

Mapping Joseph Furphy's Riverina—Yooringa

ALAN JOHN THOMPSON
Independent Researcher

A little learning is a dang'rous thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.
ALEXANDER POPE, *An Essay on Criticism*

In this essay, I chronicle my attempt to produce an accurate topographical map of the setting for Chapter III of Joseph Furphy's *Such Is Life* and the route that the novel's narrator and main protagonist Tom Collins follows through that landscape. I also set out my attempts to map the 'exact locality' of this setting within the real world of the Riverina, beyond Tom's evasive admission that 'it was somewhere between Echuca and Albury' (*SIL* 82/102).¹ Of course, it is not entirely necessary to fully answer these questions to be able to broadly follow the events that take place in Chapter III. Nevertheless, while the intricacies of the landscape are not immediately obvious from a cursory reading, it is evident from Furphy's judicious and precise placement of numerous topographical and geolocational markers or clues within the text (notwithstanding Tom's often seemingly fumbling attempts to conceal them), that he (Furphy) probably intended the 'observant reader' (*SIL* 2/2) to use these clues as signposts in order to form a detailed picture of location and landscape; or, perhaps, more in line with the wider themes of *Such Is Life*, he meant to lure him or her into such an attempt. I felt I owed it to Furphy to accept his challenge and try to 'shift some of my inborn ignorance' (*SIL* 128/159).

Unfortunately, Furphy's original plan with respect to this setting was significantly undermined when, compelled by the expediency of getting published, he eventually agreed to shorten the length of *Such Is Life* by, among other things, completely removing the original Chapter V. The events of Chapter V had been set in the same location as the events of Chapter III and many of the clues which would ultimately help the observant and attentive reader to identify the setting had been placed in the later chapter. Of course, Furphy later reworked the original Chapter V and it was eventually published as *Rigby's Romance*, but this meant that these clues ended up being distributed between two separate works rather than two separate chapters of the one work, *Such Is Life*, as originally conceived. Consequently, one must now read *Such Is Life* and *Rigby's Romance* together to gather all the clues.

Mapping the Topography of Yooringa and Tom Collins's Route

To make sense of the landscape in Chapter III of *Such Is Life*, the reader must recognise that Furphy often places his clues, the signposts, the key pieces of information necessary to precisely locate an incident either much earlier or later in the text than the point in the narrative when that incident occurs. He usually does this indirectly and without overt authorial comment, such that it is left entirely to the reader to make the connections between these various pieces of information. Furphy uses a similar technique when inserting clues which enable the reader to identify individuals.

I will firstly identify and analyse those signposts which are key to gaining an overall picture of the wider landscape of Chapter III. This will provide a good illustration of Furphy's technique and show how the broad framework of the accompanying map (Map 1) was developed and some of the main topographical features positioned within it:

- Early in the chapter, while Tom is at his camp on the north side of the river, he sees 'the figure of a *swagman* approaching from the west—that is, coming up the river' (SIL 84/105; my emphasis), Tom presumes 'coming from Moama' (SIL 91/114). In the course of their conversation, the swagman reveals his name is Andy and that he has 'the misfortune to be a bit hard o' hearin'' (SIL 92/115) and his 'eyes is none o' the best' (SIL 93/116). He also says, 'I was at a place *eight or ten miles down the river*, on the Vic. Side . . . camping as fur off of [*this bloke's*] place as from here to the other side o' the river; an' a *lagoon betwixt*' (SIL 92/115; my emphasis). When he also tells Tom that he is on his way to H____ Brother's sawmill, looking for work, Tom replies, 'Well, I hope you get on there, *mate*' (SIL 93/116; my emphasis);
- Much later, at the conclusion of Tom's night-time odyssey, he notices, while making his way back to the road, 'far away in the river timber, the red light of a camp-fire. . . *some swagman's camp* beyond doubt . . .' (SIL 110–11/138; my emphasis). He makes his way to the campfire and spends the night there. Next morning, in the clear light of day, he sees and recognises the scene before him: 'The Victorian River Road, running east and west, lay about three quarters of a mile to the south . . . The eastern prospect was more interesting. Within twenty yards of my lair, a *long deep lagoon* lay north and south . . . A *roomy homestead* . . . stood almost opposite my point of observation, and about a hundred yards distant . . .' (SIL 113/141; my emphasis). Then, '[a]way beyond the farm, *two or three miles up the road* I recognised the F____'s Arms Hotel. B____'s place lay beyond, and to the right, but shut out from view by a paddock of green timber' (SIL 113/141–42; my emphasis).

By recognising and making the connections between these signposts the observant reader can deduce that the camp Tom has found is Andy's camp from the day before, and the roomy homestead is 'this bloke's place.' From clues found later in this and the next chapter, we are able to work out that this bloke is Mr Quarterman,² and, with the help of further clues from *Rigby's Romance*, that the F____'s Arms Hotel is 'Maginnis (late Waterton), Farmers' Arms, Yooringa' (RR 3). While approaching Yooringa from Echuca along the Victorian River Road, Tom notes that 'a slight angle in the road brought into view the Farmers' Arms, two or three miles ahead' (RR 23). We are also able to identify B____'s place as the home of Tom's friend, Mr Binney, and that Tom's camp must be some six or seven miles east of the hotel and a little less from Mr Binney's place.

Of course, these clues are also pivotal to enabling the observant reader to recognise the swagman Andy of Chapter III as the same person as the swagman, Andrew Glover, whom Tom meets again in the final scene of the novel (Chapter VII). Here, as in their earlier meeting, Tom addresses Andy as 'mate': 'Indeed he did n't, *mate*' (SIL 296/369; my emphasis). These are the only two instances in *Such Is Life* when Furphy has Tom address a person thus and, emphasising this connection further, Furphy has Tom's diary entry for this day read (with an ambiguity that is surely intentional): 'SAT. MARCH 29. To Runnymede. Tom Armstrong and *mate*.' (SIL 264/329; my emphasis). This ironical use of the word 'mate' is clearly a signpost for the observant reader, but whether this use is Tom's (as 'chronicler')

or Furphy's alone (as novelist), and whether it is possible for the reader to ultimately determine which, and what we might conclude from each of these possibilities, is another question altogether.

It is worth noting that nowhere in the final version of *Such Is Life* is this locale actually named. Indeed, even the extant sections of Chapters III and V of the typescript version of *Such Is Life* do not give it a name and it is only in the final published versions of *Rigby's Romance* that we discover that the placename is Yooringa. Accordingly, it is quite possible that Furphy came up with the name of Yooringa only after he had produced the final version of *Such Is Life* when he was reworking Chapter V into *Rigby's Romance*.

Nevertheless, a detail in a story told by Steve Thompson in *Rigby's Romance* should dispel any lingering doubt as to whether the setting of Chapter III of *Such Is Life* and the Yooringa of *Rigby's Romance* are the same place. In telling the story of his January '73 canoe ride with Agnes Cameron to those camped on 'Cameron's Bend, down from Waterton's pub' (RR 7; my emphasis), he says: 'When we had gone a little better than a mile, we saw a farm house in front of us . . . It was *Quarterman's Place—two or three miles from here by the road*' (RR 62; my emphasis).

Having established this broad topographical context, we can now examine the text for further clues in order to seek out a more detailed picture of the landscape and how Tom navigates it.

Tom describes how, at around six o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, Nov. 9, 1883, he boarded a bark canoe to cross from the New South Wales to the Victorian side of the Murray River. He does this at the Splitters' Crossing (Point A of Map 1) (SIL 98/122), reached, in accordance with Mr Binney's instructions, by following the old horse paddock fence down to the river 'nearly opposite our place' (SIL 96/120). Thus, we can infer that the Splitters' Crossing is a little to the east, upstream, from the Farmers' Arms Hotel and Cameron's Bend.

When mid-stream the canoe is capsized by a large log floating downstream with the current, 'en route for South Australia' (SIL 98/122), Tom manages to scramble aboard the log which continues its course downstream and Tom, by now 'in Godiva costume' (SIL 100/125) eventually disembarks the log and swims to the northern bank of the river (Point B). 'Following the sinuosities of the river, this must have been a mile and a half below the splitters' crossing-place.' (SIL 99/124) Unbeknownst to him at the time, Tom has inadvertently swum to the Victorian side of the river, even though he has swum to the northern bank.

Julian Croft, in his *The Life And Opinions Of Tom Collins (LOTC)*, includes a diagram (157) of an 'S'-bend or double meander causing the river to turn back on itself to illustrate the basic concept of how Victoria could at some points be on the north side of the river. However, as I hope to demonstrate, this diagram does not take account of the other specific topographical features of Yooringa and its surroundings, inferable from the clues scattered throughout the remainder of the chapter and *Rigby's Romance* and, consequently, does not accurately describe Tom's path through it.

Given the above, we can further deduce that Point B of Map 1 must also be (1) downstream from the place where, in *Rigby's Romance*, Steve Thompson and Bob Dixon 'are camped at Cameron's Bend, down from Waterton's pub' (RR 7), 'half a mile along the line of fence' (RR 34) and (2) at a point where the river has taken a bend and flows west-east for at least half a

mile ('for there was the setting sun, blazing through a gap in the timber, and its mirror reflection stretching half a mile of dazzling radiance along a straight reach of the river' (*SIL* 99/124)). This means, I think, that Point B must be either level with or slightly further to the east than Thompson and Dixon's riverbank camp. At this stage of his odyssey, Tom imagines he is at something like point B₁, having assumed that the river flowed relatively directly to that point after passing Cameron's Bend (shown as a dotted line across the river), and completely overlooking the fact that from Cameron's Bend, the river 'swept away miles to the north, and again approached the road about two miles westward, thus forming a fine bend, mostly inaccessible to loafing sheep, by reason, of billabongs, lagoons, and swamps' (*RR* 49–50).

Incidentally, sunset on 9 November 1883 was 6.39 pm,³ so Tom's mile and a half journey probably took some 30 to 40 minutes at a speed of 2¼–3 miles per hour. Twilight on this date ended at 7.06 pm, which is consistent with Tom's statement that 'By the time I had induced [Pup] to take the water and rejoin me, the short twilight was gone, and night had set in, dark, starless, hot, and full of electricity' (*SIL* 100/125).

From Point B, Tom, as he imagines, 'start[s] northward for the [NSW] river road' (*SIL* 100/125; my emphasis) but 'after half an hour's gliding through heavy forest and cleaving [his] way through spongy river beds, and circling round black lagoons' (*SIL* 100/125) he finds himself at point C, with 'the river on my right, with a well-beaten cattle-track along the bank' (*SIL* 100/125). By now, the time would be around 7.45–8.15 pm and Tom thinks that he must be somewhere near point C₁ and that, 'by keeping straight on, I must soon strike the old horse-paddock fence, where the splitters used to keep their bark; and in an hour and a-half more, I would be at my camp' (*SIL* 100/125).

Tom, in his half an hour of gliding, cleaving and circling, is unlikely to have gone more than a mile and a half to two miles in that time. Because we know that the river 'swept away miles to the north and again approached the road about two miles westward,' it means that he must have encountered the river either (1) within the first mile or two of its sweep north (Point C₀), or (2) within the last mile or so of its return approach to the road (Point C). However, because we subsequently learn that he reaches the Victorian river road, after going along the cattle track for only half a mile ('After half a mile, the cattle-track intersected a beaten road . . . ' (*SIL* 101/126)), it must be the latter (ie Point C). (Incidentally, Tom would have been in for a very long walk (and night) if he had reached Point C₀ and then followed the river!) Nevertheless, in his attempt to navigate a way north in the dark, (if my understanding of the geography is correct) he has actually ended up going a little over 2 miles to the west! Therefore, it is likely that he has been wandering for slightly more than half an hour—of course, there were no stars by which he could judge the time or direction!

We also now know that he cannot have reached a point beyond Quarterman's farmhouse (nor indeed Andy Glover's campfire) because, as already highlighted above, we are told (in several places in both *Rigby's Romance* and *Such Is Life*) that Quarterman's farm is two or three miles to the west of the Farmers' Arms and Cameron's Bend, placing them beyond the point where the river approaches the road on its return. However, we are also told that Quarterman's place and Andy Glover's campfire are about three quarters of a mile to the north of the river road while still being on the Victorian side of the river (*SIL* 113/141). This seemed to me an irreconcilable inconsistency: some clues appeared to suggest that the point at which the river approaches the road and the cattle track intersects the road must be to the west of Quarterman's farmhouse, while others that it must be to the east. My inability to resolve

this paradox was eventually overcome when it finally (after 40 years!) occurred to me that the river, having approached the river road about two miles to the west of the Farmers' Arms, must then immediately turn north again and pass Quarterman's farm to the east, before turning west again about a mile and a half north of Quarterman's house. This is where, the following day, Tom flees the scene of his incendiarism of Quarterman's haystack: 'Crossing the dry place in the lagoon, I dived into the whipstick scrub and turned northward . . . it was about a mile and a half northward to the river . . .' (*SIL* 120/150). Here he meets the duck shooter, who punts him across to the New South Wales side of the river.⁴

Of course, Tom in his foolishness commits two fundamental errors in all this. Firstly, regardless of the direction that the river is flowing, or the position of the sun, moon or stars, whether overcast or clear sky (or any other self-serving justification Tom might come up with to try and hide his obtuseness), he should have realised that if he swam to the riverbank on his right hand side as he faced downstream, he would unfailingly have ended up on the NSW side. Even Pup knew this and instinctively returned to the same side of the river that he had originally left ('a little learning is a dangerous thing . . .' perhaps). Secondly, having done that, and knowing he was on the NSW side (and even if he was mistaken in thinking this), all he then needed to do was make his way back upstream along the river bank, with the river on his right, for the one and a half miles the log had carried him downstream and he would have been back at the splitters' crossing. (Even in the dark, Tom could easily have tested the direction of the current by dipping the end of a loose branch, or even his hand, into the river and feeling which way it was drawn.) From there it would have been a simple matter to retrace the nearly six miles back to his camp. There was absolutely no need or good reason for his plan to 'start northward for the river road, which [he] purposed following eastward to where the pad branched off, and then running the latter to [his] camp' (*SIL* 100/125). Rather ridiculously, he adopts this correct option only once he finally encounters the river again after wandering around in the dark; but by then it is too late and, because of the flawed logic of his first decision, he has 'shunted [his loco] on to the wrong line' (*SIL* 98/122).

As mentioned above, after encountering the cattle track by the river and then following it from his true position (Point C), along the bank of the river, he finds that, after only half a mile, he has reached a beaten road. Tom makes his way along this road which clearly does *not* (in contradistinction to Croft's interpretation) 'run along the banks of the Murray closely following its meanders' (*LOTC* 157). Because he is now heading westwards and therefore going broadly downstream towards Echuca, the stragglers from the Sunday school picnic whom he encounters coming the other way must be heading eastwards, *upstream and away from* Echuca, rather than 'downstream to Echuca' (*LOTC* 157), either back to Yooringa or perhaps even further upstream, to Lower Moira and possibly even Barmah.

Eventually, he recognises one of those stragglers as Archie M____, Superintendent of the E____ Sunday School and, at this point, having earlier been informed by the swagman Andy (Andrew Glover), that Archie and his girl had been going to a picnic that day, suddenly realises exactly where he is—on the Victorian River Road between Echuca and Yooringa and that he has been heading west rather than east. He realises that to get back to his camp: 'According to my best calculation I could make, I had ten or twelve miles of country to recross, besides the river.' (*SIL* 107/133). In other words, he has reached a point approximately two to four miles west of Quarterman's place and four to six miles west of the Farmers' Arms Hotel. It is then, as he retraces his steps, that he eventually spots the light of what turns out to be Andy Glover's campfire, adjacent to Quarterman's place.

Problems with Locating Fictional Yooringa in the Real World

While a detailed examination of maps of the Murray River between Echuca and Albury reveals that there is no actual location that fully matches the geographical features of Yooringa and its surrounding countryside, Map 2 shows that stretch of the Murray (bordering the parishes of Kanyapella and Moira) which seems to me to come closest.⁵ However, Furphy seems to have ‘imagined’ this stretch of the river and its surrounds on a far larger scale than actually exists, effectively inserting a fictional stretch of the Murray some twenty miles wide from east to west between the real parishes of Kanyapella and Lower Moira:

- Even though Yooringa is said to be ‘thirty odd miles’ (RR 5) from Echuca (see below for more about this) and even though, in reality, Barmah is only 26 miles from Echuca via the Victorian River Road route, it is unlikely that Yooringa lies beyond Barmah because, beyond Lower Moira (five miles south of Barmah), the river broadly runs north-south for over 22 miles, so that it is some 41 miles from Echuca before you reach the point where the river’s orientation changes to East-West. Moreover, beyond Barmah, going upstream, there is very little settlement near the river before Bearii which is over 50 miles from Echuca and in any case one wouldn’t follow the river road to get there;
- Yooringa cannot be Barmah itself because (1) in *Rigby’s Romance*, Steve Thompson refers to stopping at Barmah (RR 68) and it is clear that it is a quite separate place, albeit reasonably close to Yooringa; (2) if it was Barmah, the splitters living in the horse paddock hut are unlikely to have needed a canoe to cross the river for rations because, with Barmah being a recognised river crossing point, they could readily have used the punt which had been in operation since prior to the town of Barmah being surveyed in 1866; (3) Since Tom’s camp is located 6 or so miles east of Yooringa on the NSW side of the river, Yooringa must be located on a stretch of the river where, for 6 miles upstream, the river runs broadly east-west. However, upstream from Barmah the river runs broadly north-south as noted above;
- As mentioned earlier, at the beginning of Chapter III of *Such Is Life*, while Tom is at his camp on the north side of the river, he sees the swagman, Andy Glover ‘approaching from the west—that is, coming up the river’ (SIL 84/105). Tom asks Andy if he was coming from Moama (SIL 91/114). Moama is a town directly across the Murray River from Echuca and Tom’s question strongly suggests that Moama will be the nearest town to the west of Tom’s camp on the NSW side. If Yooringa was situated on the east-west stretch of the Murray to the north of Barmah, Tom would be more likely to have asked him if he was coming from Mathoura;
- In Chapter XIV of *Rigby’s Romance*, when Steve Thompson is called upon to tell the story of Dixon’s romance, he says: ‘The scene of it was on the Goulburn, twenty or thirty miles from here, and the girl was a State School teacher. She was boarding at the farm where Dixon paddocked his bullocks when he was pontooning logs five or six years ago . . .’ (RR 74) and further on: ‘Well,’ replied Thompson, ‘we were talking about that school-mistress of yours *over here* on the Goulburn . . .’ (RR 76; my emphasis). These two words are a strong indicator that their present location at Yooringa, while being on the banks of the Murray is, at the same time, reasonably close to the Goulburn River. If the camp were beyond Barmah, it is unlikely that Thompson would refer to the Goulburn as ‘over here.’

The scene of Dixon's romance on the Goulburn is most likely to be either at Undera or Mooroopna, but given how hard it is to map Furphy's fictional world using real world distances, it is impossible to say which of the two is the more likely. Both had schools established by 1876. Mooroopna, being the slightly older and larger settlement, is more likely to have had the pool hall. At this time, Shepparton was still smaller than Mooroopna;

- 'Why, he's at Yooringa, of course,' replied Mrs. Ferguson. 'Maginnis (late Waterton), Farmers' Arms, Yooringa.' 'Just a nice stage for me today,' I remarked; 'and there's sure to be grass in Cameron's Bend. I'm going to Yarrawonga, and I'll take this side of the river . . . ' (RR 2). If Yooringa were beyond Barmah, there would be no need for Tom to take the Victorian side of the river, as the route to Barmah and beyond is far shorter by crossing the river at Echuca, taking the NSW River Road (what is now the Old Barmah Road) on the New South Wales side towards Barmah and crossing the river back into Victoria using the punt at Barmah. The Old Barmah Road route to Barmah is about 16 miles. The Victorian River Road route (now the Stewarts Bridge Road, so named because you cross the Goulburn River at Stewart's Bridge on your way) to Barmah is about 25 miles;
- In the typescript version of Chapter V of *Such Is Life*, when Tom asks Sam Brackenridge whether Miss Vanderdecken 'soon got over her sickness,' he replies in the negative, adding that she had been: 'Fond o' goin out in the buggy. Every afternoon, for the last week, they'd git me to take them for a drive up the river as fur as Boileau, or p'r'aps as fur as the Goulb'n bridge' (TS 524). This is almost certainly a reference to the bridge that crosses the Goulburn River, near the point where the Goulburn flows into the Murray, and suggests that Furphy imagined Yooringa being situated beyond this point, not so close that it would be no further trouble to go the extra distance, but also not so far that it was at least worth starting out on the journey in the first place;
- It appears that Echuca is Rigby's 'home base' and he has his mail directed there even when he is travelling around the district. Accordingly, it would make sense that Yooringa, where he seems to spend a fair amount of time, is closer to Echuca than any other major regional town. If Yooringa lay beyond Barmah then one might expect Rigby to use a town like Numurkah (where the railway had reached by 1881) as his home base, and have his mail directed there, rather than Echuca. In that case, Kate Vanderdecken and Artemesia Flanagan would more likely have been directed, by those familiar with Rigby's movements, to take the train to Numurkah and make further enquiry about him there. Even Mrs Ferguson, of the Echuca Coffee Palace speaks familiarly of the Farmers' Arms, so it would seem to be relatively near.

If we accept that, notwithstanding the problem of its distance from Echuca, Yooringa cannot be located beyond Lower Moira, then it would seem it can only be somewhere on the Murray between the point where the river road crosses the Goulburn river and Lower Moira, since between these two points, the river does flow broadly east-west. However, there are only two places along this stretch where there are bends in the river which result in a temporary west-east flow, and, on a number of grounds, neither of these is very satisfactory as being the location of Cameron's Bend:

- In both cases the stretch is less than 200 yards, nowhere near the half-mile stretch described in *Such Is Life* (SIL 99/124). (As best I can tell, between Echuca and

Yarrowonga, there is only one point where the Murray runs west-east for about half a mile, and that is near Koonoomoo, midway between Cobram and Tocumwal, over 65 miles from Echuca even by the most direct route;

- In neither case does the river match the description given in *Rigby's Romance* where, downstream from Cameron's Bend, it is said to have 'swept away miles to the north, and again approached the road about two miles westward' (RR 49-50);
- The more westerly of the two is located about 14 miles from Echuca, but at this point the road towards Echuca starts to run more north-south than east-west and the Murray and Goulburn Rivers are so close together here that there is insufficient land between them for there to be the number of settlers' homes and properties that are mentioned as Tom makes his way down the river road during the night;
- The more easterly stretch is slightly better placed. There is a little more room for settlement and the road does run east west at this point, but it only extends for a mile to the east before both it and the river turn towards Barmah to the north, whereas Tom's camp on the river is located *six* miles east of Yooringa.

At this point, it is worth saying a bit more about the distance from Echuca to Yooringa:

- In Chapter I of *Rigby's Romance*, Tom says 'it was getting on for nine o'clock when I sat down to breakfast with Mrs. Ferguson' (RR 1). After breakfast he engages in some 'frivolous conversation' (RR 3), before setting off on his journey. So, it seems probable that he left Echuca at about 9.30 am at the earliest. After cantering 'a mile, or better' (RR 4), he is overtaken by the buggy and pair, with Kate, Artemesia and Sam on board, so it is likely that the buggy party left Echuca about fifteen minutes after Tom, say 9.45 am. When they finally reach Yooringa, Tom describes Kate as having, 'seven hours deposit of dust on her features' (RR 25), indicating her total journey time, and thus revealing an arrival time of about 4.45 pm. Tom says that his 'whole day's journey was thirty-odd miles' (RR 5). However, at one point during the journey, after having first left 'Echuca twenty miles behind' (RR 4) and then subsequently having ridden 'half a mile further on' (RR 5) and then a further half mile to where the tracks rejoined, he advises the buggy party that Yooringa is still 'twelve or fifteen miles' (RR 6) away, thus making Yooringa, according to Tom, somewhere between 33 and 36 miles from Echuca, and seemingly providing greater clarity to the odd bit of 'thirty-odd miles' (assuming, of course that we can rely on Tom to be accurate about this);
- During the journey, Tom stops for 'half an hour dredging Pup all over with insecticide, and another half-hour in the interminable work of carving a stockwhip handle' while at the same time the buggy party 'had been stopping for lunch' (RR 5). Tom also meets Steve Thompson along the way and chats for some 5-10 minutes (RR 7), and after some further conversation (5 minutes or so) with Sam, Kate and Artemesia, Tom takes over the reins of the buggy (RR 21) to allow Sam to ride Cleopatra. So, allowing for about 1 hour 15 minutes of stoppages, Tom's actual travelling time is about 6 hours (7¼ hrs minus 1¼ hrs) which equates to an average speed of between 5½ and 6 mph which, I believe, is very realistic. In this regard I note that for 2/3 of the journey (4 hours) he was riding Cleopatra, alternating cantering (typically 12 mph) and walking (say 4 mph) (RR 4) and for the final third in the buggy (2 hours—we know it was this long because 'for two full hours it was vouchsafed to [Sam] to avail himself of a peerless kangaroo dog and a loose pack-horse, not to speak of the daisy he was riding [Cleopatra]' (RR 23)) it is likely that the pair of horses would have 'kept up the same slow, uniform,

slinging trot' (RR 4) (say 8 mph) of the first part of the trip, alternating with stretches of walking;

- When Tom finally heads down to the camp on Cameron's Bend the sun is 'still half an hour high' (RR 34). In April 1884 when the events of *Rigby's Romance* take place (and based on a possible date of Monday, 14th April 1884 (see Problems with dating the events of *Rigby's Romance* below), sunset at this latitude was about 5.36 pm, so Tom must leave the pub at about 5.00 pm. Since he must have arrived at Yooringa at about 4.45 pm, this would leave only about 15 minutes between his arrival at the hotel and his departure. During this time (1) Tom unloads the buggy and shows the ladies to the landlady (say, five minutes); (2) the ladies wash and change (while Tom 'relieves Bunyip of his load' (RR 26), converses with Fritz and Dixon in the bar, and then with Rigby); (3) Artemesia is introduced to Rigby involving 'three minutes' desultory conversation' (RR.31); and finally, (4) they join Kate ('exquisitely lovely in a simple dress of creamy white' (RR 31)) in the parlour where Tom 'remained only five or ten minutes' before retiring 'with ceremony' (RR 32). Given the durations of (1), (3) and (4), this leaves virtually no time for (2), and surely not enough time for the ladies. Of course, if this had occurred on 9 January 1883, when this episode was originally written as Chapter V of *Such Is Life*, sunset would have been at 7.21 pm, and so Tom would have headed down to the camp at about 6.50 pm. Assuming that Furphy did not make any changes to the details of the length and duration of the journey from Echuca to Yooringa when recasting Chapter V into *Rigby's Romance* (the original manuscript version of this section is missing, I believe), this would have been about two hours after his arrival at Yooringa and the ladies would have had a good (and decidedly more satisfactory) 1½ hours to settle in, unpack, wash and change their clothes.

Problems with Dating the Events of *Rigby's Romance*

The events in the original Chapter V of *Such Is Life* take place on Wednesday 9 January 1884. In the typescript version of this chapter, in describing the events of that night, at the point where Lushington leaves the gathering, Furphy refers to 'the dull, declining, gibbous moon' (TS 506). According to lunar tables, on that date the moon was waxing, midway between half-moon (6 January) and full moon (13 January) so indeed would be gibbous. Moonrise on that date was 3.48 pm and moonset at 1.27 am the following morning. Accordingly, Lushington's departure was probably sometime between midnight and 1.30 am and Furphy's text is broadly consistent with the actual phases of the moon.

However, at some point Furphy has ruled out 'the dull, declining, gibbous moon' in the typescript and replaced it, in pencil, with 'By this time, a sickly half-moon had risen above the river timber eastward: & the stars indicated 1/2 1.' Presumably, the mark-ups were done after Furphy had decided to replace the entire original Chapter V with a new chapter. Accordingly, it would seem that, in preparing the text for publication as a separate work, he rescheduled these events to a different date, and perhaps used his *Letts Pocket Diary's* lunar tables to match the moon's phases and movements with the selected date. What this new date was is not known, but it would seem that, at some point he rescheduled again, because we find in Chapter XLII of *Rigby's Romance* that he has made a further change. The final text reads: 'By this time a sickly half-moon was past the zenith, and the stars indicated half-past one or thereabout' (RR 226).

Tom tells us that the events of *Rigby's Romance* took place in 'the April of '84' (RR xvii). Referring to the lunar tables for 1884, we find that the days on which the moon was past the zenith at 1.30 am (while still appearing in the night sky) were from Sunday 6 to Sunday 13 April. However, these are the days either side of the full moon (10 April) when the moon would more accurately be described as waxing and waning gibbous respectively, rather than half-moon. Half-moons in April 1884 occurred on Thursday 3 April (when it set at 11.57 pm) and Saturday 19 April (when it rose at 11:21 pm the night before).

In Chapter I of *Rigby's Romance*, Mrs Ferguson tells Tom that she hasn't seen Rigby for 'seven weeks come Friday' (RR 1). Accordingly, this conversation surely must have taken place earlier in the week than Friday and probably not Thursday since, in that case, she would most likely have said 'seven weeks tomorrow.' She also says that Rigby 'won't be leaving [Yooringa] till next Monday at the inside' (RR 3). (That same evening Sam overhears Rigby saying that 'he'd be goin' to Echucar in a week for good' (RR 255), which suggests that she was speaking on or after the Monday before Rigby was likely to return. Taking these two statements together, it would seem most likely that the events in *Rigby's Romance* occurred on either a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, with a leaning towards Monday, based on Rigby's statement.

Matching these days against the dates when the moon was past the zenith and closest to a half moon would suggest that the date is Monday 7 April. Nevertheless, the drawback to this hypothesis is that this date is closer to the full moon than the half moon and the moon was only an hour from setting (in other words it seems to fit the original typescript description, 'the dull, declining, gibbous moon,' far better than the final text.)

On the other hand, if we make allowance for an error in Tom's reading of the stars, and assume that it was closer to 2.30 am when Lushington left the camp, this would bring Monday 14 April into consideration (moonrise: 8.00 pm, set 9.27 am, zenith 2.21 am). While still far from being a half-moon, it is marginally closer to it than that of 7 April and could be more appropriately described as 'past the zenith' rather than 'descending.' On Tuesday 15 April the moon didn't reach its zenith until 3.08 am, and on Wednesday, 3.55 am, producing, in each case, too great a discrepancy to make allowance for.

Noting the folk wisdom that claims that rain follows the full and new phases of the moon, Mrs Maginnis's question the following morning—'Think we'll get some rain with the change of the moon?'—seems to suggest that the full moon is past, rather than approaching, lending greater support for a date of Monday 14 April 1884.⁶

Conclusion

Furphy appears, on the face of it, to have gone to extraordinary lengths to provide, within the texts of *Such Is Life* and *Rigby's Romance*, numerous and apparently precise clues ('the minutest detail of occurrence and conversation') about the geography, topography, distances, dates and times in, over, on and at which the events in these works take place, with the promise that the 'observant reader' will be afforded, for his or her attention to detail, 'a fair picture of Life, as that engaging problem has presented itself to me' (SIL 2/2). As I examined the text searching within the minutest detail for the clues that would enable me to draw a fair and accurate map of Yooringa and to locate it exactly within the real world, I found that, while I was progressively able to gain a better understanding of these things, nevertheless I remain confronted with the likelihood that, despite my journey, my map of Yooringa and

surrounds is only a reasonable approximation, that the purpose of many of the clues is for the internal logic of the narrative and to provide a veneer of verisimilitude, and that the exact location of Yooringa, although narrowed down to a finite area, is ultimately unreconcilable with the real world.

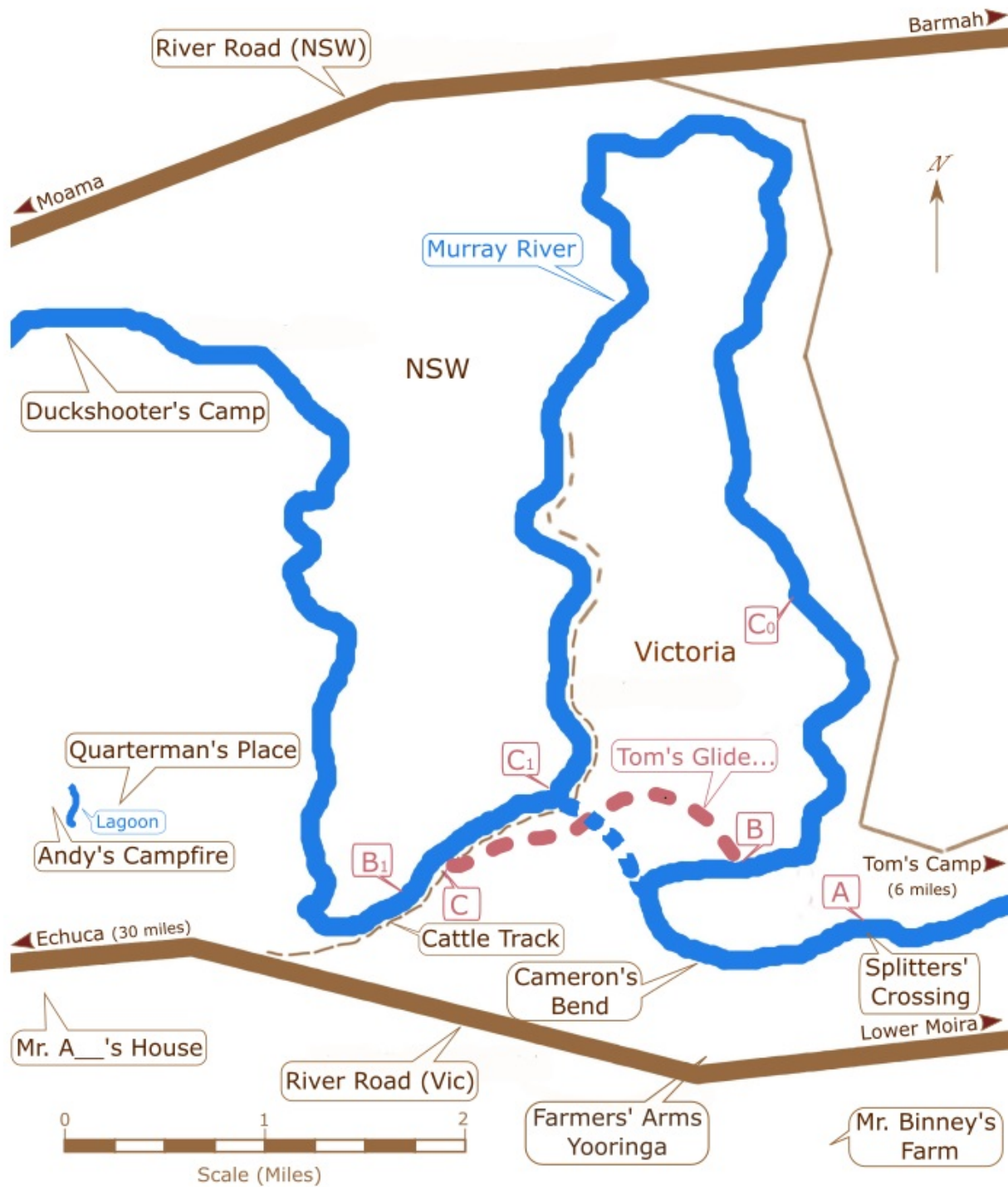
I suspect that Julian Croft is correct when he raises the possibility

that Furphy wanted us to be aware of the elaborate joke of *Such Is Life*, that neither fiction nor fact are real—that for any writing such is not life. A reading of this kind depends on working out the elaborate strata of the text, and recognising that each level of occupation contaminates the one above it or below it, until it is uncertain how the reader should position herself to the regressive fictional and meta-fictional levels. Perhaps the only position to take is one of constant scepticism, not of the text but of one's own capacity for making it an unresolvable mirage, a delusion . . . (LOTC 79)

Without wishing to overstate the significance of this, it seems, then, that I have been caught in Furphy's trap—a web of clues which reinforce one of Furphy's main themes—the elusiveness or illusion of Absolute Truth, the limits of human knowledge and understanding, and the difficulty of getting accurate information, including the difficulty arising from self-deception or the deceptions of others, either deliberate or unintentional.

Some of the difficulties in reconciling the fictional world of the novels with the real world seem more likely to have arisen from some carelessness on Furphy's part, firstly while performing major surgery on his original version of *Such Is Life* and later when reshaping the original Chapter V into *Rigby's Romance*. Funnily enough, by a strange irony, the dislocation of Chapters III and V of the original *Such Is Life* into two separate works, only goes to reinforce or emphasise the point: Now, it is not enough to read *Such Is Life* alone—one needs must also read *Rigby's Romance* and, even then, that may not be enough for complete understanding. Perhaps Furphy appreciated the irony of such a fate for his work.

But clearly this does not account for all the difficulties. Even if I have identified all the clues in the text (and that is far from certain), and have interpreted them aright (correctly identifying Furphy's slip-ups, and deciphering Tom's concealments, misdirections, deceptions and obfuscations, both deliberate and unintentional), would that still be enough to enable me to establish a completely accurate map, a single version of the truth? Or is such a goal illusory? Has Furphy provided sufficient clues within the texts, and are all the clues provided internally consistent and reconcilable with the real world, whether deliberately or unintentionally? Are there other possible interpretations based on the clues? Am I, like Tom, floundering around in the dark, seeing the world through a glass darkly, my 'blind and naked Ignorance' exposed? Of course, in Chapter III, revealing, as it does, Tom's foolishness and consequent misadventure, Furphy's joke is predominantly on Tom. But is Furphy (or even Tom) also playing a game with me, the self-proclaimed 'observant reader,' lured into the search through a false promise—so that, in the end, despite all the evidence available, all the clues provided by both Tom and Furphy at different levels, there can be no clear-cut answer and the reader must remain 'a seasoned speculatist?' Am I (are we all) not also a bit like Andy Glover, 'a bit hard o' hearin',' (SIL 92/115) and 'eyes is none o' the best' (SIL 93/116)?



Map 1: The landscape of Yooringa and surrounds—the setting for Chapter 3 of *Such Is Life*, showing the route Tom Collins follows.



Map 2: Murray River between Kanyapella and Lower Moira.

NOTES

¹ For references to *Such Is Life*, the first page number refers to the Annotated 1999 (and original 1903) edition, the second, to that of 1944.

² Throughout Chapter III, Tom conceals Mr Quarterman's full name, and refers to him throughout as 'Mr. Q ___' and to his daughter as 'Miss Jemima' or 'Jim.' Towards the end of the chapter Tom returns to Mr Q ___'s place to retrieve his kangaroo-dog, Pup, and it is eventually Jemima who returns it to him. However, at the beginning of Chapter 4, Furphy provides the single clue which fully identifies Mr Q ___ when Tom lets slip: 'And something tells me that Jim Quarterman is not likely to forget a certain cavalier who called one day about a dog' (*SIL* 131–32/164). It only takes one small slip to reveal all to the observant but perhaps Tom already knew that.

³ All times are Local Mean Time. The following sources were used for calculating all sun and moon rising and setting times: Geoscience Australia National Mapping Division's astronomical calculators at <https://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/astronomical>; Sun and Moon calculators at <https://www.timeanddate.com/>. The coordinates for Lower Moira were used in the calculations as the most suitable proxy for Yooronga: Lat=-36°04'00" Long=+145°00'00", UTS Offset = + 9h:40m.

⁴ Interestingly, in the typescript version of Chapter V of *Such Is Life* the river's approach to the road is given as 'four miles westward' (*TS* 405) which would produce a very different map, one in which the river did in fact reach the river road to the west of Andy Glover's camp and Quarterman's place—but this would have meant that Tom would have had to have covered at least 4 miles in his half-hour glide through the forest from point B until he reached the cattle track—clearly unachievable. Unfortunately, Furphy discarded most of the typescript pages for Chapter III of *Such Is Life*, so it is not possible to determine whether the above change was an isolated case of correcting an earlier oversight, say, or whether there were a series of other subtle changes to the text reflecting an overall re-imagining of the landscape.

⁵ Map 2 is a merging and annotation of sections of the following cartographic material drawn and reproduced at the Dept. of Crown Lands and Survey, Melbourne:

- Parish of Kanyapella, Counties of Rodney and Moira, 1920.
- Parish of Moira, County of Moira, 1931.

⁶ I wonder about the phrase 'sickly half-moon.' Does sickly refer to its colour or luminosity (as in 'sickly' = 'wan' or 'pale') or to its shape (as in 'sickly' = 'sickle-like,' or 'sickle-shaped' suggesting the moon was just short of a genuine half-moon, in that it still had a slight crescent or sickle shape)? If the latter, the days in April 1884 when the moon would have had this shape are Wednesday 2 April and Sunday 20 April. Of these two days, only 2 April falls within the Monday-to-Wednesday window postulated, but on this day the Moon rises at 12:25 pm (in the afternoon) and sets at 10.56 pm, so it fails the 'past the zenith at 1:30' test. If a pale half-moon is meant, then the half-moon on Thursday 3 April rises at 1.16 pm and sets at 11.57 pm, also failing this test.

WORKS CITED

- Croft, Julian. *The Life and Opinions of Tom Collins: A Study of the Works of Joseph Furphy*. St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1991. [LOTG]
- Furphy, Joseph. *The Annotated Such Is Life*. Revised 2nd edition. Ed. Frances Devlin-Glass, Robyn Eaden, G. W. Turner, Lois Hoffmann. Sydney: Halstead P, 1999. [SIL]
- _____. *Such Is Life*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1944. [SIL]
- _____. *Such Is Life*, Typescript, 1898. Joseph Furphy Digital Archive. Ed. Roger Osborne. AustLit (www.austlit.edu.au), St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 2002. [Retrieved 27/11/2015]. [TS]
- _____. *Rigby's Romance*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1946 [RR].