famous works include:

- Waltzing Matilda
- The Man from Snowy River
- Clancy of the Overflow
- Mulga Bill's Bicycle
- A Bush Christening
- The Man from Ironbark

There have been dozens of books written about him and his poetry remains immensely popular to this day.

There have been schools, libraries, bridges, boats and literary awards named after him.

Banjo Paterson's image appears on the \$10 note, along with a line from *The Man from Snowy River* as an extra security feature.

In 1981, Australia Post produced a stamp in his honour.

In 1983, a rendition of his poem *Waltzing Matilda* by singer Slim Dusty became the first song ever broadcast in space by astronauts.

In 2013, Banjo Paterson topped the *Greatest of All - Our Top 50 Australians* list published in *The Australian* newspaper.

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