

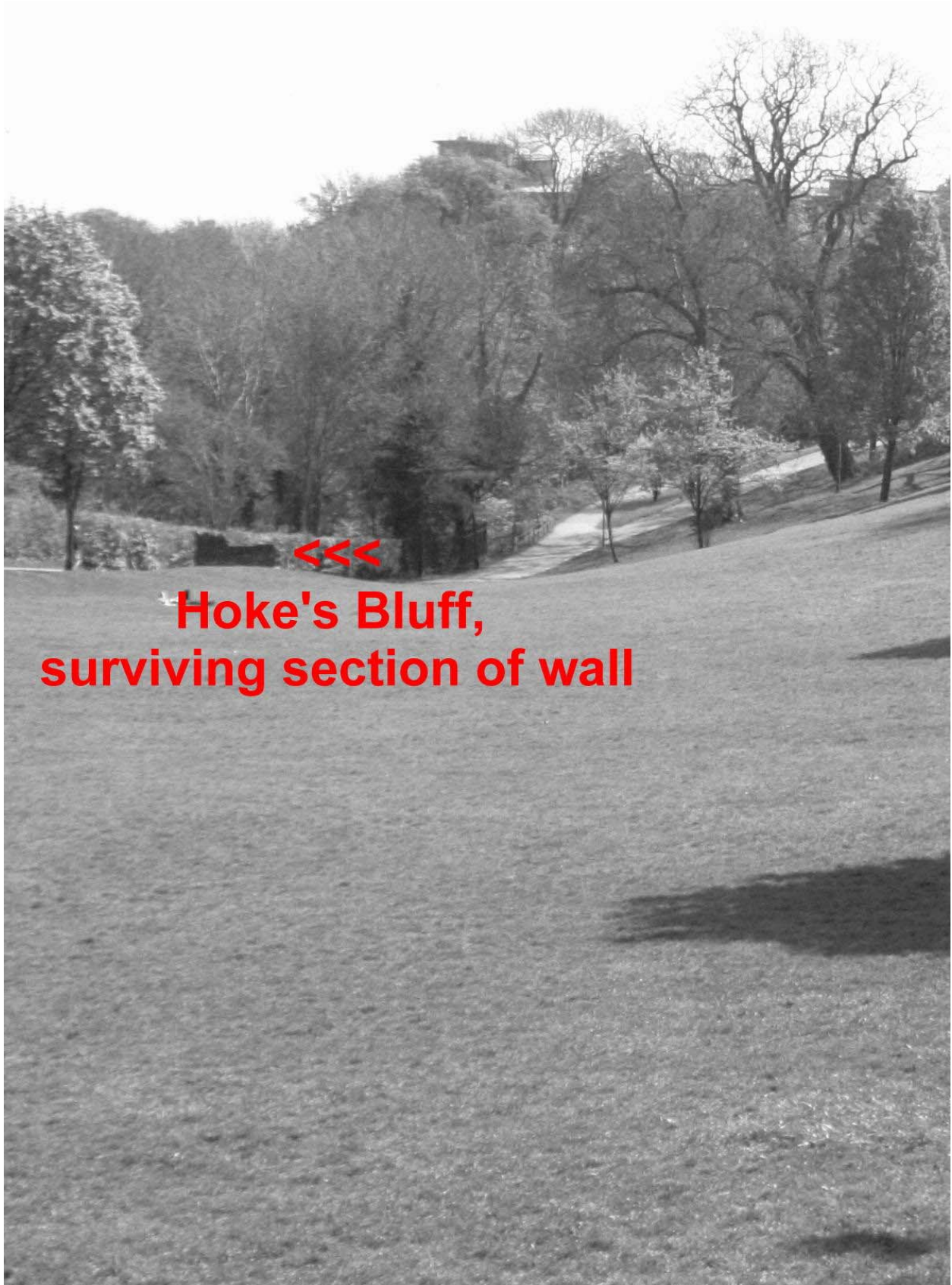
**History notes from Redland & Westbury Park - No. 32 – - Professor Henry Hoke's experiments in Redland Green**

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Henry Hoke, misunderstood genius, who's most famous saying was, "Well, it almost works. If I just adjust the...", had an invention that resulted in new sporting recreation for many. Living near Coldharbour Road he used to shortcut through the valley of Redland Green when visiting his friend, John, son of the retired Sheep Station owner, then living at Canowie House, (named after their Sheep Station). The icy winter of 1948 and Redland Green's precipitous slopes led to many falls and bruises before Henry reached the safety and warmth of his friend's house. For subsequent visits Henry had the idea of using skis, with predictable results; an even quicker descent and even more bruises! The owners of Redland Green Farm convinced that Henry's persistence would result in him being killed, had the stone wall at the bottom of the valley removed, except for the section adjacent to the pathway that came to be known as Hoke's Bluff.

Henry's problem was how to increase the friction between the skis and the icy slope. He applied his massive intellect and came up with what he thought would be a perfect solution; fix a series of very stiff bristled brushes to the bottom of the skis. His reasoning was that by shifting his centre of gravity, he could control the flexure of the bristles and the coefficient of friction and hence his rate of descent. Wrong, very wrong! Not surprisingly his descent to the valley bottom was even faster gaining even more bruises and abrasions en route.

Convalescing, he decided that it was time to relocate to warmer climes, eagerly accepting his friend's offer of a position as head fixer and mender on the family's sheep station at Canowie in Australia. But what of Henry's invention, like many of his inventions others were able to capitalise on his idea. By fixing the brushes to the ground instead of the skis, the idea of an all weather dry ski slope was born. But what became of Henry? In Australia, he established the Henry Hoke Tool company, and recently his inventive genius, whose work could have revolutionised the modern world was recognised by his neighbours who renamed their township after the Redland Green wall, Hoke's Bluff'. His exploits have been chronicled, as far as possible, by Mark Thomson, Director of the Australian institute of Backyard Studies,



Footnote: For a serious account of the naming of Canowie Road, go to Number. 23 – 'Australia & Colston meet in Redland', but to learn more about Henry's interesting life go to

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<http://www.ibys.org/> . Recently, (on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April?), a dedicated team reconstructed what was undoubtedly his greatest invention, the Random Excuse Generator. An engineering feat comparable to the Science Museum's reconstruction of Charles Babbage's difference engine a video of it operating can be seen at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_Cvlg\\_z1rM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_Cvlg_z1rM)