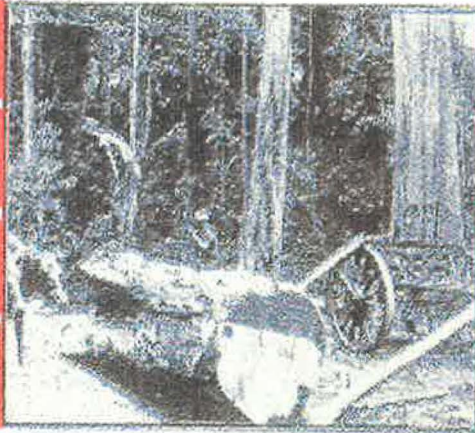


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100 YEARS  
IN  
WIDGEE  
SHIRE

IAN  
PEDLEY

# WINDS OF CHANGE

One hundred years in  
the Widgee Shire

Commissioned by the Widgee Shire Council in its centenary year.

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# WINDS OF CHANGE

One hundred years in  
the Widgee Shire



by Ian Pedley

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

While much has been written about Gympie, the gold town that saved Queensland from bankruptcy, little has been written about the surrounding Shire of Widgee. As this is the first major attempt to rectify the situation, much of the content of this book is the result of original research. Any interpretations made are mine, as are any errors which are possibly inevitable in a project of this size, though it is the author's sincere desire that these have been eliminated during an exhaustive process of checking and rechecking. Many parts of this book are based on interviews with Shire residents, particularly for the section on regional settlement, and it is quite possible that some of our noteworthy pioneers have been overlooked. Memories are not infallible and only a handful of Widgee's second generation settlers are left to tell the early stories. Any omissions are therefore inadvertent. My intention when starting this book was to both inform and entertain the reader. I hope I have managed a little of both. I am indebted to the Widgee Shire Council for choosing me to write this book for the Shire's centenary year. It would not have been possible without the interest and help of the councillors and the staff of the Widgee Shire and the Shire's residents whose hospitality has done Widgee's pioneers proud. Over the past year I have talked to hundreds of Shire residents. To name them all would be to start another major undertaking. They know who they are and I give them my thanks. My work was made easier through the assistance of the Gympie Times which gave me complete access to their files, by Queensland Newspapers which copied many of the photographs lent to me by Shire residents, by the John Oxley and State Archives Libraries in Brisbane, the Lands Office in Gympie and several other government departments. Finally my special thanks to Mrs. D. H. Lindsay for her invaluable support during my many weeks spent in the Shire during the researching of this book.

## **PART ONE: The Story of a Shire**

- 11. The Wide Bay Wilds
- 16. The Squatters
- 22. Nash to the Rescue
- 27. Birth of a Shire
- 33. The First Decade
- 39. The Convict Chairman
- 43. Gains and Losses
- 48. Drought and Disease
- 57. The Cattle Barons
- 72. War and Peace
- 82. War Again
- 89. From Borumba to Cooloola
- 106. Mary, Mary Quite Contrary
- 113. Calamity Coast
- 119. The Long Arm of Learning

## **PART TWO: Peoples and Places**

- 141. The Brisbane Road
- 148. The Northern Limits
- 156. Bushranger Country
- 163. Glastonbury
- 170. The Mary Street Farmers
- 179. The Mary Valley
- 203. The Town That Died
- 210. Land of the Tall Trees
- 216. The Tagigan Connection
- 227. What's in a Name?
- 231. Cooloola — Coast of Contrasts

## **PART THREE: Shire of Industry**

- 243. Forests — The Full Circle
- 263. The Lure of Gold
- 273. Land of Milk and Butter
- 284. From Harvest to Market

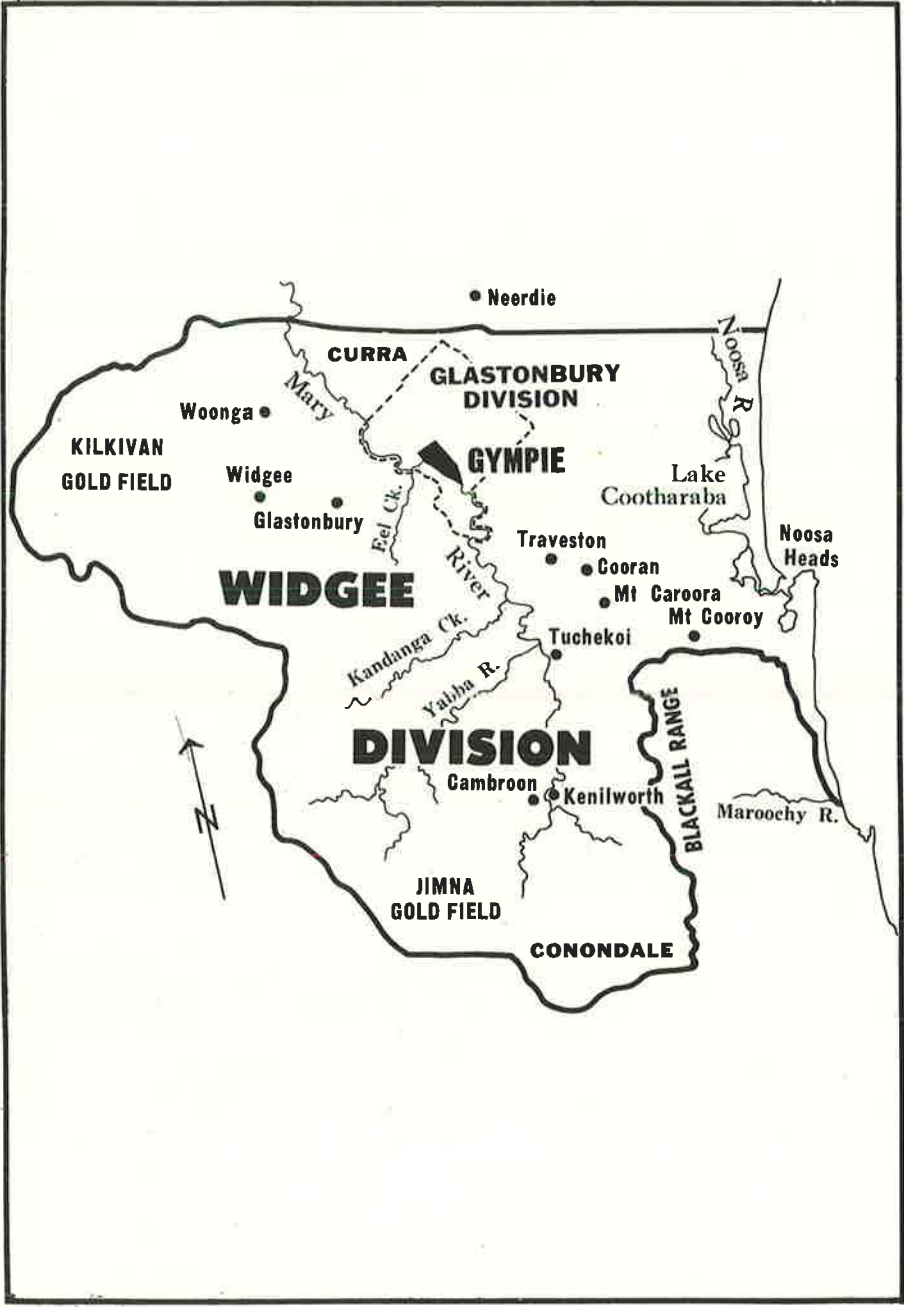
## **PART FOUR: The Second Century**



## PART ONE

### The Story of a Shire





## The Wide Bay Wilds

The winning of Widgee did not come easily. Riches it had aplenty. But they were not there just for the taking.

The land was a wilderness. And its tenants, tribes of warlike Aborigines, fought bitterly to keep out intruders.

These were the Wide Bay wilds. All harsh, forbidding country—from Widgee, the mountain of winds, down to the coastal plains of Cooloola.

Blood flowed on both sides, black and white, before an uneasy truce was reached. Inevitably the white man was the winner. He had come to carve out his destiny from the virgin forest land and the Aboriginal was forced to bow to his superior force of arms.

Sweat—the sweat of honest toil—earned the white pioneers their place on the land. Their axes hacked a living from the forests to clear the way for future towns and pastures.

Tears came later, tears of frustration and sorrow as nature showed its strength. Trickling streams and rivers sometimes turned to torrents, sweeping away in hours the work that had taken years.

Grit and determination saw Widgee's pioneers through flood, fire and famine. They were iron men with a will to win that would not be suppressed.

The first white men to this land came, saw and were not much impressed.

Seen from the coast fair judgment could not be passed. With the Endeavour hove to off Double Island Point on his voyage of discovery, Captain James Cook simply noted in his log of 18 May, 1770:

“The land hereabouts, which is of a moderate height, appears more barren than any we have yet seen on this coast and the soil more sandy, there being several large places where nothing else is to be seen; in other places the woods look to be low and shrubby, nor did we see many signs of inhabitants.”

He could not see, of course, the richly timbered hinterland or the fertile lands of the Mary River which were to form much of the Widgee Shire more than a century later.

Nor did he realise that this land was home for thousands of Aborigines of the Kabi and Wide Bay tribes.

More than half a century was to pass before white man ventured into these wilds. Even then it was as a last resort—flight into the unknown to escape the terrors and torments of the penal settlement at Moreton Bay.

Into this hostile country came men such as John "Moilow" Graham, an escaped Irish convict who lived for more than four years with the Kabis around Tewanin. He was adopted by the tribe and given a lubra wife. But on her death in 1833 he could stand no more and returned to the more civilised rigours of a life in chains.

And there were runaways like James "Durramboi" Davis and James "Wandi" Bracefell, who gave themselves over completely to the Aboriginal ways, hunting and fighting alongside the blacks until their liberation by explorer Andrew Petrie.

By 1840 the great land race in northern New South Wales—as Queensland then was known—had moved into top gear. Expectations were high and would-be graziers had no trouble in obtaining backing from wealthy southern interests. Following in the path of Patrick Leslie, the pioneers headed north with their great flocks and herds, skirting the prohibited 50-mile zone around the penal settlement of Moreton Bay and blazing their own trails in the search for new territory.

Among the vanguard were the famous Archer brothers—there were nine in all—who in 1841 squatted at Durundur run on the upper Brisbane River. Soon after, David Archer, Frederick Bigge and Colin MacKenzie crossed the difficult Conondale Range and came upon the headwaters of the unnamed Mary River. They worked their way downstream in search of grazing land for their sheep. But deciding the country was unsuitable they retraced their steps. It meant nought to them that they were probably the first free white men to enter the Mary Valley.

In May 1842 an expedition led by Andrew Petrie sailed into Noosa. With him were Andrew Stuart Russell, Joliffe, the Hon. Walter Wrottesley, five ticket of leave men from the penal settlement and two Brisbane Aborigines.

The Noosa natives told Petrie of a white man living with a nearby tribe and he penned a quick note for them to deliver. The recipient, "Wandi" Bracefell, was of two minds. He had no way of knowing that the chapter was being closed on Moreton Bay as a penal settlement. Dare he run the risk of being returned to the incarceration from which he had fled? Curiosity got his better and, spear in hand and nearly naked, he went to meet Petrie.

The Kabis called him Wandi, the great talker. Now he was tongue-tied. Fourteen years of running wild with savages had left him virtually speechless in his mother tongue. Gradually the words came back and, haltingly, he told his story.

He named the landmarks visible from a nearby vantage point, mountains such as Coolum and Cooroora—and Double Island Point where he said that Brown, first mate of the ill-fated Stirling Castle, had been killed and eaten by blacks.

Six years earlier the story of the Stirling Castle shipwreck, and the degradations of Mrs. Eliza Fraser in the hands of her primitive captors, had horrified the western world.

The Singapore-bound vessel foundered on Swain Reef, off Bowen, in 1836, the officers and crew set sail for Sydney in two lifeboats. Captain and Mrs. Fraser were in the smaller of the two boats launched from the wreck and somewhere out in the open sea, in that cockleshell of a boat, Mrs. Fraser gave birth to a child. It had no chance, lingered for a few hours before dying, and was buried at sea. Captain Fraser put in to Great Sandy Island (now Fraser Island) to find fresh water but he and the party were quickly overcome by some of the 2,000 blacks then inhabiting the area. The natives were cruel slavemasters. One day Captain Fraser weakened in his labours and was speared to death without warning in front of his horrified wife.

Mrs. Fraser was taken to the mainland and suffered a life of torment around Lake Cootharaba until her eventual rescue.

Wandi Bracefell, perhaps in hope of a full pardon, spun Petrie a tale of his personal heroism in the saving of Mrs. Fraser, claiming it was he who had led her to Lieutenant Otter's rescue party before returning to the bush. However, it appears it was actually the Irishman Moilow Graham who played the hero while Bracefell took no part in the drama at all.

Leaving his Noosa anchorage, Petrie sailed north to Tin Can Bay. There Russell was left to guard the vessel near Inskip Point while the others went off in search of water. Much to his consternation, the lone Russell saw a group of blacks approaching. In a moment of panic he overcharged his flint musket and loosed off a warning shot. Its main effect was to send him flying backwards into the sand. Fortunately, the blacks turned out to be cronies of Bracefell.

Again Petrie sailed north and became the first white man to enter the Mary River, known variously by the native tribes as Morrobocoola, Monoboola and Namboola. Not far from Bauple the party met James "Durramboi" Davis, who had been transported in irons from Glasgow at the age of 11.

After two years in the penal settlement at Moreton Bay he managed to escape and roamed for 14 years with the Wide Bay blacks. Russell later described the strange sight as Bracefell persuaded the suspicious Durramboi to give himself up:

"Derhamboi's chest was tattooed 'moolgarrah' fashion, i.e., horizontal scars parallel to each other; both showed scars of old wounds in the back and legs. The former had a spear through his thigh and the smash of a boomerang on the right knee. In the tension of their muscular frames these brands caught the eye, as we gathered nearer to put a stop to any active hostility. Derhamboi was the tallest—though not a tall man—and the best set up. Wandi slim and as hard as his own spear but much older than his opponent, who was about 30 years of age."

On returning to Moreton Bay, both men were given their ticket to leave, Davis to live for many years while Bracefell met an untimely death from a falling tree.

Joliffe had made the voyage with Petrie as overseer for John Eales, a wealthy grazier at Duckenfield on the Hunter River. Joliffe saw possibilities in the newly discovered land. Later that year he made his way overland to Tiaro with 20,000 sheep and several drays. His probable route was through Kilcoy, across the Jimna Range and down Yabba Creek to its junction with the Wide Bay River, as Petrie had named the Mary. The name was changed by Governor Fitzroy five years later in honour of his wife.

In November 1842, Russell with another white man, William Orton, and an Aboriginal boy, Jimmy, followed Joliffe's tracks. They found his sheep venture in a sorry state. Marauding blacks had killed some of his shepherds and forced him to withdraw from the outstations he had established.

It had not taken the blacks long to discover that the docile, woolly animals were much easier to catch than kangaroos, and they had dined royally at Mr. Eales' expense. To top it all off, the country was not really suited to sheep. Joliffe threw in the towel, handing over to a man named Last, but it was not long before he, too, pulled out.

When an expedition led by Dr. Stephen Simpson, Crown Lands Commissioner for Moreton Bay, reached Tiaro on 30th. March, 1843, the Eales experiment was in its death throes. The overseers had gone and fearful shepherds were guarding the remainder of the flock against further depredations.

Dr. Simpson's party, comprising the Rev. Eipper from the German mission station at Nundah, four mounted policemen and six convicts, had travelled down the Mary via the Hinka Booma flats (Kenilworth), the dray journey from Brisbane taking three weeks. Dr. Simpson was particularly taken with the land about the upper reaches noting that the "abundance of grass and the fine timber, particularly blackbut, iron bark and pine, gave the country a pleasing aspect." Dr. Simpson's purpose was to define the northern boundary of his land district—which was known as the "limit of colonisation"—and the boundary of the first electorate.

Where Joliffe and Last had failed, George Furber tried again, moving into Eales' deserted run. He too, was beaten by the blacks. One of his men, Barron, was murdered and Furber himself met the same fate a few years later.

It was hardly surprising then that other squatters gave a wide berth to so much of the fertile land beside the Wide Bay River. This inhospitable country fell within the official description of "unsettled lands" which squatters could occupy on a 14-year pastoral tenure. Rentals were set at the rate of £10 per annum for land with a carrying capacity assessed at 4,000 sheep, and an additional £2/10/- per annum for each additional thousand-head carrying capacity.

These were generous terms considering the vast tracts of lands open to squatters. But the big runs could not be established without men, and the word had got around.

The Wide Bay country was bad news, so much so that in December 1848 the "Moreton Bay Courier" felt compelled to lecture the 240 immigrants

of the Artemisia, the first goverment chartered vessel to bring British settlers direct to Brisbane:

“Among other mistaken notions that have entrance into the heads of the Artemisia people is the idea that the Wide Bay is so dangerous a locality that they are bound to avoid it. A strong repugnance exists to hiring for that district . . . it is not at all improved in character by the republication of certain affrays with the blacks which occurred there some six or seven years ago.”

# The Squatters

Uninviting and hostile this land might have been, but some men were equal to the challenge. These were the frontiersmen—mainly young, single, ambitious, hardy (some called them foolhardy) and imbued with the spirit of adventure.



J. D. MacTaggart

John David MacTaggart was such a man. Born at Campbelltown, Argyllshire in 1823, he had not long reached his majority when he had a chance meeting in Maryborough with James Sheridan.

Sheridan had been squatting on land around Running Creek where he had lost many of his sheep to marauding blacks. He dug in for two years or so but it was the last straw when the blacks butchered two of his shepherds and he pulled out. Somehow he convinced the young Scot of the potential of the land a few miles south of his Running Creek disaster.

MacTaggart and a bunch of shepherds drove a flock of sheep across to this promised land determined to stay whatever the odds. He did, pioneering the Kilkivan station, the first of the famous runs which later formed part of the Widgee Division, forerunner of the present Widgee Shire.



W. B. Tooth

Two young men of Kent — William Butler Tooth and his brother, Atticus—were of a similar ilk. They arrived in Sydney in 1839 to join their cousins of brewing fame. Fame and fortune beckoned in the north and sometime in the 1840s the two brothers travelled overland, their intended destination the Tiaro land which Eales had found so unrewarding. But their travels took them further west to greener pastures. In fact, they had discovered the country which was to become known far and wide as the Widgee run.

Not far behind them were the Swanson brothers—Alexander, James and John—who bedded their flock at Yabba station, said for many



Atticus Tooth

years to be the most inaccessible station in Queensland for anything on wheels. This did not deter the brothers who drove their sheep up from southern New South Wales and across the Jimna Range to their headquarters on upper Yabba (earlier Cedar Creek).

At the very head of the Mary River Donald Tuart McKenzie in 1851 took up the land rejected several years earlier by the Archers. McKenzie, who had been sheep overseer in the upper Brisbane Valley on Mr. Balfour's Colinton run, named his own station Conondale after the Conon, a village near his Scottish birthplace. This run later marked the southern extremity of the first Widgee division.

Further downstream a prominent Moreton Bay businessman, Richard Joseph Smith, was investing in the future. He took up the Hinka Booma flats and the valley of the Oubee Oubee (which appears variously in old records as Ouby Ouby, Ubi Ubi and Obi Obi). Durramboi Davis, who had known the Aboriginal warrior of that name, pronounced it Oobee Oobee.

Towards the coast, two of the pioneering Skyring brothers, Daniel and Zachariah, in 1853 took up three runs extending from the Blackall Range eastwards to Lake Weyba. Ten years earlier Thomas Archer had traversed this country north of the Maroochy in search of new grazing. It was too rough for his liking but the Skyings were undaunted and three years later were to add a fourth run, Pooreena, to the original three blocks called Whidlka (Tuchekoi), Canando and Yandina.

Unlike other squatters in the region the Skyings stocked their runs with cattle. But while the land could sustain many head of cattle, the dense scrub made mustering a problem.

Daniel and Zachariah had arrived from England in the Esther in 1833 with their father, Daniel Budd Skyring. He was one of the first free settlers in Brisbane and founded the Bee Hives general store and other businesses in the fledgling town.

Further north, on the east bank of the Mary, the scrublands sat begging until 1857 when Robert Glissons took up adjoining runs known as Traverston and North Traverston.

Completing the squatters circle, Walter Hay, a former Maryborough ferryman, took up Curra run in 1859 and over the following two years, Tagigan and Coutharaba runs west of Lake Cootharaba. The latter run had, in fact, been chosen but never occupied by Lieutenant Bligh, officer in charge of Native Affairs for Wide Bay. He called the run Caroora.

While the squatters virtually owned the Mary Valley in the early 1850s there were other white inhabitants—the prospectors.

A small notice in the "Domestic Intelligence" columns of the Moreton Bay Courier of 6 September, 1851 reported that Mr. J. C. Bidwell, the



Commissioner of Crown Lands for Wide Bay, had discovered gold "in that district between the waters of the Brisbane and the Mary, and that he had forwarded specimens to the Government, with an official request that a commissioner might be appointed. This statement is extremely probable, as Mr. Bidwell is known to be a good geologist and mineralogist, and as the locality indicated has recently been named by the Rev. W. B. Clarke, in a letter to a gentleman in Brisbane, as being likely to prove the richest goldfield in the country."

According to local history, Bidwell's find at Imbil Imbil was rushed by scores of diggers and a settlement of shanty huts sprang up almost overnight. A fortunate few were said to have struck it lucky but Mr. Bidwell's optimism was not justified, and the strike petered out after a few months. There is little documentation of such a rush, or of any significant finds at Imbil. At that time the Moreton Bay Courier was saying a major discovery seemed unlikely as "the plain fact is that no systematic and properly organised search has yet been made in this quarter."

Undoubtedly there were a number of prospectors in the Imbil area though their attention was soon switched further south.

The spotlight switched briefly to Widgee when a letter published in October 1851 from Mr. Thomas Jones, son of the member of Parliament for Stanley Borough, stated that gold had been discovered in the Widgee-Widgee mountains and that a bucketful of earth had yielded 30 per cent of gold.

Perhaps the writer was referring to one of the Tooth brothers, who earlier in the month reported having found a "small particle in a creek." Whatever the case, over the next year the prospectors concentrated instead on the Kilcoy, Nanango and Ipswich areas without much luck. By 1853 most had drifted down to what were known as the northern diggings in the New England area.

Certainly there was every incentive for prospectors to fossick closer to Brisbane. Local businessmen took up a subscription, with some pledging £100 each, as a reward for anyone finding gold worth working in the Darling Downs, Moreton Bay, Brisbane or Ipswich areas.

Poor Bidwell was no longer around to give further advice. In 1852 he was instructed to survey a road from Maryborough up the Mary River to Brisbane. On the way Bidwell sent most of the party back to Maryborough while he and a man named Slade continued on alone. Bidwell lost his compass and became hopelessly lost near the head of Obi Obi Creek. When he was found eight days later by friendly natives he was delirious and suffering from exposure. He did not fully recover and died the following year. There is no further record of Slade but one of the party sent back to Maryborough, George Dart, later claimed that Bidwell had found gold in a deep creek near the site of the future Gympie—15 years before the discovery of gold there by James Nash.

After the prospectors came the timber cutters, in a very small way at first. Official records of exports from the Mary River for the third quarter of

1853 included £26/5/- for 1,500 feet of cedar boards. Wool made up the bulk of the exports with 426 bales worth £11,107/10/- followed by 43 tons 2½ cwt of tallow (£1,522/10/-), 20,400 pounds of sheepskins (£510), 180 hides (£85/10/-) and two casks of tongues (£8). The statistics did not, however, reveal from what part of the Mary these goods had come.

The early timber cutters were a law unto themselves. Armed with a licence issued by the Bench of Magistrates in Brisbane, timber men could take their pick of any Crown land for an annual fee of £4 for cedar and pine or £2 for hardwood. They were not allowed to cut timber within two miles of any head station, but that was hardly any limitation.



William Suthers, a Mary River timbergetter who became a Mayor of Gympie.

Among the first to take out timber licences to cut cedar along the Mary River were the four Suthers brothers, Ted Butler and James Kitchen, Jim Connors and Frank Luck. Copson and Ponting, Denman and Wanner, the Elworthy brothers and the Mellor brothers.

The squatters and timbermen were in a constant state of war with the legions of nomadic Aborigines who saw the white man as a threat to their existence. Any lone European had to be on his mettle. The virgin bushland made excellent concealment for the blacks who found a white man's unguarded back an almost irresistible target. Many a lonely shepherd found a spear thrust through the side of his calico shelter in the dead of night.

While there was also a considerable degree of friendly existence, some white men often regarded the Aborigines as scarcely human and thought nothing of shooting them if they posed a threat, real or imaginary. Many shootings went unreported; the killing of an Aboriginal was not that important. The Aborigines eventually learned their spears were no match for the white man's musket and tended to keep their distance.

With the coming of the miners in vast numbers, the situation was reversed. While the white men slumbered peacefully on the goldfield at night, any Aboriginal who ventured too close was liable to be shot out of hand.

No place was safe from the black marauders in the early days. They could strike anywhere at any time. One such attack took place around 1850 at Woolooga where John Murray was trying to establish a run. Grim testimony of the deed was brought to light later through a scribbled message on a flyleaf torn from a novel. The sad message read: "Dear MacTaggart; make all haste. Frank is murdered, and a lot of sheep taken. Make haste J. Murray." Poor Frank, it turns out, was John Murray's brother.

It was on Woolooga run, after it became part of the Widgee consolidated holding, that two Widgee musterers, James Caulfield and Andrew Ogilvie, later found the rotting bodies of five blacks in a waterhole, each with a bullet hole through his forehead—either a reprisal killing by some unknown

whites, or the actions of some secret vigilantes. Widgee head station had waged its own war with the blacks, at least one shepherd being killed by the raiders and several more wounded.

Several Aborigines were killed—if not massacred—after a battle with police on Imbil Island, the land formed by the pocket of Yabba and Anabranck Creeks at Imbil. The trouble is believed to have started when a group of either Eumundi or Tewantin Aborigines camped on Imbil Island without permission. The Blackall Range marked the normal limit of their territory and to cross it they had to send a tribesman ahead with a message stick to seek permission from their neighbours. Apparently on this occasion the trespassers did not follow normal protocol and a battle broke out with the natives of the Imbil area.

A native police party under a white constable was sent to quell the disturbance. But on their arrival both warring tribes called a truce and turned jointly on the peacekeepers. In a fierce but one-sided battle, in which spears were no match for muskets, the police party killed several Aborigines and threw their bodies in a lagoon (just outside the present Imbil township on Imbil Island Road).

A number of whites were massacred on a station neighbouring Kenilworth about 1860. Charles Parkinson was joint owner of Kenilworth at the time and his daughter, the late Mrs. Frances Mary Western, later recalled why her father left the property: "Natives were the trouble, they liked fat cattle as much as the butcher did and began to kill and eat the best. Soldiers were sent from Brisbane but the blacks were much too clever to be caught. Smoke would be seen in the distance but when the soldiers reached the spot they found a good fire, where beef had been roasted, but they saw nothing but bones, the natives were miles away having been warned by one of them from a tall tree that redcoats were coming towards them. This occurred so often and all hands on a neighbouring station (with the exception of one little boy, who had crawled under a bed) were murdered. It was supposed the blacks heard a horseman coming and made off; anyway the child was saved."

Some time later a number of Aborigines were killed near Kenilworth in reprisal for some now-forgotten crime. The exact site of the massacre is no longer known, but for many years it was said no grass would grow on the spot.

Cannibalism also was commonplace among the Aborigines, according to Colin McKenzie Fraser, joint owner of Kenilworth with Mr. Parkinson. Testifying in 1861 before a select parliamentary committee on the Native Police Force and the conditions of Aborigines, he was asked how the natives singled out one of their own number to be eaten. "He is selected by a few," said Fraser. "They pitch upon him, and on the first opportunity they get him off his guard and knock him on the head."

Timbercutter Ebenezer Thorne wrote of instances in the Noosa area where the blacks had killed and eaten young children, sometimes through sheer hunger when game was scarce and once "because it was always crying

and was not a boy." Some people even claimed that during the bunya season the Aborigines' desire for flesh was so intense that they had to kill one of their young to satisfy their craving.

Yet another early massacre of blacks took place just south of Lake Weyba, a reminder of the deed being perpetuated through the name of Murdering Creek. According to some local legends the only black to escape the holocaust was the legendary King Tommy who dived into the water and hid beneath the surface, breathing through a straw before making his escape. Similar tales are told in other areas, however, and the authenticity of King Tommy's escape must be open to question.

Possibly the worst massacre of all in Widgee Shire took place on Amamoor Creek, with most of those killed being innocent victims. Like many similar incidents it is poorly documented, since no one really liked to openly boast of shooting men down in cold blood.

The massacre followed the killing of a shepherd on Manumbar station and the stealing of a flock of sheep. The Aboriginal marauders drove the flock nearly 30 miles east, firing the scrub behind them in an attempt to put any pursuers off their trail.

Apparently the shepherd's murder was not discovered for several days. When it was, a posse of white settlers and police, aided by a black tracker, followed the flock down to Amamoor Creek. There they found a large group of natives gorging themselves on the stolen sheep. Retribution was swift and ruthless. The Aborigines scattered but few escaped the avengers' bullets.

The tragedy of the massacre was that apparently none of those killed had taken any part in the Manumbar murder. They had merely been invited to the feast by the sheep stealers who themselves had taken their fill and moved on.

## Nash to the Rescue

In 1867 the infant Colony of Queensland was in dire financial straights. Two banks with which the Government had close connections—The Agra and Masterman's Bank of London and the recently established Bank of Queensland—had failed and closed their doors. The Government's coffers were empty and public works had ground to a halt. The army of unemployed navvies and immigrants in Brisbane had swelled to 2,000 and feelings were running high. Men fought over crusts of bread in the streets and there were dark threats against the Government. Who knows what would have happened but for the timely discovery of gold by an itinerant Englishman named James Nash.



James Nash

Nash, born in the Wiltshire village of Beanacre in 1834, sailed to Sydney at the age of 22. With pan and pick he drifted through the goldfields of the south without much success. Early in 1867 he moved to Queensland, first to Calliope and then to Nanango. Still the precious metal eluded him and in mid-August he decided to head further north to Gladstone.

The following few days were to prove a turning point in the history of Queensland.

Nash was on foot and travelling light with only a pick, a pan and a bedroll to encumber him. He was in no hurry and planned to prospect all likely sites along his route. Travelling via Mount Stanley he crossed the Jimna Range and spent a night at the Swansons' Yabba station.

Travellers in those days were always welcome to rest a while at the isolated homesteads which offered company and security from the nomadic savages.

Next day he worked his way down the range to an old shepherd's hut about 12 miles from Yabba and stayed the night there with two young men who were tailing cattle. They told him some gold had been found about three miles away on Bella Creek and the next day he panned the area. It yielded some encouraging colours, sufficient for him to return to the creek for a second look after a quick trip to Brisbane to buy a horse and rations. But the creek yielded no more than colours and Nash moved on to Imbil station where

he spent a night with the manager, Mr. Lamb, and Rees Howel, who was running the mail from Maryborough to Brisbane.

The next morning Nash came across the camp of a timber getter, Mr. R. J. Denman, on Amamoor Creek. He shared a billy of tea with Denman and a timber hauler named Wannell, who advised him how to reach the Traveston crossing on the Mary. Denman, later Crown Lands Ranger at Maryborough, maintained until his death that he directed Nash to the spot where he found gold with a gentleman's understanding that the two would share the spoils of any significant find. Nash always denied this.

After leaving Denman's camp, Nash crossed to Traveston and stayed there with Harry Best and a man named Ramsey, both stockmen for Thomas Powell who held the station. According to Traveston legend, Nash threw a line into a creek there and dined on mullet that night.

Heading north again he crossed the Six Mile Creek—which he said was the place Denman had advised him to prospect—but deemed it unworthy of his attentions. Then, near the foot of Caledonian Hill in Gympie, he found gold. First, just a trace; the next day an ounce and three dwts before he broke his hammer-headed pick.

Nash made a quick trip to Maryborough for repairs and exchanged his gold for one pound in cash and two pounds worth of tools and rations. Then it was back to the scene of his find. Working his way up towards the site of the present Gympie Civic Centre he was rewarded with 75ozs of gold in six days.

The gully where Nash worked was on the outer limits of the Widgee run. But not a stockman or a black disturbed him as he bent to his work, his excitement mounting as each panload of dirt yielded its riches. The only building within miles was a rough shepherd's hut, deserted at the time.

With his 75 ounces of gold, Nash returned to Maryborough in mid-October, camping on the way at Mr. Booker's Curra Station. In Maryborough Nash reported his find to the Police Magistrate, Mr. Sheridan, who sent a police sergeant to authenticate the find and to mark out the claim.

Inside three days word of the discovery was out. Maryborough was almost denuded of population. Shopkeepers and publicans closed their doors to join the mad gold stampede. The Brisbane Courier of October 17 carried a small announcement of the find. The news spread like wildfire and within hours the men of Brisbane, too, were on the move.

Over the next few days, as bigger and better finds were reported, thousands of diggers came from far and wide to share in the spoils of Nashville, the first name for the diggings.

On October 31 an area of 25 square miles around Nashville was officially proclaimed the Upper Mary River Goldfields.

While Queenslanders led the rush, the southerners were not far behind. They came whichever way they could, some by boat to the Maroochy and Mary Rivers then overland to the diggings. Others too poor to afford a fare walked all the way—even from Melbourne.

No one will ever know how much gold was won in the fabulous first year of Gympie. While official figures for 1868 show that 84,792 ounces were sent from Gympie by Government escort, many thousands of ounces were taken out by private arrangement. Stories of spectacular success are endless; men who had been on or below the breadline nearly all their working lives suddenly found themselves rich beyond their wildest dreams.

Nash himself was said to have earned £10,000 in 12 months on the field, in addition to the Queensland's Government reward of £1000 for his discovery of a payable goldfield.

Unfortunately for Nash, his winnings vanished in bad investments. In later years he went back to work as a caretaker of an explosives magazine near Traveston. He died in 1913, famous but impoverished and somewhat embittered by his reduced circumstances.

While the gold rush itself is really the story of Gympie, it marked the turning point for the Mary Valley. The alluvial was largely worked out within the first two years and the reef mining era began. Those who had failed to make their pile either moved on to new strikes or remained to work the reefs of their more fortunate fellows. The Government was convinced that a town would rise from the calico tents and bark huts on the diggings and embarked on a policy of closer settlement of the area.

Prior to Nash's discovery, none of the Mary River lands had been regarded as suitable for agriculture. Cattle grazing and timber getting had been the only industries, with applications for pastoral runs and timber licences being processed in Brisbane. Gold brought the arrival of a mining



One Mile Creek, Nashville at the end of 1867. On the left is J. and J. Burns store. *courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

warden on the field to survey claims and to adjudicate disputes. Then came the appointment of a Land Commissioner to administer the era of closer settlement.

By now there had been great changes—both in ownership and extent—of the great sheep and cattle runs which dominated the district. Widgee and associated runs had passed from the Tooth family's control to the Bank of New South Wales, the Traveston spread had been forfeited for non-payment of rent, the Imbil run was in the hands of the Lawless brothers and Isaac Moore had acquired the Kenilworth run. They were sitting targets for dissection under the Crown Lands Alienation Act.

Since Separation 10 years earlier there had been a running battle in the new Queensland Parliament between the "Squatters" and "Town" factions over land policy, the former naturally wishing to retain large areas for grazing at low rents while the latter, representing the business community, wanted a rapid increase in population to promote business, and saw a rapid proliferation of small holdings as the answer.

The first Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1860 had set aside agricultural reserves in the settled areas for selection of up to 320 acres of land at one pound per acre. In 1863, however, the squatters retaliated with the Agricultural Reserves Act and established the principle of permanent land settlement by conditional purchase, which was to remain the basic tenet of all land settlement legislation for the next half century. This was modified by the Consolidating Land Act of 1868 under which land commissioners and rangers were appointed and provisions were made for resumptions from pastoral holdings, with restrictions on selection areas, penalties for evasion and fraud, and conditions relating to the occupation and improvement of the selections.

It was under the 1868 act that the first resumptions were made, the watershed of the Amamoor Creek being thrown open to selection in January 1869 and 16,000 acres of the Traveston run in July. During the next few months 56 square miles of the Kilkivan run, 67 square miles of Yabba and 34 square miles of Imbil were successively opened for selection.

Meanwhile the squatters had not let sleeping dogs lie, and in 1869 forced through Parliament a Pastoral Leases Act in an endeavour to obtain relative security for runs in the unsettled districts. The act made provision for the freeholding by pastoral lessees of up to 2,560 acres of the improved portions of their runs.

No self-respecting squatter could be content with only 2,560 acres, however. After years of virtually free range the runholders were not slow to spot a loophole in the act and gradually built up their freeholdings through the use of "dummies". The dummies were usually carefully chosen friends or employees who selected portions of the former lease and lived on the blocks until they were inspected by the land commissioners, whose job it was to note the improvements required by law and approve the land for title. The dummies then transferred or sold the land back to the station with the result that



stations such as Widgee and Imbil finished up with extensive freehold lands as well as their acreages still under lease.

“Spot the dummy” makes an interesting exercise in the early rate books of the Widgee Divisional Board, where lowly stockmen appear to be prosperous pastoralists. Usually the dummy deals went through without a hitch though there were a couple of well known exceptions within Widgee Shire when the dummies failed to deliver the goods, the land they retained passing on down through the family to the present owners.

The first application lodged with the new Lands Office in Gympie was from C. S. Russell on March 16, 1869 for 5,000 acres of second class pastoral land on King King (Kin Kin) Creek. The Lands Commissioner approved the application but, after survey, amended the area to 5,678 acres. This was evidently good timber country since the lease was transferred four years later to Cootharaba sawmiller James McGhie.

The second application on May 3 came from another sawmiller, William Sim, for 1,468 acres at Woolann Creek near Double Island Point. The application was rejected but later in the month his partner, William Pettigrew, was granted a lease over 500 acres in the same area.

Next in order of application were James Clarke for 160 acres at Six-Mile Creek, Jervis Long for 91 acres at Traveston, Daniel Skyring for 100 acres near Traveston and John McGill for 300 acres on Amamoor Creek.

Not all of the early selectors actually settled on their land. Many took up their acreages purely for the timber and, when it was worked out, let it go.

Some of the scrub land avoided by the first selectors but later taken up at a cheap rate for its timber proved most valuable in later years—land such as that taken up by Zachariah Skyring on Pie Creek and Ferguson and Co. at Amamoor.

The first land opened for selection was outside the gazetted Gympie goldfield area of 25 square miles. Then under the Goldfields Homesteads' Act of 1870 farming blocks of up to 40 acres outside the main area of the diggings were opened for selection.

The first application was made by John Staley on March 1, 1871 for just over five acres near the Pound at Monkland. Among other selectors to take up Goldfields Homestead leases the same day were Adam Mulholland (40 acres at Widgee Crossing), Robert Walker (five acres on Imbil Road), J. W. Gericke (10 acres at old Imbil crossing), Robert Cochrane (nine acres at Cedar Pocket), W. Johnston (40 acres at Widgee Crossing), Thomas Raymond (25 acres at Deep Creek), George Hall (20 acres near old Imbil Crossing) and John Hopper (40 acres on Brisbane Road). These homestead blocks fell within the Glastonbury Division at first but later became part of the Widgee Division.

## Birth of a Shire

Widgee Shire was conceived in 1879 through the Queensland Government's introduction of a Divisional Boards Act. The birth of Widgee Division was announced in the Gazette of November 11, 1879.

At the same time separate Gympie and Glastonbury Divisions were proclaimed. However, Gympie died soon after birth (its residents demanded and were given the status of a municipality) while Glastonbury survived only into teenage before being swallowed up by Widgee. The population of the three divisions was officially given as Widgee 1,609, Gympie 4,338 and Glastonbury 714.

Widgee Division—as it was known for nearly quarter of a century—was described as commencing on the sea coast at the mouth of the Maroochy River and bounded thence by the northern and western watershed of that river north-westerly and southerly to the range dividing the waters of the Brisbane River from those of the Mary; thence by that range to the western watershed of the Mary River: thence by that watershed north easterly and by a spur range south-easterly to the junction of Rocky Creek and Wide Bay Creek: thence by Wide Bay Creek downwards to the junction of the Mary River: thence by a line bearing east to the sea-coast: and by the sea-coast southerly to the point of commencement—exclusive of divisions of Glastonbury and Gympie.”

Glastonbury was a relatively small Division surrounding the Gympie goldfield while encompassing them both was Widgee. Basically, Widgee's boundaries extended past Kilkivan in the west, southwards down the Jimna Range to Conondale, northwards beside the Blackall Range to the headwaters of the Maroochy River, around the river and down a narrow coastal strip to its mouth, up the coast and then due west in a line scything through the Curra run.

It was natural that the Noosa and Kilkivan areas—now both shires in their own right—should be included within the Widgee Division. There was then no rail link to the township of Kilkivan which had sprung up from the diggings there; all of its business was channelled eastwards through Gympie. Noosa, Gympie's closest seaport for both cargo and passenger trade, had little other business apart from the timber industry. While it already was popular as a holiday centre, nearly all of its visitors were drawn from either the mines of Gympie or the farms of Widgee.

If the Government had expected the settlers to jump at the opportunity of local government for the first time it was wrong. When nominations closed not a soul had stepped forward to represent one of Widgee's three subdivisions—and no one at all for Gympie or Glastonbury. However, the Government stepped in and appointed men of its own choice to fill the vacancies.

In the first election on January 31, 1880 for seats on the Widgee Divisional Board, the ratepayers of Sub-division Three elected Matthew Mellor, William Chippindall and Abraham Hutchinson as their representatives at a meeting in the Gympie School of Arts.



Matthew Mellor

Three days later Benjamin Gerler, Alexander Matthew and John Broadbent got the nod in Subdivision Two. The Government appointed Frederick Hetley, F. George Goodchap and Patrick Rogers in Subdivision One.

Most of these men were to play a continuing role in Widgee affairs for many years to come, especially Mellor, Chippindall and Broadbent.

On February 25, 1880, a Wednesday, the Widgee Divisional Board met for the first time in the Gympie School of Arts and elected Mr. Mellor as its chairman.

Matthew Mellor was eminently equipped for his job as chairman and knew the Division as well as any man. For two years before Gympie's discovery he had cut timber up the Mary with his brother, James, and lifelong friend William Elworthy. He had dallied on the goldfield, gaining more in experience than in wealth, before deciding to supply the miners rather than compete with them. With Elworthy and Henry Best he set up a chain of butcher shops and then, with Elworthy again, acquired the Imbil run to fatten cattle for the Gympie and Brisbane markets. Mellor's talents were not confined to Widgee. Later in 1880 he was to become the first Mayor of Gympie and, in 1883, the Member for Wide Bay in the Queensland Parliament.



W. T. Chippindall

William Chippindall, whose father was governor of the Bathurst Prison in New South Wales, was a prosperous farmer on Bunya Creek and the district's most prominent agriculturist. He had managed the Yandina run for six years before selecting land in the Mary Valley where he was said to have sent more produce to Gympie than the rest of the farmers put together in a radius of 25 miles. The year 1880 marked the start of more than two decades of continuous service on the Widgee Divisional Board by Mr. Chippindall, setting a tradition for later generations of the family.

John Broadbent was a partner of the Widgee station which gave him enormous influence on the Board, since he controlled many votes through the

“dummies” he had used to build up the freehold of his run. The Widgee run, which had given the Division its name, was known far and wide for its outstanding stock and its immense carrying capacity. The humblest settlers, eking out a meagre existence on their scrubby soil, saw the successful Broadbent as a natural leader. Mr. Broadbent was soon to succeed Mr. Mellor as chairman of the Board, and later to force the removal of the Widgee station from the Widgee Division on January 1, 1888.

No less energetic were the other three members west of the Mary. Abraham Hutchinson put his Northumberland Farm—and the Widgee district—on the map by becoming the first man from the Widgee Division to show his wares in England, at the 1886 Indian and Colonial Exhibition in London where he won a bronze medal. Benjamin Gerler had worked his land at Eel Creek with a missionary fervour, doubling the size of his holding within five years and building up a herd of 300 cattle. He was the son of Lutheran missionary Carl Gerler, from the Aboriginal mission station at Nundah just north of Brisbane. Benjamin Gerler later caught the mining bug and left the district for Coolgardie where he died of typhoid, which struck down many pioneers in their prime. The third member, Alexander Matthew, had taken up 321 acres of land resumed from the old Widgee run near the head of Glastonbury Creek. There he was felling timber to open up his land for grazing.

On the other side of the Mary was the reluctant trio pressed into service by the Government. Patrick Rogers, the only farmer of the three, had recently settled in Noosa Road. As he became established, however, he was to play an increasing role in the civic affairs of Gympie and the district. Frederick Hetley and George Goodchap were both timber men with interests around Lake Cootharaba. Goodchap had made a fortune on the Gympie goldfield with fellow miners James McGhie and Alexander Fleetwood Luya (later a State Member of Parliament) in the Mount Pleasant and other mines. Goodchap, in fact, declined to take up his seat on the Board, probably because of the travelling time involved, and was replaced by John Ray, from near the Six-Mile Creek.

The nine-man Widgee Divisional Board quickly came to grips with the basic problems of raising revenue and administering its affairs. The part-time positions of Divisional Board Secretary, Solicitor and Valuator were advertised in the local papers of the day, the now defunct “Gympie Miner” and the “Gympie Times and Mary River Gazette”.

Mr. James Kidgell was chosen from 11 applicants as Secretary at a stipend of £75 per annum, Mr. Horace Tozer got the Solicitor’s post at £20 a year and Mr. G. T. Chippindall’s tender of £65 to value the three subdivisions within three months was accepted from the nine who offered their services for the task. The Colonial Secretary advanced the sum of £50 and the Widgee Divisional Board was in business.

Both the Secretary and Solicitor wore many hats. Mr. Kidgell had been Gympie’s representative in State Parliament for the three prior years and was soon to become Gympie’s first Town Clerk. Mr. Tozer, later Sir Horace, had

a distinguished political career ahead of him. He went on to become the State Member for Wide Bay for 10 years including six as Colonial Secretary before retiring from Parliament to take up the post of Agent-General for Queensland in London. As a Gympie solicitor he became expert in mining law. He also excelled in boring the Legislative Assembly at times. The term "Tozerism" was coined for his particular style of filibustering to stifle unwanted legislation.

Initially the Widgee Divisional Board worked somewhat in the dark. There was no working map of the Division and with only £50 in the kitty little to spend and a lot to be done. Nevertheless, the Board set its sights high, asking the Government for at least £500 for a bridge across Bunya Creek (or lower Kandanga Creek) and noting that the Widgee and Glastonbury districts had had a large population for several years but "had never had one shilling expended on them."

The Board also asked for a £1,000 subsidy for public works to open up inland roads. Mr. Hutchinson pointed out that the road to Imbil was impassable in six places—"the public having to trespass on private property to get into town. The road leading towards Glastonbury, Widgee and Kilkivan is impassable in many places, also involving a trespass on freehold property to get into Gympie."

It did not take the Board very long to learn that there would be no Government handouts, though the further sum of £450 was advanced in the form of an early endowment, since under the terms of the Divisional Boards Act the local bodies were to receive an endowment equal to the amount collected in rates.

In June, Valuator Chippindall handed in his completed land valuations and was rewarded with a bonus of £15 for having to carry out his task without the aid of official maps. The Board struck its first rate of one shilling in the pound and also decided to implement a wheel tax as a means of further revenue. Rates totalling £130/4/6 were assessed for Subdivision One, £297/4/3 for Subdivision Two and £124/8/6 for Subdivision Three.

The first rate book of the Widgee Divisional Board makes interesting reading since many of the pioneers' descendants occupy the same properties a century later. Naturally there were a few omissions and mistakes in both ownerships and situation of some properties because of the rush job without the aid of proper maps. The first list of ratepayers (with the rateable value of some of the bigger properties in parentheses) is:

#### SUB-DIVISION ONE

Traveston: Thomas Powell (slab house and land valued at £69/11/-), Charles Powell, Jacob Buckhard; Brisbane Road: Lawrence Cotham, Thomas Mullaly, Robert Dillon, John Pearen, John Brady, Robert Gluch, James Nelson Clarke, Francis Kemsley, Walter Compigne, D. O'Brien, William Houghton, T. H. Cartwright, John Ray, J. Hopper, Isaac Heuston, J.

Hall, William Gibson; Tinana Creek: Albert Wilson, James Dowzer, J. Rop, John Gillis, William Durston, G. Atkin; Noosa Road: John Mogan (£92/1/-), Patrick Rogers, J. O'Keefe, Simon Hommelgard, Michael D'Arcy, Skinner Jacob, Thomas Andrews, Isaac Nordern, William Martin, William Casey, William Ferguson, Alex Ferguson, William Dowling, William Clarke; Noosa: A. F. Luya (£62/9/2), Grainger Ward, Walter Hay, Jas Forsyth, Australian Joint Stock Bank; Cootharaba: F. G. Goodchap (£57/2/8), John Nevin (£63), F. W. Hetley (£63/12/3), William Hillcoat (£74/17/-), A. Pollock, Charles Dunn, G. St. John Carter, H. Hatch, Charles Hopf, J. R. McKenzie, P. G. Waller, William Tismey, Mary Coe, Commercial Bank of Brisbane, Queensland National Bank, J. S. Bell, George Knight, A. Gillis, J. Woodburn, H. Blakesley jr., J. Maulsberry; Mount Cooroey: A. H. Wilkin, Tewantin: Thomas Bull, J. McDonald, M. Mellor, A. R. Pillow, Robert Kift, A. Mann, C. Smith, H. Joseph, Walter Hay, B. Finney, N. Wilson, Haley and Compigne, W. Kidman, W. Wickham, W. Ferguson, R. Pollock, H. Brown, J. Mogan, R. Brewin, M. Raymond, E. Smith, H. Blakesley, R. Lawson, Clarence Rop, L. Cotham, J. Donnell, G. Ward, W. Sainsbury, C. Bunworth, D. Butler, M. Shields, H. Goodwin, J. S. Cullinane, D. Hendry, J. Pearen, R. A. Richardson, J. Smith, E. T. Smith, W. L. Smith, McGhie Luya and Co., Robert Dath.

## SUB-DIVISION TWO

Pie Creek: Zachariah Skyring, Thomas Moffat, William Kidd, Peter Lorrensen, Edward Ogden, John Chapman, Robert Walker, John Miller, Herbert Porter, William Cochrane, Malcolm McFarlane, Jacob Wismer, Michael Ryan, Mrs. T. Raleigh, John Bell, William Cole; Eel Creek: Benjamin Gerler, David Groundwater, G. W. Groundwater, Daniel Hendry, John Scott, C. Lynch, Matthew Lynch, Wyatt Stockden, Thomas Abdy, Henry Turner; Widgee Crossing: William Ford; Widgee Road: M. Mellor, John Conway (£66/9/6), J. Briere, Adam Mulholland, Richard Crank, Henry Callaghan, William Green, Daniel Donoghue; Widgee: John Atkinson (£116/6/3), Patrick Lillis (£429/10/-), Broadbent and Williams (£405/4/-), John Broadbent (£167/1/6), James Caulfield (£173/17/9), William Wooster (£50/4/9), Edward Homer (£182/8/-), J. McMahon; Widgee Creek: James Meakin, William Meakin, Frederick Clothier, George McVeigh, George Wilson, J. Ream, Charles Wilson, William Cave, Norman Wilson; Brooyar: John Burke, W. Graham, J. Gallagher; Nanango: Jane Smith, Peter McPherson; Rocky Crk.; John Spier; Wide Bay Creek: Mrs. R. J. Lord (£190/18/-), Thomas Harvey, A. Batt. Francis Power (£61/15/6), Thomas Standen, William Graham (£187/10/-) Samuel Fittham, John Wilson; Coppermine Creek: Jonah Courtman. Emanuel Williams; Woolsloga: H. P. Abbott (£128), Joseph McFarlane; Nine-Mile: Konrad Nahrung, William Hayles; Curra: E. Booker (£300/8/7), W. Boldrey, J. Robinson, G. Thrower; Glenbar: D. MacTaggart; Glastonbury Creek: Patrick Green, C. O'Sullivan, J. McCarthy, Bridget Walsh, Michael

Whelan, George Williams, Thomas Betts, T. Betts jr., Harrison Fittell, Martin Carroll, Michael Cotter, William Carroll, Jeremiah Leahy, Michael Leahy; Glastonbury: Michael O'Brien (£138/5/-), John Fitzgerald (£84/9/-), G. W. Anderson, Michael McGrath, Alexander Matthew, Ellen Clapperton, J. O'Connell, H. Andrew, T. Betts; Black Snake: J. Thompson; Maryborough Road: James Meredith; Kilkivan: Thomas Rose (£126/3/6), Thomas Bloodworth (£226/13/-), Trustee for J. E. Rose (£257/19/-), Trustee for J. D. MacTaggart (£165/5/-), Robert Hunter (£87/3/6), Rudolph Brown, William Spencer, Godfrey Moeseneger, William Laurie, James Hunter, Hector Innes, A. Brayshaw, G. M. Towner, Jane Eliza Rose, B. Molyneux, J. Threlkeld, E. Delipa, Horace Tozer, Ebenezer Vickery, Mt. Clara Copper Mining Co., John Frampton, J. Henderson, P. Ramsay-R. Lord-J. Haley, G. W. Allen, Tubbs Pritchard and Co., Boase and Co., McGhie and Co., H. Coop and R. Collins, A. Carter, George Zahnleiter, Ashbury Bright, John Bier, Michael Mackay.

### SUB-DIVISION THREE:

Lagoon Pocket: James Ogden, Isaac Butler, Charles Biggar, James Leary; Imbil Road: W. T. Chippindall (£101/3/4), Riley Duckworth, Francis Quinlan, James Leary, John Trout, A. Hutchinson, James Meakin, S. McDonald, A. H. Chippindall; Bunya Creek: R. Brooker, J. A. Sprauls, John Stephens, Archibald Davies, Thomas Bergin, John Melliush; Yabba Creek Road: M. Mellor, Elworthy and Mellor (£186/12/-), James Swanson (£291/6/-), James Cockburn, John Elworthy, E. Harrison; Bella Creek: George Byrnes (£136/18/-), Theo Simpson, Thomas Pritchard, C. Bunworth; Jimna: G. Whittington; Mount Ubi: A. E. Bonney (£97/18/-); Connondale: J. Bonney (£93), W. Bonney, H. Bonney, C. Bonney, J. McConnell, W. Godd; Durundur: John Daley, J. McConnell; Kenilworth: J. Murray; Bella Creek: H. M. Davies (£73/7/6); Amamoor: J. McGill, W. McClymont, John Letheren, John Blackburn; Brisbane Road: M. C. Peacon, A. Freeman, J. Banibridge, Daniel Skyring, John Nevin, William Lynch, John Walsh, Cornelius Walsh, A. Coles.

## The First Decade

The Widgee Divisional Board was barely six months old when it fell foul of the ratepayers, not just through its impudence in levying rates on them but because of the imprudence of one of its members.

Mr. Hutchinson was at the centre of the scandal and was forced to resign, being replaced by Mr. Archibald Davies of Yabba Vale, who was himself a subject for comment as the only man in the district to employ kanaka labour.

Poor Mr. Hutchinson's error was to accede to a request from the foreman of a Board road gang for the use of his team of horses. He readily agreed to help out but made the mistake of seeking, and receiving, three days' payment for the work. A number of ratepayers demanded an inquiry and the Board had no alternative but to ask Mr. Hutchinson to resign, since members were disqualified from receiving such payments.

Magnanimously, the Board later held a further special inquiry and acquitted Mr. Hutchinson of "any fraudulent intention in the matter." With the stain removed from his character, Mr. Hutchinson continued as a bulwark of society on Amamoor Creek and later served on the Glastonbury Divisional Board.

The fledgling Widgee Board took great lengths to be seen to be doing the right thing, and its members were sticklers for correctness in all matters. So much so that they refused to deal with anyone who did not follow suit. A letter from an irate Glastonbury Creek pioneer, Patrick Green—from whom Greendale took its name—was returned to sender because it was "couched in disrespectful language."

The year 1880 also marked the capture of the notorious Johnny Campbell, the black bushranger who had terrorised the women of the district for years.

Campbell began his career of crime by attacking a shepherd's wife on Manumbar station where, along with fellow reprobate Billy Lillis, he had attended a Sunday school run by Mrs. Mortimer, the station owner's wife. For several years Campbell was the scourge of Wide Bay. He travelled mostly on foot and at night, always with a female native at his side but never the same one for long. When he wanted one he did not ask but took, casting her aside when someone else took his fancy. He had pretty much the same attitude towards the white women of the district who lived in fear of his shadow being cast across their doorsteps while the men were away. In nearly every house a



loaded gun was kept in readiness for a possible visit by Campbell. On many occasions police and vigilante parties thought they had him trapped but he used every trick in the book, and a few of his own besides, to avoid capture—such as walking along a two-rail fence to avoid leaving a trail.

A woman was Campbell's final undoing. His latest acquisition, who went by the name of Kitty Noble, was said to have betrayed him to Aborigines near Noosa. They handed him over to Tewanin residents George Goodchap and Ben Ross who clamped him in leg-irons. Police took Campbell to Gympie where word of the capture spread fast. A large crowd turned out to see him before he was taken on to Maryborough, and then to Brisbane where he was later hanged for rape.

The Government had offered a monetary reward for Campbell's capture. But suspecting the Tewanin Aborigines would only waste this on drink, the Government instead gave them a new boat and fishing tackle for their help.

The Divisional Boards Act called for the retirement of one member from each sub-division every year so after 12 months on the Widgee Board Messrs Mellor, Broadbent and Hetley retired. The former two were overwhelmingly returned but Mr. Hetley was replaced by Robert Arthur Pollock, one of the brothers who shared in the riches of Gympie's famous Lady Mary P.C. mine.

The year 1881 also saw the completion at long last of the railway line from Maryborough. The entire Widgee Board attended the July 18 opening which included a trip by rail to Maryborough along with great festivities. The benefits of the railway were two-fold, opening up an era of travel in unaccustomed comfort in place of jolting stagecoaches and offering a new dimension in the movement of stock and timber.

The changeover from sheep to cattle was almost completed by now. The Widgee Marsupial Board whose membership comprised the owners of the major stations—Messrs. Broadbent (Widgee), Booker (Curra), Rose (Kilkivan), Elworthy (Imbil), and Lillis (Kenilworth)—reported the following stock numbers in the district: 33,969 cattle, 1,417 horses and 4,305 sheep.

In 1884 the Widgee Division suffered its first major severance of territory when the Government annexed the area between the Conondale and Durundur Ranges to the Caboolture Division. Geographically it seemed a logical move since the transferred territory was at least a hard day's ride away from the Widgee Board's headquarters in Gympie. The Widgee Board objected strongly to the Minister of Works, however, maintaining that he had made a promise to Mr. Mellor that no such alterations should be made to the southern boundaries of the Division until the question of the proposed Brisbane to Gympie railway route had been settled. The objection came to no avail and the Conondale portion was lost forever.

Meanwhile, the ratepayers were getting restless in the west; many from Kilkivan and Widgee were agitating for change. They had basically just one complaint, the state of the roads. Many of them felt they would get more

improvements done if they went in with the adjoining Barambah Division or became part of an entirely new division.



John Broadbent

In 1885 they formally petitioned the Widgee Board for the first time seeking severance of the greater part of Sub-division Two. The breakaway movement was led by Mr. Broadbent, who had just completed a year as chairman of the Widgee Divisional Board and who wanted a better road to his Widgee station. But his successor as chairman, sawmiller William Ferguson, and fellow members vigorously rejected the suggestion. Mr. Broadbent obviously had a persuasive tongue—within a year he had swung most of the Board behind his effort to change the western boundary of the Division. The Board wrote to the Minister of Works expressing agreement to an amended schedule proposed by Mr. Broadbent.

The Government replied it did not intend to make any alteration to the boundaries. Then in an about-face only three months later, the Government on July 1, 1886, proclaimed a new Division of Kilkivan to be made up of severed portions of the Widgee and Barrambah Divisions and to be centred on Kilkivan township.

Victory was short lived for the breakaway supporters. The Widgee Divisional Board had a considerable overdraft facility from the Queensland National Bank with its collateral being the revenue anticipated from rates and endowment. The Bank obviously feared for its money and refused to honour any of the Board's cheques. The Board immediately sent a telegram to Mr. Mellor, now a Member of the Legislative Assembly in Brisbane, saying: "Widgee Board's bank refuse payment cheques owing to recent proclamations. Works suspended. Labourers demanding money. See Minister. Read Board's letter sent him Friday. Ask immediate reply."

A similar telegram was sent to the Minister of Works, Mr. Miles, who the following day rescinded the proclamation.

Over a year later, when matters had been sorted out satisfactorily to all parties concerned, the Government on November 17, 1877, proclaimed the formation of a new Kilkivan Division which took effect on January 1, 1888. And so the famous Widgee station, from which the present Shire gained its name, was excised from its boundaries. Widgee station owner, Mr. Broadbent, spent one more year on the Widgee Board while concurrently a founding member of its Kilkivan counterpart.

Coincidentally, the formation of the Kilkivan Division marked the start of agitation within the Glastonbury Division for annexation to Widgee. Rents from the Goldfields Homestead leases had been paid direct to the Glastonbury Board and constituted most of its finances. But in 1887 the Government decided to collect these rents for itself, leaving Glastonbury to raise its

revenue through the otherwise universal system of rates and endowment. Glastonbury Division thus found itself in the unenviable position of having to finance itself from a limited number of rateable properties to maintain all the roads and bridges immediately around the Gympie township.

Funding was a problem for all the local bodies. Every settler demanded a formed road up to his selection and there simply was not enough money to go around!

This did not absolve the Widgee Board from responsibility for the roads, however, as it already had found to its cost. On August 28, 1884 the Board lost its first major legal battle when Patrick Rogers, an original member of the Board who was cutting timber on the Noosa Road, was awarded £27/6/- by the Central District Court in Gympie for the loss of a horse.

Mr. Rogers' team of eight was carting timber into Gympie when, because of the bad state of a culvert on the road, the cart capsized, sending five of the eight horses over the side and killing one of them. Judge Miller ruled that the state of the road when the Widgee Divisional Board took it over from the Government did not relieve it of its responsibility to keep it reasonably safe.

Following the unfavourable verdict, the Board decided that having exhausted all funds at its disposal it would advertise in the Government Gazette that it could no longer take responsibility for the repair of the road and bridges on Noosa Road.

This stung the Government into action and it lent the Board £1,000 for bridgework on the road. As a result the Board embarked on its most ambitious project to date, construction of a bridge across Lake Weyba, not only to help the settlers there but for the convenience of the large number of travellers from the Gympie district who spent their holidays there.

The 200-foot long bridge spanned the Noosa River about a mile below Lake Weyba. Called the Alexandra Bridge, it was officially opened on April 24, 1886 by the daughter of past Widgee Divisional Board chairman William Ferguson. It was a gala occasion, with the official party being taken across Lake Proo for refreshment at the Restdown homestead of the Smith brothers.

Unfortunately, the bridge lasted less than five years. It was attacked by cobra, a type of seawater borer, and the Board had to demolish the bridge before it collapsed of its own accord.

Encouraged by its loan for the Alexandra Bridge, the Widgee Divisional Board made up a joint deputation with Gympie and Glastonbury to the Minister of Works to seek a £5,000 grant to build a high-level bridge across the Mary River at Normanby and another across Six-Mile Creek. The Government declined to contribute towards the latter so the Widgee Board itself financed the first proper bridge across the creek, albeit a low-level structure. It was built in 1887 by McDermott and Sons at a cost of £746/4/3. The Government's reply on the Normanby bridge was a first and final offer of one third of the cost of a low-level bridge.

Wrangles with the Government over bridges were to continue for many more years. The settlers already had been through one bad flood—in 1870 when the Mary River reached a height of 70 feet 9 inches at Gympie. And every time there was prolonged rain, many roads and crossings over the Mary and its tributaries became impassable.

Sometimes the settlers could not wait and built the bridges themselves. Settlers on Imbil Road, for instance, built a major bridge across Amamoor Creek. Piles were sunk about 17 feet into the ground and the decking was placed 17 feet above the normal creek level. The cost, less than 70, was provided by the Gympie Flood Relief Committee. The cost of erecting a similar structure on contract was estimated at £400.

In November 1890, Widgee chairman William Chippindall, Gympie Mayor Mr. E. Bytheway and the chairman of the Glastonbury Divisional Board, Mr. E. B. Davidson, made a combined approach to the Minister of Works for the formation of a proposed Local Authority of Nashville to administer the construction and maintenance of bridges in the Gympie area.

The Government saw some benefits in this scheme and on July 11 the following year gazetted a new local body, the Gympie Bridge Board, for the construction, maintenance and control of a high-level bridge over the Mary River in the vicinity of the Normanby Bridge and for the formation and maintenance of the approaches. The joint board of the new authority was to consist of six members, two from each of the councils involved.

The Gympie Bridge Board met for the first time on July 31, 1891, the nominated members being Messrs Chippindall and John Flood from the Widgee Divisional Board, Matthews and Henderson (Gympie) and Davidson and Macfarlane (Glastonbury). The ubiquitous Mr. Kidgell was appointed secretary and Mr. E. Baker, the Gympie council overseer, was commissioned to draw up plans for a bridge 20 feet above the height of the existing Normanby Bridge. Allocation costs for the bridge were to be 50 per cent to Gympie, 30 per cent to Widgee and 20 per cent to Glastonbury.

The year 1891 was the second of four successive flood years for the Mary Valley and it was quickly obvious that a different site was needed for the proposed bridge. Mr. C. B. Steele was commissioned to design a high-level bridge and in May 1892 the Gympie Bridge Board accepted a tender of £2,230/6/6 from Green and Tebbutt for its construction. However, the Government had asked the Bridge Board to delay acceptance of tenders and, somewhat irked at being ignored, retaliated by dissolving the Board.

After appeasement talks, the Board was reconstituted in September with Mr. Chippindall as chairman. Back in business, the Board set its sights lower—awarding the contract for a low-level Normanby Bridge to Green and Tebbutt for £1028, as well as a medium-level bridge at Channon Street to Mr. J. W. Mott for £1,417. The old Channon Street bridge had been wrecked by floods earlier in the year. Replacement of the Channon Street Bridge was a must—even at the expense of a bigger and better structure at Normanby—since there were 71 holders of homestead leases in the immediate area, as well

as all the residents of Pie and Eel Creeks, Glastonbury and the western districts who had to travel another five miles further via Normanby Bridge to reach Gympie.

But the disadvantages of compromise were rammed home with a vengeance even while the bridges were under construction. Both structures went under in the worst flood in the history of the Mary Valley. The Mary River peaked in Gympie at 83 feet six inches on February 4, 1893 and rose again to 69 feet two inches a week later. Two years later the Gympie Bridge Board was abolished with little protest from its disenchanting members.

## The Convict Chairman

In February 1891 the Widgee Divisional Board elected as its chairman a former convict who was transported to Australia in irons. He was John Flood, who, in his youth, had been a leader of Ireland's revolutionary Fenian movement which was a forerunner of today's outlawed Sinn Fein.



John Flood

Flood, then 25, was arrested after leading an abortive arms raid on Chester Castle in England. The raid was a dismal failure after a turncoat tipped off the authorities. Flood escaped and attempted to slip back into Ireland unnoticed. However, police and soldiers received another tipoff and Flood was arrested after a wild chase up the River Liffey in Dublin. He was captured on February 19, 1867 and was held at the dreaded Mountjoy Prison in Dublin while awaiting trial.

Three months later he was taken to court. The trial took place before three judges—Mr. Justice Fitzgerald, Mr. Baron Deasy and the Lord Chief Justice—and a jury.

Flood was charged under the Treason-Felony Act together with two other Fenians, James Dunne and Edward Duffy.

The prosecutor described them as among the most mischievous and active Fenian leaders and said their overt acts included "their becoming members of the Fenian conspiracy, their procuring arms and levying war for the purpose of promoting that conspiracy, and that those prisoners, with others, had actually planned the insurrection or outbreak against the authorities which took place through so many parts of Ireland on the night of the sixth of March last. They were also charged with having entered into a plan to attack Chester Castle and seize the arms which were deposited there, and to take them over to Ireland for the purposes of insurrection."

The March 6 accusation referred to a rash of killings and other violence said to have been committed by the Fenian "assassination committee" and which took place after Flood's arrest.

Flood himself was alleged to have been appointed by Fenian leader James Stephens as commander, or head centre, of all England and Scotland. During the trial Flood was identified by several informers as a top man in the Fenian movement, whose oath was "to be true and loyal to the Irish Republic and to take up arms at a moment's notice to level war against the Queen."

Flood pleaded not guilty to the treason charges but did not dissociate himself from the Fenians.

At the end of the six-day trial Flood was sentenced to 15 years penal servitude. Passing sentence, Mr. Baron Deasy said: "Your crime has been a political one; but from the moral guilt of conniving at any assassination I entirely exonerate you. It appears that you were engaged as one of the directors and participators of what has been called the Chester raid, which had as its object to supply arms and ammunition to Ireland."

Flood, along with other Fenians, was transported from Ireland in the *Hougoumont*—the last convict vessel sent to Australia—which reached Fremantle on January 10, 1868. There a handful of the 50 prisoners managed to escape with the help of an American sympathiser. Flood was not among the escapees. But the following year he was one of 45 political prisoners granted an amnesty by the Gladstone government in Britain. Friends in Melbourne raised £5000 to help the freed men and most of them returned to Ireland or the United States. Flood elected to stay in Australia.

Another Irish rebel, John Denvir, later wrote in his memoirs of his first meeting in Liverpool with Flood, "a fine, handsome man, tall and strong, wearing a full and flowing tawny-coloured beard. He had a genial face, and, in your intercourse with him, you found him just as genial as he looked. He was a man of distinguished bearing, who you could imagine would fill with grace and dignity the post of Irish Ambassador to some friendly power."



John Flood's grave at  
Gympie Cemetery

Flood was about 28 years old when he was granted his freedom. He moved to Sydney and started a weekly newspaper, *The Irish People*, which lasted about a year. He moved on to the Palmer goldfield and then to Brisbane, where he worked first for the *Brisbane Courier* and later as manager of Perkins Brewery (now Castlemaine Perkins). In 1881 he moved to Gympie where he established a mining secretary's office with Robert Acton under the name John Flood and Co., and in 1888 bought a controlling interest in the *Gympie Miner* newspaper. For several years he farmed on the Brisbane Road and then built a house on the South Side between Power and Woolgar Roads, where he lived until his death in 1909.

He remained an active supporter of Home Rule for Ireland and founded the first Australian branch of the Land League. Some of Widgee's older residents remember Flood as a tall, bearded, reserved man, not given to reminiscing about his convict days. An imposing edifice was erected at Gympie cemetery in 1911 "by friends and admirers to commemorate his life's work in the cause of Irish Nationality."

After his second term in office, Flood was succeeded as chairman in 1894 by his newspaper rival, A. G. Ramsey, also from the South Side, who was joint owner with Jacob Stumm of the *Gympie Times*.

Alfred George Ramsey was born in Daystead, Victoria, and began his newspaper career as an apprentice printer on the Hokitika Times during the New Zealand gold rush. He followed the stampede to Gympie in 1867 and worked on the Nashville Times and Mary River Mining Gazette (now Gympie Times), gradually buying a stake in the business. By 1880 he and Jacob Stumm were the sole proprietors of the paper, with Ramsey the senior partner and business manager, a position which he filled until his death in 1926. Before serving on the Widgee Board, Ramsey was a member of the Glastonbury Divisional Board and later served on the Gympie City Council, becoming Mayor in 1913.

During the 1890s several Widgee residents succumbed again to the lure of gold and headed to the new fields in Western Australia. Among them was Thomas Whitmore, a Pie Creek farmer and earlier a timber cutter in the Noosa area.

In March 1893 Whitmore set out from Gympie with a horse team and two bullock teams at the start of a great trek which went largely unrecorded in the annals of pioneering history. With him were his sons Tom—better known as Mick—and Charlie. Whitmore later recalled: "When I got to Charleville I was blocked in the mulga country on account of the drought and the dry state of the roads to the west of that place. It was about nine months before I could make a fresh start and before doing so my son Charlie returned home to help his mother on the farm. When the drought broke I loaded the teams with goods and headed for the rabbit-proof fence on the South Australian border and encountered the usual difficulties of travelling in western Queensland in flood time, for the drought had been succeeded by flood."

Crossing the border at the Diamantina south of Birdsville, Whitmore followed that river up to Cooper's Creek which he crossed near the "Missionary" station, then followed the overland telegraph line south to a small township called The Coward. Heading west, he reached Paddykillan where he sold one of his bullock teams for £60.

Whitmore and son then braved the daunting 260-mile challenge of a tract of desert named the "camel pad". At the 62-mile well the horses wandered off in the night and the younger Whitmore spent nine fruitless days in search of them.

Father and son finally reached the coast at Fowler's Bay, a small settlement which was a calling place for coastal boats. Then it was westward ho, for 130 miles along the coast to "Nellabor Plains", a sheep station adjacent to the Great Australian Bight.

"On the road I had provided myself with one 400-gallon and two 200-gallon tanks as I was told that after leaving Nellabor Plains we should have a stage of 120 miles without water," said Whitmore. "We could only get brackish water and so loaded up our tanks with four tons of this from the government well, and bidding goodbye to Nellabor and possibly the world, we tackled the 120 mile dry stage. After five days we reached Eucla, on the West Australian border, very little the worst for our trying experience."



There Whitmore had to pay £22 border tax duty on his stock and equipment as he was passing into another colony. But this price was insignificant with the riches ahead supposedly waiting to be picked from the ground. The first goldfield reached was Kurnalpie, which the Whitmores found to be a disappointingly small alluvial field. They joined the Pendennie rush only to find poverty on a grander scale than they had seen before. Then on to the Norseman where they arrived in a terrible condition and had to pay sixpence a gallon for water, "the one drink for the three horses and our two selves standing me in seventeen shillings," said Whitmore.

Disillusioned the Whitmores went on to Fremantle and returned to Brisbane by sea, the return trip taking just six weeks as against the epic overland trek lasting over two years, and finally back to Pie Creek.

Two months before the turn of the century, another brave band of Gympie and Widgee residents set out for far away fields. They were the 26 young men who sailed off in the first Queensland contingent to the Boer War. One of them was a young man who went on to carve a glorious niche in history. He was Harry Walker, who returned from the battlefields to farm the Coles Creek area and to become chairman of the Wide Bay Co-operative Dairy Company for 23 years — and a Member of State Parliament for 40 years.

The Brisbane Courier described one of Mr. Walker's many heroic feats as a member of F Company (Gympie) of the Queensland Mounted Infantry. "When portion of the Queenslanders, who had been holding a kopje, were ordered to retire, Sergeant Walker was one of the first to get away, and he, with others galloped out through heavy fire into cover beyond the range of the Boer rifles.

"The remainder of the party, A Company, had not left the kopje and it seemed they did not intend doing so, owing to the very heavy cross fire covering the line of retreat. Sergeant Walker considered it his duty to return to his company, and resolutely galloped through heavy cross fire to rejoin them. Later on, when the Queenslanders were ordered to retire they galloped out in small groups across the Boers' line of fire. Sergeant Walker saw an Imperial Mounted Infantryman trying to get away on foot, for his horse had been shot from under him. He galloped back, took the Englishman up on his horse behind him, and under ever-increasing fire, managed to get to shelter out of the inferno without a scratch."

Mr. Walker's commanding officer was later quoted as saying that the gallant Harry Walker should have been awarded the Victoria Cross for this and other equally valiant deeds.

## Gains and Losses

Settlement of the Widgee Division accelerated during the 1890s following the completion of the North Coast Railway between Brisbane and Gympie. This, the final link in the 2,000-mile eastern seaboard line between Adelaide and Bundaberg, gave the Division's graziers and farmers virtually unlimited access to the southern markets. The last set of rails was laid on May 10, 1891 and the official opening by Sir Samuel Griffith took place on July 17. Mr. G. C. Willcocks, contractor for most of the Gympie end of the line, estimated that up to 2,000 men had been employed on the final section between Cooran and Yandina.

While much of Queensland was gripped by the great shearers strike, Widgee's potential for growing sugar cane and other crops attracted many new selectors. This was also the beginning of the era of group selection which, though a failure at the time, had some lasting benefits in that it made the row a little easier to hoe for the settlers who followed them on to some of their forfeited lands.



*courtesy K. Poulsen*

An Aboriginal bush shack on Holstrup near Happy Jack Creek, circa 1900

The first group selection was at Tuckekoi, where a band of industrious Germans attempted to establish their own farm of hiebutism. They chose the wrong time. They cleared a large area of land but were largely defeated by the four bad flood years.

McGhie Luya and Co. also attempted to establish a village settlement scheme at Lake Cootharaba by letting land cheaply to families for farming. Most of them soon returned to Tewantin where a visitor said of their efforts: "They are practically destitute and are at present living on charity. The husbands declare they are willing to work for food alone until they get work, but although they have tried cannot get anything to do. Their tale is a pitiful one. They make the seventh of 11 families who went up to Cootharaba in April last that have left the settlement. They say that of the four remaining two are receiving a small wage for their work and the other two are working for their food and are anxious to get away as they cannot possibly make anything up there. They say the land is unfit for cultivation being either too wet or too sandy."

The Government did its utmost to encourage group settlement as a means towards faster development. In 1893 it passed a Co-operative Communities Land Settlement Act which led to the creation of 12 co-operative groups. Two of these came to the Widgee Division.

One of these was the Woolloongabba Exemplar Group which was given over £700 to begin communal farming beside Lake Weyba. This was the same area as where the Rev. E. Fuller and his wife had been allocated 10,000 acres in 1872 to form a mission station for Aborigines brought over from Fraser Island. The blacks would not stay put, however, and after six months the mission was abandoned. Perhaps it was a portent, for the Woolloongabba Exemplars did not last much longer.

In 1895, the Minister for Lands, Mr. Barlow, told Parliament of his visit to the Weyba commune: "I could see from what they told me that dissension was rampant among them. There was one manly, upstanding man, whom I was sorry to see in such circumstances, who said. . . . 'Instead of members working as they should, they have not worked at any time unless they liked, and the group is a failure.'"

Mr. Barlow was referring to George Watson, leader of the 116-member group. The manly leader's efforts to keep his flock in muster proved unsuccessful and by the end of the year there were only six of the original families left.

The second government-sponsored group, the Protestant Unity Group, took up 6,000 acres of land on Pinbarren Creek about four miles from Cooran.

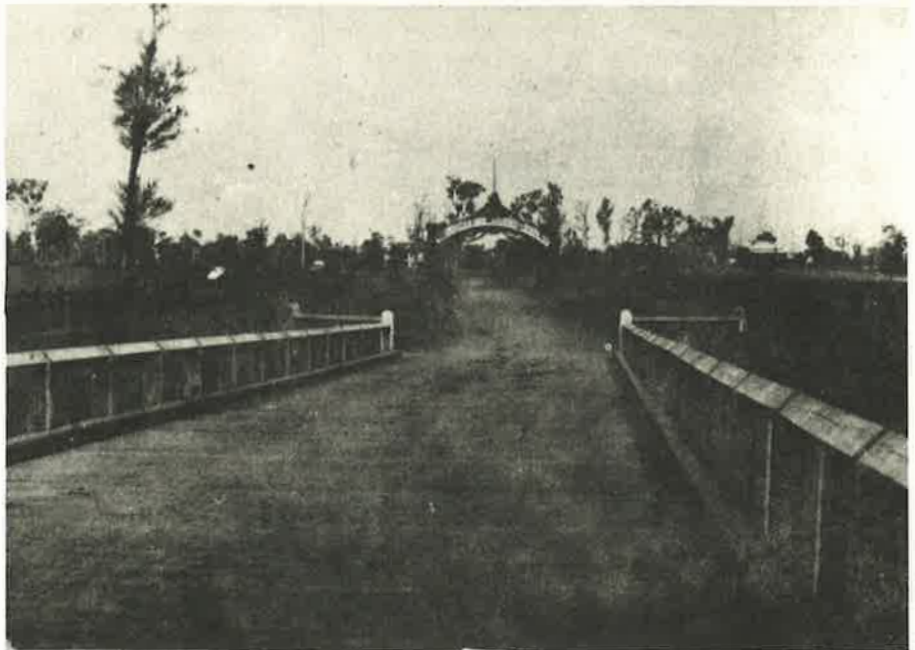
At least 50 homesteads had been taken up in the Cooran area, mainly by descendants of Danes and Germans who originally settled in the Bundaberg area. Like the Protestant Unity settlers, they saw their future in sugar, and on October 8, 1894 decided to press for their own sugar mill. The meeting, held at Dan Martin's "Halfway House" Hotel, elected a committee compris-

ing Messrs Martin, T. Parry Horsman, Charles Holden, Alex Ferguson, G. Renshaw, P. R. Ostenfeld, L. Cameron and C. Jensen.

The Government refused to subsidise a mill, ruling that the existing Nambour mill had ample crushing capacity. Despite the cost of railing to Nambour, cane looked a very attractive proposition to the farmers—the ruling rate of 9/6 per ton was gauged to be an excellent return in comparison with 1/3 per bushel for bagged corn. Much of the impetus of the cane growing movement was lost, however, with a disastrous fire in November 1895 which destroyed the Protestant Unity's store and all their stock and tools inside. This brought an end to the group and the remaining assets including 50 acres of sugar were divided up among the 22 members. Seventeen of them elected to carry on independently and selected their own land in the neighbourhood.

While the Government was opening up many new areas of land at this time, not all of it was snapped up. Intending settlers were selective in their choice. In 1894, for example, there was keen competition for land on Pinbarren Creek and for the new areas offered at Woondum. But land simultaneously opened for selection around Goomboorian, at one pound to two pound an acre, found no takers initially.

This was the year when the deathknell sounded for the Glastonbury Division. Glastonbury was now the smallest division in the colony and Mr.



Channon Street Bridge about the turn of the century. The sign reads "Welcome to Widgee Division". The building on the left side of the road is probably the Retreat Hotel.

Tozer, then Colonial Secretary, said it was a disgrace that three corporate bodies were being controlled from one centre. He said it was now a "battle of the clerks" and it was high time for them to get together to confer on boundaries.

There had been good reason for Glastonbury to be constituted as a special division at the introduction of divisional board government. It was then entitled to a special revenue from the Goldfield Homestead leases and it was only right that the expenditure of these rents should be controlled by a board elected by the lessees. However, since the appropriation by the Treasury of these rents and the reduction of the Government's endowment to all local bodies, the dissolution of Glastonbury division was only a matter of time.

The settlers of Glastonbury Subdivision One west of the Mary petitioned to be added to Widgee Subdivisions Two and Three, since they had common grounds in that all used the roads to travel into and out of Gympie. The thickly populated regions of Glastonbury Division at Monkland, Cootharaba Road and Ashford's Hill sought annexation by Gympie, with the remainder of the Glastonbury division east of the river to be taken over by Widgee.

On January 4, 1895 a Government Order in Council was issued abolishing Glastonbury Division and adding most of the territory to Widgee, the remainder going to Gympie Municipality along the lines earlier recommended. The order was made retrospective to the last day of 1894.

Because of the abolition of Glastonbury, the entire Widgee Divisional Board was required to retire. There was considerable interest in the ensuing elections which drew a large field of candidates. The new board comprised Messrs William Henderson, Daniel Martin, Alfred G. Ramsay, James Fraser, John Flood, Thomas Abdy, William Chippindall, Matthew Mellor, and Daniel Skyring. The unsuccessful candidates were Emanuel Gate, Joseph Hawley, William Davies, Henry Hatch, Edward O'Neill, Abraham Hutchinson and Engelbert Pedersen.

One of the new members, Mr. Fraser, was a former chairman of the Glastonbury Divisional Board. He later served three terms as Widgee chairman.

In December 1896 a large slice of territory was removed from the southeast portion of the Division despite a rearguard action lasting nearly four years. In 1893 the owner of Kenilworth station Isaac Moore and Mr. Tamlyn from the Mount Ubi Estate formed an alliance to block this severance move. Mr. J. O. Bonney, who owned Belli Park on the road from Kenilworth to Yandina, was lobbying strongly for annexation to Maroochy Division and had taken up a petition among settlers of the area to support him.

The key to the issue was the North Coast railway. The breakaway movement felt by aligning themselves with Maroochy they would be given a better road to the railway at Yandina. At the time the road was something of a

no-man's land with neither Widgee nor Maroochy willing to do anything about its atrocious condition.

Tamlyn and company put forward the view that merger with Maroochy would delay improvements to the road for at least five years, since it would take all their rates over this period to pay for the work.

Mr. Bonney had intended to fight his battle for separation as a member of the Widgee Divisional Board, as Mr. Broadbent earlier had done with the secession of Widgee station. But Mr. Bonney's plan became unstuck when his horse took fright and bolted as he was riding into Gympie to lodge his nomination papers. Mr. Bonney was thrown and lay unconscious for over two hours. He continued in to Gympie but arrived too late to lodge his nomination.

Despite this setback he eventually won his case. Kenilworth and the properties which comprised the Mount Ubi estate were transferred to Maroochy, the change being gazetted on the last day of 1896.

The year 1897 was Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee year, and the Widgee Divisional Board distributed 1,250 medals it had specially struck for the occasion.

In the same year the Board decided to buy the Masonic Hall (Reid's Printery) in Gympie as its affairs had outgrown the shared use of the Gympie School of Arts.

## Drought and Disease

Fireworks heralded the start of the 20th century. It was a time for optimism. On the national scene, Federation would become a reality within a year. In Gympie the mines were heading for their record years. For the man on the land prospects had never looked better. Then came a crash which was to resound throughout the Division and bring farmers to their knees.

The twin instruments of destruction were a two-year drought and the tiny cattle tick. For half a century the landsmen had weathered their battles with marauding blacks, droughts, floods and bushfires. Now many of them met their match.

Cattle losses were bad enough in 1901, the first year of the big drought. In 1902 the drought was so bad that even Deep Creek ran dry. Feed was in such short supply that corn had to be imported from South Africa to take the place of the Widgee's failed crops.

But worst of all were the ticks. Whole herds were wiped out or decimated by the tick-carried redwater disease which spread through the Division like wildfire.

A shipment of five Brahmans from Java in 1872 is believed to have brought the first ticks to Australia. But until the turn of the century ticks had been confined to the north of Queensland; not one had been reported anywhere near Widgee. Then as the widespread drought over Queensland dragged on, many graziers moved their herds to find relief along the coast. Tick-infested cattle mixed freely with local stock agisted on the wallum country. The local herds had no immunity, and the damage was done.

Stock losses were appalling, Mrs P. Gilligan, then the largest landholder at Lagoon Pocket, lost 170 head of cattle. On Eel Creek, Thomas Abdy lost over 100 head. He later recalled: "I lost count after 33 died in three days. I know I had only 11 cows left." Another long established Eel Creek settler, David Groundwater, bemoaned: "I just about lost everything. I have not now got 10 cows that have had two calves." His losses, in fact, were 325 head.

Mr. E. W. Treeby, who had just bought Mumbeanna, lost 155 out of 210 cattle; John Hillcoat lost more than 120 of the stock he was running at Wodonga; John Bertlesen lost 30 of the 42 cattle he had on agistment near the coast; George Cochrane on Deep Creek had to give up dairying after losing 37 milking cows.

On the Brisbane Road, John and William Mullaly, who had been the biggest suppliers of cream to the local dairy factory, were reduced to just 33

cows in milk. At Bunya Creek Mr. J. H. Waller lost half his cattle to the drought and several more to redwater.

On Widgee station which then carried an average of 6-7,000 head, owner Arnold Wienholt refused to sit back and see his herd decimated. Before the ticks even hit the district—their effects were certainly known out west—Mr. Wienholt began experiments to combat the plague. Inoculating healthy cattle with blood taken from animals which had recovered from redwater, Mr. Wienholt made a series of controlled tests. He found that blood taken from the worst-affected beasts was the least suitable for inoculation purposes but many of his other findings were inconclusive. Nevertheless he carried out a widescale inoculation programme on his herd with a fair degree of success. During the first year of the plague his stock losses amounted to only 10 per cent. And the following year he reduced this to two per cent by a judicious combination of inoculation and dipping.

The measure of Wienholt's success can be seen from a comparison with the Myra Vale property immediately south of Widgee station, where Wilson and Fisher lost 200 of their 850 cattle in the first year of the scourge.

Every man had his own theory on how to overcome the scourge which threatened to bankrupt them all. There were no Department of Primary Industries backroom boys to turn to in those days. But it was generally thought that dipping was the best solution. As a result dozens of dips were built throughout Widgee over the next few years as farmers realised their value. Some of the bigger properties built their own, like Imbil station which had three. Sometimes neighbours built a common dip on their boundary, as was the case with the Neeps and Beckers at Tagigan. In other areas dips were built and operated on a co-operative basis.

Nearly every man on the land was affected, whether it was his house milking cow or his bullock team which was afflicted. It took many years for the Division to get over the blow and for stock numbers to be replenished.

The Widgee Divisional Board was in turmoil, too. A series of incidents involving one of the Board's road gangs culminated in the resignation of the chairman, James Fullerton. The minutes of a special board meeting on June 18, 1902 tell Fullerton's side of the story:

“In January the members of No. 2 Subdivision decided to knock off the road party which was done. Some time after it was decided to put a man on the Glastonbury Road, and Rountree had been put on. He worked for three weeks and got his pay. And as Mr. E. Cross (Board member) said there were one or two other things that need doing, Rountree continued working for the three weeks of the next month. He (the chairman) then went out and decided as there was nothing more wanted doing urgently and owing to the state of the funds that it was time he was knocked off, which he did.

“Mr. Cross and Mr. (D.) Webster put him on again and as they were in the majority he (Fullerton) took it in good grace and said nothing more about it, intending to bring it up at the next meeting. At that meeting, owing to an unfortunate accident, Mr. Cross was not present. After that meeting he had





Widgee Shire Council, 1903: Back row, from left: D. Webster, E. Cross, W. A. Clarke, A. H. Lowe; Front row: D. Martin, Z. D. S. Skyring, J. Fraser (chairman), W. C. Anderson, J. Green. In front: C. Brasch (clerk).

talked the matter over with Mr. Webster who subsequently went away but had promised to return. While he (Fullerton) was sitting at the table Rountree came in and asked what was to be done, whether he was to be knocked off. He asked Rountree to wait till Mr. Webster returned and they would then settle it. He replied he wanted an answer at once and he then told him to knock off. Rountree then gave him the biggest blackguarding in his life, shaking his fist in his face and calling him a rogue, a thief and a swindler. Eleven days later he found Rountree working on the road but he did not know by whose authority."

Messrs Cross and Webster replied they had put Rountree back on to fill in a big hole near the Jockey Club Hotel and said Rountree was an honest and conscientious worker who would be a great loss to the ratepayers if his services were dispensed with.

The upshot of the affair was the resignation of Mr. Fullerton although the Board supported his actions from a financial point of view. He was replaced on the board by Zachariah Skyring whose uncle, Daniel, was already a member.

As a result of the Fullerton affair, the Board passed a resolution that any employee who abused a Board member would be dismissed. Daniel Skyring asked his fellow members to "stand on their manhood and say they

were servants of the ratepayers and not of the employees." He said they had seen a sample of what could happen and if they were going to allow their employees to "blackguard" them then he was not going to remain on the Board.

In April 1903 Widgee was elevated to the status of a shire, Widgee Divisional Board members became Shire Councillors instead, with James Fraser the incumbent chairman. The Council soon found itself embroiled in a legal battle which lasted four years and which had important implications for every local authority in the country.

The battle began with what seemed a trifling offence. Bullock driver Percy Bonney drove his wagon over a drain beside a newly metalled road, causing damage amounting to about thirty shillings. The Council prosecuted Bonney under Shire by-law No. 287 which said that "no person shall in any way injure or destroy the water-table, guttering or side drain of any road in any way whatsoever, either by crossing or driving along or in the same way with any cart, dray, wagon or other conveyance, or by casting or depositing therein any material calculated to impede or disturb the course of the waterflow, under penalty of not more than £5."

The Court of Petty Sessions in Gympie duly convicted Bonney and fined him five shillings with costs. Bonney did not let the matter rest, however, and appealed to the Full Court (Supreme Court of Queensland). The case was heard in December 1906 before Judges C. J. Cooper, J. Real and J. Power.

Widgee lost this round to Bonney by a unanimous decision. The three judges ruled that while damage to the side drain was admitted, there was no proof of intent to cause damage. All three judged felt the wording of the by-law gave the Council far too sweeping powers to be taken as absolute law.

Mr. Justice Cooper suggested that the Council might amend the by-law by adding the words, "crossing or driving into the same negligently, or unnecessarily, or wantonly." Mr. Justice Real added: "I do not think a by-law is authorised which can make a person liable for injury caused without negligence while using the road in the ordinary and usual way."

Appalled by the decision, Widgee Shire Council appealed to the High Court of Australia which heard the case in April 1907. This time the decision went in favour of the Council, the court ruling that the by-law was a duly constituted law approved by the Governor in Council.

It was a somewhat hollow victory for Widgee, however, as the high Court ordered the Council to pay Bonney's costs—which was like a mountain to a molehole in comparison with the original thirty shillings damage to a drain. Nevertheless, the decision had far-reaching consequences for all local authorities, since it practically gave them a charter of freedom to forbid wheeled vehicles from crossing any water-table formed on either side of a newly metalled road and to confine heavily laden vehicles to prescribed portion of the width of a highway.

Concurrently with the Bonney case, Widgee fought another major legal battle. Headed by Wilhelm Anderson, a Danish-born Brooloo farmer who succeeded Fraser in the chair, the Council took on one of Gympie's mining giants, Scottish Gympie, over pollution of the Mary River.

It was in fact, a test case since many of the mining companies were involved. At issue was the discharge of tailings from the crushing batteries into the river. Up to 20,000 tons a month of slime and sludge from the batteries was carried by sluice boxes—some of them a long mile—into the river in the expectation that it would be washed away by periodic floods. But the tailings proved too heavy and the river became badly silted with a foul slime which poisoned the water for drinking and ruined the adjacent pastures. There was so much sediment in the river at one stage that it began working its way upstream towards the intake for Gympie's water supply and a barrage was built to prevent further encroachment.

Protests about the tailings began in 1901 with a letter to the Widgee Divisional Board from an irate landholder downstream from Gympie. By 1904 complaints had been received from as far downstream as Maryborough. The Gympie Town Council declined to take action since the mines were the lifeblood of the town. However, on September 6, 1904 the Widgee Shire Council took the matter to Court. Bottles of polluted water—now on display at Gympie Historical and Mining Museum—were presented as exhibits. The Shire lost its case because of a technicality over the exact time and place where the samples had been taken.

The following year Widgee was joined in a concerted campaign by other shires bordering the river—Tiaro, Antigua, Tinana, Granville, Burrum and Maryborough. No further legal action was taken but over a period of several years most of the mining companies bowed to public pressure and decided to stack their tailings in heaps instead of discharging them into the river. By then, however, the mines had passed their peak. After World War II the tailing deposits were reworked by the Runge family to extract gold by the cyanide process.

Court cases were of minor concern to most of the Shire, however. Most of its residents were more interested in getting better roads and bridges. In 1908 they got another major bridge across the Mary—Bell's Bridge at O'Leary's Crossing. Before the bridge the only way across the river there was by ford or, in flood time, by ferry.

Construction of the bridge was a mainly Widgee affair, since neither Tiaro Shire nor Gympie was prepared to contribute towards its cost. The only financial help came from Kilkivan Shire, which naturally enough wanted an upgraded route to Maryborough.

The bridge was opened on May 28, 1908 by the Minister of Lands, Mr. J. T. Bell, and was followed by a banquet at the site hosted by Widgee Shire chairman James Fraser. The main contractor for the bridge was a Mr. Fitzgerald.

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# The Bridge Committee

—OF THE—

*Kilkivan and Widgee Shire Councils  
request the pleasure of your Company,  
on Thursday, the 28th inst., at 1 o'clock  
p.m., at the opening of the Bridge over  
the Mary River, at O'Leary's Crossing.*

*Gympie, May 1908.*

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Two years later the bridge was badly damaged in a flood when the pressure of logs and debris smashed the decking and left the pylons askew. Tebbutt and Green were called in to make substantial repairs including the sinking of new piles seven feet deeper than before. The last three symbolic blows were delivered by the Shire chairman, Mr. Fraser, who threw a champagne party to reopen the bridge.

Following repeated requests from Widgee for financial assistance to maintain the bridge, the Bell's Bridge Board was formed on January 20, 1916 with Widgee and Kilkivan Shires each contributing 40 per cent of the costs, Gympie City Council 15 per cent and Tiaro five per cent.

The first chairman of the Bridge Board was Mr. T. H. Steele, the immediate past chairman of the Widgee Shire Council. Other members of the first board were H. G. Percival (Widgee), T. Tennison and F. S. Schollick (Kilkivan), H. B. Lindley (Tiaro) and P. H. Green (Gympie).

Mr. Steele's successors as chairman were Mr. Percival and Mr. W. H. Kidd, the latter holding office when the Bell's Bridge Board was abolished on May 30, 1935.

In November 1909 the Home Secretary's Office served notice on the Council that it intended to sever major portions from Widgee and Maroochy Shires to form a new Shire based on Cooroy. The notification was gazetted on November 13 and came into effect three months later, though the new shire was called Noosa instead of Cooroy and its headquarters became Pomona.

The land annexed by Noosa Shire from Widgee included all of Noosa Parish, a small eastern portion of Traveston, more than half of Tuchekeoi and all of that part of Tewanin and Weyba Parishes which had been included in Widgee up to that time. Widgee in turn regained a small portion of Tuchekeoi Parish between Mount Tuchekeoi and Blackfellows Creek.

Not everyone was happy with the boundary change which in some cases bordered on the ridiculous. At Cedar Pocket Mr. James Waddell's house remained in Widgee while his cow bails became part of Noosa. Members of the Moran Group of settlers at Kin Kin successfully petitioned to be returned to Widgee Shire, but in 1914 went back to Noosa during a series of minor boundary adjustments. Eventually all of the Kin Kin district reverted to Noosa Shire as well as an area of Como Parish including Lakes Como and Cooloola.



Bells Bridge after a flood in the 1920s.

*courtesy W. Greenhalgh*

In 1911, Zachariah Daniel Sparks Skyring was elected Shire chairman. No one was surprised by his election. Everyone in the Shire knew or knew of "Zac" as he liked to be called. He was already a legend in his lifetime, which was to span nearly a century of the Shire's development.

Zac had been a boy of about 10 when his father, Zachariah snr., brought him up from Brisbane with the rest of the family, the trip by bullock



The Pomona blacksmith's shop of Mr. W. Brooks. In 1909 the Widgee Shire Council served a demolition order on Mr. Brooks because of objections from the local bank.

dray taking 14 days. The family moved into the slab hut Mr. Skyring had built on the goldfield at Mt. Pleasant and about three years later moved to an area of Pie Creek known as Green Swamp. They found over 150 blacks camped on their selection where the bunyas were in season. Mr. Skyring, who spoke some of the Aboriginal language, made no effort to drive them away and named his property Mumbeanna after their chief, Mumbe.

Meanwhile, young Zac befriended the native children and quickly learned their tongue, getting to know their words by the time proven method of pointing to an object and demanding its name. In no time at all Zac was adopted into the tribe as a blood brother and given the name Bunda. Whenever his work was done—often with many hands making light work through the intervention of his black brothers—Bunda would go walkabout or join a hunt. He was totally accepted as one of the tribe and ran naked with them, carrying his own waddy or nulla nulla when he went on a hunt (battue) for kangaroos.

Young Zac's knowledge of the Aborigines stood him in good stead many times—and even saved his life. Once, while drinking at a waterhole far from home and friendly blacks, he saw in the water the reflections of an Aboriginal standing behind him with upraised spear. Without a flicker of fear, Zac asked calmly: "What name you?" Of course, he spoke in the Aboriginal language and the young warrior immediately lowered his weapon.

When Zac was only 13 years old his father sent him to Brisbane to bring back some cattle. On the way back the stockmen who accompanied him decided to slake their dusty throats at a little shanty just north of Brisbane.

The potent sly grog got the better of them and they were taken under the wing of the constabulary, so Zac decided to go on alone. Near Cooroy, however, the cattle got away from him and scattered. Like any young boy he sat down and cried. Through his sobs he heard the sound of Aboriginal voices discussing what on earth such a young fellow was doing on his own. Speaking in their own language, Zac told them he was Bunda of Mumbearna and that he had failed in the task set for him by his father. Among Aborigines, such failure meant great disgrace. So they rounded up all the cattle and helped Zac drive them all the way to the outskirts of Gympie. They would go no further for fear of being shot.

Zac's life was full of adventure. He once recounted his meeting with the bushranger Palmer. "I took some rations out in the bush to my father who was splitting palings. I camped the night, and the next morning a stranger on a horse came to the camp fire and Dad asked him to have a cup of tea.

"As he squatted down his coat fell apart and I saw a pistol on each side of his belt. Suddenly three men came out of the scrub. The stranger vaulted on to his horse and the three men started shooting. The stranger leapt with his horse into the creek and the bullets missed him. The men told us then that they were policemen and that the stranger was the notorious Palmer. We saw him again a couple of months later when he stopped at our house and had a cup of tea. He told us then he was thinking of giving up. He eventually did, but they showed no mercy and hanged him."

The adult Zac was as enterprising as young Zac, turning his hand to timber felling, bullock driving and then banana growing with great success. On retirement he moved to Tin Can Bay to live. His property there was later subdivided as the Skyring residential estate.

Mr. Skyring served a second term as chairman towards the end of World War 1. During the intervening years the chair was filled by Traveston teamster Thornton Powell, Imbil sawyer and farmer William Tweed, Green's Creek dairyman Thomas Steele and Glastonbury farmer and cream carrier, Teddy Betts.

# The Cattle Barons

By the time World War 1 broke out, the days of the big cattle runs in Widgee Shire were virtually at an end. Traveston, Imbil, Kenilworth and Widgee runs all had been cut up into smaller farms and sold. Only Yabba, too far off the beaten track to be very attractive for closer settlement survived as a major holding.

For up to half a century these and smaller runs had dominated the Shire's rural affairs and offered employment to many workers. With the dismemberment of the cattle runs, many of the employees grabbed the opportunity to buy up land on the properties on which they had toiled.

No history of Widgee Shire would be complete without a record of the stations:

## WIDGEE

By far the best known of the big cattle stations—and the one which was to give its name to the Shire—was Widgee, even though it did not spend many years within the boundaries of the Widgee Shire.

William and Atticus Tooth had a grand vision for Widgee when they stumbled on to the land some time in the late 1840s. On February 5, 1849 they tendered the less than princely sum of sixpence per annum for a pastoral licence for 46,080 acres. The colonial officials of New South Wales were not quite that anxious to develop the north and declined the application. Undaunted the brothers made a counter offer of 15 shillings and sixpence per annum for 15,000 acres in the Basin of Weigee Weigee (one of several early spellings of the name Widgee) and 1/6 for an adjoining 16,000 acres at Orange Tree. These two applications were successful and were approved on October 1 of the same year. The lessees' names went into the books as William B. Tooth and Co., since Atticus at that time was too young to hold land in his own right. The carrying capacity of each run was estimated at 600 head of cattle.

Over the next two years the brothers acquired more and more land, taking up the adjoining Glastonbury, Bald Hills and Reserve runs.

In the absence of any proper surveys, boundaries were rough and ready. The Basin of Wijji Widgee (another spelling) was officially described as "commencing at a large gum tree, marked  $\mathfrak{D}$  on the west face on the left bank of the main Widgee Widgee Creek, about half a mile below the junction of two branch creeks, and near where the scrub first joins the creek, below the gap leading from Woonga; thence west three miles; thence in a line parallel with



the general course of the creek upwards eight miles; thence east to the creek, then down by the creek to the starting point.”

In practice, boundaries of the early runs were more often formed by nature, with rivers and ranges determining the limits. The Tooths’ stock thus was able to roam freely over land not yet taken up or on land already forfeited such as the Walooga and Brooyar runs.

Both of the latter runs had been tendered for by John Murray in 1849 and 1851 respectively. Both applications were refused, and the runs later passed into the Tooths’ control. In September 1849 John Ross took up 16,000 acres to form the Woonga run. But in 1852 this, too, was transferred to the Tooth brothers.

The conglomeration of all these runs gave William and Atticus Tooth a giant holding embracing an area of 70 miles by 100 miles. In 1852, however, they sold out to their Sydney cousins, Robert and Frederick Tooth, though William retained a financial interest. Atticus went on to manage Cambroon station which his brother had bought, stocking the run with 10,000 sheep only to see them nearly wiped out by nearly nine months of incessant rain.

For some time the Tooths persevered with sheep and also experimented with wheat growing. Under the superintendence of Mr. W. Taylor—who was followed as manager some time later by William Casbrook Giles—a trial crop of two acres of wheat in the 1850s produced a crop of two bushels. Finding the land unsuitable for sheep or wheat on a large scale the Tooths switched to cattle, a move that was to win Widgee renown as one of the premier cattle raising properties in the colony.



*courtesy John Oxley Library*

Widgee Station, circa 1869

By 1863 Widgee carried 10,000 cattle and 4,000 horses. In the same year Mr. James Charles White, a gentleman of Sydney, purchased Widgee lock, stock and barrel for the sum of £30,000. Mr. White lasted barely a year. Pleuropneumonia ravaged the herd and Robert Tooth redeemed the mortgage on the station.

Mr. White had seen Widgee as the ideal country for his bloodstock horses. He raced horses in Sydney where the young Thomas Mullaly was among his jockeys.

Mr. Mullaly, a race jockey since the age of 13, was hired by Mr. White as studmaster, handler, trainer and rider on a five year contract at Widgee for £6 a week plus keep. Although Mr. White's dream did not eventuate, Mr. Mullaly stayed on for the five years during which time he married. Five of the Mullalys' 10 children were born on Widgee station and one of them, John, later wrote: "Mrs. Mullaly was badly horned by the house cow in her side while separating the calf from its mother. It so happened all were away from Widgee, except her two small children. Mother sewed up the wound, shut the children in the room and went to bed. The nearest doctor was approximately 60 miles away. Doctors' books and first aid remedies were provided to all employees. Fortunately she recovered."

Mr. John Mullaly also related a meeting between Mr. White and the manager of Mr. MacTaggart's Kilkivan station. Both claimed to have the best rider in the district with the result that a buckjumping contest was arranged for the two champions. All hands from both stations gathered for the contest with each side putting up £50 for the winner. Both were excellent horsemen and neither was thrown, but the young Mullaly was eventually adjudged the victor.

As an indication of Widgee's immense stockholding capacity, Mrs. Mullaly said she had seen 8,000 head of mixed cattle yarded at the Widgee home paddock.

In 1864 Widgee was mortgaged by Robert Tooth to Ipswich grazier Robert Cran for the sum of £12,500. Mr. Cran also had slaughtering businesses and a boiling down works in Maryborough which produced Liebig's extract of beef.

During Mr. Cran's investment in Widgee the homestead was extended and remodelled into a stately home—at least by Queensland country standards. Among the staff at the time was Eugene Monaghan, a drover who took some stock to Widgee in 1863 and stayed for the next five years.

In May 1868 Messrs Tooth and Cran assigned their interests in the station to the Bank of New South Wales, so ending the Tooth family's 20-year association with Widgee. Stock transferred included 14,000 head of cattle and 300 horses.

In the same year an application was made to bring the Widgee station under the provisions of the Crown Lands Alienation Act. The constituent runs—Woonga, Orange Tree, Basin of Widgee Widgee, Brooyar, Glastonbury, Bald Hills, Reserve, Walooga and Carrington—were consolidated and

on August 14, 1869 a total of 102,300 acres was resumed for selection purposes.

In March 1872, the Bank of New South Wales, which by now had accumulated landholdings on both sides of the Mary River, transferred the Widgee lease to John Broadbent and Daniel Williams.

Everyone wanted land from the resumed portion of Widgee and there was never enough to go around. At one Land Court sitting in Gympie in 1875 there were 49 applicants, for 165,000 acres at Widgee although only 65,000 acres of resumed land was available for selection. The land was shared out by ballot with J. J. G. Caulfield among the fortunate, though he was acting as a dummy for the Widgee owners themselves. Through their own selections and through the use of dummies, the owners were able to build up the freeholding of the Widgee run to over 30,000 acres by 1888, this area being additional to land still held under pastoral lease.

James John Good Caulfield was as much a part of Widgee as any of the station's owners. He started work there in 1864 at the age of 16 and remained until 1908 when he selected a part of the old Woolooga run for himself. The tales of Jimmy Caulfield's feats of horsemanship are legend, such as his 70-mile ride to Maryborough in the dead of night to summon a doctor for the badly injured Widgee manager, Mr. Jackson, who had been gored by a mad bull. Had it not been for Caulfield's epic ride, and the primitive but effective ministrations of the German housekeeper, Mr. Jackson almost certainly would have died.

It was during Messrs Broadbent and Williams' tenure of Widgee that the station was removed from the Widgee Division though the invisible local government boundary made no difference to its influence. Mr. Williams died in 1885, his interests being taken over by William Forrest and Peter MacPherson as the executors of his estate. Broadbent left 10 years later when the holding was taken over by Wienholt Estates Co. Arnold Wienholt, who was Daniel Williams' grandson, managed the station. He was a roving sportsman and adventurer, given to impulses such as joining lion safaris to Africa. He met his death in Ethiopia on an ill-advised expedition to fight against the invading Italian forces. After his death Wienholts sold Widgee station back to the Queensland Government for an average of £2 an acre, and in 1911 and 1912 the run was cut up into small blocks and sold. The old homestead was destroyed by fire shortly afterwards. At the end Widgee station had an area of 45,997 acres.

### IMBIL

One of the stories local residents like to tell is that Imbil station got its name when a young Aboriginal, on being questioned as to why a cow was lying down, told his employer, "No boss, 'im bull." Unfortunately the story does not stand up to scrutiny as the name Imbil Imbil was on the map before there were ever any cattle there!

The land was first tendered for in July, 1851 in two 16,000-acre blocks known as Bluff Plains and Bunya Creek, the latter being known a few years

later as Yabber Creek. MacTaggart operated the two properties together with his adjacent Amamoor run as one holding.

In 1857 MacTaggart sold the Bluff Plains and Yabber Creek leases to Paul and Clement Lawless, who had pioneered much of the Burnett district ten years earlier. Like other squatters along the Mary River, they found the land unsuitable for sheep and made the switch to cattle. During the wet seasons the sheep developed footrot and were crippled by the spear grass which pierced their hooves.

The Lawless brothers had virtually open range over the Mary Valley from their boundary with Kenilworth in the south to Traveston Crossing in the north, being bounded on the west by the Swansons' Yabba station and Amamoor station (on which MacTaggart forfeited his lease in 1862).

Some time during either MacTaggart's or the Lawless brothers' tenure the first building was erected, a rude homestead of round cedar logs 27 inches in width. The roof and battens were also of cedar and on one rafter the name "J. W. Hickson, 1860" was carved by penknife. The walls contained a number of auger holes through which the homesteaders could fire their guns in the event of an attack by blacks. This building was later covered with weatherboards on the outside while the inside was lined with pitsawn, hand dressed timber. It stood for over half a century before being demolished.



Imbil homestead in which the Elworthy family lived

Under the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868 a vast portion of the run, mainly from the northern end, was resumed for closer selection and the consolidated run became known as Imbil station. However, the owners and other members of the family, including Ellen Lawless, also selected some of the resumed land, in particular the area known as Imbil Island encircled by Yabba Creek and its Anabranch.

In 1875 the Lawless family sold Imbil to Elworthy and Mellor who retained the run for over 30 years. The transferred leasehold lands totalled 37 square miles and in 1879 the new owners took out a five-year lease over another 40 square miles at £2 per square mile per annum. Over the next few years, in the face of more resumptions, they freeholded much of the run, partly through the judicious use of "dummies." By 1888 the partnership had managed to freehold well over 13,000 acres.

The Elworthy and Mellor partnership initially comprised the Devonshire born Elworthy brothers, John and William, and the Mellor brothers—James who was deeply religious, and Matthew, who was a fast rising star on the Widgee political scene. The principals of the partnership were William Elworthy and Matthew Mellor who struck up a life-long business partnership during their timber cutting days in the Logan district in 1863. They were cutting cedar on the Mary River when the Gympie rush began and tried their hand at mining too, without much success. They then turned to butchering in partnership with a former Traveston stockman, Henry Best. Their first beasts were bought from Miva station at £4 a head. As business prospered the need arose for land on which they could fatten their own stock, hence their purchase of Imbil.



William Elworthy

Elworthy himself took over the managership of Imbil and ran it for many years with an iron fist. Near the homestead is an underground tank of clay packed brick, roughly 12 feet wide and 18 feet deep, in the shape of a giant bottle. Elworthy was a firm believer in cleanliness and used to round up all the young blacks on the station every week for a bath. He made sure this was carried out by personally putting a rope around each of them and dunking them down the well several times.

Elworthy's home still stands though it has fallen into disrepair and is used as a barn by the present owner, Mr. R. Myers. This homestead, built a few years after the original station building, consists basically of four rooms with verandahs on three sides. The flooring is beech and the walls are of white cedar, all hand planed and tongue and grooved. The studs are of cedar and silky oak. Originally the roof was of cedar shingles which were replaced with iron in 1925.

The early kitchen and servants quarters were burnt down many years ago and after that one of the verandahs was closed in and converted into a

kitchen. Over the years the station served many functions—as post office, store, school, staging post and boarding house.

In the early days when there was no other settlement within cooee, head stations like Imbil were a haven for travellers, somewhere where they could get a meal and a bed. When the Mary Valley was being settled, before there were any stores, farmers usually bought their meat from Imbil station rather than kill their own. If there was no fresh meat available there was always salted beef. Similarly when supplies ran low on the Imbil goldfield, the fossickers simply called on the station.

The station also was a changing post for Cobb and Co's coaches when the main road ran through Kenilworth. The cutting for the old coach road down to the creek below the homestead can be seen today. An extra four horses were usually added to the team to help drag the coach up the hill on the other side of the creek.

Imbil station also served as the first provisional school in the area. Class was held in a shingle-roofed hut either pulled down or moved about the time the town of Imbil was created. One of its teachers was a daughter of Mr. Thomas Bergin, who spent 37 years at the station, first under the managership of Mr. R. Bushnell and later becoming head stockman and manager himself before his death in 1910. Among the men who worked for him during mustering were James Durham, Jack Grainger, Harry Stubbins and and Aboriginal stockmen Matty Mitchell, Matty Davies, Tommy Cain, Billy Isaac and Hec the saddler.

Mr. Warwick Green, who assumed the managership after Mr. Bergin, presided over Imbil's last days as a station. The famous run was cut up and sold on St. Patrick's Day, 1914.

## TRAVESTON

Traveston's history began nearly 10 years after establishment of the stations west of the Mary, yet less is known about its early days. Early records show the run spelt as Traverston and there is a theory that a man named Travers once squatted on the land. This name fails to appear in any records however.

Robert Glissons was the first tenderer for the spread, applying for two runs—Traveston and North Traveston—in 1857. Both applications were approved in April 1858 when he was granted an eight-year lease at £10/15/- a year for each of the two 16,000 acre runs.

The Land Commissioner described Traveston as "Commencing at the northwest corner of the northern or lower boundary of North Kenilworth and running easterly four miles for its southern boundary. On the east by a line bearing westerly four miles to the River Mary and on the west by the River Mary upwards to its starting point." North Traveston was described as "Commencing at the northwest corner of Traveston block and bounded on the south by Traverston, on the east by a line running parallel with the river for

six miles, on the north by a line bearing westerly four miles to the River Mary. On the west by that river upwards to the point of commencing.”

In 1868 the two runs were transferred to the timber cutters Broughton and Fallerini and then, in successive years, to S.D. and L. Moffatt and on to Thomas Holt.

The son of a Leeds wool merchant, Holt came to Australia in 1842. He purchased several properties in Queensland and carried on a wool buying business as well as representing the Stanley Borough (of Ipswich and Brisbane) in the 1856 New South Wales Government. Holt did not live at Traveston himself and forfeited the runs in 1868 for non-payment of rent. Most of this land was soon resumed under the Crown Lands Alienation Act.

Although the land does not appear to have been registered in his name, Thomas Powell held the property when James Nash dropped in for supper on the eve of his momentous gold discovery. Powell had, in fact, already been there for about 10 years in some capacity and is generally regarded as the first permanent settler.



Thomas Powell's grave at Traveston homestead

When 16,000 acres of the resumed land was opened for selection in mid-1869, Powell retained the head station and remained there until his death 40 years later.

Powell was a man of simple needs. For nearly 40 years he was content to reside in a humble hardwood dwelling. It was only on his marriage very late in life, that he built the present homestead, a fine cedar-walled highset building with solid beechwood flooring. During a timber shortage in World War II a Brisbane builder was so impressed with the cedar planks that he is said to have offered the then owner, the sum of £1,500 for the house alone, purely for the timber. The owner, newly on the property, refused to sell.

Powell was a single-minded man at times. One of his neighbours, the late John Mullaly, took great delight in recounting a tale of one of Powell's brushes with officialdom. Mr. Powell had been up to Maryborough to fetch a cook or housekeeper for the station. On the way back the dray capsized and the woman broke her arm. Powell set it as best he could, for everyone knew a bit of bush medicine in those days—they had to. However, after two or three weeks the break was not mending too well so he decided to send the woman to the hospital in Gympie. His trusted black boy, Billy, took her off to town by dray with Powell following a few hours later. On his arrival Powell found his two employees still sitting in the dray outside. According to the story admission to the hospital required the authorisation of a member of the board. "We'll see about that," fumed Powell. "Back her up, Billy," he told the young Aboriginal, who backed up the dray to the hospital verandah. "Tip her up, Billy," he ordered. And that was how she finished up in hospital. The authorities had the last laugh, though, as Powell was summonsed for making 'an unauthorised entry' to the hospital!

In the early days of Gympie thousands of prospectors trudged through the Traveston run on their way to the gold field. In 1870 the Traveston Crossing on the old road to Brisbane via Durundur was proclaimed a public ferry. Powell never succumbed to the lure of gold so close to home but in 1885 the miners came to him. Two prospectors named Smyth and Cowell found gold on a patch of land not yet freeholded. There was an instant mini-rush to Traveston. A goldfield of one square mile was provisionally proclaimed and 100 men, among them nearby farmer Daniel Skyring and Robert Pollock of the famous Lady Mary P.C. mine, staked out claims. Smyth's first assay yielded only 6dwts 12 grs. a ton however, and within two months the field was abandoned.

Much of the Traveston land is low-lying and has suffered heavy losses of stock and crops in flood years. Twenty of Thomas Powell's blood mares perished in the big flood of 1893. The area where they were lost is now part of Carlson Road and became known as Horse Flat.

At the turn of the century Powell had 3,000 acres of freehold, 800 around the homestead and the remainder river flats. The rich river grassland often carried well over 1,000 cattle and many topped the Brisbane market.

A visitor to the station in 1906 was greatly impressed with both the quality of the stock and the land. He wrote: "The bulls are of Hereford and Devon strains bred on the station from selected cows, and Mr. Powell consid-



ers that the steers he breeds are better than any he can buy in the neighbourhood. At four years old they will average 650 lbs. dressed, or if fed on lucerne 700 lbs; at five years they will have put on another 150lbs. One lot that was sold by Messrs Moreheads Limited in the Enoggera saleyards was especially mentioned in the newspapers by Messrs Dalgety and Co. as being of very prime quality."

Some of Powell's relatives also settled in the Traveston area. Charles Powell carried out dairying on 420 acres and his brother, Thornton, later a chairman of the Widgee Shire, hauled timber from the surrounding area for freshing down the river to Wilson and Hart's mill in Maryborough.

On January 22, 1909, Thomas Powell died and was buried a stone's throw from the homestead of his beloved Traveston. One year later the station was cut into blocks of up to 150 acres which brought a total of £26,000 at auction. One block bought for £1,000 many years later changed hands for nearly £180,000.

The homestead block passed out of the Powell family and has seen several different owners since. However, another relative, Mr. Rodney Powell, later bought a nearby farm on the Brisbane Road and became one of the district's most prominent pig breeders. His son, Ronald, recently obtained the old Traveston cattle brand, TP4, which was recorded the day the Queensland Register of Brands was opened in 1872 and which had passed out of the family after Thomas Powell's death.

### **KENILWORTH**

Of all the great homesteads from Widgee Shire's pioneering days, only Kenilworth remains in anything of its former glory. Though now just outside the Widgee boundary—the homestead area having been transferred to Maroochy Shire in 1896—its development has remained closely linked with the Mary Valley. The draughtsman's line across the map did not bring the southern markets any closer and, until the coming of the motor vehicle and improvements to the roads, Gympie remained the most accessible market outlet.

The size and shape of the Kenilworth spread has undergone many changes since 1850 when Richard Smith tendered for the Obee Obee country. For several years Smith fattened his stock on nearly 40,000 acres on the east bank of the Mary under a depasturing, or provisional licence. Three years after his tender was accepted Smith sold out—to his undoubted relief—to two ex-military gentlemen, Charles Parkinson and Colin Fraser in 1858. Smith appears to have made a handsome profit. The English "new boys" paid him £16,000 for the run he had occupied at a rental of only £10/1/8 a year. Certainly improvements had been made and some stock was thrown in for good measure, but when it came to goodwill there was none as far as the local blacks were concerned.

Mrs. Frances Western (nee Parkinson) was nearly three years old when she travelled with her parents and younger sister on horseback to settle on the

station. She later wrote: "My father and Mr. Fraser had, of course, been to see Ubi Ubi before they bought the land, for which they paid £16,000. My father had the house enlarged with wide verandahs. He was very proud of his study which was lined with cedar grown on his land. He had a good library full of books sent from England by his parents.

"Some cattle was bought with the land, others were bought later, the grass was so splendid that after two seasons fat cattle were ready to sell to the butchers in Brisbane and Ipswich. Then the trouble began, it was found out why the former owners wanted to get rid of such a rich piece of country."

The marauding blacks who took their sheep preyed on the Parkinsons' minds. They now had a baby boy as well as two young daughters and decided, rich land or not, this was no place to rear a family. The two partners could not carry on under the circumstances and sold out at a loss of £8,000.

Naming of the run as Kenilworth has long been credited to the days of the Smith tenure, when Mrs. Smith was said to have been taken with Sir Walter Scott's novel of that name. Mrs. Western claimed, however, it was her father who was responsible. Certainly Mr. Parkinson was a man of books. But official records shed no light on when the name Kenilworth was first adopted.

Ipswich merchant Walter Gray snapped up the bargain-priced Kenilworth run but died soon after. The executors of his estate sold it in 1863 to a wealthy Victorian, Isaac Moore, who more than doubled the size of the station by adding the Cambroon run and Cordalba, on the other side of the river.

He bought Cambroon from his brother-in-law, John Bergin, who had taken it over from the Tooths. Both Cambroon and Cordalba had passed through several hands since being taken up by J. D. MacTaggart in 1850.

Moore now controlled a spread of nearly 100 square miles, though much of it was soon resumed for closer settlement. Isaac Moore stayed at Kenilworth until 1875 but left after the death of his 14-month-old daughter, Henrietta. The baby's weathered grave and tombstone overlook the homestead. Mrs. Moore was so heartbroken by the loss that the family sold out.

For a reported price of nearly £16,000—the same as Parkinson and Fraser had paid over 16 years earlier—Patrick Lillis, who had made a fortune on the Gympie Goldfield, became the new owner of Kenilworth.

Either some time during the tenure of the Moores, or at the very start of the Lillis era, the existing homestead was erected. A Swedish journalist who visited the homestead in 1874 gave his readers back home near the Arctic Circle a description which could well fit the present building. Descendants of the Moores have credited its construction to two Orkney Island cabinet makers specially commissioned by Isaac Moore. On the other hand, Lillis mentions the "men at shingling" in his diary for 1875, his first year at Kenilworth.

Whoever built the homestead, it is of classic Queensland colonial style; a low-set rectangular building bordered by sweeping wide verandahs. The walls are of massive red cedar and are nailed to the floor by large hand made

nails of the type produced by female convicts at the Moreton Bay penal settlement.

In his early years at Kenilworth Lillis prospered. He renewed his lease on Cambroon in 1879, securing 48 square miles for five years at an annual rental of £96, and by 1884 was one of the biggest freehold landowners in the Wide Bay with 9,092 acres. His cattle waxed fat on the rich Kenilworth grasslands and his cedar forests provided icing for the cake.

Even the Gympie Times, blase about money when it came to mining, raised its eyebrows at one spectacular timber deal pulled off by Lillis. "A Melbourne firm through a local agent has been negotiating for the last few days for the purchase of 1,000,000 feet of log cedar now lying in the River Mary between Gympie and Kenilworth," the paper said. "Messrs Lillis and party are the proprietors and if the transaction takes place will be the largest sale of this sort yet to have taken place in this neighbourhood. The price offered is 9/- per hundred feet, but were there direct railway communications from here to Brisbane a much higher figure could easily be got." The sale went through and Lillis reaped a neat £9,000. Within a few years, however, the Lillis bubble burst. A bushfire swept the property in 1888 killing much stock, maize prices fell to ruinous levels and Mr. Lillis' mining investments failed.

In 1891 the Moores repossessed the property.

The Moores, in addition to the freehold land, leased 73 square miles of Crown land and ran Kenilworth in conjunction with their nearby Jimna run. Mr. Duncan Beattie was installed as manager of the combined properties. Kenilworth became renowned for its prize Hereford herd and its thoroughbreds, particularly a mare named The Nun, winner of the 1886 Victoria Oaks. Her progeny raced with considerable success on the Brisbane circuit.

Mr. Beattie stayed on as manager until the run was subdivided in 1921 when he bought part of the estate. Inroads into Kenilworth territory had begun in 1869 with the resumption of land to create the Mount Ubi estate, taken up by A. E. Bonney who subsequently sold to Tamlyn and Rodgers. Twenty years later resumptions from North Kenilworth paved the way for settlement of the Tuchekoi area.

The Kenilworth homestead block now is owned by Mr. and Mrs. J. Rowe, who have opened their historic property to the public. The barn, once the setting for annual balls to raise money for the Gympie Hospital, is used as a dormitory for visiting youth groups. And a pair of old miners' cottages, re-erected near the homestead, provide a haven for visitors seeking the restfulness of the country.

### **YABBA**

In the days of the horse and buggy, Yabba station was regarded as one of the most inaccessible stations in southern Queensland. The Swanson brothers who pioneered the run built their red cedar homestead just above the falls, where the Yabba Creek spills down a 250-foot gorge on its way to join the Mary River. Behind was the rugged Jimna Range. There was no easy way in.

Charles Green, manager of the station from 1890 to 1908, wrote in his reminiscences: "The only wheeled vehicles at Yabba when I went there in 1882 were a bullock dray, a two-wheeler with a pole and a heavy spring cart.

"In the seventies Yabba grazed sheep, and wool was taken by bullock cart to Maryborough via Manumbah, Boonara, Boobyian and Gismoogan. The route to Gympie—only by horseback—was the worst of the lot.

"Sometimes when wet weather set in the teams would be away from the stations for three months at a time owing to flooded creeks. It was a common occurrence for drivers of these drays to break into a keg of rum in the provisions. Often the rum would be all gone by the time they reached the station so an accident would be contrived in which the jar was smashed. The driver would relate the accident to the boss on arrival. The practice was so common that the boss invariably treated it as a joke and I never heard of a bullocky having to shell out for the happening."

John was the first of the Swansons to take up land at Yabba, arriving in 1852 with sheep brought overland from Coonabarabran in New South Wales. He later was joined by brothers James and Alexander and they selected large blocks, mainly in Alexander's name. They concentrated on sheep, and the Yabba diaries make reference to wool from the station being sold for 2/8½d on the London market.

Several shepherds were reported murdered at Yabba around 1856 and historian George Loyau, himself a shepherd there in 1860, told of having narrowly escaped with his life after being attacked by Aborigines.

Yabba was a vast spread. Even after the resumption of 67 square miles of the run under the Crown Lands Alienation Act in 1868 the station still comprised nearly 40,000 acres. Among the first to take up land resumed out of the run were George Byrne, who selected 2920 acres and James Clancy, 400 acres. In general, the land was not particularly sought after because of the difficulties of access.

In 1882 the property passed from the Swansons to the Queensland National Bank and was managed by Mr. R. Bushnell. The sheep had by now given way to Shorthorn cattle which later were replaced by Herefords. In 1915 Yabba came under the control of the Queensland National Pastoral Company, formed to run stations owned by the Queensland National Bank.

Yabba station abutted parts of the Kenilworth and Imbil stations and there were no fences to stop cattle from straying. This posed few problems, however. Before muster time it was the usual practice to send a boy to the neighbour with a letter as notice. The two stations' musterers would meet and there would be some hours of camp drafting after the cattle were mustered. Very few stations had bullock paddocks in those days and all the cattle were mixed up. The cows with calves and weaners would be drafted off and taken home and all the strangers, and others, let go.

Among the musterers on several occasions was the notorious Billy Lillis, who stole from anyone and was a terror for the grog. One of his tricks was to enter houses by climbing down the chimney but he did this once too

often at John Ryland's house at Jimna. Ryland caught him and gave him such a hiding with a stick that the scoundrel always had a healthy respect for Ryland.

During Mr. Green's management there were up to 4,500 Herefords at Yabba. However, in the middle of the 1890s the stud bulls were sold when the bank which owned the station decided to get out of breeding in favour of fattening only. Mr. Green said many of the fat cattle turned out from Yabba often topped the Enoggera market in Brisbane.

Charles MacDonald succeeded Mr. Green as manager of the station and he was followed by his son, Gerald ("Boy") MacDonald who spent more than half a century on the property.

In "Boy" MacDonald's time, Yabba employed a black stockman called Super MacDonald (the station Aborigines often adopted the name of the owner or their employer). Once Super was sent in to Kilcoy with a message. He lingered in a hotel there and the local police sergeant received a telephone call asking him to arrest Super if he did not return forthwith. The sergeant had no wish to arrest Super but told him he would have to lock him up. He suggested that Super ride his horse to the jail, and of course the stockman headed for the hills—with the parting shot: "If you can catch me you've got a better horse than Yabba." The sergeant did not attempt to follow. Yabba had a reputation for its horses as well as for its cattle.

In 1946 the original homestead was demolished. A modern farmhouse replaced the graceful but aged homestead. A considerable amount of the red cedar, carved by a cabinet maker friend of the Swansons, the Rev. Humphries, was incorporated in the new building. A boundary change in 1931 removed most of the Yabba spread to Kilcoy Shire.

### CURRA

Curra was just another Wide Bay station for several years. But when the Maryborough Chronicle reported on October 16, 1867 that Nash had found gold "on Gimpi adjoining Currie," suddenly everyone was asking where Curra was.

Mr. E. Booker owned Curra at the time of the Gympie rush. It had seen a succession of leaseholders since Walter Hay first squatted there in 1859. Mr. Hay, at one time a ferryman at Maryborough, moved from Curra to the Tagigan run and later made his mark in the Noosa-Tewantin area where his varied enterprises included a boarding house for tourists, timber interests and an unsuccessful attempt to start an ostrich farm at Coolum.

Leaseholders of the Curra run after Mr. Hay were J. Minnis and J. Clarke, W. Jackson, James Dowzer, John Purser and John Eaton. After Mr. Booker the station was acquired by the Lindley family.

Curra shrank considerably during the 1870s and 1880s through a succession of resumptions, though Mr. Edward Booker continued to hold as much leasehold land as possible. One lease taken out in 1879 was for 19 square miles for five years at £2 per square mile. A few years later Curra was reported to be running 3,000 head of cattle.

The homestead was built about 200 yards north of the turnoff to Curra railway station from the Old Maryborough Road. A few of the old stumps remain. The opening of the railway line from Maryborough to Gympie in 1881 hastened the closure of the nearby Nine Mile Hotel. This had been run by Mr. Conrad Nahrung as a refreshment stop and changing post for Cobb and Co. The hotel site is now in Tiaro Shire, about a mile from the Widgee boundary on the Old Maryborough Road. The bare patch of land where the building stood is clearly visible.

Only a minor portion of the Curra run was ever part of Widgee Shire. Most of it was in Tiaro and Glastonbury Divisions early on and Widgee's share was subsequently reduced through boundary alterations.

On February 11 1925 when the Curra estate was auctioned it comprised 13,000 acres with an 11-mile frontage to the railway, with most of the property west of the line. It was cut up into 45 farms with the best land selling at up to £20 an acre.

## War and Peace

Within a few weeks of the outbreak of World War 1 on August 4, 1914, the first contingent of young Widgee men were on their way to the front. Over the next four years they were joined by a large proportion of Widgee's youth. But the loss to the work force had no great impact since those were the days of very large families. One Pie Creek family, the Treebys, probably created a Shire record by sending six sons to the war, while the Salmons of Wolvi sent five of their sons.

Early letters from the front were relatively optimistic. Rupert Mellor, son of the first Widgee chairman and a Rhodes Scholar before he enlisted in England, wrote back to Australia: "Our men have a profound contempt for the German soldier; he is brave they admit, but as a fighting man has no initiative. I don't see much of a finish for quite six months, still one can never tell . . . Heaven knows when it will end. Perhaps it will have when you receive this."

But it did not. The war dragged on and more and more young men from the Shire volunteered for the front. The people of the Shire rallied behind them with fundraising activities for the war effort. The Brooloo and Imbil Race Club was among the first to stage patriotic race meetings. And in every hall in the Shire there were patriotic socials, balls and auctions. Patriotic cricket matches and other sports were held in aid of causes such as the Socks Fund and the Belgian Relief Fund.

The Widgee Shire Council did its bit, too, by offering rates relief to serving farmers and by providing-£20 for Sergeant William Thrumman, the recruiting officer sent to the district, to help him with his work.

The columns of the Gympie Times told the sad story of the war. With every issue there were reports naming the latest batch of Widgee soldiers either killed or wounded overseas. Still spirits were high at the front.

Corporal W. Gillespie, from East Deep Creek, wrote home towards the end of the war: "Just a few lines to the friends on Gympie to let them know how our Gympie boys are getting on. They are looking splendid. . . . Have been wounded but am tip top again and hope to be soon back on duty."

World War 1 ground to an end on November 11, 1918 to great rejoicings in Widgee Shire. A few weeks later the first of the boys returned home to heroes welcomes, among them Private Ove Hansen, from Goomboorian, who enlisted at the start of the war and won the Military Medal for valour. Others would never return. Over 250 Gympie and Widgee men were buried in Flanders and other fields.



Widgee Shire Councillors (1916-17) and officers: Standing: Crs. H. G. Percival, R. Dunmall, Mr. W. P. Watts (auditor), Mr. G. A. Buist (Shire Clerk), Cr. T. H. Steele. Seated: Crs. D. Mulcahy, T. E. Betts, J. E. Farrell (chairman), Z. D. S. Skyring, R. B. Parkyn. In front: Mr. A. Fullerton (overseer), Miss E. E. Ruddle (assistant clerk).



These fallen soldiers were commemorated with the erection of the Gympie and Widgee District Memorial Gates in Gympie which lead from Mary Street into the Gympie and Widgee District Memorial Park. The park grounds were formerly the site of Ferguson and Co's Union Sawmill, and were donated by the Henderson family. The gates, paid for by public subscription, were opened in 1920 during a visit to Gympie by the Prince of Wales. Around the Shire a war memorial was erected at Kandanga and memorial halls were built at Wolvi and Traveston.

Despite the war the Shire had forged ahead with the opening of the Mary Valley railway line and the springing up of towns at Dagon, Amamoor, Kandanga and Imbil.

The Shire Council had changed, too, having invested in its first proper road plant, a grader, which revolutionised road making by both forming the surface and clearing the side drains in one operation. This primitive grader was really just a blade which had to be rigged up to a team of bullocks or any other motive power. It was put to the acid test behind a traction engine for the first time on Saxelby Flat on the Cedar Pocket Road. The Council hired Alf Godwin's traction engine for the occasion, with Harry Coop the driver. Shire overseer Archie Fullerton later reported to Council that it had cost only 20/6 per chain to form the nearby Greens Road using the traction engine against 30/3 per chain using bullocks—and so the Widgee Shire Council embarked on a lasting policy of modern, mechanised road equipment.

Shortly afterwards the Council bought a drag scoop, which also could be pulled by either bullocks or traction engine. A few years later the Council advocated a mass demonstration of up-to-date roadmaking plant. This took place near Long Flat Hall, probably the first demonstration of its kind in Queensland. As a result the Council bought a Thornycroft truck and a small Austin grader. A rate of one farthing was levied over the Shire to cover the cost of the equipment which took the Council into the motor age.

Working on the Shire roads before the introduction of such machinery was very different from today. And it wasn't just because of the equipment. Mr. George Clark recalled his first days working on the roads shortly before the war.

"It was all pick and shovel work then," he said. "I got eight shillings and four pence a day. If it rained there was no pay. It was a 48-hour week and no holidays.

"My first job was on Saxelby Flat. Bill Barroman was the ganger and Tom Gill and Bill Sorrensen made up the rest of the gang.

"Archie Fullerton was the foreman and he used to ride across the Shire on horseback and camp with the men. The men always had a horse and dray and feed. Fullerton used to take his swag with him and then ride off the next morning to see somewhere else.

"Everybody had to camp out when they were away on a job. You didn't get any transport from the Council. You had to find your own conveyance there and back. I'd go out by horse or bicycle and take a week's tucker with

me. We had to travel in our own time, too. Sometimes we had to leave on Sunday night to get to work on time for Monday morning if we were working a long way out.

“There were a few blokes carrying their swags in those days. Several times when we were working on the road we’d come home to our tent and find all our tucker gone, although they’d usually leave a little bit for you. Then we’d either have to ride back into Gympie or get one of the cream carriers to bring something out.”

On June 30, 1917 the Council decided to split Number Three Division of the Shire in two. The Number Four Division thus created comprised all of the Shire south of Yabba Creek and east of the Mary River south of Skyring Creek. At the same time Number Two Division was extended to include several homestead properties on the western side of Imbil Road and also the upper portion of Amamoor Creek comprising about half the Parish of Kandanga.

The first elections for Number Four Division were held the following year with Albert Lowe from Bollier and timber hauler Paddy O’Dwyer jr. being chosen as its first representatives. The unsuccessful candidates were Brooloo sawmillers Andrew Doyle and John Grogan.

Council affairs took a new turn in 1921 when elections were held in all four divisions to choose councillors for a three-year term, instead of the former method of councillors retiring on a rotational basis. In conjunction the chairman was elected directly by the ratepayers for the first time with Joseph Tatnell from Cedar Pocket running out the winner with 1,006 votes over two former chairmen—Mr J. E. Farrell with 682 and Mr. W. C. Anderson with 311.

Three years later Mr. Tatnell was pipped by 52 votes when he stood for re-election. His victor was William Hubbard Kidd, who chalked up one of the most remarkable records in Australian local government history. He remained as chairman until 1969, when he stepped down after a full half century as an elected member of the Widgee Shire.

“The Shire was Billy’s first love and I came second,” said his widow Mrs. Muriel Kidd. “He just lived for that Shire and the day his resignation as Council chairman became official he died. He actually died a short time later but for me he died when he finished with the Council.”

Mrs. Kidd said she had opposed her husband first standing for Council in 1919. “We’d only been married three years and had two little girls and a milk run to manage. We had Billy’s invalid mother living with us, too. He told me after his first term as a councillor that he was going to stand for the chair and after one term he’d be out. Well, he was appointed chairman but he never went out.

“He became more and more involved. He had a liking for public life so it was left to me to keep the home fires burning. I really couldn’t enjoy it with four little girls to rear and send to school plus the farm.”

The Kidds' farm on Pie Creek Road had been Billy's father's before him. Later the Kidds changed from milking to fat cattle and Billy took on an insurance agency. But none of this interfered with his Council work.

Mrs. Kidd said that in the early days roads were the Shire's and her husband's biggest problem. "Those were the pick and shovel, horse and dray days. Roads grew out of tracks which wound round obstacles like trees or clumps of stones. When the wet season came they were bad. Billy pushed for better equipment—machinery was the magic word. Once we got machinery we had the wonderful thought that all our troubles would be over. When the Council got a new piece of machinery we'd all have to turn out and watch it push down trees and see how it worked."

Mrs. Kidd added, "A lot of people were sorry to see the end of the horse and dray. The Shire Council had had a favourite horse which workmen and councillors alike spoke of as though he was one of their best gangers.

"For Billy elections were wonderful—he gloried in them. He liked nothing more than a debate or argument at an election meeting. He was fairly quick witted and if anyone had a crack at him he'd give as good as he got. During elections there was a cartoonist, Bob McFadden, who used to do cartoons on election issues. Billy's name, of course, gave him wonderful scope. Billy revelled in those cartoons whether the joke was for or against him."

Mr. Kidd was rarely at a loss for words. Once in his early days as chairman he acceded to a request by Goomboorian residents to inspect the wretched state of their roads. During the course of his inspection tour he was taken aside by several of the complainants, who each solemnly declared that despite any hot words they had expressed about the roads, they each had voted for Mr. Kidd. When the time came for Mr. Kidd to sum up the proceedings, he agreed with the locals that they had the worst roads in the Shire. But he added they were also the worst liars. Mr. Kidd had received just one vote from the district in the previous election.

When Mr. Kidd first joined the Council he was the father of two baby daughters. When he left he was a great-grandfather. For most of the intervening half century he was closely associated with Wesley Mitchell, who joined the Council in 1925 as a temporary junior clerk and finished up staying for just on 43 years. On his appointment as Shire Clerk in 1931 he was thought to be the youngest in the State to hold this post.

The Council's central staff when Mr. Mitchell joined the payroll consisted of the Shire Clerk, Mr. G. A. Buist, assistant clerk Miss Edith Ruddle and Shire Engineer Harold Iley Kay. The latter was the Shire's first qualified engineer. Previously Shire works had been under the control of overseers, chosen largely for their practical commonsense. But with the move into heavy machinery, the skills of a qualified engineer became essential.

The story of the 1920s is mainly a happy one. For it was probably the most prosperous decade in Widgee's history. Widgee's population rose dramatically during this period.

One of the reasons was the setting up of Soldiers Settlements around the Shire. In keeping with its promise to look after the young men of the nation when they came home from the war, the Federal Government made land available to them on very easy terms. The land was mainly in groups of about 40-acre farm blocks. The areas were selected by the Shire Council at the Government's request during the war but were not actually settled until 1922 onwards. They included settlements at Tagigan, Woondum, Veteran, Calico Creek, Tuhekoi and Glastonbury. Many of the soldier farmers had not been on the land before. Although some took to their new life with a fair degree of success, many more soon forsook their farms to work in the cities.

But the biggest boost to the population came through a sudden boom in Widgee's banana industry after a disease known as bunchy top hit the big plantations in northern New South Wales. Hundreds of enterprising young men came to Widgee to grow bananas. The hillsides rang with the sound of axes and the air was filled with the scent of wood smoke as the scrub was felled and burned to make way for plantations.

The boom lasted about 10 years and brought men of many nations including scores of Finns and White Russians, Indians and a large number of English migrants. After the boom most of them departed although some of the Englishmen remained and turned to dairy farming.

Dairying recovered from the fierce 1919 drought to go from strength to strength during the '20s, and the timber industry also thrived. There were dozens of sawmills scattered around the Shire during this period. In the Mary Valley, in particular, the setting up of these mills was a catalyst to the growth of townships begun only a few years earlier with the extension of the Mary Valley railway line from Gympie. Each of the general mills usually employed at least a score of workers and the townships had to grow to accommodate the men and their families.

The reason some of the townships did not keep on growing was the widespread introduction of the motor car—one of the most exciting developments of the century and certainly the one that did most to change the way of life in Widgee. Virtually overnight a two-hour trip to Gympie in the horse and trap became a pleasant half-hour's drive for many Widgee farmers. Hundreds of them were able to scrape up the couple of hundred pounds or so, a considerable sum at that time, to buy themselves a truck or ute. They mostly became fair mechanics, too. Country garages were few and far between but farmers accustomed to making do with the materials and tools available found they could do just about any running repair on their Model Ts with a piece of fencing wire.

The advent of the car meant more work for the Shire Council since the motorists demanded better roads. For all their advantages, the Model Ts and Oldsmobiles could not get through the mud the way a team of horses could. A temporary solution was to corduroy the bad patches by laying saplings across the roadway. Occupants of solid-tyred vehicles received a bone-jarring ride



*courtesy T. Mason*

The old and the new . . . Tom Mason's bullock team pulled up beside Dick Hodges' truck, an early Leyland.

across the corduroy, though at least they got across. But gradually the corduroy disappeared as more and more roads were metalled and culverts were installed in the gullies.

For many years the mullock heaps from Gympie and Widgee mines provided the favourite road building material. It was cheap and accessible and the blue metal made one of the best road beds. Mullock from Widgee's few mines was soon exhausted so the Shire Council bought its mullock from Gympie. The Council had only a couple of its own trucks and most of the mullock was moved by private contractors. Anyone with a truck could take his turn and cart metal for the Council, with payment being made on the volume of each load.

The 1920s was also a great sporting decade. The men of Widgee, who had always been keen huntsmen and sharpshooters, took up sports like cricket and tennis in great numbers. Every district could boast of at least one cricket team. Social matches were the order of the day and on Saturday the whole family would pack into the Model T and head for the sportsground. There the menfolk of the district took on a rival eleven while their families picnicked in the shade.

Tennis was just as big. Nearly everyone had a spot of flat land tailor-made for a court and the sport flourished, both as a family pastime and on a competitive footing.

The end of the decade virtually coincided with the start of the Depression and resulted in an exodus from the Shire as workers drifted to the cities in search of jobs. The last of Gympie's big mines had closed but there was a revival of interest in Widgee's gold fields and many of the old diggings at Glastonbury, Dawn Pocket and Veteran were reworked. Fossickers were given a government subsidy of £1 a week and allowed to keep any gold they



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

A Gympie mullock heap. A lot of the mullock was used for road building in Widgee Shire.

found. Miners engaged in sinking shafts were subsidised per foot of shaft sunk and given free dynamite for the work. Some gold was taken out, though not enough to make anyone a fortune, and the end of the Depression brought the small scale mining to an end.

During the 1920s the Forestry Service established a good foothold in the Shire. From then on until the start of World War II it waged a running battle against interests pushing the agricultural and dairy industries.

Both the Forestry Service and the farmers eyed off the rich scrub lands, with the one side advocating more forest conservation and replacement and the other seeing only good producing country. The result was a stalemate. Little land was opened up for farms and little reforestation was done. Land thrown open for selection at Upper Eel Creek in 1926 was virtually the last to be offered right up to the war.

The farming lobby thought it would carry the day when Gympie MP, Mr. T. Dunstan, became State Minister for Lands. But its optimism was shortlived since he created more forestry areas than he allowed to be encroached on.

The farm lobby got no further when in 1930 another Minister for Lands, Mr. W. A. Deacon, heard depositions from both sides. The Mayor of Gympie, Mr. R. N. Witham, took up cudgels for the farmers. He pointed out that timber brought in only a third of the revenue produced by agriculture on the Mary Valley railway line. He said that within an 18-mile radius of Gympie there were 1,250 dairy suppliers and 600 fruit growers who were virtually keeping the district going after the closing of Gympie's mines and the start of the economic slump. The land was capable of taking double this number of producers if more of it was opened for selection, he said.

The Minister was unmoved. He had been taken out to Mooloo for an inspection and claimed he had seen no land there suitable for farming; all he had seen was lantana. Mr. Deacon's attitude won the day for the Forestry Service but won him few friends around the Shire. But the net result was that forestry in Widgee was given another boost which led to important developments after the Second World War.

In the decade leading up to the war several alterations were made to the Shire boundaries. The changes began in 1931 when several properties including the Yabba run were transferred to Kilcoy Shire, which was actively seeking new territory to replace rateable lands lost through the construction of the Somerset Dam. Two years later Kilcoy tried to take another slice but Widgee successfully opposed the move.

The setting up of the Main Roads Commission was indirectly responsible for another boundary change in 1933 when Kilkiyan Shire took a small portion of Widgee territory to enhance government funding of roadworks in the area. In early 1933 Widgee gained a portion of upper Goomboorian so as to include the entire length of the Tin Can Bay Road in Widgee Shire.

Two years later a further boundary change was made to include all of Tin Can Bay township area in Widgee.

Roadwork fundings underwent considerable change during the 1930s. The Tin Can Bay Road, for example, was built by relief work with major assistance from the Main Roads Commission instead of the Shire having to fit the entire bill. In 1932 a total of £1,000 was outlaid on the road with Widgee contributing two 28ths of the cost over a period of 30 years, Gympie three 28ths and the Main Roads Commission 23/28—even though all of the road fell within Widgee Shire.

The M.R.C. then introduced a system of designated main roads with the Gympie-Wolvi-Kin Kin road being given number one priority in the Shire's arterial system. Former Shire chairman J. T. Tatnell was one of the driving forces to have the old Wolvi Road upgraded. At that time the route from Gympie to Wolvi was via Old Goomboorian Road, over Mitchell's hill—on which Canina Hall was built—and over the Black Rise. The new road, built with M.R.C. assistance, skirted these two pinches, which were notoriously slippery when wet, especially for motor traffic. However, some local settlers had grave misgivings about the new road. One in particular, was incensed. The new road divided his property, leaving the higher portion without access to



*courtesy Rudy Hoffman*

This southern Cross drilling rig mounted on a 1920 AEC truck was one of the first used in Widgee Shire. The rig cost £600 and could drill to 650 feet.

water. He fought to the bitter end to have the road diverted, then sold his property in disgust and left the district.

The road was completed through to Kin Kin in 1935 at a total cost of £80,000. Widgee's share for the 20½-mile stretch within its boundaries was £1,350 a year for 30 years. Gympie and Noosa councils also contributed sums in proportion to the length of the road within their boundaries.—one mile in Gympie and 14 in Noosa. It was opened on September 21, 1935 by the Minister for Public Works, Mr. H. A. Bruce, who pointed out that the new road would actually provide a saving for residents. Because of the road the cost of carting cream to the Wide Bay factory had been reduced from a high 4/1 per 100lb. to 2/6, he said. Cream supplied from the top of Wolvi Range eastward was estimated to be 700,000 lb per annum, and at an average saving of 1/4 per 100 lb. the new road would save producers £450 p.a. in cream costs alone.

Significant social changes also were afoot in the Shire. The late 1920s and early 1930s was a period in which the women on the land began to assert themselves more in public, demonstrably through the formation of branches of the Country Women's Association—the main branches now being Cedar Pocket, Imbil, Glastonbury, Goomboorian, Kandanga, Mothar Mountain and Tin Can Bay. But they were not formed—nor are they now—as pressure groups, their basic flagstone being loyalty to Queen and country.

For over half a century Widgee had been very much a man's country. This was natural in the frontier days, when it was survival of the fittest both on the goldfields and in the raw countryside. As a result many of the Shire's first settlers were past middle age when they married and began raising families. Unlike America where women went with their men to the new frontiers, Australia, for the most part, was tamed by men only.

Another contributing factor in the early supremacy of men in Widgee was that many of the original settlers came from Ireland. In the home country there was never any doubt that a woman's sole role was in the home where she was subservient to her husband. That's not to say that women were of no account, just that they didn't really shape the Shire. Perhaps it's a hangover from the past that during the first 100 years the Widgee Shire did not have a woman councillor.



## War Again

“It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that, in consequence of the persistence of Germany in the invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war on her, and that as a result Australia is also at war.” The date—September 3, 1939; the speaker—Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies; and just a quarter of a century after the start of the war that was to have ended all wars, Australians returned to the battlefields.

Within a few days of the announcement, the first of Widgee’s young men were packing their kitbags to go into camp. And as they had done a quarter of a century earlier, the people of the Shire rallied behind their fighting men. Patriotic groups were quickly established in every corner of the Shire. Comfort Circles were formed in Wolvi, Wilson’s Pocket, Dagun and other centres, Red Cross branches at Goomboorian, Amamoor, Upper Kandanga, Mary’s Creek and Mooloo and Win-the-War Leagues at Imbil and Pie Creek to take just a few.

Patriotic efforts at Mooloo were typical of the Shire. The residents there met in the Mooloo Hall on June 22, 1940 to form a local branch of the Red Cross organisation, with Mrs. S. H. Woolgar as president, Mrs. H. Clark and L. Gorrington joint secretaries and Mrs. W. S. Smith as treasurer. During their first year the women of the Mooloo Red Cross forwarded the following articles to district headquarters: 46 pairs of pyjamas, 14 pairs of socks, 13 knitted pullovers, six knitted cardigans, five pairs of gloves, 14 scarves, eight balaclavas, eight pairs of knee caps, 20 polo mufflers, 183 pillow cases, four sheets and 34 hotwater bottle covers.

Children of the Mooloo School Calf Club donated £20 worth of flannelette, calico and wool bought with money raised at club functions. The Mooloo Rifle Club chipped in with £7/15/- proceeds from a dance, the school gave £16 from a tennis tournament and the Mooloo Tennis Club gave £15/18/- from a successful sports day. Local farmers W. S. Smith, J. Elliott, T. C. Smith, F. Skyring, C. Collard, S. H. Woolgar and H. Clark each gave a cow to be sold for Red Cross benefit.

At various stages of the war Widgee Shire was used as a training ground for new recruits for the European and Pacific campaigns, with one camp at the Showgrounds and another at Canina. Rationing was introduced for petrol, sugar and other commodities including butter. The people of the biggest butter producing area in the country had to use coupons for their butter just like everyone else while the bulk of the production was sent overseas to feed the troops and the beleaguered British nation.

Most of the farmers received a petrol ration of only five or six gallons a month. The Widgee Shire Council was subject to restrictions, too, and its works programme was greatly scaled down. The Council's activities were further affected by the appropriation for the war effort of much of its road-building plant.

In the early days of the war an incident known as the "great stampede" took place. It began at the Showgrounds where the Light Horse Cavalry had set up camp.

Water had been laid on specially for the horses, a two-inch main being taken across the river by the Army—the first water supply to the Southside. The horses were taken regularly in strings to the trough to drink. Among them was a rogue grey which often used to kick out at the other horses. One day it kicked a bit too accurately and the string of horses took off around the ground. Other horses broke free and joined the mad rush, their flaying halters whipping them into a frenzy. Soon there were between 80 and 100 horses careering wildly around the ground. The leaders smashed through a fence and the herd thundered out on to the road.

Mr. Terry Ramsey, whose father Barney owned the nearby Jockey Club Hotel at the time, saw them heading pell mell down Ramsey Road and feared for anyone in their path. Fortunately no one was as they wheeled into Exhibition Road and dashed across Channon Street Bridge to Gympie. Hooves flew in all directions as the herd split up, some continuing up Horse-shoe Bend while others veered into River Road. Some of the horses suffered frightful injuries as they skidded on the tarseal and crashed heavily to the ground. When it was all over about 10 horses had to be destroyed.

One of the biggest problems during the war was the lack of manpower to maintain farm production. The Land Army of women workers did not have sufficient numbers to go round but the problem was largely solved through the use of Italian prisoners of war. These were prisoners who were captured in Egypt early in the war and taken to India. When the Japanese approached India the Italians were shipped to Australia. By this time they were regarded as low risk prisoners and the Australian Government allowed farmers to employ them as labourers. Nearly every crop grower in Widgee Shire had one or two or three Italian prisoners at work. The farmers paid about 30 shillings a week to the Government for their services and provided them with food and lodgings.

The prisoners were serviced by a mobile canteen which provided them with cigarettes and clothing. They were confined to their employers' farms at night though this was not strictly policed in some areas. At the end of the war many asked to be allowed to remain on the farms, but the Government refused to entertain their requests.

During the war several of the Shire's young warriors won battle honours, among them two Lagoon Pocket men—Lance Corporal R. H. Tweed who was awarded the Military Medal during the Bougainville campaign and Flight Lieutenant Roy Beattie, who received the Distinguished Flying Medal



*courtesy W. Beattie*

Three Italian prisoners of war and farm employee Tom Tobin (second from left) on Mr. W. J. Beattie's Calico Creek property.

from King George VI but was later killed in Borneo, just one of the many Widgee men who did not return.

Others to win battle honours were Lieutenants A. R. Dunstan, of Wolvi, and A. E. C. Mullaly, of Kybong, who both were awarded the Military Cross in the Pacific campaign, and Pilot Officer C. W. Sutton, who won a Distinguished Flying Cross.

Lt. Mullaly's citation read in part: "During fighting in the Hoadell River section, a platoon was ordered to attack and destroy the enemy in a pillbox area. After an advance of 200 yards heavy rifle fire was encountered from a strongly fortified pillbox. Lt. Mullaly unhesitatingly rushed the pillbox singlehanded, throwing grenades as he ran in. The enemy continued to fire but Lt. Mullaly persisted with his one-man attack until he finally succeeded with throwing a grenade through the narrow firing slit. This action resulted in the complete demoralisation of the enemy. Within seconds of the destruction of the first post, several rifles opened up on the platoon at point blank range from a second pillbox. Completely disregarding the intense fire, Lt. Mullaly again charged the enemy singlehanded and after a short encounter routed them completely."

During the war the flag on the Council Chambers was flown at half mast whenever the death in action of a Shire resident was officially notified.

Over 100 Gympie and Widgee men gave their lives for their country during the six years of the war.

When it was finally over, the following statement by chairman, Mr. Kidd, was officially written into the Council's records: "For the past six years we have met under the dark clouds of war. On account of the united efforts of our Great Empire, the allied nations and the guidance of Almighty God, a glorious victory has been achieved. We have great pleasure in expressing our thankfulness to our servicemen and women and war workers for the close co-operation of the people which has contributed to the successful termination of this tragic war. We regret that so many valuable lives were lost—we must revere and remember them. We must now live and work to hold the peace so dearly won and solemnly resolve to do our utmost in our public and private capacities to prevent further war."

Before the war Widgee Shire Council was one of the best equipped local bodies in the State, with £8,000 worth of plant including two tractors, a bulldozer, two drawn graders, two patrol graders, four trucks, road rippers, ploughs and scoops. But during the war the Defence Department took over much of the plant for the war effort, including the bulldozer, the two patrol graders, one drawn grader and one truck. As a result the Council was left with little equipment for major works at the cessation of hostilities.

Mr. Kidd had often boasted that Widgee was the first council in Queensland to discard the pick and shovel and horse and dray. He asked Shire Engineer, Mr. E. J. Channer, to be on the alert for any plant made available from the Army and Allied Works Council's stocks, since no new equipment was available. The Shire thus acquired a considerable amount of second hand plant at a good price over the next few months, including a 35 h.p. angledozer, a No. 12 66 h.p. Caterpillar grader, a 30cwt. road ripper, a D16 tractor, a six-yard scoop and two heavy trucks.



Widgee Shire Council plant in the early 1950s.

The Council also acquired new office premises during the war. In 1940 it moved out of the old Masonic Hall building, which had been damaged in a tornado which devastated Gympie eight years earlier, and moved into its present premises in Mary Street. The Council bought the building from the Bank of New South Wales for £2,000. The upper part of the building was then rented back to the bank as a manager's residence, a practice which ceased only a few years ago.

The end of the war saw the start of another co-operative movement by Widgee primary producers. On December 8, 1945 farmers and growers met at the Gympie Town Hall to form a co-operative trading society. The meeting elected a committee comprising Messrs H. Bath (chairman) N. P. Damm and M. Buchanan from Goomboorian, E. K. Beattie (Lagoon Pocket), W. A. H. Cheales (Eel Creek), T. P. Reynolds (Chatsworth), T. Learoyd (Amamoor), and N. L. Morris and F. Haldane (Wolvi).

The outcome was another Widgee business in Tozer Street, Gympie—in the same street as the Wide Bay Dairy Co-operative and the Gympie Fruit-growers' Association. The Farmers Co-operative Trading Society began business in 1946 with only a part-time employee selling straight grocery lines. Today it has a staff of 22, has an annual turnover of over a million dollars, and sells lines such as hardware, produce, irrigation equipment and petrol.

The postwar years brought electrification to most of the Shire, the biggest single advancement since the advent of the motor vehicle. The work was undertaken during and immediately after the war by the City Electric Light Co. Ltd., which held the franchise for all of the Widgee area. The line was taken first to Cooran, and then in 1946 to Dagon, Kandanga and further up the Mary Valley. The work gathered pace as more materials and skilled manpower became available after the war.

Roads remained a political issue until well into the 1950s. A start had been made on the sealing of Widgee's roads before the war—first at White bridge on the Wolvi Road and then the Bruce Highway north and south of Gympie. After the war there was considerable feeling among some residents who were still waiting for their roads to be gravelled while other highways were being sealed.

Less contentious was Widgee's last boundary change of note—in 1955—when a small portion of territory was ceded to Gympie. This was brought about by residents who wanted a town water supply. The simplest expedient was to transfer their properties to Gympie which allowed them to be connected up to the Gympie water system.

In the same year a disastrous flood carried away the Normanby Bridge across the Mary River at Gympie and, further downstream, damaged Bell's Bridge and its approaches. Over the next few years both were replaced as well as Gympie's other bridge across the Mary, the Channon Street Bridge.

Bell's Bridge was the first to be replaced after much haggling over the cost. Four times the Widgee Shire Council called tenders, and each time

found none within its budget. Finally the Main Roads Department took the project on and built it under estimate using day labour. It was completed on September 20, 1957 for a final bill of £60,725/15/4—Widgee's share being eight per cent, Kilkivan nine per cent and Gympie three per cent with the M.R.D. picking up the tab for the remainder. A new bridge approach on the Widgee side cost another £6,322/16/1 of which the Shire paid 20 per cent. New approaches on the Kilkivan side cost another £30,000 but no Widgee money was involved. The roadwork was completed only three days before the official opening of the bridge on May 24, 1958 by the Minister for Public Works and Local Government, Mr. J. A. Heading.

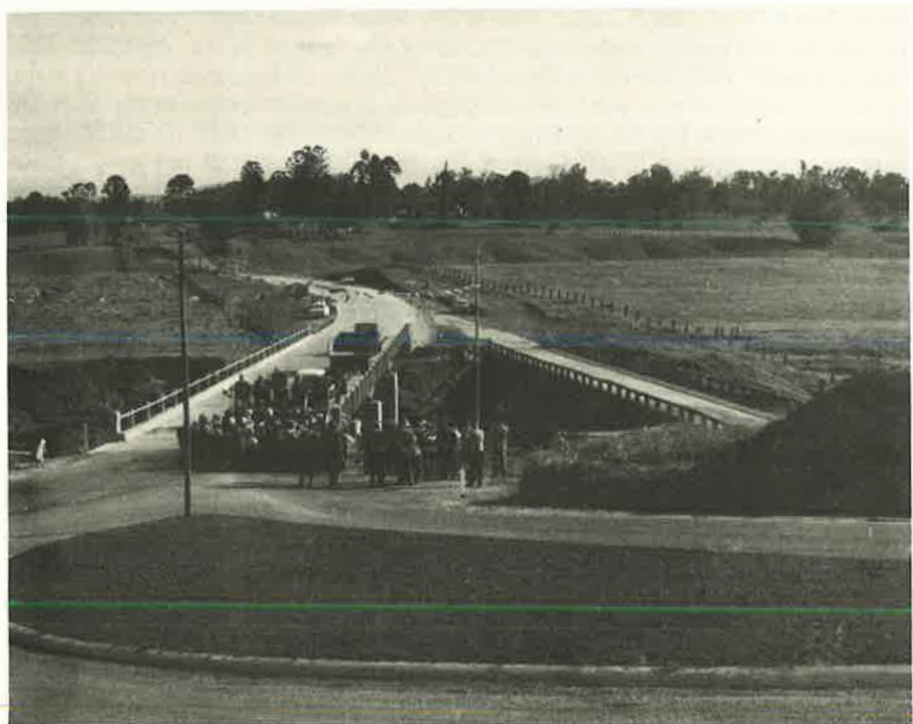
The new Normanby Bridge was opened on October 17, 1959, with Miss Queensland, Nancy Knudsen, doing the honours by snipping the appropriate ribbon. It was the third bridge to be built on the site, the first having been opened by the Marquis of Normanby during a visit to Gympie in 1873. The new Bridge was built by the M.R.D. at a total cost of £108,000 with Widgee and Gympie each paying a 10 per cent share.

The bridge was built at a height of 52 feet—34 feet higher than its predecessor—making it the first truly high level bridge across the river between Gympie and the Mary Valley.

Kidd Bridge completed the trio of bridges across the Mary. Named in honour of Shire chairman Mr. W. H. Kidd, M.B.E. it was opened on August 5, 1961 by the Minister for Lands, Mr. E. Evans. Built at a cost of just under £65,000 plus a further £1,200 for approach work, it replaced the £1,417 Channon Street bridge built in 1893 by J. W. Mott.



The Normanby Bridge which was destroyed in the 1955 flood



Opening of Kidd Bridge in 1961

## From Borumba to Cooloola

Widgee entered the 1960s with its attention riveted on Borumba. It leaves the 1970s with all eyes on the Cooloola Coast. The 20 years in between have seen a steady progression of advances around the Shire—from the more mundane introduction of water and sewerage systems to the creation of exciting new towns and industries.

The start of this era coincided with the construction of Borumba Dam, the biggest undertaking the Shire had ever seen. It was designed and built under the auspices of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission at a total cost of £2,300,000. The Widgee Shire Council assisted through the construction of access and camp roads and relocation of roads inundated by the reservoir.

The Borumba site, just over 19 miles up Yabba Creek from its junction



Aerial view of Borumba Dam during construction



with the Mary River, was chosen after the I.W.S. had made a detailed study and evaluation of two possible sites, the other being in the Beenham Valley. Preliminary work began at Borumba in 1960 and in August 1961 the contractors, CITRA Australia, took over.

For nearly three years work went on around the clock to build the massive dam. The CITRA work force numbered several hundred men, many of them Italian dam-building specialists flown in specifically for the job. Rows of single men's barracks and married quarters were transported to the dam site to house the large, temporary population.

Rock for filling—526,500 cubic yards in all—was blasted from nearby cliffs and was faced with 38,440 yards of concrete. The spillway was built to a width of 105 feet, the top of the spillway being 101 feet above the bottom of the dam and 44 feet below the crest. The finished dam has a storage capacity of 34,500 acre feet drawn from a catchment area of 180 square miles, most of it state forest.

Borumba Dam was officially opened on September 12, 1964 by the Minister for Local Government and Conservation, Mr. H. Richter, its dual purposes being to provide an urban water supply for the Gympie area and to give an assured supply of water for irrigation by private pumping from Yabba Creek and the Mary River.

A pipeline was built overland from the Mary River at Jones' Hill to carry the water supply for Gympie. Jones' Hill has been the site of the Gympie Waterworks since 1901 when the familiar red brick pumphouse was built a mile upstream from the Normanby Bridge.

The waterworks were originally built at a cost of £32,000 and included a 960,000-gallon reservoir which held the equivalent of three days' emergency supplies for Gympie. Water was drawn straight from the river. However, with the construction of the Borumba system, major improvements were made to the waterworks plant.

Through the construction of Borumba Dam, Widgee also gained a major new leisure area which attracts up to 800 people at weekends. Boating is allowed on the lake and water skiing, too, in a gazetted area. It is hoped that the dam will eventually become a prime fishing spot through the continuing work of a fish replenishment project.

Less spectacular than the Borumba Dam project, but equally important to the residents involved, were the water supply systems built during the same period for the townships of the Mary Valley—Imbil which got its supply in 1961 from a pumping station on Yabba Creek below the dam, Kandanga from a small weir built on Kandanga Creek and Amamoor which pumped its supply straight from the creek there. Widgee later negotiated a bulk purchase of water from Gympie to take a water supply to the South Side in 1966 and the following year inaugurated a water supply to Tin Can Bay.

The Tin Can Bay scheme, designed and built by the Widgee Shire Council, took water from Seary's Creek via a four-inch pipe under Tin Can Bay inlet. It eventually will be replaced by a new water supply from

Teewah Creek in the Noosa River system. A guaranteed supply of three million gallons of water a day—compared with Gympie's maximum usage of around two million gallons a day—from the Seary's Creek and Teewah systems has obviated the building of dams to supply the coastal townships.

The Rainbow Beach water supply, the last major undertaking, draws from an unnamed creek though eventually it will come from Seary's Creek.

Two years ago a major irrigation scheme which diverts water from the Mary River went into operation. The scheme, known as the Pie Creek Diversion, consists of diversion channels to supplement water flow in Pie, Calico and McIntosh Creeks. It was built by the I.W.S. at a total cost of \$1,203,042 and last year served 19 irrigators and three other landholders who use the water for domestic purposes and stock.

The scheme, intended for pastures and small crops, has the potential to supply another 11 irrigators. It was first suggested by the Queensland Dairy-men's Association in 1964 and was taken up again in 1967. It became operational on December 12, 1977.

Perhaps equally as mundane as water, but of vital significance to Widgee's landmen, was the opening of the Widgee Shire Council's pig and calf saleyards at Banks Pocket on June 12, 1963. "It has removed what has been referred to as a blot on the city (Gympie) because the old yards were almost in the centre of population," Shire chairman W. H. Kidd said at the opening ceremony.



Opening of the Widgee Shire Council pig and calf yards

Sales previously had been conducted at yards beside the Gympie Railway Station and earlier—before pigs and calves were trucked to market—at country towns such as Brooloo, Kandanga, Cooran, Pomona and Widgee. The improvement in motor transport forced the closure of these yards when the major commercial buyers stopped attending the sales at smaller centres. Some of the towns affected went into decline soon after—like Cooran, where on pig days there had hardly been room to walk down the main street, and where three or four sittings for lunch were necessary at the local hotel to cope with demand.

The sales at Cooran and Pomona were held on alternate weeks by James MacDonnell. His son, Myles, conducted sales at Brooloo and Widgee while sales at Kandanga were held by Kelso Viles. Before roads were upgraded, pigs had to be driven long distances overland to the sales. The drover usually walked ahead dropping a trail of corn to keep the herd on the move.

The Shire's new yards were officially opened by State Transport Minister, Mr. Gordon Chalk, who also auctioned the first pig which raised £7/5/- for a local charity. The yards comprised a 120 feet by 110 feet concrete and steel building, amenities block and bitumen roadway which cost the Council £42,000. The Railways Department spent £8,000 to provide a railway siding and adjacent trucking yards.

Eight years later the yards were extensively developed to provide cattle saleyards. The \$100,000 cattle yards, which were opened on July 22, 1971 by the Minister for Primary Industries, Mr. J. A. Row, were the first in Queensland to introduce scales for liveweight selling.

The chairman of the Council's cattle saleyards committee, Mr. M. Smith, said the Council had decided to introduce scales as a service to both producers and buyers. There was some initial opposition to this new method of selling but the move proved successful. Within a year more cattle were being sold through the new yards than had been sold through all the private yards combined.

Over the past century there have been many saleyards in and around Gympie. At the turn of the century cattle sales were conducted by James MacDonnell and Charles Stewart in yards on Woolgar Road on the South Side. Sales also were conducted before World War I at private yards on Stewart Terrace, Gympie. Some store cattle were sold there but by far the biggest trade was in horses.

The horse sales were big events. Often several hundred horses were sold over two days. There was a big demand for horses of all types—stock horses, cart horses, draught horses and a lot of horses which were bought as remounts for the Indian Army, with Billy Hayes one of the most prominent dealers in this field.

Before World War I there also were cattle saleyards behind the Royal Standard Hotel at Jones' Hill. During and after the war public sales were held behind the Mining Exchange Hotel (now the site of the Soldiers Club) in

Gympie. James MacDonnell also built private yards opposite the Commercial Hotel and then on the Ampol depot site in Monkland Street. These were later moved to Stumm Road on the South Side. Between the wars Tatnell and Graham built cattle and pig saleyards on River Road (next to where the swimming pool is now) while Goldsborough and Mort built yards on Old Maryborough Road and others just off the Bruce Highway north of Gympie.

With the opening of the Widgee Shire Council cattle saleyards, the last three private yards were closed. The Council yards had a record yarding on June 22, 1978 during a resurgence of beef prices when 2,353 head of cattle were put through the yards in a two-day sale.

Another Widgee milestone of the 1960s was the opening of Gympie Aerodrome in 1966. It brought to an end a controversy which had stretched over three decades. Sites on the South Side, near Bell's Bridge and Goomboorian had been put forward as suitable landing strips before the decision was made to build an aerodrome at Kybong, about eight miles south of Gympie beside the Bruce Highway.

Aviation was still in the flying leathers and goggles era when Widgee saw its first plane. This was in 1919 when a Captain Smith landed his flimsy World War 1 vintage biplane on the Gympie Showgrounds.

Gympie schoolchildren were given a half-day off to see this modern marvel. Among the children who flocked to the Showgrounds to see the plane make its takeoff was Alex Tramacchi. He recalled that historic moment: "We were all pretty excited as the plane prepared to take off. But when he finally got going he couldn't quite gain enough height and clipped a tree, then plunged into another. Everyone rushed up to see if Captain Smith and his passenger were all right. They were still sitting calmly in their seats eating a sandwich. The plane was badly damaged, however, and had to be taken away by road to be repaired."

Over the next few years planes of similar vintage made occasional landings at the Showgrounds. But the public's imagination for flying was not really fired until 1928 when Bundaberg aviator Bert Hinkler landed at the Showgrounds after his record-breaking flight from England to Australia. A couple of years later some of Widgee's braver souls took to the air for the first time when a plane landed at Lagoon Pocket and stayed for several months taking joy flights. This plane was owned by Brisbane goanna salve manufacturer Mr. Marconi and was piloted by a Mr. Shaw.

It was about this time that moves were first made to build a permanent airstrip in the district. Both before and after World War II there were strong moves to have the airport built on the Showgrounds where there was sufficient flat land for a runway to extend as far as Widgee Crossing. It was suggested that Queen's Park in Gympie could be used for a new Showgrounds site. But this suggestion encountered strong opposition, not the least of it from some of the South Side residents.



*courtesy A. Tramacchi*

Bert Hinkler's plane at the Gympie Showgrounds in 1928

The next site suggested was near Bell's Bridge, which led to Kilkivan Shire's subsequent representation on the Aerodrome Board. Then negotiations were held with the Forestry Department for an airport site near Tinana Creek just off the road to Tin Can Bay. Finally the Gympie District Aerodrome Board, which had been formed in 1961, decided on the present Kybong site. This was the same site that Shire Engineer Jack Channer had recommended some 20 years earlier when he had been asked to investigate the best site for a defence aerodrome during World War II.

Gympie Airport was opened on May 7, 1966 by the Civil Aviation Minister, Mr. R. W. C. Swartz. Construction and running costs were borne by the three councils represented on the Aerodrome Board in the ratio of three sevenths each by Widgee and Gympie and one seventh by Kilkivan.

Regular commercial flights were scheduled for a while but were dropped when traffic volumes did not justify their continuation. The airport has remained a busy light aircraft base and last year became the home of an air charter service operated by Scott's Aviation. This company operates two Cessnas from the airport, on a charter basis and for scenic flights to the coast and over the Mary Valley. The latter includes a stopover at the Pie Creek property of George Sutherland who has a collection of vintage cars and aircraft.

There are several other airstrips around the Shire, with two on the coast at Cooloola Village and Rainbow Beach as well as landing strips on a number of farms to enable aerial topdressing to be carried out.

The year after the opening of Gympie Airport saw the worst plane crash in the history of the Shire when a light aircraft went down in the Como state forest, killing both the pilot and his passenger and triggering one of the biggest air and land searches the state had mounted up to that time.

The plane, a Beechcraft Musketeer, went missing on a flight from Pialba to Toowoomba on March 3, 1967. Its wreckage was discovered a week later three miles from the Como forestry barracks after a search involving up to 14 aircraft a day, civilian volunteers and the Army and Air Force.

At first the search was carried out in the Biggenden area about 100 miles northwest of Como. The search was switched to Como, well off the normal flight path, only after insistent local reports from Goomboorian and Mount Coondoo about a low-flying plane in their areas on the day of the crash. Even then the wreckage was discovered purely by chance by a quartet of forestry workers returning from a day's search. One of them said it could easily have remained there undiscovered for up to 20 years.

The plane had ploughed into a thick tallow-wood tree and crashed to the ground, bringing down vines and other foliage which virtually covered the wreckage. The wreckage was not visible from the forestry road about 100 yards away and would have been almost impossible to spot from the air. Both of the victims appeared to have died instantly in the crash.

One of the most significant developments of the 1960s—and the most controversial—was the establishment of a major sand mining industry on the Cooloola Coast.

The booming mining industry brought about the road to Rainbow Beach and the birth of a new township there. At the same time it sparked a controversy reaching national proportions, culminating in the declaration of the Cooloola National Park.

Mining of the beach sands began shortly after World War II when a string of small companies took out leases to mine the beach between the high and low water marks from the Noosa River up to Double Island Point.

Mining was hardly the word for it. The black, rutile-bearing sand was simply dug from the beach by shovel and loaded straight on to old Army trucks which carted it to a dry mill on the eastern side of the Noosa River. There the rutile and zircon was extracted though the smaller amount of ilmenite was left in the residue, since there was no cheap way of removing it. There was little or no public outcry over these operations. The only conflicts were between the miners and the Forestry Department over rehabilitation of Forestry land. The highwater mark was not a straight line and it was not uncommon for the specified boundaries of the mining leases to extend over the dunes and into the state forests.

Apart from these few infractions there was no mining at all of the land behind the dunes. The first step towards this was taken in August 1952 with the arrival of an American engineer, Mr. Newman, armed with a prospecting licence issued to Tamco (Titanium Alloy Manufacturing Company), a sub-

subsidiary of Union Lead, U.S.A. Mr. Newman carried out drilling on a grid basis in an area of the Noosa Basin east of the junction of Teewah Creek and the Noosa River. This aroused the first protests by conservationists, mainly from Brisbane. The outcry was still relatively muted, however, as the exploration was wholly in the wallum area and did not touch on the Cooloola rainforest.

The next major development was the arrival on the scene of Queensland Titanium Ltd., which successfully applied for a licence to mine the strip of land between Rainbow Beach and Inskip Point and an area on the southern portion of Fraser Island.

At one stage the company envisaged building facilities at Urangan to ship out the rutile and planned to ferry its workers by hovercraft from Tin Can Bay to Inskip Point. Eventually it opted for a road from Rainbow Beach to Gympie to take the minerals out by bulk road transports as far as Gympie, where it was loaded on to the railway.

The road to Rainbow Beach was built by the Widgee Shire and financed by Q.T.M., the Queensland Government and the Widgee Shire. It followed the watershed between Tin Can Bay streams and the Noosa River basin.

Later the same parties sealed the road to Rainbow Beach.

It was said to be one of the longest stretches of bitumen road undertaken in one job in southeast Queensland. The 19-mile road was built in less than a year by the Widgee Shire Council at a cost of \$235,000 with Q.T.M. contributing \$130,000, the State Government \$81,000 and the Shire \$24,000. The road was officially opened by the Premier, Mr. G. F. R. Nicklin, on March 26, 1966.

The Council also built an eight-mile stretch of private road for Q.T.M. between Rainbow Beach and Bullock Point in Tin Can Bay where barges unloaded rutile sand carried across from Fraser Island. The rutile and zircon was extracted at a large dry mill erected by Q.T.M. just north of Rainbow Beach.

The major battle between conservationists and the mining industry began with an application by Q.T.M. to mine a large area inland from Double Island Point. Horrified conservationists formed the Cooloola Committee which mounted a national campaign to stop the miners. Many Gympie and Widgee residents backed the miners, however, and formed a Truth About Cooloola Committee. They believed the industry would bring more employment to the area and give an added boost to tourism.

One of the miners' proposals was to build a coastal road from Rainbow Beach to Double Island Point where there were plans for a large international-style resort.

The battle for Cooloola was a bitter, hard-fought struggle in which both sides exerted strong pressure on the Government. At one stage a number of Gympie businessmen sponsored a cavalcade to Brisbane to support the miners' case. They issued motorists with free petrol and put on free buses to take supporters to Parliament House in Brisbane. About 400 drivers took

part, though some opponents claimed many of them did so just to get to Brisbane for nothing for a day's shopping.

In the end the conservationists won the day. The miners' application was rejected and the Government created the Coolooloa National Park.

Meanwhile, sand mining continued unabated at Inskip Point and Fraser Island. But conservationists, buoyed by their Coolooloa victory, turned their attention to Fraser Island. Once again their powerful lobby proved successful and in 1976 the mineral sands industry on Fraser Island and Inskip Point was brought to a halt.

Q.T.M., which had spent over \$3 million on capital expenditure, was forced to put its plant in mothballs and scores of men lost their jobs. In the six years before the compulsory closure, Q.T.M. had earned Australia more than \$11 million in export income.

While Widgee lost one of its major industries, there was some spin-off in the form of government compensation—\$2.1 million was allocated for the construction of a new road to link Maryborough with the Tin Can Bay road. The 25-mile stretch of road through Toolara and Tuan Forestry areas is being built over three years. Widgee Shire Council is building the 20-mile section through Widgee and Tiaro Shires, with the remainder being done by Maryborough.

The 1960's also marked a major expansion of the beef industry in Widgee Shire. As the dairy industry declined, a number of farmers switched over to beef. For many it was a gradual process; others not prepared to take the risk sold up their dairy farms and left the land for good. This left a lot of farms on the market and neighbour bought out neighbour for the increased holdings necessary to run a beef property.

Amalgamation of the small dairy farms into larger holdings led to increased efficiency and greater profits as beef prices increased and the market grew. With this stepped-up beef production interest turned to purebred cattle. Beef studs started to emerge and Widgee farmers began to produce some champions.

There had, of course, been studs around the Shire for years but it was not until the Sixties that they made their presence felt. At Imbil, for example, the Atthows had been breeding Angus cattle for decades and were among the first genuine graziers in the Shire. They have since been joined by the McFarlanes, and Mrs. S. H. McFarlane (who was an Atthow) has extended their stud interest to Poll Herefords. Mr. L. A. Poulsen on Amamoor Creek was another early stud beef breeder, his Herefords being long established in the district.

Many of the Shire's beef cattle were a cross of British and Brahman breeds which proved ideal for the coastal conditions as well as being tick and heat resistant. The most popular British breeds were Herefords, Angus and Shorthorns.

Two of the first dairy farmers to make the change to beef were H. Heck of Kybong and George Beattie of Lagoon Pocket. But dairy farmers were not



the only ones interested. Many professional men entered the industry. These men who lived in cities throughout Australia joined together to form companies to run beef cattle properties. Big holdings at Goomboorian and North Deep Creek were operated in this way.

But it was the beef studs that captured many producers' interest. Attie Sullivan, a Gympie butcher, established the Shire's showplace stud at the Chatsworth. This was the Spring Valley Brahman Stud. And according to Gympie auctioneer and cattle agent, Mr. Bill Bishop, it was the equal of any stud anywhere in the world.



Dr. W. E. Lindsay with champion Red Poll bull Braelyn Beau Wonder

Dr. W. E. Lindsay was another prominent stud breeder. His South Meadow Red Poll Stud, started in the 1950s, produced several champions which won trophies at Gympie, Brisbane and Sydney shows. Red Polls thrived in the Shire and the breed's dual emphasis on beef and milk provided a logical balance between Widgee's beef and dairy interests.

Another early breeder on the South Side was Percy Bishop who went in for Brahmans at his Garglen Stud. At Goomboorian Trevor Gillies also opted for Brahmans. At Amamoor Mr. C. Blanckensee, a pineapple grower, extended his interest to a Droughtmaster stud while Jack Mulholland changed his family's Widgee Crossing farm over from dairying to beef and started a flourishing Santa Gertrudis stud.

By the 1970s more and more people were jumping on the beef bandwagon and more studs got under way. Neville and Ray Hood left their homes in the Northern Territory and bought up several dairy farms at Glastonbury where they established the Little Valley Brahman Stud. At Goomboorian Cyril Webster began a Braford stud while three Gympie women—Mrs. S. Bishop, Mrs. E. Nimmo and Mrs. J. Johnson—got together to establish Nuhruna Stock Holdings on Glastonbury Road where they set up Widgee's first Charolais stud. According to Mr. Bishop, Nuhruna produced the first three-quarter Charolais heifer born in Australia.

Don Clarkson also breeds Charolais on the South Side while Neville Harrington, is breeding up a new Italian strain, Chianinas. Bert Granshaw is another Charolais breeder at Cedar Pocket while at the Chatsworth Reg Cross has gone in for Murray Greys.

The 1970s saw overseas interests buying into Widgee's beef industry. An American company bought up land in the Chatsworth area for cattle grazing but sold out last year, since when much of the holding has been sub-divided. Japanese companies also are showing an interest in the region but so far their purchases have been on the peripheries of the Shire.

One of the biggest beef holdings in the Shire is that of the Tinana Development Co., owned by F. J. Walker Ltd. and M.L.C., which runs 8,000 head of cattle. It is indicative of the large developments going on in the rural coastal regions of Queensland. Similar though smaller developments in the cattle industry include Redbridge and Bambara at Goomboorian, Don Young's Penyrhoel Acres at North Deep Creek and F. Roberts' property at Sandy Creek.

Horse breeding also has boomed over the past five years. And according to Gympie auctioneer and horse expert Alain Henderson, Widgee produces some of the best horses in the country.

The Wide Bay district has 184 registered horse breeders and many of them are in Widgee Shire. Among the most prominent are Quarter Horse breeders such as the Hood brothers at Little Valley, the Mawhinney family at Currajohn, Percy Bishop at Garglen and Vic Owens at Dee Why on the Mary Valley road.

Appaloosas are bred by John McBurnie on Pie Creek, Ken Blakemore at Camphor Park near Gympie, Peter Schneider at Dagun, Kevin Andreassen at Imbil and David Connell on East Deep Creek.

McCulloughs' Arabian Stud at the Chatsworth has produced several champions which have won prizes all round the country, as have the numerous blood horses and Australian stock horses produced by other breeders around the Shire.

Night horse sales are held at the Widgee Shire Council's cattle saleyards about six times a year and are open to all breeds. Thoroughbred yearlings also are sent to the yearling sales in Brisbane, Appaloosa and Quarter Horses to the Rockhampton sales, Australian stock horses to sales at Rockhampton and Dalby, and Arabs to the Gatton sales.



Widgee Shire Councillors (1976-79) and officers: Standing: Crs. C. C. Colburn, A. D. McClintock, A. B. Kelly, R. P. Williams, R. J. Neale, C. W. Stubbins, F. G. Shadbolt, G. P. Burtenshaw. Seated: Mr. K. C. Rafter (Shire Clerk), Crs. T. J. Beutel, K. De Vere (chairman), E. K. Beattie (deputy chairman), Mr. D. W. Clarkson (Shire Engineer).

Reflecting the horse boom, Gympie Active Riders has a membership of about 80 and often attracts 250 or more horses to pony club days. Private riding schools are conducted at Mothar Mountain and Beenham Valley.

While Widgee Shire has seen many changes in the past century, its councillors have usually been men of the land in line with the rural-based economy on which the Shire was built. The outgoing Shire Council of 1979 was no exception.

Shire chairman Kevin De Vere was born in Nambour and worked in North Queensland before moving to the Mary Valley, where in 1950 he bought his present dairy farm at Bergin's Pocket.

A keen rugby league player who represented Queensland at junior level, he first became involved in community affairs through his association with the local football club at Kandanga.

One thing led to another and Cr. De Vere became involved with other local organisations. Then in 1964 he won a seat on the Council after a bizarre set of circumstances in which one of the sitting councillors failed by a few minutes to file his nomination papers by the required time, with the result that Cr. De Vere did not have to face an election.

As Shire chairman, Cr. De Vere is involved in many civic affairs as well as working for various charitable causes. He is a member of the Gympie Cemetery Trust, Fire Brigade Board and Hospital Board as well as other bodies. His wife, Faith, is prominent in many community affairs while his brother, Eddie, has been chairman of neighbouring Maroochy Shire for the past 12 years.

Deputy chairman Kitch Beattie, the longest serving member of the Council, was eight years old when his family moved from North Queensland to Lagoon Pocket. He later worked in Gympie, at Dawn Pocket and then on the family farm until the outbreak of World War II. During the war Cr. Beattie served with the A.I.F. in England, Egypt, Tobruk, Palestine, Syria and New Guinea where he won a field promotion to lieutenant after the battle of Milne Bay. He was twice wounded in action.

After the war he bought a dairy farm at Wolvi and six years ago retired to Green's Creek. He has been chairman of the Wolvi Q.D.O., school committee and local-fruitgrowers association and was a foundation member of the Gympie Farmers' Co-operative Trading Society. His wife is a grand-daughter of wheelwright and shopkeeper William Walker, whose wife was one of the first five white women in Gympie.

Cr. Tom Beutel has lived all his life at Sandy Creek on the 160 acres his father, William, selected for a dairy farm shortly before World War I, having first gone to the district to work at Boyce's hardwood mill. During World War II Cr. Beutel served with the 2nd. 14th Battalion in New Guinea. On his return he worked for the Kilkivan Shire Council and in 1950 took over his father's farm.

Cr. Beutel is chairman of the Sandy Creek Hall Committee—a hall which his father helped to build. His wife's grandfather, Mr. Naylor, was

among the first arrivals in Gympie, coming overland from Quilpie by bullock dray in the early days of the rush.

Cr. George Burtenshaw left his native Monmouthshire for Queensland in 1929 and worked on banana plantations and dairy farms at Kia Ora before moving to a sheep station in western Queensland. During World War II he left with the 2nd. 10th. Field Regiment for Malaya and was captured by the Japanese. He was forced to work on the infamous Burma Railway in Thailand and later was interned in Changi prison in Singapore for the duration of the war.

On his return he dairied at Coomera, then bought a pineapple farm at Dagun and in 1956 moved to Brooloo. A Justice of the Peace, Cr. Burtenshaw is an officer of many local organisations and has a particular interest in the Mary Valley Fish Replenishment Committee. This body's work is concentrated on Yabba Creek above Lake Borumba—not far from where the first fish replenishment programme in the Mary Valley was carried out in 1898. On that occasion Mr. W. G. Morris of the Killarney hatchery released 60 young American trout in the Yabba, apparently with little lasting success.

Cr. Clive Colburn, a descendant of a pioneer family of the Cleveland district, came to the Mary Valley in 1937 and during World War II served with the Australian Army in New Guinea. He returned to a job in Brisbane and fought both there and in Sydney as a professional boxer. One of his most memorable fights, which earned him £15, was a 12-rounder against Terry O'Real. Colburn, a 10-1 outsider, stopped his opponent in the seventh round and was chaired from the ring by jubilant supporters who had backed him for an upset.

In 1949 Cr. Colburn returned to Kandanga to work at the local sawmill. Two years later he began snigging timber in the Mary Valley and at one stage had 16 horses at work. He was the first in the Shire to introduce tractors for snigging pine plantation thinnings.

Cr. Ned Kelly, a Victorian businessman who retired at the age of 36 after pioneering the takeaway food business in that state, spent five years caravanning around Queensland before deciding to settle at Tin Can Bay—for its climate and boating facilities. The son of a cockney who worked as a planter in Penang before moving to Australia, Cr. Kelly served as a member of the Doncaster and Templestowe Shire (later City) Council before leaving Victoria.

Retired in name only, Cr. Kelly is a full-time advocate for the Cooloola Coast where he is involved in all community affairs—as is his wife who is a former Victorian president of the St. John's Children's Homes. Both are active in sport and Mrs. Kelly won the first Tin Can Bay women's golf championship.

Cr. Adrian McClintock grew up on his father's pineapple farm at Amamoor, then moved to Imbil with his parents. Like many Widgee children, he was a week-day boarder at Winston House in Gympie while attending high school, returning by rail at weekends to his parents' home.

After leaving school he became an apprentice fitter and turner in Brisbane and for three years owned his own welding and fabrication plant. But after 11 years of city life he yearned for the country again and bought his uncle Harold McClintock's farm at Dagon, where he now has over 50 acres under pineapples. A local stalwart of the Uniting Church, Cr. McClintock is a representative to Synod in Brisbane and a member of the Synod standing committee.

Cr. Rodney Neale is another farmer who has swapped the pressures of city life to make a living from the land. The son of a dairy farmer from Allora on the Darling Downs, he worked for 12 years as an accountant in Brisbane and in England. Then in 1964 he quit the rat race and bought a dairy farm at Mooloo, convinced that the country was a healthier place to raise his family.

He is particularly active in Q.D.O. affairs and was elected to the Shire Council only nine years after moving to the district. His farm, selected over a century ago by Thomas Raleigh and later owned by Harold Kidd, was once the gathering place for Mooloo's cricket enthusiasts.

Cr. Fred Shadbolt has lived nearly all his life at Cedar Pocket where his father, a former London cabinetmaker, took up a Soldiers Settlement block. One of Cedar Pocket's top cricketers at the time when the district boasted its own team, Cr. Shadbolt still has fond memories of the 123 retired he clouted against Mooloo, an innings which included 11 sixes and eight fours.

In his youth he and his two brothers felled scrub at Kin Kin Creek and Como. During the war he had to stay behind to work his father's farm and later worked on dairy farms and small crops at Goomborian before buying his own property at Cedar Pocket. He has been a fire warden for 25 years and has served several periods as an officer of the local Q.D.O., fruitgrowers, hall and school committees. It was at the local Beenham Range School that he met his Amamoor-born wife whose mother, Mrs. Alma McIntyre, was foundation president of the Cedar Pocket C.W.A.

Cr. Charlie Stubbins, the longest serving councillor in the Mary Valley, has grown up with the township of Imbil, his earliest recollections dating back to when there were only four shops and fewer than 50 houses. The township was still in its infancy when he was born at the homestead on Imbil station where his father, William, worked as a ploughman.

There were still a couple of Aborigines camped near Imbil when he was a boy. They were hunting carpet snakes for their skins, and it was with much pride that the young Charlie Stubbins once dragged a large green snake he had killed at school for a couple of miles to their camp. There he presented it to them for their supper, not knowing that green snakes were not the delicacy that he believed. However, the recipients returned the compliment by sharing with him their meal of carpet snake.

Cr. Stubbins has farmed in the Imbil area nearly all of his working life and for 21 years owned and operated the local picture theatre. Last year he was presented with his 20-year Council long service badge by the Governor, Sir James Ramsay.

Cr. Bob Williams' English-born father selected land at Upper Glastonbury in 1927 after a spell of banana growing at Kin Kin. Cr. Williams eventually took over the family farm and recently moved to Greendale where he combines dairy farming with grazing and some crops. His present property was selected nearly a century ago by Patrick Green, after whom the district was named, and adjoins the Brooyar state forest. Cr. Williams has given a portion of his high land for part of the forestry scenic lookout.

Cr. Williams was one of the prime movers for centralisation of rural schools and the introduction of bus runs. Feelings in the Glastonbury district ran high on the issue when Cr. Williams was first elected to Council in 1961, partly on a pro-bus platform. Now he can justifiably ask, "Who would be without the buses now?"

Shire Clerk Ken Rafter has worked in local government for 24 years, covering the whole range of local administration roles, and has worked twice each for three Shire Councils—Mount Isa, Chinchilla and Widgee.

During his outback period he was also chief clerk/accountant for the Northwest Electricity Authority and became Deputy Shire Clerk of Mount Isa, then the largest Shire Council in Queensland. He also was secretary of the Northwestern Regional Library Service Board—which covered 10 local authorities, making it the largest board in the state.

Mr. Rafter has been secretary of the Gympie Industrial Development Committee almost since its inception. The committee, a joint venture by the Gympie and Widgee councils, met for the first time on March 18, 1971. It administers the 215-acre Gympie Industrial Estate established by the Queensland Department of Industrial Development at the southern entrance to the city.

The estate has five established factories—W. C. Pronger and Sons, J. Smith and Sons, Drummond and Kindred Trading Co. Pty. Ltd., Corbets frame and truss factory and Gympie Concrete Works.

Shire Engineer Don Clarkson, originally from Cecil Plains, worked for the Co-ordinator General's Department, private engineering contractors and was Maryborough Deputy City Engineer before joining Widgee in 1961.

He is chairman of the Gympie and District Home for the Aged (Cooinda) and was its foundation secretary. He is a past president and life member of Apex and also a past president of Gympie Rotary Club.

Mr. Clarkson has been associated professionally with virtually all of the Shire's big advances over the past two decades. During this period the Council's output has changed, too.

When Mr. Clarkson joined the Council he was the sole engineer and most of the work involved road building. Now the Council's works staff includes three engineers, two draughtsmen, five foremen and about 160 outside staff. Their work is fairly evenly divided into four sections—Main Roads Department jobs, other government work, sub-division work and wholly Council projects. The total value of Shire road plant used for this work is \$780,000.

For several years Main Roads Department work within the Shire has been running at a level of over \$1 million a year. However, this has probably passed its peak for the present. The major roadwork now being carried out is the new Maryborough-Tin Can Bay road from the Fraser Island relief funds.

For many years Widgee has had a well deserved reputation as an efficient well-run Shire. Since the days of Mr. Buist half a century ago, the Council has benefited from the continuing services of Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Rafter.

And the Shire's three successive engineers have also distinguished themselves in their field. Mr. Kay moved on to become Chief Engineer for the Tasmanian Government. Mr. Channer became chief construction engineer for Thiess Brothers, while Mr. Clarkson was recognised by the Australian Road Research Board when it asked him to present a paper at its Adelaide conference in 1976. The A.R.R.B. is a prestigious body attracting the most highly qualified speakers from around the world.



After a naturalisation ceremony in the Widgee Shire Council chambers. Shire chairman Mr. W. H. Kidd is at right.



## Mary, Mary Quite Contrary

Disaster has struck many times in many ways in Widgee Shire. Nature has wreaked havoc through droughts, floods, fires and cyclones. The most potent agent of destruction has been the Mary River.

The normally placid Mary together with its many tributaries is the lifeblood for much of the Shire. But since the first settlement of the Mary Valley the river has often broken its banks—and the hearts of many who have seen it wash away their hopes and possessions. Damage over the years has been enormous, as has been the cost of bridging the river.

The first major recorded flood was in 1870 when the Mary River peaked at over 70 feet in Gympie. This was the first time the majority of the settlers had seen the river in flood, and it caught them by surprise. At Mr. George Skyring's farm near Traveston, three men, a woman and five children climbed on to the roof of a barn to escape the fast rising waters. They had to remain there for a week until the waters subsided.

One of the men, Mr. Jervis Long, tried to swim home to his nearby farm but drowned in the attempt.

Two of the original settlers at Widgee Crossing, Adam Mulholland and ferryman John Heilbronn, had their houses swept away while at Lagoon Pocket a family of eleven made a raft from the side of their house after it was demolished by the swirling waters.

The 1870 flood was so bad and left the land such a quagmire that Cobb and Co.'s coach took three weeks to make the trip from Gympie to Brisbane instead of the usual two days.

Wary of further floods many established settlers along the river moved their houses to higher ground while new selectors were warned not to build their homes on the picturesque banks of the river. It was just as well for there were numerous floods of varying degrees over the next two decades while much of the land was being settled. Invariably the Chinese market gardeners who farmed the fertile river flats near Gympie were among the worst to suffer.

The worst flood for two decades hit in January 1890. Glastonbury was first to feel the fury. Over 30 inches of rain in little more than a day produced great landslides on Widgee Mountain and sent a mighty torrent down Glastonbury Creek. The creek rose so fast that a family camped opposite the hotel was swept away. A Mrs. Coomber and three children drowned. They are buried in an unmarked grave near the corner of Diggings Road at Glastonbury. The Glastonbury torrent joined the Mary with such force that two well-known

men of the day, Mr. F. I. Power and Mr. Justin McDonnell, thought their eyes were playing tricks when they saw the Mary River flowing backwards. In fact, the volume of water gushing from the creek was so great that the river could not cope and the overflow was forced back towards Gympie.

Two days after the Glastonbury tragedy the whole of the Mary River was in flood. Cultivations on Imbil station were badly damaged; the Chasworth vineyards of Messrs Carter and Flay suffered considerably. Work on the final section of the North Coast railway line near Cooroy was held up for over a month because of the rains and the conditions of navvies and their families was described as pitiful. Because of the rain there was no work and consequently no money. To cap it off everyone was starving. The expected arrival of rations had been delayed for over a fortnight because they were on the steamer Tarshaw which was held up outside the Maroochy bar because of the flood.

Gympie's mines were badly damaged in this flood. Many of the deep mines were interconnected, to assist drainage and ventilation. Consequently water entering the lower mines also filled those mines whose entrances were high above flood level. It was months before many of the mines were pumped dry. To prevent such a recurrence a system of spring-loaded steel flood gates was devised to cover the opening of any mines likely to be affected by flood. No one reckoned on a bigger flood and that was a mistake.

The flood of 1893 was the grandfather of them all. It peaked at a record 83 feet six inches in Gympie on February 4 and once more entered the mines.

The Chinese market gardens just across the river from Gympie were washed away. The South Side farmers lost the greater part of their crops, among them Messrs Ross, Du Rietz, D'Arcy, Stumm, Ramsey and Power. Mr. Flack's house was last seen sailing down the river towards Maryborough and Mr. Holmes was left with only the kitchen of his homestead. Mr. Wickham's hotel, the Retreat, halfway between the Jockey Club Hotel and the Channon Street Bridge, had seven feet of water through the bar.

It was the same story virtually throughout the Widgee Division. At Bunya Creek, Mr. Chippindall lost 200 acres of corn. Others to suffer in this area were Messrs D. Nicholls and H. Kyte.

At Yabba Vale, Mr. A. Davies lost over 100 acres of maize while on Yabba Creek Mr. Oliver Tincknell lost six horses and 60 acres of corn just ready for the market. A rescue party which called on Mr. Tincknell by boat could hardly believe their eyes when they saw the floodwaters had reached the floor of Mr. Tincknell's house which had been thought to be on safe ground.

Mr. Elworthy of Imbil station also suffered, losing 50 acres of maize, the best crop grown in the district. Among the heavy losers on lower Glastonbury Creek were Messrs Green and O'Keefe at Greendale who both lost all their crops. Hardly a man among the farmers of Lagoon Pocket escaped damage. Mr. E. Butler lost his hayshed when it burst under the pressure of the swelling hay inside. Across the river, Mr. T. Powell at Traveston lost a good deal of

stock including several brood mares. Mr. J. Flood and his neighbour, Mr. L. Currie, also saw their crops perish at Kybong. Gympie was isolated—the North Coast Railway line to Brisbane which had been completed two years earlier was cut in many places while the line to Maryborough was closed after the Antigua Bridge was washed away.

There were moments of light relief in the face of adversity. Stumm Road settlers Edgar Davidson, Hugo Du Rietz and William Turner were standing together watching the river when they saw some furniture being carried down on the flood. "I know that furniture," said Turner and plunged out into the river. He returned to shore with a chiffonier which, sure enough, belonged to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Moreland, from near the old Channon Street Bridge. The rerieved piece of furniture remains in service with the family.

One of the most remarkable stories to emerge from the floods occurred on the coast. The Brisbane River also was in flood. The torrent which swept away the Victoria Bridge in Brisbane also demolished the West End Brewery and deposited several barrels of beer over 100 miles up the coast between Double Island and Inskip Points. A police party from Maryborough aboard the steamer Llewellyn reported that the Aborigines along the coast had broached several of the barrels and were rip-roaring drunk.

Constables Cleary and Sydney were left behind to walk along the beach and remove the bungs from all the unopened barrels to prevent the Aborigines from doing themselves damage. They also claimed that there was freshwater for 100 yards to sea all the way along the coast, so great was the volume of floodwater which had spewed out of the Brisbane River.

While the 1893 flood is generally regarded as the highest in the Mary River as far as Gympie is concerned, the river peaked three feet higher at Kenilworth five years later. Mr. Duncan Beattie, manager of Kenilworth reported at the time: "We have lost all our crops with the flood. It was three feet higher than in 1893 and was running at a terrible speed. At other times the maize was left standing but this time it is all down and covered with the soil washed down. In all there is about 140 acres of maize destroyed just around here."

Kenilworth had been made the early warning station for settlers along the Mary River after the 1893 flood. A system had been devised under which Kenilworth would telephone other centres to warn of approaching floods in time for precautions to be taken.

The 1898 flood still managed to produce some benefits. Farmers who suffered severely were given the chance to take up cheap flood-free land in the hill country further back. At the instigation of Mr. Chippindall, the Government also provided free seed to selectors who had lost their crops. The worthy Mr. Chippindall made all the arrangements for the seed to be brought to Gympie and personally undertook the distribution.

Wolvi and Cedar Pocket had their worst flood on Christmas Day 1909. According to local residents upper Deep Creek rose at least 20 feet in two hours, completely ruining all standing crops and washing away tons of soil.

Tinana Creek reached its highest ever level and nearly swept away a family of nine new settlers who were camped on its banks. The water rose so quickly that they lost everything including their five tents and had to wade 300 yards to reach high ground where they were helped by a local resident, Mr. B. Hillcoat, who had swum to their assistance.



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

The Mary River under flood at Tuchekoi in 1931

A cyclone and floods created twin havoc in February 1931 at the same time as the earthquake horror in Napier, New Zealand. While farmers in low lying areas had their crops damaged by water, the winds savaged banana plantations on the hills. Farmers at Ora Vale, North Deep Creek and Corella, in particular, reported severe damage as did Scrubby Creek banana growers J. Swan, J. Schultz and W. J. Marks. At the height of the storm a tree was blown over, killing five cattle sheltering beneath it on Mr. S. Jackson's Ross Creek property. Fortunately, the fatalities were confined to stock.

By far the worst flood in the memory of most Shire residents occurred on March 28, 1955 when the Mary River peaked at 70 feet 4 inches in Gympie. It was a disaster on a grand scale. Damage to property, crops and stocks ran to tens of thousands of pounds.

The flood wrecked the Normanby Bridge, completely demolished the approaches to Bell's Bridge and badly damaged a dozen other bridges around the Shire. Fortunately there was no loss of life, the only human casualties being four people slightly injured during evacuation work in Gympie.

Low-lying areas of Gympie suffered badly. Mary Street was flooded for 250 yards. Drinkers stood knee-deep at the bar of the Empire Hotel. Only the awnings and rooftops of shops were visible further down the street. Fifty-two houses were flooded and the town's water supply from Jones' Hill failed after a break in the 12-inch main.



Mary Street, Gympie under flood in 1955

*courtesy T. Ramsey*

Two Army amphibious craft were brought in to help with evacuation work. One broke down on the South Side and a ferry had to be sent to its assistance. The Navy sent a helicopter—the first ever to land in the Gympie district—to help with the crisis.

Electricity and telephone services to Imbil and the South Side were disrupted as poles carrying wires across the Mary were knocked askew by the force of the torrent. Imbil's only road communication with Gympie was via the Bollier and Tuchekei bridge.

Tin Can Bay was cut off from Gympie for a day as Coondoo Creek reached its highest level in memory. However the following day Mr. Duncan Polley was able to get a bus service through to Tin Can Bay by transferring passengers across the creek by boat to other transport.

The full extent of the damage was not revealed until the floodwaters began to recede. They left a grim picture of disaster. The Normanby Bridge, Gympie's main road link with the Mary Valley for more than 40 years, was gone. Only the piers and crossbeams remained. Gone with the decking was a 10-inch water main which had spanned the river from the reservoir.

Bell's Bridge presented an equally desolate picture. Although the bridge—the important connecting link between Gympie and the South Burnett—was still standing, the road for about 300 yards on the Gympie side was completely obliterated. In its place were holes 50 feet deep and 50 yards long.

Shire Engineer Jack Channer made an inspection flight over the Mary Valley in the Navy helicopter, landing at Amamoor, Kandanga and Imbil. He returned with a depressing report.

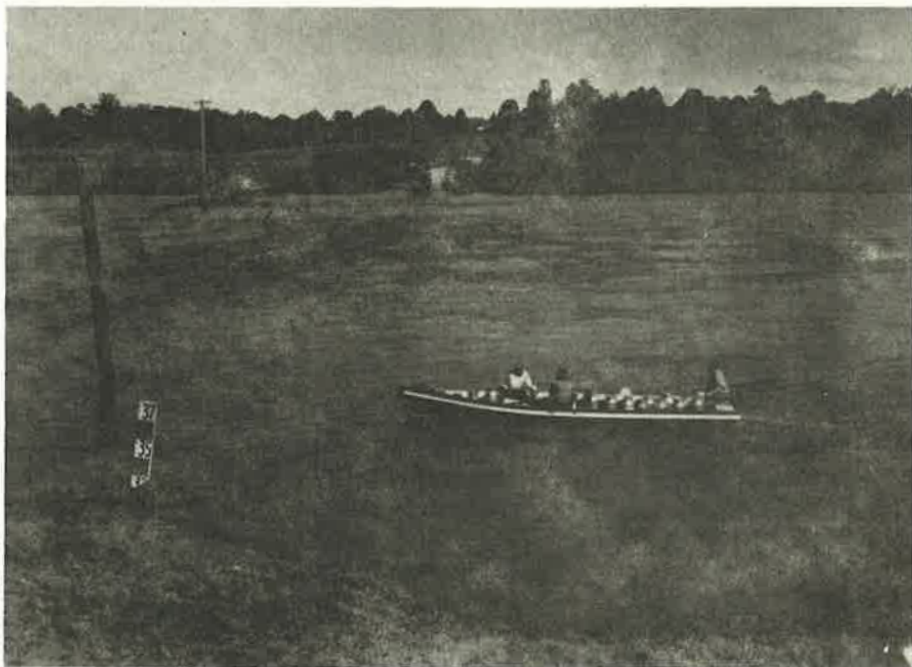
Two bridges over Yabba Creek—the bridge leading into Imbil township and the Yabba Vale bridge on the Kandanga-Bollier Road—were destroyed. Their replacement was estimated at £18,000. The superstructure of the Yabba Vale bridge, a Main Roads Department responsibility, had been pushed down the creek. The Imbil bridge, a Widgee Shire concern, had vanished from its piles.

A bridge at Moy Pocket was destroyed, one span of Townsend's bridge at Amamoor was demolished and approaches to the new bridge over Kandanga Creek at Kandanga were badly washed out.

As communications were restored, the reports of damage flowed in.

At Goomboorian, cyclonic winds caused extensive damage to papaw plantations where trees were either ripped to shreds or blown over. At Neusavale, torrential rain caused a landslide which carried away part of a banana plantation. In other places there was massive soil erosion. Areas planted with beans were badly washed. Fortunately most of the pineapple crops had passed their summer peak.

Dagun, one place to suffer crop damage, reported that flood backwaters had come to within seven feet of the record 1893 flood. Bollier reported the



Getting the cream across the Mary River:from the South Side during a flood

same plus a number of losses of livestock and poultry. Messrs M. Carlson and R. Ernst lost a total of 80 pigs between them.

Kandanga Creek broke its banks at the sawmill end of the township, flooding out Wilson Hart's mill and sending three feet of water rushing through the Post Office store of Arnold and Sons, damaging farm produce and other goods.

At Traveston Crossing electricity poles ready for the installation of irrigation were ripped out and sent swirling down the river. At Calico Creek there were extensive landslips and two houses on pineapple farmer Mr. F. C. Bourke's property were blown off their stumps by high winds.

Memories of the big '55 came flooding back in 1973 and again in 1974, though neither of these floods reached the height of their big predecessor. Nor was the damage anywhere near as severe though crops, as usual, were a major victim.

From the earliest days of settlement ferries have operated across the river in flood time, with ferrymen over the years including famous local boxer Archie Bradley. Since 1969 ferry services and other facilities have been co-ordinated by the Gympie Ferry Board, a joint body elected by the Gympie and Widgee Councils.

The Wide Bay dairy also used to put on ferries to ensure continuity of supply. And in the days before bulk milk carriers, the Railways Department co-operated by ensuring that a train was always on the Mary Valley side of the river to get the cream cans through. Using the Dawn loop siding to get behind the trucks, the engine would push them out on to the flooded rail bridge which served as a jetty for the cans to be unloaded into waiting boats.

## Calamity Coast

Widgee's coast, famous for its beaches, has a more nefarious reputation among seafarers. Its waters are not always peaceful and inviting. Over the years this stretch of coastline from Noosa River in the south to Tin Can Bay in the north—all of it part of Widgee Shire at one time or another—has claimed more than its share of shipwrecks.

One of the first was in 1870 when the schooner *Titania* went aground at the mouth of the Noosa River. It was salvaged. But a mere seven years later another schooner, the *Bonita*, was pounded to pieces close to the same spot.

Most of the early shipping at Noosa was involved in the timber trade though many also had room for fare-paying passengers. Several of these "workhorses" met a watery grave, among them the paddle steamer *Culgoa*. For two decades the *Culgoa* plied the Tewantin-Brisbane run every few days with logs from McGhie, Luya and Co's Cootharaba sawmill—until it, too, came to grief on the Noosa bar.

The 25-ton cutter *Sylvanus* was brought on to the run to fill the gap left by the *Culgoa*. But within months owner-captain John Fredericks took the wrong channel across the bar and found himself beached about 400 yards from the *Culgoa* wreck. The cargo was taken off and two days later startled Noosa residents saw a huge bullock team dragging the *Sylvanus* along the beach to deep water. But the sorry saga of the *Sylvanus* was not yet done. A few days later it set sail for Brisbane only to be wrecked on Coolum Beach.

The Wide Bay bar, stretching from Double Island Point to Fraser Island also has taken its toll. One of the first victims was the *Helena*, a brigantine licensed by the Government to bring kanaka labour to Australia. It went down on July 31, 1899 but everyone aboard was saved.

In June 1900, the schooner *Confidence* was wrecked on the bar and three lives were lost.

On September 24, 1914 the *Dugong* also foundered on the bar. Originally a small coastal vessel, the *Dugong* had been converted to a barge and was under tow by the paddle steamer *Adonis* when it was swamped by heavy seas. The *Adonis*, which survived the mishap, earlier had been on the Tewantin-Brisbane run as a sister ship to the *Culgoa*.

One of Australia's worst maritime disasters took place about 14 miles southeast of Double Island Point on April 2, 1926, when the steamer *Dorrigo* sank with the loss of 22 lives—the only survivors being the master, Captain C. A. Gray and his 18-year-old son, Aban, an apprentice seaman.



All had seemed well when the 715-ton vessel left Brisbane the previous evening, carrying 600 tons of cargo for North Queensland ports and Thursday Island. The cargo included oregon pine logs which were lashed to the deck. A moderate southeaster was blowing as the *Dorrigo*, skippered by the commodore of the John Burke shipping line, headed up the coast. In fact, the weather was better than expected as Captain Gray turned in for the night. But at 10 to six the next morning, Captain Gray was awakened by one of the crew who told him without preamble: "The second officer wants you."

Captain Gray had no idea anything serious was amiss as he hurried up on deck. He quickly discovered the ship was listing badly to port and that several of the crew already had donned their lifejackets. Fireman A. Stillaway alarmed the forecandle where 12 of the crew, including the young Gray, were sleeping and hustled them on deck. Captain Gray gave the order to abandon ship, but when the port lifeboat was lowered it immediately capsized. There was no time for further measures. The crew plunged into the sea as the *Dorrigo* lurched completely over and sank. The logs which had been lashed to the deck shot out of the water like corks from champagne bottles and other deck cargo was strewn across the waves.

Fate was kind to Captain Gray, who had survived a previous shipwreck when the *Timaru* went down off Burleigh Heads and two hands were lost. As the *Dorrigo* went down, he found himself floating on a portion of the aft sundeck which had surfaced beneath him. Just 50 yards away young Aban Gray and other members of the crew were clinging precariously to the up-turned lifeboat while still others clutched at spars and debris. Aban joined his father on the precarious perch and as the day dragged on they drifted further and further away from the other survivors. With the night the weather deteriorated. Rain pelted down on father and son as they huddled together while inquisitive sharks circled their makeshift raft. Their only comfort was on the horizon—the flashing light at Double Island Point. They sustained themselves on beans and apples salvaged earlier from the flotsam. Rescue finally came after 34 hours adrift when the passing steamer *Moruya* spotted the castaways and picked them up.

Still the outside world had no inkling of the disaster that had befallen the *Dorrigo*. The head light keeper at Double Island Point, Mr. Harper, and his assistant, Mr. Priest, were puzzled as they saw the *Moruya* start behaving erratically, changing its course and steering in circles. The *Moruya* was, however, looking for more survivors. A morse message soon alerted the lighthouse to the disaster and a huge sea and land search was mounted.

For several days wreckage was washed up along the coastline and on Fraser Island one body was recovered, but there were no more survivors.

Sixteen years later during World War II a fleet of Army landing craft bound for New Guinea with drums of petrol ran into trouble after passing Double Island Point. Rather than risk the open sea the pilots decided to beach their craft. One turned turtle and sank, and its rusting remains sometimes are visible on the bottom from the air off the sandblow in the Cooloola coloured



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

The Natone wrecked near Double Island Point with native crew members in the foreground removing their belongings.

sands. The fleet lost its precious wartime cargo of fuel and the remaining craft later were forced to put into Tin Can Bay for repairs after their battering.

On December 8, 1954, the Wide Bay Shipping Co's coastal vessel *Leisha* went aground on the northern side of Double Island Point. This time there was a happy ending. With the aid of tractors rushed to the scene, the vessel was refloated.

One of Australia's most famous ships, the *Natone*, was wrecked just south of Rainbow Beach on January 24, 1959 during a cyclone. All 18 seamen survived the ordeal—after a wild ride to the beach, using hatchcovers as surfboards atop mountainous waves. The six white officers and 12 Papuan crewmen were hurled ashore at the Eight Mile Rocks but escaped with little more than cuts and bruises. They took refuge in a nearby mineral sands hut until rescuers arrived the following day.

The 450-ton *Natone* had started out as the *Wongala*. Later this was changed to *Wyatt Earp* and under this name it made six voyages to the Antarctic. The ship was used by South Australian explorers Sir Douglas Mawson and Sir Hubert Wilkins, whose exploits put the vessel's name on the front page of nearly every newspaper in the world.

The *Natone* was owned by the Ulverstone Line of Sydney at the time of the wreck and had been ferrying cattle from Queensland ports to New Guinea. The end came as the ship's seams gradually opened under the battering from the seas, flooding the engines and pumps. Captain P. H. Gosschalk managed to rig emergency sails, but had no chance against the wind and the waves.

Never has the treacherous Wide Bay bar been more unkind to sailors than when the ill-fated *Beagle* attempted to cross it to reach the sanctuary of Tin Can Bay. The bar proved too great an obstacle and the *Beagle* succumbed to cyclonic seas. Five of the six men aboard were lost.

The *Beagle*, a brand new 33-foot big game fishing launch, had left Brisbane on March 30, 1967 on its maiden voyage to North Queensland. On board were the owner, a Darwin doctor, and five of his fishing friends. Cyclone Glenda was approaching Gladstone at the time and a strong wind warning was current as the *Beagle* headed up the coast.

On April 2 the *Beagle* neared Fraser Island. By then the seas had reached frightening proportions and the crew attempted to cross the bar into the calm waters of Tin Can Bay. Thwarted by the bar, they turned back and sought shelter about a mile north of Double Island Point. Just after 6 p.m., disaster struck. A 35-foot wave smashed into the *Beagle* and tossed the vessel upside down. Only three of the men managed to extricate themselves from the upturned hull. All three were able to reach the temporary safety of a dinghy which had broken free from the *Beagle*. One of them, however, attempted to return to the *Beagle* to see what he could do to help the three men still trapped. He did not return.

The two remaining survivors drifted helplessly in the wild seas which carried the dinghy northwards. Later in the evening one of the men, transport driver Arthur Frederick Watkins, decided he would try to swim ashore. His

goal was the lights he could see from the mining houses at Rainbow Beach about a mile and a half away.

Watkins later told a Coroner's Court inquest: "I swam towards the lights but I was swept out by a strong rip. I tried this a second time but again the same thing happened. I had to rest lying on my back. I decided to have a third go and swim with the current. I saw a long line of white foam and thought the waves must be breaking against something. I was dumped a fair few times and hit my head on the bottom. I made a special effort and reached the beach."

About 5.30 a.m. on April 3, Watkins staggered into the Rainbow Beach Surf Lifesavers Club. He had been swimming for about eight hours since leaving the dinghy. He was the sole survivor. The bodies of two of his friends were later recovered from Rainbow Beach and Fraser Island while the other three were presumed to have gone down with the *Beagle*.

The most spectacular shipwreck of all and the most recent is the *Cherry Venture*. The saga of the Singapore-owned *Cherry Venture* began on the morning of July 8, 1973. At 5.30 a.m. the 1,625-ton freighter—bound for Brisbane from New Zealand—radioed for assistance as it floundered in gale-force winds off the Queensland coast. There was no help at hand and 40-foot



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

Tourists visit the *Cherry Venture* on the beach south of Double Island Point in 1977.

waves relentlessly drove the freighter towards the shore. By afternoon it was firmly aground just south of Double Island Point.

R.A.A.F. helicopters flew most of the Chinese crew to refuge at Tin Can Bay. The master and a few hands remained on board while seas beat mercilessly against the hull of the stricken ship. When the seas abated a Gladstone tug tried to pull the Cherry Venture free. But the task was too great.

Two months later the Singapore owners offered the Cherry Venture for sale by tender—"as is, where is." The owner of South Molle Island, Mr. Peter Vaggelas, outbid five others and made a downpayment of about \$10,000 for the right to dispose of the Cherry Venture. He was supremely confident he could refloat the vessel and said at the time: "When I first saw the Cherry Venture I knew I could get it out to sea. It amused me to think the ship had been stuck on the beach for such a long time."

However, six years and tens of thousands of dollars later, the Cherry Venture remains a fixture on the beach—and a great drawcard for tourists who flock to see the rusting carcass high on the sand like a stranded whale.

Numerous attempts to refloat the Cherry Venture have ended in failure, though success often has seemed in sight. The technique has been to pump out sand from around the vessel and pump water into the hole. With the Cherry Venture afloat in the man-made lagoon a channel has been cut to the sea and attempts made to pull the ship into the open water on a suitable tide.

Each time something has gone wrong at the last moment. The most recent thwarted attempt at refloating has left the Cherry Venture with an alarming list and a fire has destroyed much of the interior.

The Cherry Venture no longer seems destined to the new life once envisaged by Mr. Vaggelas—as a luxury cruise ship and floating casino to operate around the Barrier Reef islands.

## The Long Arm of Learning

A fortunate few went on horseback; others went on foot; many more stayed at home. These were the pioneer children of Widgee Shire, in the days when schools were few and far between, when roads were virtually non-existent, when a distance of just a few miles often meant a hard day's trek.

The setting up of schools was a numbers game. The Government needed a guaranteed attendance before it would be party to the establishment of a school in any area. The number often was hard to obtain, and then maintain, so that many pioneer children did their lessons (often when work permitted) at home. There was no correspondence school in those first days and years of the Shire so that the teaching of the Three Rs fell to the mother, whose own education often left a lot to be desired. The children of wealthier families sometimes hired governesses to do the job or sent them in to Gympie to attend one of the privately run schools.

But once the Shire began to develop in various regions the numbers game began to pay off and provisional schools mushroomed in all directions for half a century. These schools were a type of joint venture between local parents and the Government. When there were sufficient numbers of children to warrant a school, the settlers would erect a building, usually of a basic rectangular design with slab walls, and supply the necessary furniture while the Government appointed and paid the teacher and supplied some teaching equipment.

In many areas, however, the establishment of provisional schools was delayed, sometimes for several years, by arguments among settlers over the siting of the school since none was keen to have his child walk the furthest, crossing creeks and negotiating lonely bush tracks.

In September 1875, an Act of Parliament was passed to provide free, compulsory education in the Colony of Queensland. The local community was expected to raise one fifth of the cost of any new government school and every child aged between six and 12 within a radius of two miles by the nearest road, had to attend on the required number of days per year. Failure to do so was punishable by a fine of £1 in the first instance and \*5 for subsequent offences. Failure to pay a fine meant jail. Four years later, when Widgee Division was proclaimed in 1879, there were no such government schools in the Division and the rules and penalties did not apply to provisional schools. The first government (or State) school started in Widgee about three years later.

But it was the provisional school that paved the way for widespread education in the Shire. Invariably such a school was not built to last and had many shortcomings, not the least of which were its lavatories. A Department of Public Instruction (as the present Education Department was then known) inspector who visited some of the first Widgee schools reported that “. . . almost without exception throughout the district only one double closet with separate entrances, is used by both sexes. The regulations of the Department, to say nothing of common decency, require that separate closets for boys and girls, as far apart as the nature of the grounds will permit, should be erected.”

Widgee's 100 years have seen more than 70 schools come and mostly go—some lasted a year or two, others persevered to gain increased status and numbers. Now the Shire has a total of 13 schools in key areas. The rise and fall of the schools in many ways mirrors the development of the Shire, reflecting changes in population, the economy and way of life, particularly since the advent of motorised transport and the upgrading of roads. The interesting history of these schools would fill more than a volume in itself; for this book a selected account must suffice.

On the formation of the Widgee Division in November 1879 there were only five schools within its far-flung boundaries—at Eel Creek, Glastonbury, Cootharaba, Tewanin and Kilkivan.

The first of these was the Cootharaba School, which opened in August 1874 with an enrolment of 16 children. Cootharaba was a timber workers settlement. In a report to Parliament the following year the school was described as a “comfortable building with a verandah” near the shores of Lake Cootharaba “better equipped than most provisional schools in the colony.”

Next to open was the Tewanin Provisional School in mid-1875. The condition of the school, built at a cost of £24, was described by a government official as “moderate”. The Gympie Times referred to it as a “bark humpy”. Attendance was poor and for most pupils punctuality was of little concern, especially for those who had to cross the river to reach the school. According to an inspector's report, “The pupils are, as might be expected, extremely backward in their studies.”

Requests and demands for a school west of the River Mary prompted a visit to the area by the regional inspector of schools, Mr. A. J. Campbell. His recommendations provide an interesting commentary on the times and the districts. At Eel Creek he reported, “On the 18th. instant (November 1875) I was present at a public meeting of the residents of Eel Creek near Gympie. This was held in the house of Mr. T. O'Brien and was called at my request to consider what steps should be taken to supply the educational wants of the district. The meeting was a harmonious one and was attended by every person (except two) really interested in the establishment of a school in the neighbourhood. I enclose a rough map of the district showing the selections and residences.

“The land is for the most part of an inferior kind. The only arable portions of it are the small flooded scrubs and flats along the creeks which run through it. The rest of the country consists of stony ridges and mountains. The selections have been taken up for the most part by bona fide settlers many of whom have families, as will be seen by referring to the map.

“The number of children under 15 years of age within a three-mile radius is 47, of these 27 are now able to attend school. I think it is probable that an average daily attendance of 18 or 20 may certainly be depended on.

“The most suitable site for the school is in the neighbourhood of a freestone quarry on the right bank of Eel Creek. The land is somewhat inferior but a block of 40 acres may be secured with some six or eight acres of good land on it. The land has not yet been alienated.

“The meeting appointed a committee of three to superintend the erection of a school house 20x14 feet with two skillion rooms 10x8 feet to serve as a teacher’s residence. This building is to be enclosed with pine palings, floored with sawn boards and roofed with shingle. I think it will be fairly well adapted for a provisional school building if it is suitably furnished.

“I recommend that the usual aid (£70 to assist with the teacher’s pay, books and equipment per annum) be given to the proposed school and that an application be made to the Minister for Lands to proclaim as a school reserve the forty acres referred to. The promoters of the school will supply the Land Commissioner here with the technical description of the land.”

The Government acted quickly on Mr. Campbell’s recommendations and sent a teacher, Mr. Ward, to Eel Creek in January, 1876. The farmers had not completed the school in time so Mr. Ward began teaching in Mr. Matthewson’s house. Twenty-three children enrolled. But despite initial enthusiasm and preparation lack of numbers forced the closure of the school not too many years after its opening. It then reopened a few years later on a site further up the creek where its fortunes continued to wax and wane. In 1948 the school was renamed Langshaw State School. From 1919 nearby Mooloo had a school of its own which caused a reduction of numbers at Eel Creek and a greater distribution of pupils.

But returning to the first visit by school inspector, Mr. Campbell; in 1875 another meeting was convened at the home of Mr. T. Corley at Lagoon Pocket. From this meeting he reported: “There are but 10 families settled in the neighbourhood of Lagoon Pocket and of these three are separated from the rest by the Mary River which is not everywhere fordable. The good land situated along the river is all under flood mark and the indifferent country only affords good pasturage in favourable seasons. The settlement is not so likely to afford the means of maintaining a good and permanent school as the neighbouring settlement at Eel Creek. I enclose a rough map of the district.

“The number of children of less than 15 years of age is 29 and of these about 23 are said to be fit to attend school. I do not expect a daily average attendance of more than 15 pupils.



“A good slab building with a fireplace in it has been erected; it is about 18x12 feet. There is neither furniture nor flooring yet. I have given some directions about these matters which will probably be carried out. Strange to say the building has been erected on a public road! There is now no government land available for a school site in the neighbourhood. Little increase in the population may be expected for a long time to come.”

Despite these efforts Lagoon Pocket school did not open until 1882 when Miss Ellen McCloskey was appointed head. Its pupils that year were Lizzie, Willie and Thomas Biggars, Betty and Sara Bullar, all of Lagoon Pocket, Maria Peterson whose father worked as a timber getter at Long Flat, Jennet McGill, of Imbil Road, and Willie Dulal and Rose Wells, whose fathers worked as labourers in the area.

But to return to 1876! At Kilkivan the goldminers got a school for their children that year. It opened near the diggings with an enrolment of 24 and was called the Rise and Shine Provisional School after the reef which was providing their livelihoods. The following year the school's name was changed to Neureum and four years later changed again to Kilkivan in line with the name change of the settlement.

Just three months before the birth of the Shire, Glastonbury Creek Provisional School opened its doors for business with Annie Mary Dwyer at the helm. On that 18th day of August, 1879, the scheduled attendance at the school was: William, Charles, James, Charlotte and John Simpson; Margaret, Anne, Michael, Mary, William and John O'Sullivan; William and Michael Carroll; Sarah, Caroline, Henrietta, Eliza and Mary Ann Fittell; and Johanna, Mary, Michael, James and Daniel McCarthy. Mrs. Dwyer, a qualified teacher, had, according to her correspondence, taken a drop in salary to teach at this new country school. Although her qualifications entitled her to £90 a year, she was paid only £60 because of the provisional status of the school. Sometimes in such cases, parents could be prevailed upon to supplement a teacher's salary depending on their means. But, apparently Mrs. Dwyer missed out on this supplement and with three children to support asked for a transfer “since everything is so dear here.” Another teacher, Kate Bruce, in 1888 persuaded Glastonbury parents to pay her 3d per week per child to supplement her government salary but, according to her letters to the department, “some did and some didn't”.

As well as being one of the first schools in the Shire, Glastonbury was also one of the first to be closed in the 1960s when the Government introduced a transport scheme as an incentive to centralisation of rural schools. This was designed to cut the high cost of having several one-teacher schools in the same area, such as those which had been established at Scrubby Creek in 1934, Warrawee in 1939 and Greendale in 1930. All were in the Glastonbury area. After much heated debate the parents of the Glastonbury district agreed to have their children become “guinea pigs” for the rest of the State and paved the way for the now much-used school bus runs. The closing of the Glaston-

bury State School also closed a chapter in the life of Mr. Don Spacie, who had taught there for its last three decades.



*courtesy H. Portas*

Warrawee School 1939. Back row, from left: Jessie Turner, John Geiger, Alison Smith, Norton Geiger, Elma Smith. Front row: Alan Portas, Pat O'Brien, Jean Portas, Betty Portas, Lesley Turner.

Six years of agitation by Mr. W. T. Chippindall brought about the opening of Bunya Creek Provisional School in July 1881 with an enrolment of 24 and Mr. Thomas White as its head. Officially described as a "superior type" of provisional school it was the major institute of education in the Mary Valley for many years. It was closed in 1928 as the growing Kandanga School took over as the district's foremost school.

The Two Mile State School (the Shire's first school with State status) is the Widgee Shire's oldest surviving school. Located just north of Gympie, the school was the result of a widely advertised public meeting on April 28, 1881. Over £100 was collected at this meeting which elected a building committee comprising James Fraser, James Kidgell, James Spiller, Thomas Raymond and Adam Mulholland. A list of more than 50 potential pupils submitted to the Department of Public Instruction included: Annie, James, Mary and Lizzie Kidgell; Matilda, William, Sarah and James Mulholland; Maggie, Liddy, Minnie and Kate Brien; Ted and Ernest Hay; Joseph and Jane Briere; Mary Anne, James, Robert, Donald and Elizabeth Fraser; Bernard Euphene; Maggie and Minnie Raymond; Malcolm, Margaret, Thomas, Francis and James Waddell; Elizabeth, Robert, Alexander, Eden and Lilly Hinds; Joseph, Samuel, Enoch and Lilly Spiller; Jepie, William and Eliza McAully; Thomas

Henderson; George Draper; Anna and Emily Boase; John and William Dean; John Innes; Maria, Sarah and Dora Bunworth; Peter Rodney; George Campbell; Annie and Lilly Fowles; Annie Edwards; Susan, George, Amy and Adolf Heilbronn; Violet, Jane, Jesse and George Thomas; Mary, John and Sarah Groundwater; Joseph Cottrell; and Lilly Chapple.

The letter accompanying the request for a school noted that the population in the area was increasing. When it opened in 1883 there were 103 pupils on the roll. Some were, in fact, from Gympie, others from Mrs. Clayton's private school which was soon forced to close.

In 1892 the head teacher, Mr. W. Gower, wrote to the department advising of a shaft being sunk in the school reserve. His letter was sympathetic to the men responsible (Tewkesbury and party) because, "there are a lot of men out of work here," and asked the department's permission to allow them to continue. He said that the men would ensure secure fencing around the shaft. Apparently they dug with permission but with little success.

The next year floods nearly completely covered the school residence twice and the school had six feet of water in it which damaged windows, doors, books, maps and carried away the head teacher's chair.

The 1880s also saw the opening of two of the most unusually situated schools. They were at Inskip and Double Island Points and were accessible only by sea. Looking at these areas today it is hard to believe they supported schools but both these institutions enjoyed colourful though brief histories.

LIST OF PARENTS and CHILDREN residing near proposed *Provisional* School at *Inskip Point*  
*15 November 1883*

NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN <small>Full Name of the Parent or Guardian of the Child</small>	NAME OF CHILD	AGE <small>At date of registration</small>	RESIDENCE <small>Full name of the residence of the child at date of registration</small>	SEX <small>Male or Female</small>	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF REGISTRATION	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF REGISTRATION
<i>Geo. S. Ryan</i>	<i>Geo. S. Ryan</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Inskip Point, Wide Bay, Vic</i>	<i>Male</i>				
<i>John Smith</i>	<i>Reg. J. Ryan</i>	<i>6</i>	" " " "	"				
<i>Law. E. Reilly</i>	<i>Mary Ann Smith</i>	<i>6</i>	" " " "	"				
"	<i>Emily Ann Reilly</i>	<i>5</i>	" " " "	"				<i>Primary, Laribois 2</i>
"	<i>William Walter Reilly</i>	<i>6</i>	" " " "	"				"
"	<i>Sam. Alpha Reilly</i>	<i>5</i>	" " " "	"				"
"	<i>Maud Reilly</i>	<i>4</i>	" " " "	"				"
<i>Geo. Anderson</i>	<i>Jno. Stephen Anderson</i>	<i>6</i>	" " " "	"				<i>vic vic</i>
"	<i>Geo. Thomas Anderson</i>	<i>4</i>	" " " "	"				"
<i>Frank Perce</i>	<i>Ellen Maria Perce</i>	<i>5</i>	" " " "	"				"
"	<i>Hilda Elizabeth Perce</i>	<i>4</i>	" " " "	"				"

545767.

\* Male or Provisional

(To be signed for the Registrar by the Secretary to the Building Committee)

*Geo. S. Ryan*

Register for the provisional school at Inskip Point, 1883

In 1883 five families at Inskip submitted the names and ages of their children in the hope of getting a teacher and subsidy for a provisional school. The fathers, George Bryce, John Smith, Sam Reilly, Charles Anderson and Frank Peres, all were boatmen attached to the Port of Maryborough. The chief pilot was in charge of the community and it was his duty to meet and house any visitors, since transport to and from these pilot stations was by sea. A Captain Heath was the man the community relied on heavily. It was his steamer that plied that part of the coast and, once the school opened it was he who was called on to convey the numerous female teachers to and from their remote posting. The first teacher was Miss Mary Garsden. She duly recorded in copper-plate handwriting her "commencement of duties" to the department on January 21 1884. Two months later she resigned, "the sea-air being rather too strong for me and giving me very violent headaches." To often the blow he added that Inskip was, "a very pretty convenient place and the people whom I am residing with are exceptionally nice".

Her successor, Mrs. Margaret Kenny, lasted little longer and was replaced by a Mrs. Sullivan whose appointment proved to be a disaster. An officer from the port authority sent to investigate allegation of drunkenness in the teacher made every effort in his report to give her the benefit of the doubt. His report stated that he had arrived to find the school closed since Mrs. Sullivan was suffering from a "face ache" and had taken spirits to relieve the pain! But despite that and a "ne'er do well" husband the school children were progressing well.

Needless to say the hapless woman was relieved of her duties and a Miss Clara Cafferty was appointed in 1868 at £45 a year plus free board. But single young females didn't seem cut out for Inskip and she too left. In desperation Mr. Kenny was reappointed in 1891 but her liking for liquor had not abated since being replaced at Inskip because of her "problem". Two years later she was sacked and in the following letter to the department tried to reverse the decision to no avail. "Sir—I have the honour to submit to your consideration the following: I am the third teacher dismissed from this school; The school has had a bad record in previous years. I am the only teacher that has not been at variance with people; I am under the Department of Public Instruction since 1878 except one interval while in the Old Country; I am a widow." The school was without a teacher for two years until a Miss Sarah Gibson was appointed. Six months later she was gone, too and Mr. Reilly was notified by the department that "the circumstances under which Miss Gibson withdrew from Inskip Point are such as to prevent the Minister from appointing a female teacher to the place and no male teacher is available." And that was the end of Inskip Point Provisional School.

Double Island Point's school started in 1887 and continued until 1922. It suffered a chequered career and the children were subjected to a start-stop education. The department obviously tired of constant complaints from its scattered women teachers so when Double Island Point's last teacher, Miss Stella Kemp wrote to describe her unsavoury accommodation and beg for a

transfer, she was refused. She resigned and that was that at Double Island. All schools in the Shire were inspected regularly and these pilot station schools were no exception. The inspectors travelled by steamer from Maryborough either aboard the Llewellyn or Woy Woy and were ashore a couple of hours before rejoining the boat. One inspector, after a visit to Double Island, wanted authorities to direct the Woy Woy's skipper to wait at the point for four hours in future to allow him enough time to "climb the hill and inspect the school." But the Maryborough harbourmaster declined to give such a direction, since the weather alone dictated the length of stay to a ship's captain. So a rushed climb up rocky Double Island Point and an out-of-breath inspection of the school was the order of the day when the inspector called at that particular school!

Despite that last example, the Department of Public Instruction's district inspectors did their job diligently and well. An outstanding one who visited Widgee's schools and attended parents meetings prior to the establishment of schools was Walter Scott. He weighed the pros and cons of education from every angle—numbers, costs, life-styles, occupations and enthusiasm. And so far history hasn't proved his findings wrong. And, like his literary namesake, his writings are full of vividly descriptive passages. Up until the turn of the century Walter Scott was the man to make or break the Shire's education programme.

In 1895 in an easy-to-read flowing hand he reported on the proposed establishment of a provisional school at Pie Creek. With great regard to detail he accompanied this report with a meticulously annotated map of the relevant district and a list of names of prospective pupils. These included William Tamlyn's seven children, Ernest Bonney's three, one Wismore child, David O'Farrell's six, Joseph Ogden's one, James Ogden's three, David Webster's three, Thomas O'Brien's three, six Skyring children, John Carswell's three, Fred Dodt's two, the two Stone children, Edward Treeby's 10, Chas Treichel's five, Robert Ubank's seven and Howard Maynard's two children. According to Mr. Scott's report the proposed school was desirable but—"the questions—Where? and And of what kind? present some difficulty." The matter was finally resolved and the school opened the following February with Bessie McGhie as head teacher.

Most provisional schools in the Shire had women teachers and many, being young, found their work in remote centres distasteful and tedious. Miss Mary Pilcher found her job at Neardie Provisional School "bad for my health" but what she really meant was that it was too isolated. She applied for a transfer to Traveston but on missing out there she snapped up the appointment to the just opened Woondum school towards the end of 1899. This settlement was far more accessible than most, being on the North Coast railway line and not too far from the main road to Gympie. But numbers were insufficient for the school to continue after 1906 and it closed. Attempts to open a school at Woondum Siding by the former school's secretary, Joseph

Tatnell, in 1911 failed as did an attempt by Mr. Raymond Hewitt, a local banana grower, in 1927.

The reason for the rejections were the close proximity of Mothar Mountain School, a mere 2¼ miles away up the line. That school opened in 1908 and closed some 60 years later as part of the Department of Education's streamlined regional programme. For a brief period there was another school in the area, the Ardoyne School.

In 1889 there were moves to establish provisional schools at Cootharaba Road and nearby Deep Creek. Mr. Scott, the inspector, reported in 1892 that there were 35 children at Cootharaba Road and another 25 school age children at Deep Creek. On this basis and because of the proximity of the proposed sites he suggested that both parent groups should get together for one good state school rather than two provisional schools.

A list of children for the proposed state school was drawn up and submitted. It comprised Alfred Cooke's children Eliza, Martha, Georgina and Alfred; Robert Tomkin's Rose, Lillie and Daisy; Robert Bickle's Francis, Nina and Allen; John Dundas' Margaret, James, Matilda, William and Thomas; Thomas McMillan's Mary; Thomas Brennan's Ventine, Thomas and John; Charles Tompkin's Osmond; Charles, Robert, Elizabeth, Johnson and William; David Stewart's Joshepna, Robert and Sarah; Christopher Jemsen's Henry; Andrew Anderson's Anna, Arthur, Abbesse and Albert; Andrew Johnson's Annie Marie and Oskar; Robert Kinch's William and Elizabeth; Mr. C. Moller's Gunon; and Mr. T. Malcho's children, Sine, Charret, Mage and Anne. But the parents failed to agree on a common site and plans for a state school fell by the wayside. Two separate schools got under way in 1894.

In 1896 the secretary of the Cootharaba Road Provisional School, Mr. Alfred Cooke, advised the Department of Public Instruction that the average attendance at the school was 33 and it was expected to exceed 40 the following year. Therefore moves would be made to have its status upgraded. These succeeded and the old building was converted to a teacher's residence and a new school building was erected in May, 1899 to accommodate an enrolment of just under 50. Local parents collected and contributed £73 to the cost of the new school in accordance with the government act requiring them to pay one-sixth of the outlay for the erection of a state school.

In the 1920s there was considerable drama in the district when it was alleged that one of the pupils at the school had attempted to poison the headteacher and his wife (unsuccessfully) and the teacher's chooks (successfully). As the story goes a num-dum (described in departmental records as an indigenous fruit) was supposedly treated with strychnine and offered to the headteacher by one of the boys and with the full knowledge of other boys. Two of the boys reportedly involved in the incident left the school of their own accord but an inquiry was also held by the department as the headteacher wanted "the school purified of bad boys and bad language." The extensive inquiry was inconclusive but made a good talking point for a few years after!

The 20th century brought many more schools to the area, among them provisional schools at Cedar Pocket in 1906, Beenham Range in 1923 and Wilson's Pocket in 1924. They were all closed for good by 1965 when the Gympie East State School opened.

The original Cedar Pocket school started life with the bare essentials in 1906 but had a tireless school committee comprising Thomas Saxelby, William Reid, John Ormes, Thomas Elliott and Robert Gillespie. In 1916 the school's headteacher, Henry McCullagh, was involved in a controversy regarding a general complaint against school teachers who tested cream and milk for farmers as a check against butter factories. The Wide Bay Co-Operative Dairy Company complained about Mr. McCullagh but he replied that such testing was done as part of the school's curricula and that local farmers took it upon themselves to compare his findings with those they got from the butter factory.

Beenham Range for many years shared a teacher with Coondoo, the teacher spending alternate weeks at each. When Beenham Range school opened its secretary was Mr. A. J. Shadbolt. His son, Mr. F. G. Shadbolt, was secretary when the school closed.

But some schools never get off the ground! An example of this was the abortive attempt by Veteran Road settlers to get a school of their own. Investigation shows that it was with good reason they failed! The proposed site at the junction of Veteran and Enterprise Roads was considered suitable by the department's representative but there were other factors. For one thing the site was a mere two miles from Cootharaba Road State School which residents along Veteran Road had agreed to support. There was no natural barrier between children and the school because Deep Creek had a bridge across it. In fact, the bridge had been built specifically to allow Veteran Road children easier access to Cootharaba Road School and the Department of Public Instruction and the school's committee had subsidised the cost. The bridge opened in July 1904 and the move for the school was made later in the same year. So as the Department's report stated, "Under the circumstances it does not seem desirable, or even fair, to grant Veteran Road applicants the school for which they have made application." To cap it off Cootharaba Road School was then undergoing extensions which would be superfluous if the Veteran Road children were withdrawn.

In 1891 a meeting was held to form a provisional school for Traveston and Tuckekoi residents. A committee comprising Messrs J. Bason, J. Walsh, B. Higgins and A. R. Bailey (secretary) took up a collection to buy school furniture and to hire a suitable building for 12 months, obviating the immediate necessity to build. The school, the first in the Traveston area, was opened on August 24 with Miss L. Flynn as teacher.

Nearby Kybong got its own school 14 years later and was a state school from the word 'go'. Its first pupils were Albert Warnes, his brother Leslie and sister Florence; the Brady children, Arthur, George, Ernest and Lily; Annie Bytheway; Herman August, Rudolph and Adolph Wagenknecht; and Percy

and William Reed. The Warnes' father was a farmer, Mr. Brady listed his occupation as "scalper", Mr. Bytheway was a miner, the Wagenknechts father was an engine driver and Mr. F Reed a timber getter.

Imbil Provisional School began in 1897 under the guidance of Miss Helen O'Brien, who remained at her post until 1902. But later, in 1906, for want of a teacher the school closed its doors, opened again for six months the following year and then closed again until September 1908. Three years later the school closed yet again but was opened as a state school in October 1915—following the sale of Imbil township—with an enrolment of 38. Mr. George Charles Pestorius was appointed head teacher. At last the school had continuity and Mr. Pestorius stayed until 1926 with a gap of three years during World War 1, during which time his wife took over. The school was designated a rural school from 1925 to 1937 and during this period other Mary Valley schools sent their pupils to Imbil to learn manual training skills. In 1962 Imbil was further upgraded to include a secondary department. Mr. Eugene Burkett steered the school through this transition of the '60s and was head teacher until the end of 1971.

The Mary Valley's earliest schools also included the shortlived Bollier and Bluff provisional schools. Attempts to form the latter began in 1890 but the area always seemed to be either two or three children short or short of cash following disastrous seasons of flood or drought. It finally opened in 1907 on



Brooloo School, circa 1920. The teacher, Mr. Tom Bath, is at centre, rear *courtesy Mrs. H. Portas*



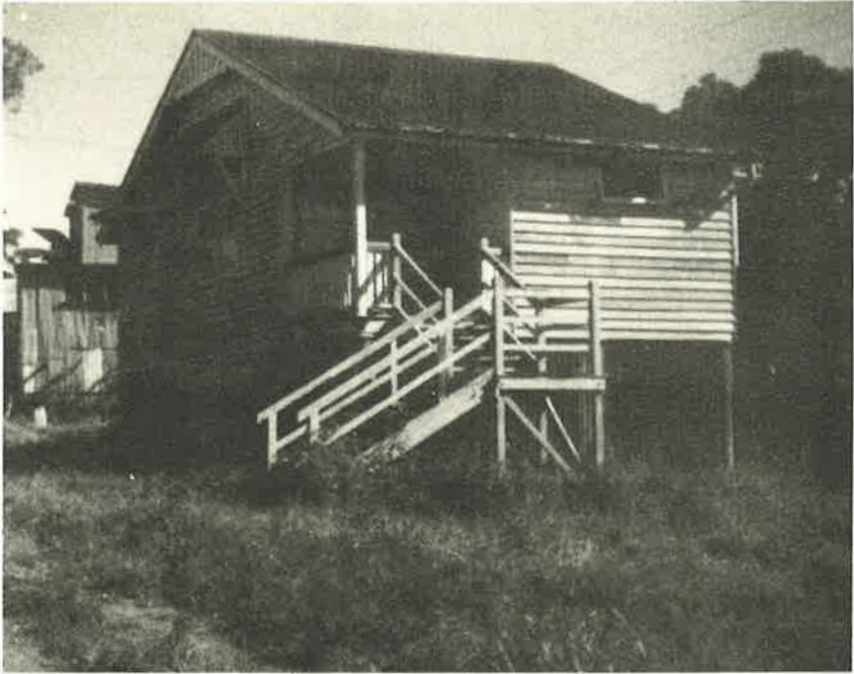
July 15 with an enrolment of 18 under head teacher, Samuel Bridges. In 1910 Mary Foley took over and in 1915 the school's name was changed to Brooloo. In 1916 Thomas Bath was appointed head and it is he who takes most of the credit for the school in the 36 years he was in charge. In 1952 Mr. James Shute took up the reins but in the late '60s the school finally closed its doors for ever.

Kandanga Creek opened in 1900 with 13 boys and four girls on the roll. Miss Violet Fielding was the sole teacher. Thomas Sproules gave five acres of his land for the school site, and his two children were among the first intake. Other settlers who sent children on the first day were James Tincknell, Augustus Hester, Peter Mitchell, William Smerdon, Niels Rasmussen and John Schmidt. In 1909 the school was upgraded to a state school.

Another Kandanga school, in the township this time, started six years later. This was called the Kandanga Township State School but from the word 'go' the building was somewhat inadequate. A visit in 1916 by the Department of Public Instruction's Under-Secretary Mr. J. D. Story, brought prompt improvements. Mr. Story's report stated that it was unsatisfactory for 50 or 60 children to work under a low iron roof that lacked a ceiling. Other reports told of children suffering headaches and the teacher having to wear a hat inside to combat the intense heat from the roof. So it wasn't surprising that by May the department had decided to build a new school and it was completed in 1917. In 1924 the school's name was officially changed to Kandanga State School and eight years later a teacher's residence was built in the school grounds.

Jones' Hill at the entrance to the Mary Valley was one of Widgee's larger communities at the turn of the century and the much-needed and long-awaited state school opened on January 29, 1902 with an enrolment of 45 and Mr. Richard Doran in charge. Residents had submitted an application for a school three years earlier but some of the children on that original list of prospective pupils were over school age by the time the school got under way. Among those listed on the original 1899 application were Henry and George Treichel; Elsie Dodt; Albert Dodt; John and Thomas Fitzpatrick; June, Emily and Frederick Hill; Lily, James, Sam and Thomas Meredith; Charles, Elizabeth and George Donald; Mary and Sydney Surtees; John and May Carswell; Richard, Maude and Emma Hodges; Ellen Gerrard; Willington, Emily and Clara Foan; James and Violet Simpson; Sydney, Pearl, Herbert and Norman Smith; Peter and Florrie Larsen; George Hodges; William, David and Annie Lane; Lizzie, Alice and Florence Farmer; Lewis and Albert Cox; Thomas and Margaret Beausang; Maggie A. Beausang; and Richard and Fred Grassick.

The first school in the Amamoor district was Diamond Field School which opened in 1914. It had 17 pupils. Closer settlement of the Mary Valley after the railway went through brought about new schools at Amamoor (1921), Dagon (1924), Carter's Ridge (1925), Calico Creek (1936) and Forest Station (1939). A little further afield schools were opened at Bella Junction in 1928 and earlier still at Yabba.



The old Carter's Ridge School, now a farm building at Beechwood. Many of Widgee's schools suffered similar fates.

The formation of Dagon school was a prime example of community spirit. Although land had been provided for schools both at Amamoor and Dagon in the subdivision of the Amamoor Estate, the Dagon site was judged unsuitable by a government inspector. Landholders and parents in the area each chipped in £2/10/0 and paid £50 for the land on which the school now stands. The school was opened on June 14, 1924 four years after the establishment of the building committee comprising Messrs. G. C. Hansen (chairman), J. Long, W. and G. Hutchins, L. Meddleton, E. S. Smith, M. J. Conroy and J. Downs. The delay in opening the school was due to the shortfall in numbers. On the first day the enrolment was 20—one more than that required by government—and Mr. V. Brown was head teacher. At its peak the school had an enrolment of 70 in the 1930s. Two foundation members of school's parents' committee, Mr. J. Long and Mr. J. T. McClintock, served the school for 27 years.

Wolvi—originally named Neusa Vale—Provisional School register shows that on September 14, 1899 six Waller children and two Hillcoat children took out their slates, sharpened their pencils and got down to the serious business of education. This particular school register provides one of the clearest records of people in the district, where they lived and what they did for a living.

# REGISTER OF Neusa Vale Provisional SCHOOL.

No.	Date of Admission	Name	Age	Residence	Occupation of Father	Religion	Claims				Date of Birth	Date of Entry to Sch.	
							Wolvi	Wolvi East	Wolvi West	Wolvi North			
1	14.8.99	Hillcoat, John	7.9	Neusa Vale	Charcoal	E.C.						25.6.02	
2	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Edw. J.	10.0	Neusa Vale	Charcoal	E.C.						11.12.03	
3	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Allen John	10.0	Neusa Vale	Charcoal	E.C.						21.5.05	
4	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Gladys Norma	9.5	Neusa Vale	Charcoal	E.C.						25.4.05	
5	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Henry Charles	9.5	Oakleigh	Selector	E.C.						20.6.05	
6	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Mary Florence	6.9	Neusa Vale	Charcoal	E.C.						11.5.08	
7	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Reginald James	5.8	Oakleigh	Selector	E.C.						20.0.19	
8	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Ethel Vida	5.0	Neusa Vale	Charcoal	E.C.						11.5.06	
9	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Martin Christy	11.0	Neusa Vale	Servant	E.C.							
10	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Gordon	5.0	Oakleigh	Selector	E.C.						9.12.10	
11	14.8.99	Westbrook, Edward	17.11	Neusa Vale	Carpenter	E.C.							
12	14.8.99	Hillcoat, Edna Kate	7.1	Oakleigh	Selector	E.C.						28.6.01	
13	8.10.01	Boase, Augusta Kate	11.10	Ashley Hill	Farmer	E.C.						11.12.01	
14	8.10.01	Boase, Nallo Emmet	10.5	Ashley Hill	Farmer	E.C.						15.12.01	
15	10.2.02	Boase, Leonard	13.9	Oakleigh	Editor	E.C.						27.7.02	
16	25.7.07	Boase, Mavis	7.5	Oakleigh	Editor	E.C.						11.9.02	
17	25.7.07	Boase, Lurline	5.0	Neusa Vale	Charcoal	E.C.							
18	20.07.07	Ryan, Mollie Edna	8.6	Wolvi	Timber getter	E.C.						12.12.02	
19	20.07.07	Bashford, Lurline	5.9	Maryborough	Baker	E.C.						27.3.03	14.04.04

Early register of Neusa Vale (later Wolvi) Provisional School

The Wallers' father was described as a grazier and the school was built on his property called Neusa Vale. The Hillcoats lived on their father's selection which he had named Oakleigh. On it he cut timber and grazed cattle. In 1900 two more Hillcoat children, Gordon (5) and Egerton Bertie (15), were enrolled along with carpenter Mr. Westbrook's son, Edward. Attendance was boosted yet again the following year by Augusta and Waldo Cass from Ashley Hill, and in 1902 by Leonard and Edward Boase, both sons of Gympie editor Charles Boase; by O'Neill Edward Ryan, son of a Wolvi timber getter; and by Llewelyn, Lurline and Mavis Bashford, the children of a Maryborough baker who had moved to Oakleigh. In 1906 the school was moved to Wolvi and its new intake comprised John Neeb and Esther Becker, whose fathers raised cattle on adjoining properties at Tagigan, Bertha Hodge and George and Charles Phillips. From then on many well known district names such as Salmon, Hunt, Robertson, and Bartholomew appeared in the register. The school graduated from its 24x18 unlined state of 1899 to a new building in 1918 which in turn was replaced in 1932. This last building has been remodelled and extended and in 1969 the old school building from Coondoo was brought in to house the Wolvi School's library. The Coondoo School, formerly called Wolvi East, closed in 1967, half a century after it opened.

Another Neusa Vale School opened in 1933—27 years after its namesake changed its name to Wolvi. The new school's register contained no

links with the first Neusa Vale School. Instead it had names such as Christensen, Woodgate, Steele, Barr, McIntyre, Doak, Ford and Carle and in the '40s Backhouse and Begega to begin a new era at Neusa Vale.

From Federation to World War 1 there was a rapid proliferation of schools in the Shire. Two which opened north of Gympie in quick succession were at Chatsworth (the year before Federation) and Banks Pocket.

Local M.P. Andrew Fisher, later Prime Minister of Australia, opened the Chatsworth Provisional School in April 1900. The first head teacher, Mr. J. J. Ford, had 22 pupils in his care. As the area prospered it quickly became a state school and in 1924 moved into new, larger premises. Four years after the Chatsworth opening the school at Banks Pocket opened its doors with Miss Mary Pilcher in charge. The first school committee consisted of local residents, Alan Counter, F. W. Gillmore, William Jobling, Charles Jorgensen and Edward Smith. Other schools in this general northern area which served for varying periods included Bell's Bridge, Enterprise, Corella, Tamaree, Ora Vale and North Deep Creek.

The school at North Deep Creek was a classic example of one whose opening date was delayed (by six years, in fact) because parents could not come to a unanimous decision on where it should be sited. The schools within a 10-mile radius—Tamaree, Downsfield and Enterprise—were out of the question as far as residents at North Deep Creek were concerned because of the surrounding rough terrain. Finally, in 1920 agreement was reached and a list of pupils sent to the department. Mr. Harvey Sanderson had three children on the list, Mr. Percy Young five, Mr. John Anderson one, Mr. William Miles five, Mr. Norman Jensen two and Mr. William Hebblewhite one. Daisy Simpson was the first teacher appointed when the school opened in 1921 and she was succeeded by Mary Koppe. In 1926 the school closed for lack of pupils and moves to reopen it from the following year were to no avail until 1930 when Mrs. Grace Colvin was appointed headteacher. But again this was another school that was closed just over 10 years ago in the cause of progress.

In February 1902 a provisional school was opened at Goomboorian, just under two years after local residents led by George Power had made their first move for its establishment. Its opening day was hardly auspicious! The school committee had asked for a female teacher and the woman appointed, Emily Downey, resigned on the day she started because "the place is too lonely and unsuitable." There was not much of a road between Gympie and Goomboorian at this time, the latter's main contact with the outside world being via the postal route to Tiaro. Prior to the opening of Goomboorian's school, the nearest feasible alternative had been at Neerdie, seven miles away. The government inspector who recommended the establishment of the Goomboorian school estimated there were 29 school-age children in the vicinity, among them the children of Messrs G. Power, J. Rop, G. Bligh, A. Hinds, W. Ross, J. Ostwald and J. Gillis. However, average attendances did not rise above 14 for several years.

The district got a second school in March 1921, closer to Gympie at Ross Creek. It opened nine months ahead of schedule in temporary premises, a room of the newly completed home of local settler, Mr. Alf Taylor. Mr. Taylor along with Messrs W. J. M. Rogers (chairman), Malcolm Buchanan, John R. Burns, and Frederick Thompson comprised the school parents' committee. The first teacher was local girl, Miss Ruby Ostwald.

Kia Ora, the late-comer of the district, was opened four months after Ross Creek. It began as a provisional school under headteacher Johanna Doherty and became a state school in 1925. The school's first committee comprised George Hillcoat (chairman), Robert Hose, James Elliott, Andrew Hill and Albert Borchert. Kia Ora now is the district's only survivor with the closure in 1962 of Ross Creek and Goomboorian schools and further afield, the Sandy Creek School.



*courtesy T. Beutel*

Downsfield School, circa 1928. Front row, from left: Stan Strophfeldt, Frank Tipman, Harold Waples, Sheila Dower. Middle row: Tom Ford, Hilda Tipman, Nora Dower, Ruby Waples. Back row: Leo Eagers, David Dower, Albert Roon, Doug Ford, Peter Dower, Harry Sainty, Tom Beutel.

With the formation of the Noosa Shire in 1910, Widgee Shire lost many of its early schools. They included schools like Cooran, Pinbarren Creek and Pomona which all were opened in the 1890s, as well as schools in the newly opened up areas of Kin Kin Junction, Moran Group and Cooroy.

The years 1910 also marked the start of the South Side State School which is now the biggest primary school in the Shire. It opened on July 4, with 25 pupils and Mr. Don Price as headteacher. First day pupils were Myles MacDonnell, aged 5, whose father was listed in the register as a sharebroker; Isidore, 9, and Leo Power 7, sons of one of the district's leading solicitors;

Arthur and Colin Durietz, twin sons of a draper's assistant, Ernest, Ellen and Thomas Smith, whose father worked as an engine driver; the Johnston children—Thomas, May and Vivian—whose father was a blacksmith; Hannah Albury and Elsie Abdy, whose fathers were teamsters; Stanley Adcock 11, son of an Eel Creek farmer; Jane and Jack Davey, children of a miner; Edna, Hilda and Agnes Whitmore, daughters of a Methodist publican; Dorothy Ross, whose father was a South Side farmer; Wyatt and William Stockden, sons of a drayman; five-year-old Dorothy Kidd, daughter of another local farmer; and Clyde and Percy Moreland, sons of a Cinnabar timber-getter. Six others started school at South Side that month but somehow didn't make it on the first day. William and Margaret Howley, the children of a sawyer, and Charles Adcock enrolled the day after but Emmett Skyring, son of Eel Creek farmer, Zachariah Skyring, was a full week late. Susan Howley, 5, joined her brother and sister at school on the 19th, and Thomas Beasley, whose father was listed as a colporteur from Red Hill, Brisbane, started on the 26th.



*courtesy M. MacDonnell*

South Side School 1910. Back row, from left: Bob Skyring, Isidor Power, Arthur Du Rietz, Nellie Smith, Ernie Smith, Hannah Albury, Stan Adcock, Tom Johnston, May Johnston. Second row: Edna Whitmore, Charles Adcock, Myles MacDonnell, Hilda Whitmore, Leo Power, Dorothy Ross, Viv Johnstone, Colin Du Rietz, Vera Davey. Front row: Stan Smith, Tom Smith, Eugene MacDonnell, Beattie Kidd, Bill Kidd, Nettie Whitmore, Elsie Whitmore, Jack Davey, Fred Smith. Teacher at right: Mr. Don Price.

Despite Tin Can Bay's early rise to prominence in the timber industry it didn't rate a school until February 1, 1934—one of the late-comers in the Shire's long list of schools. It was called the Wallu State School, in line with

the township's official name, and established as a result of representations by a committee comprising Messrs J. Rogers (chairman), M. Scullin, V. G. Mason, T. Impey and W. R. Payne. The first headteacher was Mr. Herbert Court and at the end of the first year the enrolment was 36. Because of Tin Can Bay's transient population, education authorities thought it better to move an existing building rather than build a new one on site. So Tin Can Bay children started school in an old building from Wolvi. But numbers grew rapidly and in 1936 another building was moved to Tin Can, this time it was the old Bells Bridge School. In April the following year the name was changed to Tin Can Bay School as was the township's. Since those first years enrolment has steadily increased and building additions have gone up. Last year 108—all from the township—attended the school. Mr. W. E. Catlow is principal.

Widgee Shire's newest school is Gympie East School, opened in 1965 and built on a compromise site to serve surrounding districts in which schools had been closed. This modern school at Cedar Pocket had an enrolment of 140 in 1978 under principal, Mr. Kevin King. Pupils came by bus from Wilson's Pocket, Deep Creek, Cootharaba Road, Neusa Vale, Green's Creek, Goomboorian and Beenham Valley areas.

At Two Mile School numbers dwindled to 31 last year and principal, Mr. G. H. Shum, has his fingers crossed that there will be sufficient children attending to keep the school open for the celebration of its centenary in 1983. With the recent spate of subdivisions of farm land near the school the enrolment could go up.

Four buses take children to the Chatsworth School near Bell's Bridge. They come from Harvey's Siding, Tamaree, along the Wide Bay Highway, the Bruce Highway, and from farms along the Mary River. The principal is Mr. R. Norman and latest enrolment figure is 85.

Gympie South (known as South Side until recently) is the Shire's largest school with an enrolment of 371. Children come from the immediate area which has mushroomed with housing developments and subdivisions in the past 15 years. Mr. Ron Baker, the principal, cites the recent addition of a pre-school in the school as further evidence of Southside's growth potential. Buses also bring pupils from Glastonbury, Calico Creek, Lagoon Pocket, Scrubby Creek, Langshaw, Mooloo and Mary's Creek.

Jones' Hill depends entirely on families living within walking distance of the school for its pupils. Mr. M. J. Jackes, principal, had an enrolment of 36 in 1978.

Kia Ora's enrolment is 78 and pupils come from near and far. Children come from Rainbow Beach—a daily round trip of approximately 60 miles—Toolara Forestry and Goomboorian. Mr. Tom Stallard is principal.

Imbil accommodates the Shire's only secondary school. Both primary and secondary sections are under principal, Mr. G. F. Nelson. Latest enrolment statistics are 140 primary pupils and 51 secondary. At the end of 1978 a new pre-school opened in the school grounds and 10 children enrolled. Buses

bring children to the school from a wide area including Yabba-Bella Creek, Bollier-Tuchekoi and Moy Pocket-Brooloo.

Kandanga still continues to support two schools though they are about six miles apart. Kandanga State School has an enrolment of 90, including pre-schoolers. Buses bring pupils into the town from Goomong Pocket, the Bollier Road district and Riversdale Road. Mr. Bill Dawson is principal. At Kandanga Creek State School Mr. Russ Pastourel is in charge. His enrolment in 1978 was 27 primary and four pre-school children. A bus brings children to school from the pineapple and dairy farms at the top of the Valley.

Amamoor is another Mary Valley school taking part in the early childhood education scheme introduced in 1976. The scheme allows for the inclusion of pre-schoolers into classes with children in Years One and Two. Amamoor's enrolment last year was 54 primary and 14 pre-school pupils. Mr. George C. Williams, is principal. Buses bring pupils from Amamoor Forestry and from farms along the way as well as from Diamondfield Road and Amamoor township.

Thirty-seven children attended Dagon State School last year, of whom the majority are local, but some also from pineapple and small crops farms at Dagon Pocket and along the Mary Valley Highway. Mr. Gary Hatcher is in charge.

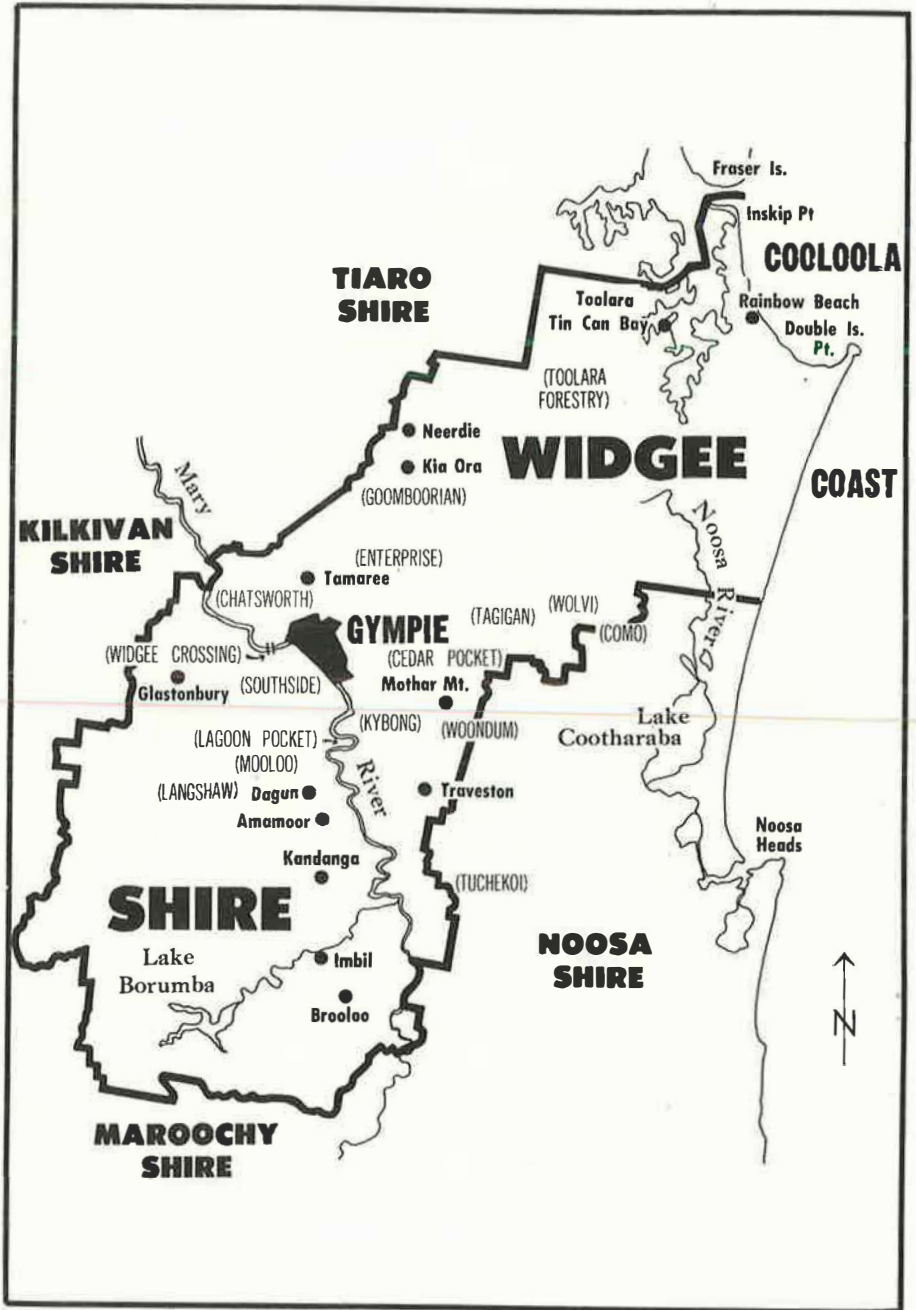
Gympie-based relieving principal, Mr. Brian Kidd, spent much of last year at Wolvi State School. The L-shaped school is run on an open-area concept with the library at the angle of the L separating infants from primary classes. Buses bring children from Beenham Valley, Neusa Vale and Coondoo and others come from Wolvi itself.





## PART TWO

### People and Places



## The Brisbane Road

If only they could see it now! The road that carried the early prospectors to Gympie was hardly fit for a goat. It was an entirely different route from that of today. When the gold rush began the route from Brisbane was via the mountain track—through Durundur, Conondale, Ubi Ubi and over the Bollier to Traveston Crossing.

It was definitely unfit for coach travel, though this did not deter the 15,000 miners who flocked to the goldfield. The "Queensland Daily Guardian" reporting on the gold rush said: "The road from Brisbane to the diggings is described to us by a traveller who recently passed that way as something frightful—to footmen and horsemen a fearful journey—to drays all but impossible. All sorts of schemes have to be resorted to, to drag the laden drays up the steeps, but the lowering them down again is a more difficult feat. Ropes run around the trees have to be attached to the drays, and hand over hand the drays lowered, whilst men bear a hand with some guy ropes to prevent the whole toppling down some siding. Notwithstanding all precautions a good many horses have been lost."

Within a few months there was a public clamour in both Gympie and Brisbane for an alternative road. Government Surveyor F. H. Hart inspected a route proposed by Mr. J. D. Bergin, a Maroochy settler, and recommended it to the Government. This was across the Maroochy River, through a gap in the ranges to the northwest, through the Tuchekoi Paddock (the old Whidlka Whidlka run previously owned by the Skydings and Bergin himself), across Bergin's (Skyring's) Creek to Traveston run and on to the diggings.

The Government agreed and voted the sum of £2,700 for improvements to this route—the first public money to be spent on any road in Widgee Shire. Work began immediately but did not proceed as fast as expected. Many of the workers downed tools and took off to the diggings, while the wet season caused further delays.

The famous Cobb and Co. coaching firm had extended its operations to Queensland two years before the Gympie rush. The company's Brisbane manager, Mr. Whatmore, was not prepared to send his teams over the mountain track but in November 1868 sent his top driver, Hiram Barnes, to try the more easterly route. Two days later, and five minutes ahead of schedule, Barnes drove his four-horse team triumphantly into Gympie where amid the miners' cheers he was chaired to the Northumberland Hotel for a night of celebration.

Travellers from Brisbane to Gympie stayed the night at Cobb and Co's halfway house at Woombye, where for a few shillings extra they could get a bed and a meal. The next day they continued on to Yandina, where the team was changed, and across two steep pinches known as Big and Little Newspaper, so named because bundles of newspapers often were placed beneath the wheels to give them traction in the mud. At Big Newspaper—now on the Maroochy side of the boundary which runs between these two pinches on the Tuchekoi-Kenilworth Road—passengers invariably had to get out and carry their bags to lighten the load. There was another steep haul across the pinch to the west of Tuchekoi Mountain and then another stop for refreshments and a change of horses at Charles Peacan's staging house at Peacan's Pocket on the Mary River. From there the road wound on the eastern side of the river past Traveston and across a series of hills known as the Seven Sisters, through a ford at Six Mile Creek and into Gympie.

This remained basically the route of the Brisbane Road until the era of the motor car when the straightening and flattening process began. The biggest changes to the route within the Shire have been the detour east of Mount Tuchekoi in 1954 and the recent formation of a new section of Bruce Highway which left behind what is now Carlson Road.



From a school to a church . . . Greenridge School, now the premises of the Uniting Church

The land along the Brisbane Road was among the first to be settled when it became apparent that Gympie gold was no mere flash in the pan. When Widgee Division was created there was hardly any land not taken up on the road between Gympie and the Tuckehoi pinch. Starting from the Monkland, the first farmer on the road was John Hopper who selected a total of 152 acres. Some of the land later was bought by Hugh Hughes, one of the first blacksmiths in Gympie, who called the property Green Ridge—the same name as John Pearen's homestead farm on the other side of the Mary River. Somehow Green Ridge moved! And the name later was given to the locality further south near Traveston.

Just north of the bridge across the Six Mile Creek near today's Gympie Industrial Estate, the land was selected by John Ray, who had other blocks back towards Woondum, while on the southern side of the bridge was the Sovereign Hotel. This once was owned by Mr. W. H. Kidd, sr., father of a subsequent Shire chairman, and later was removed to a site at the One-Mile. There was an even earlier hotel further down the road known as the Seven Mile Travellers Inn. This was built by Francis Kemsley in 1871 but its career as a hotel did not last long. It became the home of the Purcell family and burned down about 1905.



*courtesy T. Ramsey*

This shingle-roofed holiday home of Mr. A. G. Ramsey at Noosa was moved from Kybong where it was once a hotel.

For over a century the Six Mile Creek was the bane of travellers on the Brisbane Road. In flood times it was nearly always one of the first places for the road to be cut. The first bridge across the creek was a makeshift affair probably erected with voluntary labour by regular travellers and men from the

district. Tenders were called for a new timber bridge in 1887 and the contract was let to McDermott and Sons for the sum of £746/4/3. It was replaced in 1939 and this in turn was replaced in 1977 by a high-level bridge, the A. M. Hodges Bridge. It was opened by the Premier, Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, and named after Tourism Minister Mr. Max Hodges, Gympie's long-serving M.L.A. The new bridge cost \$228,867 and the approaches a further \$463,000.

South of the bridge, Thomas Mullaly selected 799 acres in a pocket of the river in 1872. It was assessed as second class pastoral land which was available then at six pence per acre per annum. First class pastoral land could be leased for one shilling and agricultural land for 1/6.

Dingoes were a problem when Mullaly moved to Rose Vale as he named his farm. He solved the problem by fetching two "savage" greyhounds from Sydney. As befitting a former race jockey, Mullaly had thoroughbreds as well as cattle and cleared a six-furlong track to train his racehorses. Many of his horses were bred on Widgee station where he once worked. They included Jimboom, winner of The Miners Cup in 1881.

In the days when the Mary River teemed with fish many Aborigines camped at Rose Vale on their travels. Once a young picaninny died on the property. Amid much weeping and wailing it was buried in an ants' nest between two sheets of bark. Six months later the Aborigines returned and shared the bones among relatives. They never went back again. The Aborigines usually did not return to live at a place where a death had occurred.

In 1900 the Mullalys were the largest suppliers of the Gympie Butter Factory with 800 lb. of cream per week. About 60 years later the Mullaly land was used to grow corn for a quantity trial under government supervision. The yield of 114 bushels to the acre set a Queensland record at the time. In 1972 Mr. C. J. Mullaly sold the remaining portion of the original Rose Vale farm. It had been in the family for exactly 100 years.

Early selectors between Rose Vale and Thomas Powell's Traveston homestead included John Brady and Robert Gluch.

Part of the old Traveston spread was resumed and sold as the Kybong estate, the buyers including W. J. Warnes, J. Brede, George Pinkerton, George and Charles Hutchins and Charles and Thornton Powell.

In 1911 a hall was built at Kybong by the Brisbane Road and Woondum Progress Association. It was destroyed by a fire on Christmas Eve 1935 but was rebuilt on a new site further out from Gympie.

Early farmers on the road to Traveston Crossing included Shire chairman John Flood, who did not live on his property, and William Groves on Rock Farm. Many farms beside the Bruce Highway near the Traveston turnoff resulted from the sale of Traveston cattle run in December 1910. The run was cut up into farms ranging from 23 to over 100 acres which were sold by auctioneer George Lindley at the Theatre Royal in Gympie. Prices ranged from £1/6/- to £10 an acre and buyers included T. Nobbs, T. Fitzpatrick, W. P. Hutchins, Henry Hutchins, jr., T. T. Powell, F. Hollis, F. Morgan, W. King,



*Stage one of the Forestry Training Centre at Two Mile, north of Gympie.*



*Hyne and Sons large milling complex at Melawondi in the Mary Valley.*

*'oodland Ltd.'s big board manufacturing plant on the southern outskirts of Gympie.*







*Some of the prawning fleet at anchor at Tin Can Bay.*



*Cattle and pineapple industries make a significant contribution to the economy of Widgee Shire.*



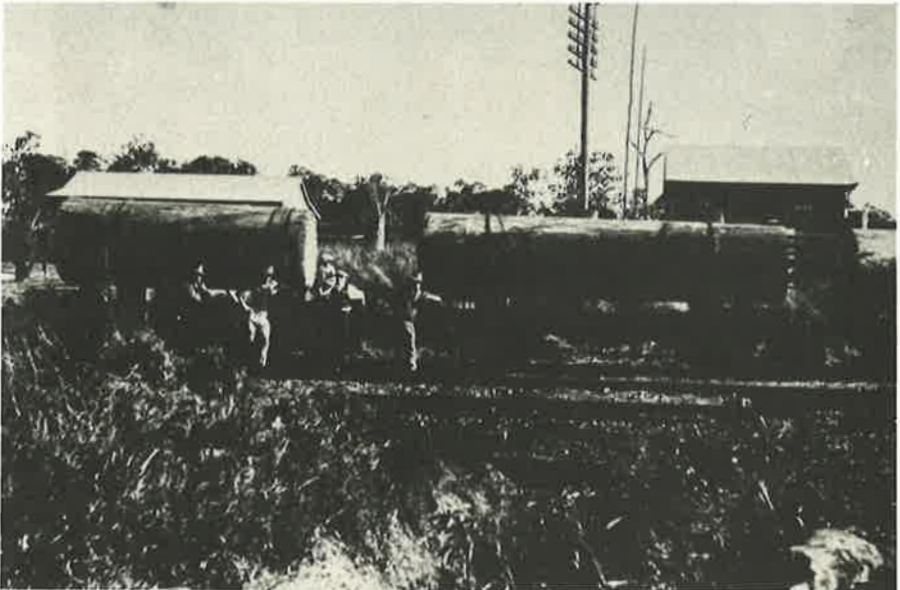
A. E. Organ, W. Reid, G. J. Pinkerton, A. Dalzell and H. F. Walker.

Traveston rail siding at that time housed Gympie's powder magazine. It was moved there in 1898 from Gympie as the authorities considered the explosives too dangerous to be stored in town. Selectors in the district—on land alienated from the Traveston run well before the turn of the century— included M. J. O'Rourke, J. D. and R. W. Kenman, Daniel and Michael Griffin, William McVicar and J. Stark.

Some of these selectors were foundation members of the Traveston and District Progress Association which was formed on June 11, 1914 at a meeting in the Traveston State School, which is now the site of the local rubbish tip. The initial office bearers were H. F. Walker, president; J. Toomey and W. McVicar, vice-presidents; J. H. McDonald, secretary; M. J. O'Rourke, treasurer; and a committee comprising C. Meades, J. Kenman, E. Toomey, C. Dyne, E. McDonald and J. Stark. After the war the settlers bought the old magazine building and transformed it into the Traveston Memorial Hall.

As dairying boomed, the Traveston district had about 30 dairy farms which railed their cream to the butter factory at Pomona. There was a shop near the siding then, owned at first by Peter Hamelswang and later by George Porter. It was burnt down after World War II and was not replaced. Opposite the shop was a tennis court which has also gone.

For many years the hardwood forests behind Traveston sustained a thriving timber industry. Much of the timber was taken out by Dave Johnson



*courtesy D. Alford*

Arthur Alford, Jack Alford, Mr. A. Bower, S.M., and Dave Alford with a giant log ready for railing from Traveston station.

and Dave Alford. Mr. Alford, who hung up his bullock yokes about 15 years ago to become C.O.D. loader at Traveston, started work in the district with a horse team in 1920. Then, in the days when a teamster could have his pick of any herd for £5 a head, he switched to bullocks. During World War II the Traveston forests provided piles up to 100 feet long which were sent to Tilbury Docks in London for war construction jobs in Britain.

The railway line between Traveston and Tandur was the scene of a horrifying rail smash in the early hours of June 9, 1923. Ten people were killed and another 26 were injured when the mail train for Rockhampton, known as 21A, left the rails and plunged about 30 feet into a gully. Most of the dead and injured had been asleep in two carriages which bore the brunt of the crash. Later investigations found the luggage car had jumped the tracks and been dragged for over a mile before derailing the rest of the train.



Wreckage of the Traveston rail smash

*courtesy Mrs. A. Johnson*

South of Traveston, the first settlers included Asher Coles who took up 240 acres on 15-Mile (later Coles) Creek, John Nevin and Cornelius Walsh. After the turn of the century Coles' property on Carlson Road became the home of Harry F. Walker, the soldier-statesman who took a leading role in many of the Shire's affairs. Walker combined dairying with agriculture and ran a herd of over 50 cattle. One of his bulls was a purebred Ayrshire from the St. Helena penal settlement.



Daniel Skyring

Bellwood, just south of the bridge over Skyring Creek, has been the home of the Skyring family since 1869 when Daniel Skyring, who 16 years earlier had pioneered the Maroochy district with his brother Zachariah, took up 100 acres. By 1879 Daniel Skyring had doubled his acreage and had a quarter of it under crops. Within another 20 years he had a total of 100 acres under crops—among the largest in the Shire at that time. Bellwood homestead was a landmark on the Brisbane Road for over 80 years until the highway was rerouted further east.

## The Northern Limits

The mines, the strawberry gardens, the hotel, the major's house—these were the landmarks of the Two Mile on the main road leading north from Gympie. All are now long gone. But in their place is a new landmark, the \$1.5 million Forestry Training Centre, intended to last a rather longer time.

Settlement of the area immediately northwest of Gympie began as a direct extension of the Gympie goldfield. Within a few months of the rush the miners were on to the gold-bearing reefs outside the main field of activity. And hardly had work got into swing at the Two Mile than gold was discovered a few miles further north at Chatsworth.

The Chatsworth rush began less than 18 months after Nash's glorious find and in March 1869 the Gympie Times reported: "The locality of the Chatsworth reef presents quite an altered appearance owing to the humpies and stores which are being put up and the number of miners who are engaged on the claims. A coach service now runs to the new rush."

The Chatsworth was all standing scrub at that time, and much of it remained that way for the best part of half a century when it made way for banana plantations and dairy farms. The scrub teemed with wallabies and koalas. Aborigines who camped in the area killed wallabies for their staple diet, plus porcupines and other local delicacies. As a rule they left the koalas alone. But the native bears were shot out early this century when their skins were in demand, bringing four to five shillings each. As they became scarcer the price rose to about 10 shillings, a lot of money in those days, which put paid to the koalas' chance of survival in the Chatsworth scrub.

By the turn of the century the Aborigines had also gone. Previously about 40 Aborigines were camped near the Chatsworth, occasionally disappearing into the scrub to cut props for clothes lines to sell to miners' wives in Gympie for about a shilling each. During the bunya season they used to trek down to Amamoor where the bunyas flourished in the rich red soil ridges, there being virtually no bunyas anywhere north of Gympie.

Possibly the last of the local Aborigines were a couple remembered only as Nellie and Jimmie. They used to do the rounds of the settlers collecting used tea leaves which they smoked in their pipes.

There were opium smokers, too, at the Two Mile. They were the Chinese who were left to do pretty much as they liked, and often in the evenings they relaxed with their hookah pipes, perhaps dreaming of families across the seas in China. In fact, there was quite an international flavour about

the early community, since there were considerable numbers of Hindus and Italians as well as the more usual English and Scottish settlers.

The Hindus worked mainly in the mines. When they died they were cremated in the traditional manner, on a funeral pyre in full public view, a sight still remembered by some of the area's oldest residents. It was not a closed affair either, and sometimes two or three hundred people from Gympie and nearby would witness the last rites. The Italians were mainly charcoal burners. Coal was a dear commodity so Gympie's many blacksmiths used charcoal in their forges. The supply of charcoal was an almost wholly Italian business, just as the Chinese had the market garden business sewn up in the early days. The charcoal was made by burning greenish bloodwood timber in pits of about four feet square dug in the ground and covered to let the wood burn slowly.

The miners and market gardeners were well entrenched when the Two Mile and Chatsworth were opened for settlement under the Goldfield Homestead Act.

Robert Clayton was the first man to apply for a homestead lease at the Chatsworth—on March 1, 1871, the day the register for applications was opened. He agreed to pay £2 annual rent for 40 acres officially described as "near the Chatsworth Reef and bounded on the northwest by the Chatsworth scrub."

On the same day two applications were made for 40-acre homestead blocks at Widgee crossing, on the eastern side of the Mary River and to the west of the main road leading north from Gympie. The applicants were Adam Mulholland and William Johnston.

The following month James Rodney applied for 39 acres on Gympie creek near the Two Mile flat. Evidently he could not write, for instead of putting his signature he marked his application with an "X".

One month later two Chinese, Bong Tong and Ah Kie, applied for five-acre leases in the Chinese Gardens at Chatsworth to give them official tenure there. Within a year or two many of the families long associated with the Chatsworth and Two Mile districts had also staked their claims, among them the Waddell, Fowles, Flay, Edwards, Spiller and Fraser families.

In the horse and buggy days the major landmarks on the Bruce Highway immediately north of Gympie—or the Chatsworth Road as it was called then—were the hotel, church and strawberry gardens at the Two Mile.

The church was St. Jude's, an Anglican church. It was a smallish wooden structure built on a flattened mullock heap from the Allaloon mine. The steps leading to the church entrance were cut into the side of the clay-caked mullock heap. A cyclone demolished the church in 1896 but the steps remained visible for many years on the side of the mullock. The old Allaloon mineshaft collapsed and filled with water, providing a swimming hole for the local youths, who sometimes offended their elders by swimming in the nude.

The Two Mile Hotel stood on the site now occupied by Dousts concrete plant. It was built about 1880 by John Draper and lasted until shortly after World War 1 when it was destroyed by fire. George Waddell was licensee at the time.

The strawberry gardens were opposite the new Forestry Training Centre. They were owned by George Flay, a fruitgrower par excellence. In September 1871 Flay took up 40 acres, which he called Green Park, and eight years later bought Charles Brown's adjoining block. In the space of a few years Green Park underwent a remarkable transformation.

Name the fruit or flower, it flourished on Flay's fine farm. Grapes were one of his specialties. At first he sold them on the Gympie goldfield for 1/6 a pound to miners hungry for such delicacies in their raw environment. From grapes to wine making was a natural progression and Flay's wine ranked with anything else on offer. Many a miner made the trip out to the Two Mile to sample Green Park's liquid delights.

Strawberries, however, were Flay's real forte. He grew several varieties before developing his own worldbeater, the "Phenomenal," which grew up to seven inches in circumference. Flay's strawberry fame grew far and wide. Chatsworth Road was hardly wide enough to cope with the traffic jams on Sundays when families in their horses and buggies converged on Green Park for a strawberry tea, to be eaten in a beautiful "English" setting. Flay's son, Charles, continued the strawberry growing tradition.

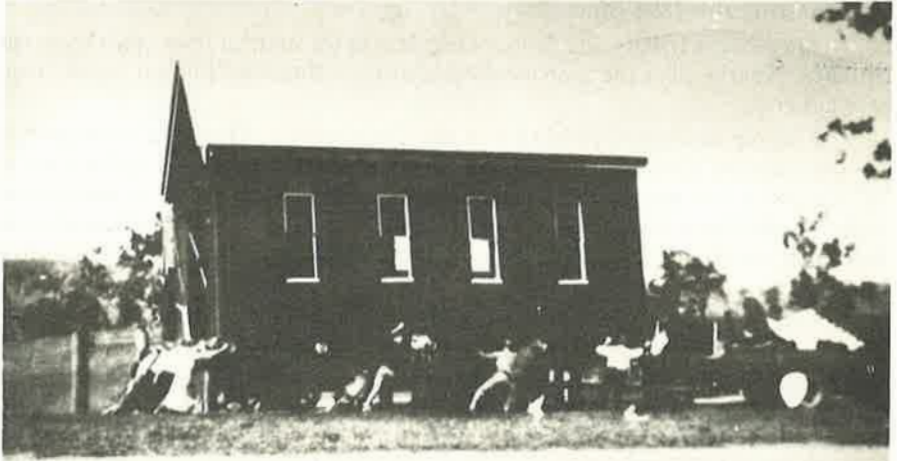
Wine was also produced on nearby Delaware Farm, the hobby farm of Dr. J. R. Benson, one of Gympie's first doctors. Dr. Benson planted a large area under vines and, under the management of a Captain Hickson, spared no expense in producing table wines fit for the top local society. Delaware Farm has seen several different owners since, among them William Carter, who was a lucky investor in the Wilmot mine, and Gympie wheelwright, Mr. J. Thurecht.

The site of the Forestry school was taken up in January 1873 by James Fraser. Coincidentally, two of his sons joined the Forestry Department in its early years—Bill who was among the original Forestry staff at Imbil and Don who worked mainly at Atherton and Kilkivan.

James Fraser arrived in Gympie two months after gold was discovered and started a transport business, carting supplies from Maryborough by horse and dray. He became one of Widgee's most prominent citizens and served three terms as chairman of the Shire Council. On his death the property passed to his younger daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Fryar, who in earlier days rode the Fisher family's prize hacks in Gympie Shows.

On part of Fraser's farm, which he called Assynt after his Scottish birth place, was the Sadowa mine—one of many around the Two Mile which enjoyed a brief but not particularly enriching history. In 1963 the property became a holding paddock for Gympie butchers Gerrard and Sullivan's adjoining slaughter yards and eventually was purchased by the Forestry Department for the training school.

A Methodist church was built last century on a water reserve between Assynt and Mr. J. Innes' property. It was removed about 1935.



*courtesy Petersen family*

Methodist church being moved from Two Mile about 1935. It was hauled by George Ilett under the supervision of Mike Schultz.

Moving out from the Two Mile, the main landmark used to be the imposing residence of Major D. E. Reid, D.S.O., ex-Boer War and manager of the Scottish mine in Gympie. Major Reid bought the property from William Davies and built a vast home which had all the trappings of a country squire—stables, coach house, grass tennis court, and an ornamental driveway. This land was selected in 1871 by various members of the Ferguson family and was the site three years earlier of the first sawmill in the Gympie district. Reid's flats are now occupied by McCulloughs' Arabian stud.

Other early settlers around Reid's flats were saddler Fred Fleming, miner John Barrett, Tom Percival and William Long. All worked in Gympie, their blocks too small to provide an adequate income for the large families which were the order of the day. Long had one of the biggest families with 17 children. One of the nine Long boys,—James—90 last year—recalled his early years at the Chatsworth.

"All of the family were born at the Chatsworth," he said. "The original home had slab walls and a bark roof as at that time sawn timber and roofing iron was very hard to get. Later on when it became available the bark and shingles were replaced and a new home built.

"There were Chinese market gardeners on the north side of our block on land leased from George Spiller. They'd go to town on Saturday morning with their melons and pay me to guard their gardens."

Mr. J. Long's father sailed from Bath in England at the age of 19. The voyage took six months during which time a shortlived mutiny at sea was put



down. His mother was a pupil of Clayton's private school on Reid's flats. He remembered these flats completely under water backed up from the Mary River during the 1893 flood.

There were hardly any fulltime farmers in the district then apart from the Spillers. Nearly all of the men worked in town and tended to their small crops at weekends.

Five Spiller brothers settled at the Chatsworth—Harry, also known as Henry, George, Cornelius, Joseph and Enoch. Harry, who took up 14 acres in 1873 was the first man in the Shire to attempt wheat growing on a commercial scale. In 1891 he commissioned Ferguson and Co. to build him a steam-driven threshing machine. Being the first in the district, it attracted considerable interest.

One of Harry Spiller's daughters, Emma, later achieved fame as a missionary in China and wrote a number of books under her married name, Emma McIntyre. She learnt to read and write Chinese before she went, being taught in the evenings by David Freeman, an Oxford-educated teacher at the Two Mile School.

George Spiller is generally acknowledged to have introduced paspalum grass to Widgee. This was in 1896, shortly after the "wonder grass" was brought to Australia and when it sold for 2/6 a root. Prior to paspalum, pasture preparation was a long and tedious process. First the scrub had to be felled and burnt off after it had dried. Then maize or pumpkins were sown in the ashes, often by means of a foot planter. After a couple of crops the ground was left for natural grasses to take their course. The instant paspalum pastures changed all that and accelerated the Shire-wide move to dairying.

The first two M.L.A.s elected directly by the Gympie goldfield both had properties nearby—Mr. R. S. Lord and Mr. James Kidgell, the latter also being first secretary of the Widgee Divisional Board.

At the heart of the Chatsworth the Allen family have been dairying for the best part of 90 years. Walter Allen, who settled on a 40-acre block in 1887, sent cream by rail to Turbot Street in Brisbane before the first butter factory was built in Gympie. Allen died young and his four sons—George, Arthur, Harry and Walter—followed him into dairying. Walter was the dominant partner and gradually acquired adjoining properties as well as a block from Arch Spiller, who ran a horse-drawn taxi in Gympie.

A third Walter Allen now dairies on the property with a herd of about 230 Jerseys after completing the changeover from Illawarra shorthorns his father began half a century ago. The property now runs to about 700 acres and is the showpiece dairy of the Shire. The Allen family provide a fresh milk service to Gympie as well as supplying Nestle's factory.

In 1938 Walter Allen pioneered the use of a running water spray in the cow bails to wash down udders before milking, a practice that has been adopted almost universally since then. Before this a bucket of water and an

old rag sufficed to give udders a token washing and this led to many impurities getting into milk.

Early settlers to the east of the Chatsworth Road included Fred and Ern Ardrey, Harry Poccock, Tom Raymond and the Fritz, Furlong, Stanley, Storer and Rammutt families. One of Mr. G. Rammutt's sons, Albert, was renowned for violin he carved from the spurs of hickory tree. Though nearly deaf himself, his playing matched the excellence of his workman's hip. For many years the Rammutt family operated a sawmill in Gympie.

Near Gentle Annie, the steep pinch on Rammutt Road, stringy bark trees were abundant on the hills sloping down to Corella Creek. They were sought after for use in roofing before there was any iron around. The eucalyptus of Corella Mountain were not selected until 1908 when Charles Greenhalgh and Tom Percival cleared the best of the land for sugar bananas and dairying.

On Fritz Road there were two blacksmiths early on, Jim and Jack Barnett. The former Fritz property, now owned by Mr. Harry Long, is one of only two dairy farms left in the Shire on the Bruce Highway north of Gympie, the other being the Allen property. Nearby land once owned by Jack Ross and Bill Billman has recently been sub-divided as the Chatsworth Hills Estate.

Further out at Spring Valley for many years the eye-catching Brahman stud of Attie Sullivan, the first landholders were Josiah Fowles who took up 40 acres in 1871, and Thomas and Charles Edwards who settled on adjoining blocks the following year. The settlement of Spring Valley was not opened up until early this century when new settlers included Charles Granzin, a carter for the old Union Sawmill, Charlie Payne who ran an Illawarra stud, Ted Horton and



*courtesy Ellis family*

This Vulcan truck of Bells Bridge cream carrier Len Ellis was one of the first in Widgee Shire with double wheels at the rear.

the Graham and Russell families. The influx of settlers eventually led to the opening of a larger school at Chatsworth.

Michael Purcell was the first settler at O'Leary's Crossing, purchasing 40 acres in 1875. He once caught a four-foot shark in the river running past his property. The last farm in the Shire on the highway was selected by Jenslund Christensen, a Danish migrant, and later was bought by the Ellis family. Mr. Len Ellis carted cream from the area for several years while his wife operated the Bell's Bridge telephone from the house before an automatic exchange was installed.

Chatsworth was the first district in the Shire to build a co-operative dip after ticks hit the Shire. It was operated for many years under the supervision of Charles Edwards.

Chatsworth Hall, the focal point of the local community was opened by Mr. D. Mulcahy, M.L.A., on January 22, 1910 when about 80 couples turned up for the gala evening. The hall was paid for by public subscription, helped by Mr. T. Edward's donation of a two-year-old heifer which raised £22/8/- towards the cost. First chairman of the hall committee was Mr. C. Spiller, whose wife donated the half-acre on which the hall was built. The first hall secretary was Mr. W. Allen while the initial trustees were C. Spiller, J. Russell and E. Ardrey.

Mr. Allen also was captain of the Chatsworth Rifle Range which was built in 1914 near the turnoff from the Bruce Highway to Fishermen's Pocket,



Widgee Crossing

*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

on the property now owned by Mr. R. Cross. It was built by Mr. F. Ardrey and was opened by Major Reid.

Rifle clubs were active then in several parts of the Shire. Among the top shots from other areas were F. Whittington, R. Hunter and S. J. Ubank of the Pie and Eel Creek Rifle Club and W. J. Gericke, W. Mullaly and A. Broadhurst of Woondum Club.

Nearer to Gympie, many a miner once trod the road to Widgee Crossing. Before the Mary River was bridged this was the main route to Kilkivan, and many miners deserted Gympie after its initial flush to try their luck on the new goldfield.

Before crossing the river, many of them lingered awhile at John Heilbronn's shanty hotel. Travellers to Glastonbury and Kilkivan provided a steady stream of custom, with up to £17 passing across the bar on busy days. Heilbronn had not always been the most popular of men, however, because of his toll bar. In the early days of Gympie he cleared the scrub through to the riverbank and applied to Commissioner H. E. King for the right to operate a toll ferry. But there were many complaints about his service, and sometimes almost blows. Eventually the Government revoked Heilbronn's licence, for which he paid £50 a year.

Not far from the hotel was Gympie's first racecourse. The first race meeting in the district was held there on December 29 and 30, 1868. About 3,000 miners rode or walked from Gympie to see the races which were held on a rough bush track—through timber and over fallen logs. There were numerous accidents during the two days of racing but no one was seriously hurt. A grandstand was built for the occasion and several publicans set up booths on the ground. Races were held there for 10 years before a new track was built on the South Side.

Adam Mulholland was the first major landholder at Widgee Crossing. Starting with a 40-acre block, he purchased neighbour William Johnston's land and over the next 25 years accumulated about 300 acres. On the formation of the Widgee Division his property was probably among its half dozen most improved farms. At that time he had 35 acres under cultivation and ran about 70 cattle and 40 horses including champion draught stallions Young Enterprise and Sir Douglas.

Closer to Gympie, the earliest settlers included James Dean in 1871 and Julian Briere, who in 1875 bought four homestead blocks taken up originally by John Dowling, William Crotty and Thomas and Patrick Ryan.

## Bushranger Country

Outlaw's hideaway, picnic spot and quarry—the Rocks on Eel Creek were all three just over 100 years ago. In particular, caves at the foot of these sandstone formations off Rocks Road provided an ideal hiding spot for the notorious bushranger. Johnny Palmer, when in between jobs or escaping from the law.



*courtesy W. Lorensen*

Bushranger country — the  
Eel Creek rocks

Palmer was on the scene shortly after the gold rush, when there were rich pickings to be had from the gold escorts which carried the bullion out of Gympie. But despite his fearsome reputation, Palmer never got off with a really good haul. For about 18 months he stayed one jump ahead of the law in the Gympie district, then was caught and sentenced to death.

Two of Widgee's early Shire chairmen, Thomas Steele and Zachariah Skyring, related stories of Palmer's precarious existence as an outlaw.

Palmer's black-whiskered face was not as well known as was his reputation.

According to Steele, the bushranger once was enjoying a mug of billy tea with two pit-sawyers on the South Side, who had offered the hospitality of their fire to this passing stranger, when Inspector Lloyd and Constable King from Gympie approached on horseback. As quick as a flash, Palmer leaped into his saddle and galloped off down the track towards Eel Creek with the police in hot pursuit. On the track was a large fallen tree. Palmer's mount cleared it without hesitation. But the police horses balked, giving Palmer the chance to reach the creek. Losing the trail, Lloyd and King rode back to Thomas Abdy's homestead to make inquiries and eventually learned that Palmer had turned in the creek and retraced his tracks towards his hideaway in the Rocks.

Skyring told of a similar incident. He and his father were boiling a billy when a stranger—Palmer—rode up and joined them. They noticed their visitor wore a pistol on each hip but wisely said nothing, since it was not the done thing to question a stranger about his business. Minutes later the ever alert Palmer spotted movement in the bush and took off on his horse. Shouts of "Halt! Halt!" rang out from the bush, followed by several shots. They made no impression on the fugitive who galloped into the open and easily

cleared a 10-foot jump across Pie Creek before heading for the caves. None of the police horses would attempt the jump, and once again Palmer made good his getaway.

On another occasion Palmer and an accomplice named William Bond held up a Cobb and Co. coach from Gympie at Woondum. Bond was wounded in the hold-up when one of the passengers, Mr. Selwyn King, manager of the Kilkivan branch of the Bank of New South Wales, drew his revolver and fired at the bushrangers. The outlaw pair, hindered by Bond's thigh wound, collected only a handful of valuables and left the mailbag untouched. Bond was soon caught but Palmer managed another six months of freedom.

Palmer was finally arrested without a fight by Inspector Lloyd just across the river from Albert Park. He was ill and dispirited and, according to some reports, let the police know where they could take him. He was hanged for the murder of a gold miner near Rockhampton a couple of years earlier.

Stone from the Rocks was quarried for several of Gympie's fine buildings and also for part of St. John's Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane. It was carted there by a Mr. Sismey with his horse and dray.

With the pick of the country to choose from, few of Widgee's early settlers saw their future in the scrub land along Pie and Eel Creeks. The knockers of the time said that some of this land was so poor that even a wallaby would need to take a cut lunch. As it turned out, this proved to be some of the best dairying land in the Shire and, higher up, some the most productive for bananas and beans.

While the lower portions of the two creeks were settled fairly rapidly, hardly anyone ventured out to the upper reaches. A government survey in 1875 found only 18 families along the length and breadth of both creeks.

One of the first on Eel Creek was James Fullerton, earlier a pioneer of the Maranoa district. In 1869 he selected a strip of land on the eastern side of Eel Creek from its junction with the Mary River and southward to cross the Gympie-Woolooga Road. On this land he established the Monaville Dairy, which produced some of the first fresh milk for the goldfield. The milk was punted across the river and then either loaded on a buckboard or carried by brawny arms to be sold to the miners for sixpence a quart.

East of the Woolooga Road was another early dairyman, Thomas Moffat, who 100 years ago was milking a herd of 80 cows, no mean feat in the days of handmilking. In recent years this land was subdivided to become part of the thriving Southside settlement.

The pocket formed by the junction of Pie and Eel Creeks was taken up in 1870 by two Irish migrants Cornelius and Matthew Lynch. Cornelius, who selected 69 acres plus other larger blocks fronting the Woolooga Road, fathered a large family including four daughters—Mary, Kate, Rose and Nell—affectionately known as the Lynch girls.

Dressed up in their Sunday best there was nothing to set them apart from other women. But as workers they were the equal of any man.

The 1902 drought and redwater epidemic destroyed their father's bullock herd so the four young women teamed together to restore the family fortunes. Long dresses and all, they swung their axes and wielded their crosscut saws to make a living from the forests. Whether it was cutting firewood or felling towering pines, the girls did everything a timberman could be expected to do.

On one occasion a well intentioned neighbour is said to have felt sorry for them as they worked hatless in the sun. Returning from a trip to Gympie, he left a hat for each of them to shade their sweaty brows. As the story goes, he went past again next day to see the four hats nailed to a fence post.

The Lynch girls were as proud as they were tough.

Just below the Rocks, Peter Matthewson selected 136 acres and built a homestead in which classes were held while the first Eel Creek school was being built (another Eel Creek school was built years later several miles further up the creek).

Above the Rocks the early selectors were Thomas O'Brien who had several other holdings around Gympie, W. Robertson and Daniel Hendry. By 1879 Hendry had accumulated 2,200 acres and had seven men working for him. The property was named Kumdin Hall, and later Orange Grove, and Mr. Hendry found money no object when it came to improvements.

Over a quarter of a century later most of this property—which had undergone a name change to Cumbrae Dairy—was acquired by Messrs G. Glasgow and C. W. and F. Stumm. A visitor to Cumbrae a short while later reported: "The dairy and the milking shed that were erected by Mr. Hendry are still in use, which is good evidence of the quality of the workmanship. The dairy is a well designed two-storey building, the foundations for which were excavated in the steep bank of a gully; the cement floor and the drains carry away all milk that may be spilt and can be easily flushed, two large galvanised iron tanks set in the earth bank at the back of the lower rooms giving a good supply of cool water even in the hottest weather. This was a very important adjunct when the making of butter and cheese were carried on, and is scarcely less so now that the cream is separated and sent to the butter factory."

Parts of Cumbrae were owned at different times by the Notleys and Major D. E. Reid and the latter held numerous wallaby hunts there. In 1932 Cumbrae was cut up into smaller farms and sold.

In 1879 there were only two selectors further up the creek, Benjamin Gerler and David Groundwater. Groundwater, a former shipwright from the Clyde, had been dairying on 120 acres between Pine Street and the Gympie cemetery. On weekends he made regular forays into the scrub looking for suitable land to select. According to family history, he took his friend Gerler with him one weekend in 1873 to Eel Creek to get his opinion on the land. Gerler, a missionary's son, was immediately taken with the country and slashed a blaze mark on a tree to stake his claim to half of the land available for selection, while Groundwater was left to take the portion further up the creek.

Gerler christened his selection Mountain Vale and built a homestead near the present Mahons Road. He also built a vast barn from cedar and beech, unthinkable today at the prices these timbers command. Mountain Vale comprised 1,500 acres and carried 300 head of cattle. Gerler later joined the gold rush to Western Australia and sold to Mr. J. O. Bonney, who selected other land nearby.

For the best part of half a century Groundwater's farm was the last on Eel Creek. Now into its sixth generation since the Scottish migrant selected nearly 1,800 acres, the Groundwater family has seen a timber town born and buried at its doorstep.

Nearly 60 years ago Brisbane timber merchants James Campbell and Son set up a sawmill next to the site of the present Langshaw Hall. Seven houses were built on the other side of the road for millworkers and their families as well as about seven shanties as barracks for single men. Several years later Oden and Christie Meyers built another mill about half a mile up the road plus five houses and a couple of barracks. For a while there was a store at Campbell's mill but it was later transferred to Meyers where it gained a postal receiving depot. About this time the name of the area was changed to Langshaw, since the postal authorities thought Eel Creek was too confusing as the creek meandered many miles before joining the Mary River.



*courtesy N. Chapman*

Meyers mill at Langshaw

With two mills, a store, a school and about two dozen working bullock teams, Langshaw was a thriving community. Logs and sawn timber were hauled out of Langshaw by bullockys such as Billy Tamlyn and Billy Penny. The logs were dumped at Rattray's Hill, about half a mile south of the Pie



Creek Hall, and were carted the rest of the way into Gympie by traction engines operated by the Coops and Charlie Lewis.

Eventually the Campbells mill was shut down. The Meyers sold their mill to Cronins, who in turn sold to Raymond and Hossack. After a fire about 1936 the mill was abandoned.

By this time there was considerable settlement further up Eel Creek. In July 1926 the high country where the timber fellers used to shoot their pine logs down the hills was opened for selection. The land was snapped up by Charlie Mayfield, Allen and Billy Cheales, and Charles and Stanley Adcock to name a few. They grew bananas and started dairying on the cleared land, opening a hectic chapter in the life of local cream carrier Norm Chapman.

Mr. Chapman, who had the cream run from Mooloo with a pick-up from the Eel Creek Road, often worked night and day carting bananas and cream into Gympie, with his Chevrolet truck groaning under the weight of its load.

At the little store near the Jockey Club Hotel he would load up with provisions for the settlers, and on one return trip his load included 112 double loaves of bread.



*courtesy N. Chapman*

Pie Creek Britannia Band, circa 1923. Back row, from left: Harry Fittell, Herman Albrecht, Bob Skyring, Charlie Adcock, Fred Lorensen, Harry Bonney (bandmaster), Jack Chapman, Norm Chapman. Front row: Frank Lorensen, Fred Finselbacht, Jack Fittell, Gus Albrecht, Albert Chapman, Henry Ubank.



*Dam wall at Lake Borumba in the Mary Valley, a beautifully landscaped picnic spot.*



*Widgee Shire Council Chambers in Mary Street, Gympie.*



*Peaceful waters of the Mothar Mountain rock pool.*

*Magnificent coloured sands at  
Rainbow Beach.*



*Double Island Point, tops  
for surfing and fishing.*



*Protected waterways of Tin  
Can Bay seen from the air.*

Unlike other banana areas, Eel Creek's growers did not include Russians or Finns. They were nearly all local settlers although there were a few plantations on leased land.

As bananas gave way to dairying, Langshaw—together with Mooloo—became a major producing area. At one stage Mr. Chapman's run was the second biggest of all the Gympie butter factory's carriers, being bettered only by Snow Bellingham on the Wolvi run.

The first cream carrier from Mooloo was Jack Grayson, who had the run for three years. He was forced to quit during the bad drought after World War 1 when cream production plummeted.

"The drought was crippling," he recalled. "It got so bad you were afraid to even ask anyone for a billy of drinking water because it was robbing them."

Mr. Grayson recalled the first pickups on his route—the three Smith families, Gibsons, Frank Skyring, Rendalls, Bob Ubank, Whitmores, Kidds, Treebys and Notleys.

When Mr. Chapman took over the run there was only one bridge over Pie Creek. And Eel Creek had to be crossed several times, which required special measures when it was running fast.

"I'd put a bag over the radiator to stop the water flooding in, put a bike tube over the exhaust and bring it up over the tray, then take the fan belt off and have a go," said Mr. Chapman. "There was just the carburettor on one side of the engine and the magneto on the other and as long as you kept the magneto dry you were right."

The first cream producer at Langshaw was David Groundwater, one of the original selector's four sons who all started as miners in Gympie. When he moved out to the farm and into dairying, David Groundwater had to ride into Gympie three times a week with a six-gallon cream can over one side of the saddle. At that time it was impossible to drive a cart up to the property. Later he had a special buckboard built which was light enough for him to lift a wheel out of a rut.

The Groundwater family totted up nearly half a century on the Shire Council. Apart from one three-year break, David Groundwater served continuously as a councillor from 1924 to 1949. His son, Colin, then succeeded him on the Council until 1973.

Langshaw's last major addition was the hall, built in 1938 with some of the timber from the local school which had been demolished. The replacement school, which closed after the introduction of the bus run, housed the Langshaw manual telephone exchange. This was last operated by the Plate family before Langshaw gained an automatic exchange.

On Pie Creek—named after a surveyor, Mr. Pye, who was drowned in the creek—the early selectors included Peter Lorensen on Rocks Road at the lower end and George Bell in the dense scrub of the upper reaches. Lorensen, or Loritzen in his native Denmark, selected 476 acres in 1870. His descen-

dants still farm the property which is notable for its old dairy which has one of the finest shingle roofs left in the Shire.



*courtesy W. Lorensen*  
Pie Creek pioneers — Peter Lorensen and family

Lorensen installed a 50-gallon cream separator around 1887, probably the second in the Shire. He usually had several acres of his Rose Vale Farm under maize. During one of the big floods of the 1890s he was doing his harvesting by raft when he fell into the swirling water. Fortunately he had a neighbour with him, the younger Zachariah Skyring, who pulled him back to safety.

Zachariah Skyring, sr., was the earliest selector of all on Pie Creek. In 1869 he settled on the Green Swamp, about half a mile below Bell's subsequent selection. Skyring, who 20 years earlier had pioneered the Maroochy district, named his 320 acres Mumbeanna after the leader of the Aborigines camped on the property when he arrived.

By 1879 Mr. Skyring already had several acres under crops and was hauling timber with his son, young Zac, who became Shire chairman nearly four decades later. In 1898 Mumbeanna, then comprising 855 acres, was sold to Mr. E. W. Treeby. Six of Mr. Treeby's sons served their country in World War 1. Nearer to Gympie, early selectors included Thomas Raleigh, Robert Walker, John Chapman, James Ogden, Thomas O'Brien and William Kidd. Like many of his fellow settlers Kidd walked to Gympie to find his fortune on the gold field. He soon settled on land at what is now the fork of the Pie Creek and Woolooga Roads where he established a dairy to supply milk to Gympie. He was succeeded on the property by a son, William Hubbard Kidd, who became a Shire councillor for half a century.



*courtesy N. Chapman*  
Steam boiler being taken to Meyers mill at Langshaw on Jack Chapman's Republic truck. In front, from left: Frank Whittington, Harold White, Bob Biggers, Jerry Collins, Griff Phillips, Jack Kluver, John Chapman and Christie Meyers.

# Glastonbury

“The Somerset Glastonbury is all of the past; the Gympie Glastonbury is all of the future.” So wrote Aleck Ivimey, an English visitor to the Widgee district in 1887.

Legend has it that Joseph of Aramitheia went to England to convert its peoples to Christendom and, arriving at the town of Glastonbury, leant on his staff in prayer, whereupon the staff took root and sprouted a holy thorn. Near that spot on Wirrall Hill the Christians are said to have built the first church in England.

Traditionally the holy thorn blossoms into white each Christmas. A clump of similar thorn wild in the Glastonbury of Widgee Shire. How it got there no one knows. But Widgee’s own local legend says it was grown from a cutting of the holy bush in Somerset. And certainly it has blossomed in Widgee for as long as anyone can remember.

Unfortunately Mr. Ivimey’s optimism for the “Gympie Glastonbury” has not entirely been borne out, though it has seen prosperous—and even boisterous—times. Mr. Ivimey’s visit came only a few weeks after the discovery of gold there by a local farmer, Patrick Green, who dug up some rich quartz while sinking a well. Diggers descended on the area in droves and the old Glastonbury Hotel jumped at night to the merrymaking of the miners.



Mrs. T. E. Betts, wife of the first settler at Glastonbury

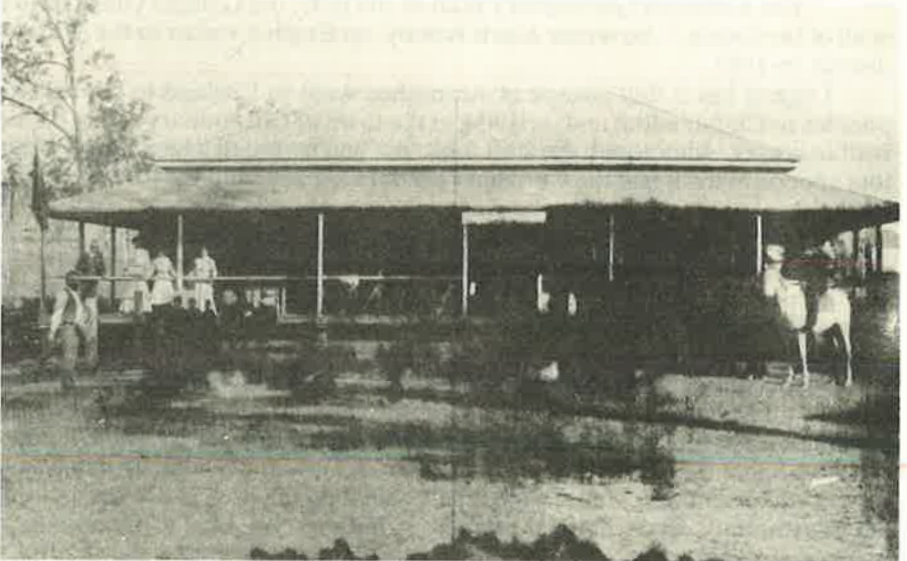
Mine host was Thomas E. Betts, the district’s first settler. He arrived in Australia with his young wife in 1859 and tried his hand at farming in the Drayton area before following the gold rush to Gympie. In 1869 he applied for 160 acres of land beside the crossing on Glastonbury Creek and the following year built a simple, shingle-roofed hotel. On July 29, 1871 he was issued with a publican’s licence and did fair business from the passing trade on the road from Gympie to Widgee station and the Kilkivan goldfield.

For tens of years the hotel was Glastonbury to most people. In 1892 it was burnt down when Mr. Conlon was owner, but was rebuilt as a much larger structure. It too, was destroyed over half a century later when Mr. Larry Hogan was the proprietor.

In between there were many landlords and many stirring times. As well as the diggers its patrons included some pretty wild Irishmen, for many of the

first settlers around Glastonbury were from the land of the leprechauns. But none left such a lasting reputation as the Jones boys, from Widgee station. The Jones brothers were of South American extraction. But they could have been straight out of the American wild west.

The hotel carried the scars of many of their deeds, such as the times when they rode their horses straight into the bar and shot their initials in the ceiling. Sometimes they didn't bother with glasses. Instead they shot the top off a bottle and drank straight from the broken neck.



*courtesy McIntosh family*

Glastonbury Hotel when Mr. A. M. McIntosh was licensee

Some of the publicans were characters, too, like Larry Hogan about whom many tales are told. Larry had a bad leg—the legacy of a cranking mishap with his old Model T Ford—and also was very deaf. One day he was transporting a group of forestry workers in his truck when it stopped. Larry got out and cranked, and cranked, and cranked until one of the forestry men took pity and told him he had started the engine several minutes before.

The Glastonbury Hall also belonged to the hotel. It survived the last fire and the local residents raised £200 to buy the building and piano from Mr. Hogan. The hotel also housed the local post office and telephone exchange. The former was not replaced after the fire but the latter was shifted to another site.

While social life centred on the hotel and hall, there also was a strong church-going community in the early days. The majority of the district's settlers were Roman Catholics and they built a church on land owned by Father Horan, a Gympie priest, on the road to Warrawee.

The site is still known as Church Hill although the church, St Joseph's, was moved into Glastonbury township over half a century ago. The original church was ravaged by white ants but some of the timber was used for the present building, which cost just over £100 and was dedicated by Archbishop Duhig.

Another Glastonbury landmark since removed was the local school. The first school building stood on part of the present Glastonbury race course, next to a butcher's shop. In 1935 it was moved to the corner of Diggings Road, as was the Glastonbury thorn vine which has survived a couple of fires since then.

Race meetings were first held at Glastonbury in 1883, opposite the hotel but on a different circuit from today. This was one of the social events of the year when a constant stream of horse-drawn taxis took Gympie racegoers to the course. The races were successfully revived in 1975 after a gap of nearly half a century.



*courtesy Betts family*

Off to the Glastonbury Races in 1920—seated are Larry Hogan, Mary Hogan and Olive Wooster with Bertie Betts standing behind.

Glastonbury's population peaked during the 1920s and early 1930s in the heyday of the banana and dairy industries. During this era Glastonbury was able to raise two local cricket eleven for Sunday matches against teams from Widgee and Warrawee.

The first cream carted into Gympie was taken by Dave Birmingham who had the run from Widgee. His successors included T. E. (Teddy) Bett jr., Larry Hogan and Ernie Smith who introduced a motorised service to the area.



In 1922 the Glastonbury farmers banded together to form a Local Producers' Association which also took on the role of a progress association. The first meeting was convened by the District Agent, Mr. T. J. O'Connell, in the Glastonbury Hotel. Those present were Messrs M. R. O'Sullivan, G. Axelsen, W. Neal, B. C. Betts, and Alex and Arthur McIntosh. They were joined on the association by Messrs T. E. Betts jr., J. Conway, J. Spiller, M. Cross, A. Loder, A. Dent, J. Bentley, R. J. Wynne, J. J. Leahy and M. C. O'Mailey—whose wife, Mrs. Mary O'Mailey, churned her own butter and walked into Gympie to sell it.

The association soon found itself involved in community affairs, such as advocating the stepping up of mail deliveries from one to two a week and agitating for a telephone line between Widgee and Gympie. It also was the spearhead of local moves to get a bridge across Glastonbury Creek.

Before the bridge residents had to ford the creek or, during flood times, go across by boat. For several years Mr. M. F. Smith used his boat to provide a ferry service during floods.

Once local dairy farmer, Vince Betts, endeavoured to take a can of cream across the swollen creek. Halfway across the boat capsized and the can of cream was lost. About a week later, when the waters had subsided, Mr. Betts retrieved the can with its contents intact. He took it to the factory where it was accepted, but later grumbled that it had been assessed as only second grade!

Glastonbury got its bridge on January 17, 1931, which meant the end to the holdups to traffic and produce at flood time. The bridge cost over £3,000 and was built by the Main Roads Department under the supervision of Shire Engineer H. I. Kay. The opening was performed by Mr. E. H. C. Clayton, MLA, and one of the oldest residents, Mr. T. E. Betts jr., took the opportunity to say he had been waiting 60 years for that bridge. Members of the local welcoming party included Messrs J. J. O'Brien, A. P. Conway, M. J. Cross, M. Blythe, H. C. Euston, J. J. Leahy, M. B. and W. O'Sullivan and B. C. Betts. Unlike today, Glastonbury was still dominated then by descendants of the original selectors.

Above the bridge, selectors on Glastonbury Creek included J. and M. Leahy, Harold Fittell and Charles Clapperton, whose properties formed the basis of Warrawee.

In 1872 Charles Clapperton selected 321 acres towards the head of Glastonbury Creek and over the next 30 years the Clapperton family freeholded about 6,000 acres. About 2,000 acres of this was bought by Maryborough sawmillers Wilson and Hart who installed Mr. M. Cross to manage the property. The rest was bought by Mr. J. Larney who subdivided this as the Teresa Vale estate in 1930. It comprised 12 farms of roughly 400 acres each and was mainly under scrub.

The three Portas brothers—Herb, Charles and Joe—were among the buyers. One of their farms, comprising 900 acres and a house, was purchased for £3,500 in 1935. At that time Fred Smith had a case mill at the junction of

Portas and Warrawee Roads and the Forestry Department was taking a lot of timber from the area. Local bullock drivers included Henry Clark, Dave Birmingham and Charles Portas. Larry Hogan was running a cream service from the area at that time but with butter prices down to seven pence a pound there was no real impetus for dairying.

At the head of Glastonbury Creek, Gympie butchers Arthur Fisher and John Wilson accumulated over 5,000 acres extending to the watersheds of Widgee and Little Mary Creeks. This property, used mainly for fattening purposes, became known as Myravale.

Myravale was purchased 20 years ago by Mr. Ted Carr, who extended the property to about 10,000 acres and runs 1,500 Santa Gertrudis cattle. Last year he started the Shire's first experimental deer farm.

Mr. Carr first noticed a few red deer on the property about 10 to 15 years ago. They gradually multiplied in numbers and reached nuisance proportions, causing heavy damage to oats and other crops. But instead of wiping them out, Mr. Carr took out a permit to trap some animals to begin a deer farm.

Sixty acres was specially fenced at a cost of several thousand dollars and on August 24 the Carrs trapped 21 deer to start their herd. Mr. Carr estimated the value of a stag at \$1,000 and a hind at half that amount. Ground-up antlers are worth up to \$2,000 a kilogram in Hong Kong where the powder is sold as a sex stimulant. And venison sells in Australia at up to \$7 a kilogram. The newly-formed Deer Suppliers' Association of Queensland is investigating a plan to set up special abattoirs at Kandanga since deer cannot be killed at cattle works. This could lead to Widgee becoming one of Queensland's top deer farming centres if Mr. Carr's experiment succeeds.

Below the bridge, the selectors included Michael Whelan, Philip O'Keefe and Patrick Green at what is now Greendale, at the foot of the Brooyar Forest Drive. There were wild times in the hills behind Greendale where a member of the Green family carried on a feud with one of his Irish neighbours. The two were said to stalk each other at night, taking potshots with their rifles, though never scoring a hit. Mr. Green accused his neighbour of cattle duffing, and on one occasion rode into Gympie and returned with a length of rope with which he vowed to hang his arch-enemy. He built a gallows from foot thick ironbark near the entrance to his property and this remained intact until a few years ago when it was dismantled. Fortunately for all parties he was not able to carry out his threat.

On Greendale Road, Austin Green started a sawmill in the 1920s with Walter Shaw as manager. It was later taken over by the Walker brothers and survived two fires until it closed about 10 years ago. At its height the mill employed a dozen men to meet its government contracts for hardwood.

At the junction of Glastonbury Creek and the Mary River the land was selected nearly a century ago by Andreas Hansen Petersen who migrated from Copenhagen with his wife Mette, and daughters Celia and Maria.

Mr. Petersen worked on Widgee station, doing carpentry and fencing, while his family established a small dairy which supplied the Gympie goldfield

with butter, cheese and pig meats. When Mr. Petersen died he left his 11-year-old son Hans as the man of the house. At the tender age of 14 Hans was working his bullock team to help support the family and in 1908 selected his own block between the creek and the river. There, in between dairying, he earned the nickname "Hans the boatman."



*courtesy Petersen family*

The original shingle-roofed Petersen homestead near the mouth of Glastonbury Creek. The rider is George Edwards, a brother of Mrs. Hans Petersen.

The 1908 Bell's Bridge was a low-level structure and it took only a little 16-foot flood to put the decking under water. That was when the call went out for Hans, who was extremely adept at handling his rowboats—18-footers of narrow beam and flat bottom. Over the years he rowed many cargoes of cream from neighbouring farms to the Gympie side of the river, often returning laden to the gunwales with household supplies.

Hans Petersen also came into his own in the fording of cattle across the river at flood times. The mob would be driven into the water and, once they were on their way, Hans would bring his boat into action to swim the horses after the cattle. With Hans on the oars and a capable man in the stern of the boat to hold the horse's head, it was a dangerous but effective way of getting the horses to the other side.

One of the biggest selectors on the road from Glastonbury to Gympie was John Conway who took up over 2,200 acres bordering Glastonbury Creek. Nomadic Aborigines often camped at the back of Conway's property, among them "King Billy", the last of the tribe. They had a burial ground on the property and many spearheads and tomahawks have been picked up in the

area. Mr. Conway, who made and lost a fortune on the Gympie goldfield, built one of the first private plunge dips in the district, about the same time as the co-operative dip on the Glastonbury recreation reserve.

South of the road opposite to the Conways, nearly 1,000 acres was selected by Henry Callaghan while a vast portion of the Scrubby Creek watershed was taken up by Zachariah Skyring jr. This became a top banana producing area.

The last hill on the Glastonbury side of the Scrubby Creek bridge is known to locals at "Betts' Downfall" for a very good reason. It was there that Teddy Betts' cream cart got a wheel caught in a rut and overturned, breaking his leg.

Among the selectors on the Gympie side of Scrubby Creek was coachbuilder Richard Crank. A wheelwright and blacksmith in England, Mr. Crank sailed to Queensland in the 1860s and at Cleveland, where ships used to anchor, met the manager of a station near Nanango. He was offered a job and accepted, but there was only room on the manager's dray for his sea chest. Mr. Crank walked all the way to Nanango to begin work and later moved to the Glastonbury area. Often he was paid for his coaches with cattle, which he fattened on the farm. Some of them were butchered for meat by a son, Charles, who later supplied meat to navvies on the North Coast railway line.

Closer to Gympie Matthew Mellor selected several large fattening properties which extended to the Mary River on the northern side of the road. They adjoined other properties taken up by Adam Mulholland of Widgee Crossing and Wyatt Stockden.

Land selected over 100 years ago as part of these properties has recently been subdivided by Mr. I. Scougall into 47 blocks of about five acres each to form a rural residential estate.

## The Mary Street Farmers

In Brisbane they're called Queen Street farmers; in Sydney it's Pitt Street and in Melbourne it's Collins Street. But in Gympie they were known as the Mary Street farmers. These were the gentlemen farmers—politicians, businessmen, editors, mining secretaries and professional men—who worked by day in Gympie and returned at night to their showpiece farms on the other side of the Mary River.

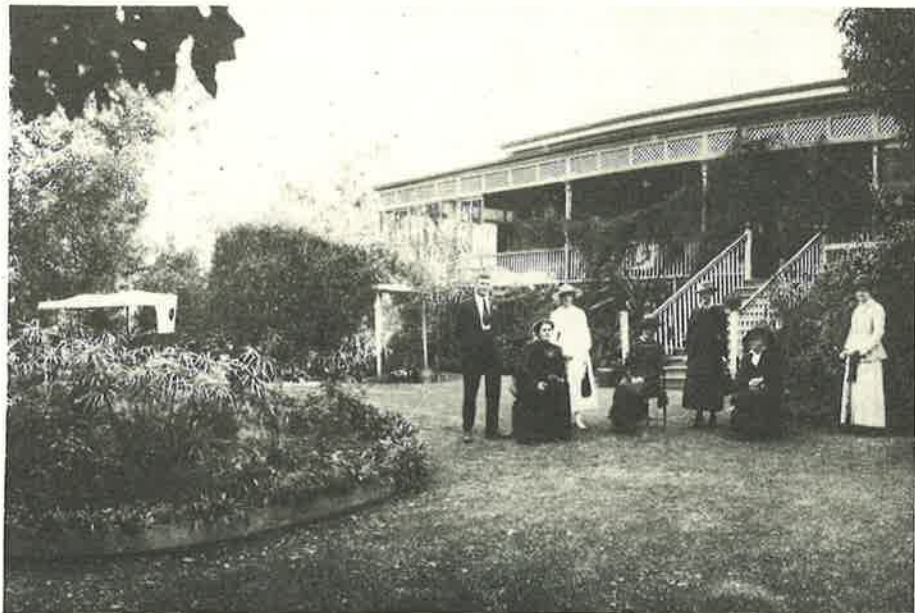
To give them their dues, they were far more involved in the land than most of their modern day, big city counterparts. And they set a trend which has made South Side—as the area generally is known today—a Widgee satellite suburb for Gympie.

For the most part the Mary Street farmers were not the original selectors of the Southside. They bought out the dairy farmers who selected the river flats extending south from Widgee Crossing to Normanby Hill. This land was taken up in 40-acre and smaller blocks from 1873 onwards under the Goldfields Homestead Act. Among the main lessees were Benjamin Gerler with two blocks near Kidd Bridge and, towards the Normanby Bridge, Robert Walker, Michael Phelan and Michael Purcell. By the turn of the century, however, nearly all of the original landholders had given way to the business set and other farmers.

Normanby Hill was known as the Scotsmen's Grandstand in the days when Rugby Union—and Rugby League when it became the major code—was played at the Normanby Football Reserve. The land next to it marked the start of settlement on Power Road, or the Southside River Road as it was referred to in the early days. The first block there was taken up by Mr. Purcell in 1875 and was sold a quarter of a century later to Mr. H. McIntosh, who carried out dairying on a small scale in common with his neighbours John Kennedy and William Goggins. In 1912 part of the latter's property was taken up by Sid Johns, one of the Southside's eldest residents who with Mr. Bob Bell hauled timber from Glastonbury into Gympie for many years using Charlie Lewis' traction engine.

Further up the road were the dairy farm of Mrs. Merrins and the home of Mr. A. Poulsen, one of the well-known photographer brothers. Then there was Kitiwah, the stately home of Francis Isidor Power. Now known as Gunabul, the homestead is used for receptions and similar functions. In Mr. Power's time it was a place for genteel tea parties and croquet on the lawn. A minimum of five staff was required to help with the chores. First there were the cook and housemaid to look after matters inside the house, a yardman to

keep the splendid grounds in order, a groom to look after the racehorses, and, naturally, a nurse to help cope with the 12 Power children. A small windmill pumped water from the river into the two 3,000-gallon tanks to supply the house.



South Side residents outside Kittiwah—now Gunabul—when it was owned by Mr. F. I. Power.

Mr. Power, for all his prominent position in municipal and political affairs, is remembered as a kindly man by old South Side residents who used to catch a lift in his horse and buggy, and often get a turn at the reins, as they walked between their homes and the Jones' Hill School.



F. I. Power

Brisbane born, Mr. Power was educated in Ireland and studied law at Trinity College, Dublin. In 1875 he set up a practice in Gympie and involved himself deeply in local affairs. He served on both the Glastonbury and Widgee Divisional Boards and was solicitor to the latter, was president of the Gympie Jockey Club and vice-president of the Show Society, had interests in many Gympie mines and was a director of several, and held a seat on the Gympie Stock Exchange. He subsequently became a member of the Queensland Legislative Council (the now defunct upper house of Parliament) and Queensland Commissioner for Affidavits.

On the neighbouring property another fine colonial mansion was built as the home of Mr. A. G. Ramsey. This was known as Lornaville, in honour of

his elder daughter. Construction of this imposing house was delayed by the 1898 flood which inundated Ferguson and Co.'s sawmills, now the site of the Memorial Park in Gympie. Selected pine timber for the house had been cut and stacked at the mill. But it was so warped and damaged after the flood that a fresh supply had to be cut. A considerable amount of red cedar was used in the doors and architraves of the house.

Mr. Ramsey also had a fine Jersey-Ayrshire herd on the property and one of his cows was the champion milker of a Gympie Show with 25 quarts of milk for one day. The farm buildings at Lornaville included a large hayshed, chaffroom, buggy house, and stables all under one roof, a full length hayloft and a skillion under which eight cow bails were built. Part of the old chaff cutter worked by a horse and whim is on display at the local museum. The camphor laurels which line the driveway were obtained early on from the Brisbane Botanical Gardens. The property is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Graham, who have changed its name to Karinya.

In Gympie, Mr. Ramsey was a director of a host of mining companies. He served on both the Widgee and Glastonbury Divisional Boards and was Mayor of Gympie in 1913. But his life revolved completely around the Gympie Times. He joined the paper as a printer in 1867 when it was known as the Nashville Times and Mary River Mining Gazette. In 1880 he became co-proprietor, with Jacob Stumm as the senior partner, and was the paper's business manager virtually up to his death in 1926. A grandson, Terry Ram-



*courtesy Mrs. S. Johns*

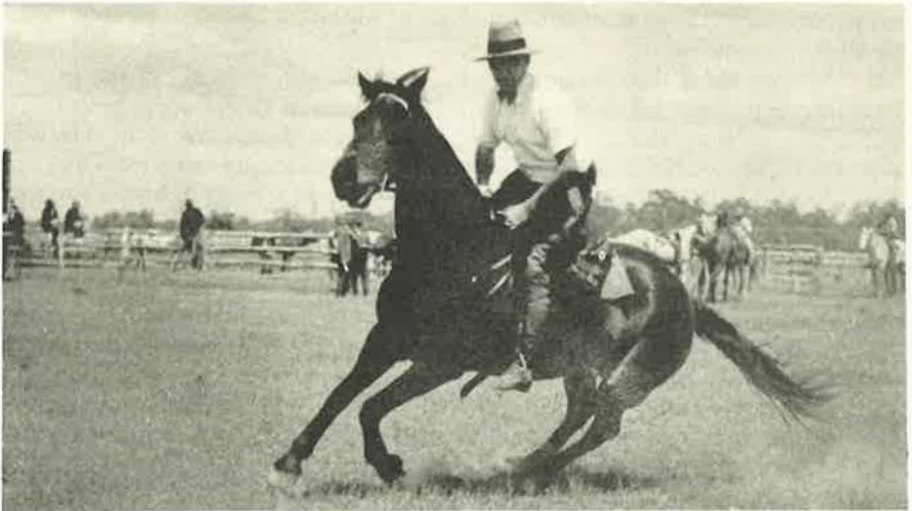
Dress styles of yesteryear. . . . Mr. and Mrs. Ted Davey from the South Side with their family, from left: Vera, Violet, Rose and Jack (on horseback).

sey, later became editor of the Gympie Times, which has always been as much a Widgee paper as a Gympie publication.

Ramsey Park, just across the road from Lornaville, is the home of the Gympie and District Hockey Association. Once the home of nearly 50 pensioners, who lived in tin huts dotted about the grounds, the six playing fields there were formed in only two days. The occasion was a demonstration of modern earth moving plant arranged by the Widgee Shire Council and attended by other local bodies. As a result the hockey fields were built at a saving of tens of thousands of dollars. The clubhouse came later, built with a lot of local voluntary labour.

Towards the Showgrounds off Woolgar Road was the home of Mr. C. J. Woolgar, for many years the principal winner in the vegetable section at the Gympie Show. One of his sons, Walter, was associated with the Gympie Times, for nearly 40 years, many of them as editor. As a young reporter early this century he visited nearly every farm in the Shire for a series of articles about its settlers and their properties. Roads were few then and hotel accommodation outside the townships was rare. Young Woolgar never wanted for a bed, however, as it was the accepted practice for any farmer to offer the hospitality of his home to travellers when night was falling.

Near the Jockey Club Hotel was the home of John Flood, the Irish convict who became chairman of the Shire. In complete contrast to his business activities in Gympie, his rural interests centred on poultry breeding. Only the best was good enough for his breeding stock which included Rosecomb White Leghorns imported from America. Across Exhibition Road lived James MacDonnell, who arrived in Australia from Ireland in the 1880s with little money but with a note of introduction to John Flood.



Myles MacDonnell



MacDonnell worked for Flood for several years before branching out on his own as an auctioneer. In 1898 he moved to the South Side to live. The house he bought was the oldest on the South Side, owned previously by the Moyes and Townsend families. With the house he bought 100 acres which he used as saleyards before setting up new premises in Monkland Street in Gympie. In 1916 he started Gympie's first Ford agency, and sold the first Ford tractor in the Shire to Billy Dawson who had a property on the Gympie-Woolooga Road.

A son, Myles, followed in MacDonnell's steps as an auctioneer and was Shire chairman from 1973 to 1976. He also was one of the Shire's premier horsemen. From 1927 when he won his first campdraft cup at Kilkivan, he went on to win the campdrafting championship of Australia in 1932 and 1936 at Warwick, the big Tamworth events in 1934 and 1935 and the top New South Wales event, the Royal Championship.

Mr. Myles MacDonnell's home, nearer to town than his father's house, is also one of the oldest on the South Side. It was the home of the Ramsey family before they moved to Lornaville, then dairy farmer John Donovan and later Jim Larney, after whom Larney's Bridge was named.

In 1961 Mr. MacDonnell carried out the first land subdivision on the South Side. A total of 131 residential blocks were sold, the most expensive being £350. The minimum deposit required for purchase was £25 with the balance to be paid on interest-free terms over four years. Streets in the development were named after members of the MacDonnell family. As a result of this subdivision, the Gympie water supply was extended to the South Side and was completed in 1966 at a cost of \$100,000. Initially there were 47 connections between Southside and Normanby. As evidence of the further growth of South Side as a residential area, water connections now number about 430.

Stumm Road took its name from Jacob Stumm, another of the gentleman farmers. A partner in the Gympie Times with A. G. Ramsey, he entered politics in 1896 as M.L.A. for Gympie, serving a three-year term. He was elected to the Federal House of Representatives twice, serving from 1913 to 1917. On his Stumm Road farm he usually ran a few head of cattle ranging from an Ayrshire bull purchased from the St. Helena stud to a young Shorthorn bull good enough to win at the Gympie Show.

Stumm's near neighbours included Michael D'Arcy and Edgar Davidson. D'Arcy, one of the first blacksmiths in Gympie, invested well on the goldfield and ran one of the best Jersey studs in the district. Davidson was a mining secretary in Gympie. He also was as expert with a stockwhip as any western drover. Once he caught his two sons and two of the young Stumm boys sitting on a fence having a swearing competition. They didn't hear him approaching from behind, and, with one deft flick of the wrist, he laid his whip across the four of them where it hurt most, which brought an immediate end to their fun. Both of the Davidson boys were killed during World War I.

Davidson's homestead was above the house where the Tregaskis family now live. Near it were built the first tennis court, croquet green and bowling green in the Gympie district. The upraised plateau of the bowling green is still clearly definable in a paddock.

Further downstream on the river side of Stumm Road was the homestead of Hugo Du Rietz, one of Widgee's most remarkable pioneers. By profession an architect, by nature an innovator, by birth a nobleman, he was often described as a man ahead of his time.

Du Rietz was a direct descendant of an old Huguenot family, Duries. In 1660 the family was elevated to the Swedish nobility for services to Sweden during its 30-year war, and for over three centuries the Du Rietz coat of arms has hung in the Grand Hall of the Palace of the House of Nobility in Stockholm.

Hugo Du Rietz left his Swedish home at 20 to chance his luck on the goldfields of Victoria. After meagre success he moved to Brisbane where he married a young colleen from Limerick, Annie Scanlon, and reverted to designing buildings. When the Gympie rush began, Du Rietz had another outbreak of gold fever and was among the first on the field. But once again he lacked the Midas touch and returned to his professional pursuit.

His major architectural achievements in Gympie included the Surface Hill Methodist Church, the School of Arts, the National Bank, the old Bank of New South Wales (now the Widgee Shire Council chambers) and the Town Hall's clock tower. He is probably best remembered in the district, however, for having introduced the first cream separator to Queensland.

Although the dairy he built on his property was perhaps the finest in Queensland, and his herd not very far behind, he gave up dairying when mine tailings ruined his land. He once explained the decision: "Not only is water rendered useless for ordinary purposes, but the banks of the river, which is the best grazing ground, is ruined by deposits of sand. True the grass will grow through the sand in two or three years, but by that time another flood may be expected." The regular floods, in fact, probably accounted for the fact that no attempt was made to settle low-lying areas of the South Side early on despite their proximity to the goldfield proper. The 1870 flood occurred before any of this land was made available for settlement and obviously provided a sufficient deterrent.

Du Rietz turned to poultry farming with the same vigour and enterprise he had given to the dairy industry. Soon he had possibly the biggest poultry farm in the Shire with about 800 hens. They got only the best in food and accommodation, the latter consisting of 18 large fenced yards and wooden framed houses which had a revolutionary arrangement by which eggs could be collected by a passage in the centre.

Among other early settlers along Stumm Road were the Lunn, Montgomery, Ross, Turner and Blackburn families. Most of their breadwinners worked either in Gympie or with timber, using their homestead land only for running the odd house cow and their horses.

While descendants of many of the South Side's early settlers still live in the area, they have been greatly outnumbered by newcomers over the past 15 years following the proliferation of housing developments which now encircle the Showgrounds.

According to Shire Engineer, Mr. Don Clarkson, about a dozen South Side landholders are actively engaged in subdivisions. Applications for new subdivisions are rolling into the Council for approval at the rate of up to 20 blocks a month. The largest current developments are Mr. Frank Withey's with 54 blocks beside the Showgrounds, Mr. Tom Madill's off Sorrensen's Road and Mr. Clarkson's own subdivision of 45 blocks. The Clarkson estate, on land selected by Thomas Moffat well over a century ago, extends back to Watson Road.

The late Mrs. Watson was a vital link in Shire affairs for some time. Shire chairman Billy Kidd, who lived just a little way further out on Pie Creek, did not have a telephone at home during his early years in office. Mrs. Watson did and on frequent occasions willingly went to fetch Mr. Kidd to the phone or passed on some Council message.

The South Side reached another milestone in the path of progress with the completion of a sewerage system on March 28, 1976. This was done at a cost of \$304,627 by contractors appointed by the Council.

The South Side has been the home of Gympie horse racing for over 100 years and of the Gympie Show Society for the best part of a century. Horse racing began on the Showgrounds site in 1877. For the previous nine years races were conducted on a bush track on the Gympie side of Widgee Crossing. The Show Society moved to the South Side in 1884, seven years after the first Gympie Show.

The Gympie Show Society was formed in 1877—the consequence of a ploughing competition at Kybong—with Dr. J. Benson as president, K. Joseph as secretary and C. Boase as treasurer. Its first show was held on October 16, 1877 in Tucker's paddock, now part of the Gympie railway yards. Two thousand people paid £72 to attend the one-day show, at which Bidde Brothers were the main exhibitors, winning prizes for their butter and bananas. Champion blood stallion was R. S. Lord's Charlton while the top blood mare was T. Johnson's Blossom. Adam Mulholland's Young Enterprise was the champion Clydesdale colt.

In 1881 the Show Society was ejected from its grounds because of the arrival of the railway line from Maryborough and the construction of the railway station. The Show Society had no title over the land and therefore no claim for compensation, at least in the eyes of the Government. The show stalwarts thought otherwise and eventually browbeat the Government into paying £800 compensation.

As a result the Show Society joined the Gympie Turf Club on the South Side and—after the sportsmen later found themselves in financial difficulties—purchased their assets. The Show Society eventually assumed

the fuller title of Gympie Agricultural, Mining and Pastoral Society to reflect the district's interests.

World War II brought both racing and the show to a halt. The Army took over the Showgrounds for training and ripped out the horse and cattle stalls, fences and other improvements. Only the grandstand and main pavilion were left intact.

Racing was resumed three years after the war through the efforts of Justin and Myles MacDonnell, Terry and Barney Ramsey, Arthur Fisher, Mort Goldberg, Billy Kidd jr., George Taylor, George Leach and other members of the local racing fraternity. They had to start from scratch, planting new grass, building new two-rail fences and installing a drainage system. Local people got behind the club with many of them buying or leasing horses to help get racing off the ground again. The first meeting was held on March 1, 1948 with Cabarita taking out the premier event. Gate takings were a healthy £600.

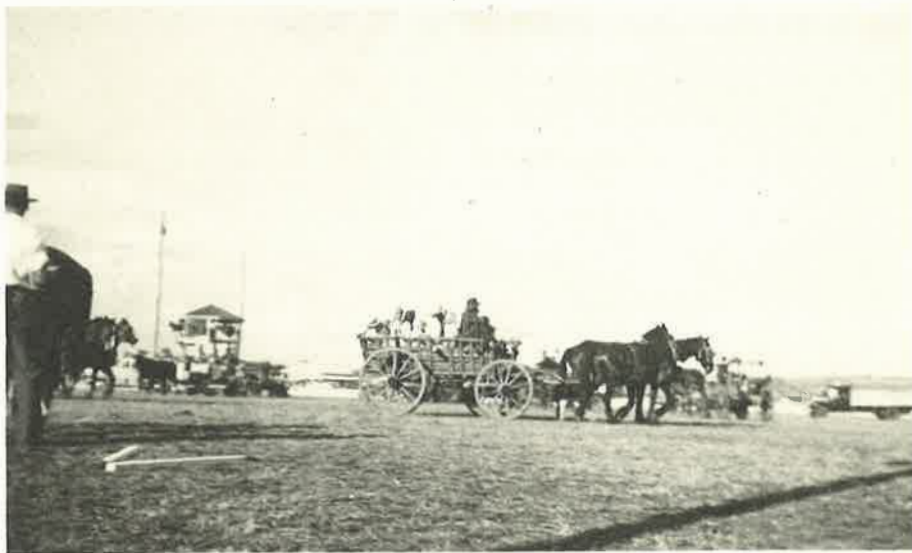


*courtesy S. Johns*

Past the finishing post at the Gympie races, circa 1920.

However, the race club slipped into the red and in 1953 was forced to close. Several small proprietary clubs tried in turn to take over. Each of them lasted only a while before failing.

Eventually the introduction of the T.A.B. rebate system to clubs helped put Gympie racing back on its feet. Now races are held on the South Side course nearly every Saturday of the year.



Gympie Show in the horse and cart era

The Show Society resumed its activities in 1949, mainly through the instigation of Mr. Billy Stewart who was helped by most of the race club's committeemen. The 1949 show consisted mainly of a rodeo held in a temporary ring. Over the next few years cattle and horse stalls were erected by voluntary labour. The Show Society hired Mr. W. Kidd jr. to dig postholes during the week. Then at the weekend volunteers would turn up to put in the posts. All of the present dairy stalls and most of the horse stalls were built with voluntary labour.

In 1969 the fat cattle pens were replaced, the new steel structure costing about \$6,000. It was followed by the stud beef pavilion—brought about largely through the efforts of Mr. Attie Sullivan and Dr. W. E. Lindsay—reflecting the sudden upsurge of beef cattle studs in the Shire. Before World War II beef cattle exhibits at the show were confined to small numbers of the Hereford and Angus breeds. In the beef boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s they were joined by large entries of British breeds—including Red Polls, Black Polls, Murray Grays and Shorthorns—and exotic breeds such as Brahmans, Santa Gertrudis, Droughtmasters, Braford and Brangus.

Dairy entries have changed, too. Fifty years ago it was almost impossible to move in the show ring because of the number of dairy cattle, mainly Jerseys, Guernseys and Australian Illawarra Shorthorns—the Friesians which now dominate the industry not becoming a force until about 20 years ago.

One of the features of the Gympie Show in recent years has been the rapid rise of equestrian entries. Not the campdraft or draughthorses of yesterday but the Arabs and Quarterhorses now so popular in the Shire. President of the Show Society in 1978 was Mr. W. Bishop.

## The Mary Valley

Settlement of the Mary Valley could be likened to a jigsaw puzzle. Using Gympie as one corner of the puzzle, the easy bits around it were filled in first—places such as Jones' Hill and river flats at Dawn and Lagoon Pockets. Hesitant starts followed in the other three corners—represented by points on the Amamoor Range, the Blackall Range and the Mary River where it enters the Shire. Gradually confidence increased and more pieces were slotted together until they showed a definite picture emerging. Sometimes the picture would get a real go-on. Events like the opening of the railway, or the boom times of an industry would boost development and prompt still more so that the Mary Valley picture became clearer. But for 1979 the picture is complete, though who knows what it might be like at the end of its next century.

From a Gympie point of view, the Normanby Bridge marks the entrance to the Mary Valley. The land immediately south of this bridge saw the first major upheaval in the valley. Within months of Nash finding gold in Gympie, the canny miners had traced the auriferous reefs down through the Monkland and to the other side of the river. The stampede spread to the "South Side"—not to be confused with the area later known by this name across the Channon Street (Kidd) Bridge from Gympie—and by early 1868 a number of claims had been taken out as far south as Dawn Pocket.

Around Jones' Hill a shanty town sprang up almost overnight. There were blacksmiths, whose services always were needed around the mines to forge and sharpen mining equipment, a general store and a butcher's shop run by John Fisher. Possibly a hotel opened its doors for business too, though it was not the Royal Standard. This was a much later addition to the scene, built around 1891 by J. Street. Like many others around the Shire, it eventually went up in flames.

A few weeks after the "South Side" stampede began, gold was found almost on the doorstep of Imbil Station and this triggered off a new rush. The man thought to have been responsible for the find was Harry Boyd, who panned a cupful of gold from Breakneck Creek. But, since the field was never a big earner, he failed to achieve either the reputation or the rewards of Gympie's James Nash. Nevertheless Boyd's find brought several hundred diggers to the site. They mostly came from Gympie, along what was euphemistically called the Imbil Road. Whether by horse or on foot, it was a hard slog along the narrow bush track to the diggings where a calico tent town shot up on Boyd's Hill, about a mile from the Imbil homestead.

While the alluvial lasted, Imbil had all the portents of a boom town. A butcher and a baker set up shop at the diggings and a vaudeville show played to enthusiastic audiences.

One of the earliest miners to arrive at Imbil was Thomas Durham. In later years he used to regale his son, James, with tales of his work as a barker. For a shilling or so he would ring a bell and coerce his fellow diggers into attending the vaudeville show which was staged in a large marquee each night. Competition came from a "wet canteen" set up nearby.

Like almost every gold find in Australia, Imbil soon attracted a good-sized crowd of Chinese fossickers. They also turned their digging efforts into the growing of vegetables and fruit and established market gardens between the alluvial diggings and the present township.

The "South Side" diggings were in full swing when in 1869 the Lands Commissioner in Gympie, Mr. H. E. King, approved the first land selections in the Mary Valley, thus ending the days when Imbil Station enjoyed almost unlimited domain west of the Mary and Traveston the same rights to the east. The area outside the goldfield boundaries was opened up first, both for agricultural and pastoral farms, and, two years later, land closer in was offered for settlement under Miners Homestead Leases.

Most of the land was virgin scrub. Some of it was so wild that John McGill, the first selector up Amamoor Creek, was lost for two weeks on his own land. No search party found him but, with the tenacity that was a prerequisite for our pioneers, he scrambled up ridges by day and back to the creek for water by night until he found his own way out.

By 1879, the year the Widgee Division came into being, there was substantial settlement along the road to the Imbil diggings. Immediately past the "South Side" diggings were the properties of John Feign, Michael Whelan and the Ryan brothers, Michael and Patrick. Feign, a miner, used his land for his horses while Whelan was a dairy farmer, starting in 1875 with a herd of 25. This was before the introduction of cream separators and Whelan made his butter the hard way, selling the finished product for about 2/6 a pound. Paddy Ryan, who later selected land near Moy Pocket, is said to have shod his horse with gold shoes and ridden down the main street of Gympie after success in the mines.

Continuing south of Jones' Hill was Thomas Buchanan's Ōtago Farm, which in 1879 was running 70 head of cattle, while at Dawn Pocket John Pearen had taken up just over 200 acres. Over the next few years Pearen increased his holdings tenfold through further selections across the river on the Brisbane Road, at Greenridge and along the Noosa Road. A former Devonshire farmer, Pearen was one of the first men on the Gympie goldfield. He arrived with 1/6 in his pocket and from one mine dividend alone allegedly reaped a mammoth £24,000, which paved his transition back to farming.

About 1880 Pearen built a town house on Geordies Hill in Gympie on the road to Gericke's Crossing. It was an imposing three-storey structure, built

for entertaining on a lavish scale. However, the great 1893 flood made no social differentiations and swept it down the river. It became snagged in a giant gum near Tiaro and was hauled back to dry land, dismantled and eventually transported by bullock wagon to Humpybong, or Redcliffe.

There it was re-erected as Victoria House. Pearen added a fourth-storey cabin which housed a strong light to guide vessels approaching the port. The house became the social centre of Redcliffe with Pearen using a windlass and block and tackle to haul kegs of beer from delivery wagons to the second floor where he staged his memorable parties. The house was destroyed by fire some years ago.

Returning to the Mary Valley, the grazing paddocks past Pearen's bordered the extremely fertile Lagoon Pocket, which was the scene of the last tribal battle between the Wide Bay and Burnett Aborigines. The two tribes met there and talked and drank for a couple of days before the battle broke out. It ended after the death of one of the warriors. The two sides held a corroboree, then went on their way. For years afterwards stones axes and other weapons were picked up around the battle site.



Isaac Butler, first settler at  
Lagoon Pocket

The Pocket also was popular with the miners from Gympie who grazed their horses there all week. Most of the river was lined with scrub but at Lagoon Pocket the horses could easily get a drink. On Saturday afternoons one or two of the miners would muster the horses and take them into town. On Sunday afternoons the horses were turned loose again. The two major selectors in the Pocket were James Ogden and Isaac Butler. Descendants of Butler, who left his native Lancashire for Australia in 1863, still farm at the Pocket, though now on land once owned by the Ogdens.

At the Calico Creek crossing on Imbil Road, C. Weking selected 73 acres in 1876 and built what for many years was one of the most substantial huts in the area. Selectors further along the road included Messrs Stewart, Pedersen and George Lunn.

Then, past a gap of country which remained unwanted for several years, was Mr. Patrick's Spring Hill Farm which marked the start of Haystack Flat. Spring Hill was selected as 250 acres in 1869 and 10 years later carried 40 head of cattle, about the average size dairy herd for a long time.

Further out the selectors included Francis Quinlan, John Trout, James Corley and at the junction of Amamoor Creek and the Mary River, Abraham Hutchinson. His Northumberland Farm comprised 550 acres including 88 freehold and 20 under crops in 1879. At that time his neighbour on the creek, James Meakin, had 100 cattle on his 560-acre selection.

Past James Liddy's selections were the properties of the first selectors on Buna Creek—the old name for the portion of Kandanga Creek below the



township. John Stephens was the first selector there, to the west of Imbil Road, with William Tatlock Chippindall on the east.

Chippindall, one of Widgee Shire's most eminent pioneers, was the first to actually settle there. After being chased by rampant Aborigines from his leasehold at Yandina he selected 640 acres on Bunya Creek in 1870. Over the next 20 years he built up his freeholding to 4,200 acres. It extended from Traveston Crossing to Bergin's Pocket and included Archibald Davies' one-time Yabba Vale property.

Originally named MacQuarrie Farm, the Chippindall property comprised 2,866 acres fenced into seven paddocks when it was first assessed for Widgee rates in 1880. His stock at that time of 400 Hereford cattle included Satellite, champion bull of the 1877 Sydney Show. The owner also bred champion draught horses and regularly commuted to Sydney to bring up new stock overland.

A large part of the farm was under cultivation, sufficient to produce 30 tons of potatoes and 2,000 bushels of corn in 1878. Cockatoos were a big menace in those days and Chippindall hired trusty blacks to scare them away from his ripening crops. Once one of his hired hands, lapsing into dreamtime, absentmindedly filled his pipe with powder intended for the muzzle loader he had been lent to give the birds a fright. But it was the pipe-smoker who got the biggest fright when he lit up before discovering his mistake.



An early car gets a tow across Coonoon-Gibber Creek on the Brooloo Gap road *courtesy D. Kirby*

In 1889 when Chippindall subdivided and sold the property, by then renamed the Grange, it was described as the best ever offered in the Gympie district. It included 350 acres under cultivation, by far the greatest under crops in any part of the Widgee Division.

Grange Estate, with a 10-mile frontage to the Mary River, was divided into 15 farms ranging from 135 to 510 acres, each with permanent water and mostly suitable for cultivation. The biggest was the homestead block which contained a capacious seven-room house of cedar and beech plus a five-room kitchen. Outbuildings included a dairy, store, cottage for the resident teacher, stables, two large haysheds, a vast chaff house and a barn.

Mr. J. H. Waller, an Englishman who farmed in Rhodesia before moving to Queensland, bought the homestead block. The homestead itself was off what is now Hasthorpe's Road. The remains of a two-rail fence are all there is left of this one-time splendid spread.

Further back along the Imbil Road towards Gympie the main farms arising from the disposal were the old Liddy farm, which had over a third of its 212 acres under cultivation, and the Heifer Paddock of 335 acres, also with over a third under crops. It contained a comfortable house, men's quarters, 10-stalled stables—all of hardwood and cedar—and a hayshed capable of holding over 300 tons.

It was not until 1897, however, that Chippindall actually moved out of the Mary Valley when his old neighbours presented him with a purse of gold



*courtesy Gympie Times*

A bridge across Calico Creek at the turn of the century.

sovereigns and an illuminated address which read: "We the undersigned farmers and other residents at Bunya Creek, Amamoor Creek, Lagoon Pocket and ratepayers of Subdivision No. 3 of the Widgee Board, beg to tender our highest esteem and our best thanks in appreciation of your valuable services in connection with the Divisional Board for over 17 years; also for your untiring labour in the support of the provisional schools. Upon your departure from the district we desire to express our sincere regret for the loss of our chief citizen and true friend. We beg to assure you of our best wishes for the future prosperity and happiness of yourself and your family. We are, dear sir, yours sincerely—M. Mellor, W. Elworthy, Isaac Butler, Henry Hutchins, Matthew Bath, R. Stephens, O. Tincknell, Meyers and Sons, J. F. North, D. Hartnett, E. Butler, J. Jensen, T. Sproules, Thomas Busby and others."

Mr. Chippindall became a Crown Lands Ranger and contested the Federal Wide Bay seat, but lost narrowly to Gympie editor Charles Jenkinson. The family's close ties with the Shire have been maintained for the full century. Frank Chippindall, one of William Tatlock's five sons, was a councillor for quarter of a century and a grandson, Viv, served over seven years on the council.

The pattern of settlement was extended into the Bollier plain in 1884 when Oliver Tincknell selected land out of the Imbil run. Mr. Tincknell, who hailed from Somerset, had worked on the station for three years before branching out on his own. He could not have picked a worse time. Hardly had he got his land into shape with a few acres under maize and the makings of a herd than the Mary showed its might. Successive flood years beginning in 1889 culminated in his last-minute escape with his family by boat in the 1893 monster which swept away all his stocks and crops. The indomitable Mr. Tincknell returned to his property and soon moved into dairying, becoming the first man from the district to take cream into Gympie.

Despite the floods there was a new surge of settlement across the valley in the 1890s. Among the newcomers were William Barsby, who selected 320 acres across Yabba Creek from Mr. Tincknell, and bullock driver Thomas Rodwell who selected 160 acres on Coonoon Gibber Creek near the subsequent township of Brooloo. Further down the creek, which bears the Aboriginal name of its crumbly stones, the first selections were taken up by William Everett and George Sterling on opposite sides of what is now the connecting road between Imbil and the Tuckekoi district. This area was called the Tuncal flat after the many bandicoots which roamed the swamps and which found great delight in a new diet of chickens brought in by the settlers.

This area also became the social centre of the Bollier—or Bollia as it was spelled in days gone by. For many years it boasted a school, a school of arts and nearer to Imbil, a race track. Around the turn of the century the Bollier races provided one of the highlights of the year for Widgee's sportsmen. It was usually a two-day affair with a regular programme of races on the first day followed by match races on the second—after what was usually a heavy night of drinking and a series of rash, often to be regretted wagers. A large contin-

gent from Gympie usually made the trek out to the Bollier, the state of the roads or lack of them being no deterrent since they were pretty much the same everywhere else. Many of Gympie's sportsmen used to venture further out to Whelan's scrub where game abounded.

Most of the early settlers of the Mary Valley were of either English or Irish descent. However, the area from Tuncal flat across to the Tuchekoi—Kenilworth Road was settled in the 1890s almost exclusively by Danes and this area became known as "Little Denmark."

Original settlers of Little Denmark included Jacob and John Olsen, whose property fronted the Mary River, P. M. Jorgensen, H. Myers and Marius Andreassen. Two second generation Andreassens were men usually on the move, Jake as one of the first cream carriers from the district and Alex as a drover taking cattle into Gympie before the days of motor transport.



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

Giant clover on Sam Olsen's farm at Tuchekoi nearly half a century ago. The growth was so luxuriant that year that the Olsen children could almost hide in it.

Mr. Jorgensen's former property off Chippindall Road has a tiny cemetery containing the graves of about half a dozen early Bollier residents, among them members of the Lowe and Myer families. Mr. Bert Lowe recently recalled that when he was at Bollier School he and about 15 other pupils marched to the cemetery for Mr. Myers funeral about 70 years ago.

Mr. Lowe's father, Albert H. Lowe, bought a 1,280 acre property at Tuncal flat in 1900. "There were still up to 15 Aborigines camped there a few years after that when I was a boy," said Mr. Lowe. "They never worked and used to catch a lot of cod. King Peter was their leader, an old man who used to wear a metal shield around his neck.

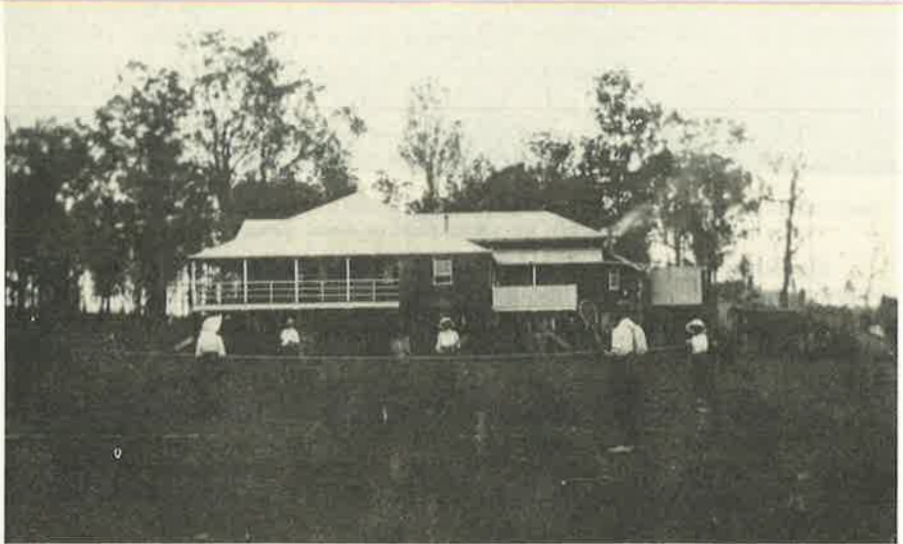
"Every year in the early days the Aborigines used to fire a large area around Tuncal and kill the bandicoots which were flushed out. Once a gin was

sent up a big gum tree beside Cooonon-Gibber Creek after a bear. She attached herself to the tree with a vine and carried an axe to cut off the limb on which the bear was hiding. She was about 80 or more feet up when she accidentally cut the vine and fell to the ground and died. The Aborigines held a two-day corroboree then left.”

Before there were any regular cream services many of the local settlers used to rely on Joe Axelby from Brooloo for supplies. Every few months the word would get around that Mr. Axelby was planning a trip to Gympie. Settlers such as the Lowes, Jorgensens, Myers and Tincknells would hand him their orders and meet him on his return trip to unload items such as baking soda and hundred-weight bags of flour for making bread, sugar and salt. Just about everything else was grown on the land.

Mr. Axelby was never paid for his service, nor did he expect anything. There was a great lot of sharing done in those days. If a farmer had a good crop of pumpkins, for example, he would pass the message on to his neighbours that they were welcome to as much as they wanted the next time they dropped in.

Immediately south of Little Denmark on Mulligan’s Flat is Beechwood, a large property purchased in 1905 from Kenilworth station by Mr. P. C. Poulsen. He was a leading photographer in Brisbane and was also the Danish Consul in Queensland. His brother, Mr. C. A. Poulsen, shared in the property. Nearly three quarters of a century later the Poulsen homestead is one of the few surviving examples in the Shire of those built on a grand scale. The shingle roof has long since been replaced but the 44 squares of timber, pitsawn



*courtesy K. Poulsen*

Anyone for tennis? There usually was at P. C. Poulsen’s home at Beechwood.

on the property, reflect the lifestyle of yesteryear. For many years the house was the receiving depot for all of the district's mail which was brought out from Gympie by a woman who drove a horse and trap. The first telephone line from Brisbane to Gympie ran through the Beechwood acres and two of the original poles are still standing there.

Further towards Kenilworth there was a slaughter yard on William Clark's farm over half a century ago. Clark used to travel by buckboard as far north as Traveston delivering fresh meat to settlers. Sometimes he made his trip by horseback with the meat slung in cloth bags across his saddle. By the time he reached his destination the horse's sweat usually had penetrated the bags but this did not seem to worry his customers.

North of Mulligan's Flat, the old main road crosses Chinaman's Creek—where a dinghy always was moored—past Peacan's Pocket to Mount Tuche-koi. According to the late Billy Quinn, Mulligan's Flat took its name from a sheep drover murdered there many years ago. Mulligan drove off an attack by Aborigines at Blackfellows Creek but was speared in the back while he was sleeping beside Happy Jack Creek a couple of nights later.

Quinn himself was a colourful character and one of the Mary Valley's best known identities. He was a familiar sight on his bullock wagon wearing a grey flannel shirt and moleskin pants "to stop the snakebites". He lived to pass the 100 mark.

Chinaman's Creek probably was named after Sam Man, a Chinese bachelor who used to grow strawberries, vegetables and flowers just above the creek. An assortment of hardy fruit trees still compete with the native scrub beside the bridge where it crosses this picturesque creek. Sam Man may well have supplied produce to the nearby Peacan family, who operated a boarding house and changing station for Cobb and Co. Here extra horses were added to the team for the long haul south over the pinches to the next changing stage of Mr. J. Lowe at Yandina. All of the present Widgee Shire territory east of the Kenilworth Road between Little Newspaper and Mount Tuche-koi was lost to Maroochy Shire in a boundary change in 1907. However three years later it was returned to the Widgee on the formation of the Noosa Shire.

By this time nearly all of the Mary Valley land east of the Imbil Road and east of the road to Brooloo Gap had been selected. At Moy Pocket, Peter Sutton farmed 500 acres of first class dairying land once part of Kenilworth run. Mr. Sutton bought the property during the big drought and constructed a wood-clay plunge dip to beat the ravages of ticks, but not before they had taken a third of his herd.

Under the gaze of Duwerri Rock where an unfaithful Aboriginal woman of that name is said to have leapt to her death rather than be executed by her tribe, Irishman John Ahearn and his son, John Thomas Ahearn, held adjoining 400-acre blocks. Closer to Brooloo early selectors included Sydney Smith and Jeremiah Collins. Brooloo Bluff was a favourite hunting spot for Aborigines. They used to herd wallabies towards the top of the bluff, then drive them over the edge to fall to their deaths on the rocks below.

The first road from Moy Pocket to Brooloo was made by local farmers who later built a bridge to get the cream truck through. This was the solid tyred truck of Herbert Sutton, who took the cream to Brooloo where it was railed to Gympie. Alf Sims was one of the first to take cream from Kenilworth Gap to Brooloo by truck, his “modern marvel” being a Rio.



*courtesy K. Poulsen*

Poulsen-Walker bridge at Moy Pocket under construction

In the south-western corner of the Shire in an area known as the Borgan—the Aboriginal name for iguana—several large grazing blocks were selected from land resumed out of Yabba station at the beginning of the century. Among the selectors were Mr. H. W. Edwards, Con. and George Spiller from the Chatsworth, William Stubbins from Imbil station and Arthur Walker. An entry in Mr. Walker’s old farm accounts book shows a payment of £8/15/- to Elliott Brothers in 1903 for construction of a dip at Borumba. One of the first dips in the Shire, its shingle roof is still intact though it is now protected by an upraised iron roof put there by Mrs. S. Macfarlane, whose father Mr. Atthow bought the property from the Walker family in the mid 1920s.

Down Yabba Creek early selectors included Edward Rowlands, John Grainger who also worked on Imbil Station and John Organ, a local miner who once tried his hand at tobacco growing there. On the Ana branch of the Yabba, across from the Imbil run, never-say-die goldminer Thomas Durham and Gilbert Horden selected adjoining blocks.

Around 1900 there were two sawmills between Brooloo and the Gap, Andrew "Buller" Doyle's mill—now just a rotting frame of a building—not far past the former Brooloo School and nearer the Gap, Mr. Grogan's mill of which there is no trace.



Remains of Andrew Doyle's Brooloo mill

The timber industry provided employment for many of the Mary Valley settlers early this century. Among those who combined timber getting with raising crops on their selections were William and George Groves whose Bunya Creek properties adjoined, Robert Gilroy from Bollier who hauled timber to the Union Sawmill in Gympie, and James Everett who bought Mr. W. T. Chippindall's former heifer paddock at the Imbil Road turnoff to Traveston Crossing in addition to his properties at Bollier and Kandanga Creek.

Kandanga at this time—before the advent of the Mary Valley railway—did not exist as a town. The focal point of that area was on the Imbil Road where there was a blacksmith, Jimmy Matthews, a cemetery and a hall. Nor did the townships of Dagon or Amamoor exist. The western flank of the Mary Valley consisted of sparsely settled and thickly timbered country extending up Amamoor and Kandanga Creeks. Virtually all of the watershed of Calico Creek was held by Ferguson and Co. through Gympie sawmiller



William Henderson who selected this country early in the piece. At its widest point the holding stretched from Pie Creek in the west to Amamoor Creek in the east.

Above Amamoor there was hardly any settlement after Thomas Busby and John Leatheren's adjoining farms. It was all thick forest up to the McGill and McClymont country at the head of Amamoor Creek.

A start had been made, however, on cutting out the timber from the Diamond Field. This area to the south of Harry's Creek was so rich in natural timber that the first timber getters could hardly believe their eyes. They dubbed the area Diamond Field for the jewels of the forest—they considered each tree as valuable as a diamond.

Early settlers in the Diamond Field included Larry Mitchell, Steve Polkinghorne, Con Coonan, John Casey, Michael Walsh, John Leatheren and William Smerdon. All were involved in the timber industry apart from Mitchell, who went straight into dairying.

Soon after the redwater plague hit, the Diamond Field settlers built a co-operative dip. Among its shareholders were Cappy Smith and Tom Busby, with Charles Leatheren as dip secretary for many years. The yards beside the dip later became known locally as the "stadium". Often there would be a bit of a blue during Saturday night dances at the Amamoor Hall, sometimes over a girl, sometimes over matters more trifling. The local custom was to arrange for satisfaction at the stadium. Come Sunday morning the two antagonists would appear at the dip yards, stripped to the waist, to do battle with bare knuckles.

On the lower reaches of the Amamoor the settlers at the beginning of the century included William Saunders, John North, John English and Simon Fitzpatrick who both had large dairy herds, and Henry Hutchins sr. and jr. Like many of the pioneer families, hard work did not seem to hurt them. Four of the 11 Hutchins children went on to live past 90 years of age.

Haystack Flat on the Imbil Road is said to have got its name from a large haystack built by Mr. Fitzpatrick with the help of some blacks. It consisted of about 100 tons of bush hay cut from natural grasses which was carted into Gympie and sold for bedding and feed for the miners' horses.

Settlement of Kandanga Creek above the present township advanced little faster than on Amamoor Creek. Most of the area above the Bunya Creek bridge was not selected until the 1890s. William Smerdon was one of the first to take up land on Kandanga Creek. He also was among the first to go into dairying in this area and put in substantial improvements including a dairy, blacksmith's shop, a slab-floored milking yard with four bails and later a concrete plunge cattle dip.

Nearby settlers included Joseph Watson, William Garde who selected there in 1871 and David O'Farrell, secretary of the first Kandanga Farmers' Association.

Then there was John Doyle, one of the pioneer sawmillers of the valley, and further up the creek at Kandanga Vale his brother, James, who dairied on

700 acres. James Doyle operated the first horse-drawn cream carrying service in the district for the Lowood Butter Factory, taking the cans to Traveston Siding for railing south. An opposition cream pickup service carried cream from the Kandanga district to Traveston for railing north to the Silverwood Butter factory in Gympie, before the formation of the Wide Bay co-operative factory.

Along the rest of the creek the early settlers had varied interests. There was Peter Mitchell, who drove a bullock team from Toowoomba to the Gympie goldfield in 1867. He was one of those who joined the gold rush to Imbil where he teamed up with Joe Sanders, William Durham and Jacob Parrott without much luck. Then there was former Gympie wheelwright, Mr. A. H. Hester, who turned his hand to horse breeding, dairy farmers Neil Rasmussen and C. P. Jensen, Mr. John Keeley whose commodious barn was used as the local settlers' first meeting place, Robert Gilliland who grew the first sugar cane in the district, and further up at Kandanga Vale, James Tincknell, who experimented with cotton growing and grew the first pineapples and bananas in those parts.

The advent of the Mary Valley railway line sparked a period of almost feverish land development. The route had been surveyed from Gympie up to Kenilworth in 1885 but it was nearly 30 years before the line was opened as far as Kandanga.

Mr. Jack Spicer, who had worked for two years on Widgee station for Mr. Wienholt, was among the timber cutters who supplied the sleepers and girders, cutting and squaring them and leaving them at wood depots along the line. He went to Kandanga to work, stayed and grew up with the town.

When he first went there Kandanga consisted only of a small shop run by Mr. J. E. Farrell and a small gable-roofed building which housed a branch of the Royal Bank. The focal point of the district was across the bridge towards Imbil Road where there were cricket and football pitches beside the Bunya Creek Hall and Bowes and McMahan's store which supplied navvies working on the line. On the other side of Imbil Road there was a small, weatherboard Anglican church in the grounds of the cemetery.

The navvies lived in a canvas village which was progressively moved along the line. With them went the Y.M.C.A. which provided a recreation centre for the navvies. Its amenities included billiards, quoits and writing equipment.

Mail was brought out once a week from Gympie in a horse and coach. The mailman would leave his vehicle at Bunya Creek then carry out his delivery round by making a grand tour of the "mailman's track" to Upper Kandanga, Imbil, Bollier and back to Kandanga. Delivering the post was a hard day's ride with little time for much more than a brief chat on the way, even though he was the only visitor all week for some of the settlers on his route.

Shortly before the coming of the rail residents formed a progress association which comprised James Doyle (president), S. Holbrook, John Doyle,

W. Smerdon, C. Chippindall, R. B. Parkyn, J. Watson, J. Farrell, J. A. Sommerville, G. Simpson and C. Mitchell.

The opening of the line to Kandanga on February 26, 1914 was a deafening affair—the first locomotive rolled into the station across detonators placed on the tracks especially for the occasion. At the controls, temporarily, were the Minister for Railways, Mr. W. T. Paget, and Mr. H. F. Walker, M.L.A. A total of 630 paying passengers made the trip from Gympie for the grand opening, necessitating two trains in addition to the official train. The day was capped by a grand banquet presided over by Widgee chairman Thornton Powell.

Within two months of the railway's opening the new Kandanga Hotel opened its bar for business. Mr. Whitecross of Nambour built the hotel for its proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. C. Bowling. The hotel, which has since been extended, measured 144 feet by 46 feet with a verandah all the way round and contained a bar, two bar parlours, a billiard room, 10 bedrooms, two bathrooms and substantial stables and other outbuildings.

About the same time a post office was established in Mr. J. E. Farrell's new store, the Queensland National Bank set up a branch and Mr. W. Cobb opened a saddlery shop. Mr. Sandercock established himself as the local blacksmith, taking over from Mathers and Rammutt, and Messrs C. Chippindall and Viles opened an auction mart and agency called the Mary Valley Stock and Land Agency.

The Kandanga settlers capped off their momentous year with a race meeting. It was held on December 28 in Mr. Smerdon's paddock and a special train from Gympie brought 200 racegoers who swelled the attendance to 600. Local officials included Mr. J. E. Farrell as president, Mr. Arthur Sullivan as starter and W. Matthews and C. Mitchell as judges. The main race, the Kandanga Handicap which carried a purse of £7, was carried off by R. Lochran's My Crown. Bookmakers' fees to field for the day were two guineas each.

The township of Kandanga prospered with the sawmilling industry that grew up there. Shops were opened by Mr. Farrell and by Peter Arnold who also ran the Post Office. Mr. Boyling left his hotel and opened another shop in what had been Kandanga's first public hall. This was replaced in 1925 by a bigger hall built at a cost of £1,234 with many local settlers acting as guarantors. Five hundred people turned up for the opening by Shire chairman, Mr. W. H. Kidd. This was followed by a grand ball with music provided by the Kandanga District Band under the direction of Mr. R. C. Paul.

Early in the township's history the mainstays of Kandanga were Messrs Farrell, Boyling, James Doyle and William Smerdon. They owned most of the land on which the town was built and ran many of its services. Doyle for example, built the local picture theatre—now just a disused hall. Pictures were usually held on Saturday nights and Mr. Doyle bought a bus specially to run a pickup service for his patrons. There was usually a pretty good turnout with the most popular attractions being Gene Autrey and other Western films.



*courtesy J. Spicer*

Kandanga Rugby League team, circa 1919. Back row, from left: Harry Bicoff, Bill Smerdon, Mr. Smith, Ted Egan, Sid Stephens, James Carlson, Walter Ward; Middle row: Danny Byrne, George Everett, Jack Spicer, Martin Higgins, Bill Lovell, August Carlson. Front row: Harry Currie, Ernie Ward.

The theatre was later bought by Percy Perrott.

Kandanga quickly became a centre of sports such as rugby league, cricket and tennis. During the 1930s there was a nine-hole golf course on Mr. Stephen's property outside Kandanga but it fell into decline after the war and closed.

Imbil township began at nearly the same time as Kandanga. It had its origins in the sale of Imbil station on March 17, 1914 when about 300 buyers converged on the homestead for the auction. A special train brought about 100 Gympie residents on the new Mary Valley line to Kandanga. There a fleet of motor vehicles, four-in-hands and other horse-drawn conveyances took them on to Imbil. Ninety-three township allotments were offered first by auctioneer Mr. G. H. Mackay. All were sold. Mostly quarter-acre blocks they brought an average £30/13/6 each with the top price of £141.

The buyers, among them a number of Mary Valley farmers and Gympie investors, were: D. Mulcahy, Walter Webb, S. M. McKinley, J. Gierkes, A. H. Shears, J. W. Albritz, J. Didcot, M. E. Daly, F. B. Sykes, F. Elworthy, J.

J. Ryan, W. Dautil, C. J. Dougherty, A. H. Lowe, M. Higgins, W. H. Shambler, A. T. Hawkins, J. F. O'Farrell jr., M. Wickers, J. Tregonning, G. R. Sly, E. Coop, W. Meddleton, T. W. Mitchell, G. F. Mathias, A. L. Walker, James Doyle, Andrew Doyle, F. Power, Chippindall and Viles, H. Mills, W. Smerdon jr., C. J. Mitchell, M. Moynihan, J. Carey, J. Hughes, L. J. Thomas, W. H. Durham and Mrs. Mays.

When the farm blocks were put up for auction all of the land near Bergin's Pocket land was passed in. Thirteen other blocks were sold, the buyers being Mr. William Oakes from Isis who paid £933/15/- for over 125 acres on Bollier, Mr. R. Hill of Gympie £1,109/5/- for 153 acres on Sandy Creek, F. Chippindall £738 for 123 acres on Yabba Creek, W. J. Maslin of Childers £1,014/10/- for 143 acres on Coonoon Gibber, Samuel Craig of Murrurumba £734 for 91 acres at Deeria (Deerier) and £220/17/6 for 23 acres near Imbil Station, John Doyle of Kandanga £802/10/- for 107 acres at Deeria, Alick Andrews of Tweed River £1,891/2/6 for 233 acres at Deeria and W. Denning of Tweed River £173/5/- for 19 acres near Imbil Station.

Other buyers shortly after the auction pushed the total purchase price of the old station to well over £20,000. They included the Meyer brothers from Eel Creek who bought 88 acres on Imbil Island, G. A. Meyer of Bollier 98 acres on the Island, T. L. Rodwell of Bollier 80 acres on the Island, M. Wecker of Yeulba 83 acres on the Island and another 33 acres adjacent, Andrew Doyle of Kandanga 121 acres at Deeria and A. H. Boardman of Tweed River 133 acres at Deeria. Most of the blocks on the flat had portions of high land as well—a legacy from the 1893 flood which swamped the Bollier plains and swept away many head of stock.

Within two years of the Imbil sale, 25 buildings had been erected there. They included a sawmill, public hall, a branch of the Royal Bank, a blacksmith's shop, two general stores and a school. The hall was built on land which had been donated by Elworthy and Mellor. With the local settlers providing the timber and their labour the final cost was only £95/18/7.

The Imbil blacksmith was Phil Wallader, the town's sole smithy for the best part of half a century. He set up his forge across the road from a bank and had a favourite saying: "The bank's in front of me, not behind me. That's why I never prospered."

The first stores were Moynihan's and Gilroy's, while other early shopkeepers included butchers Roy and Edward Gomersall and saddler Art Girder, whose hand-made saddles were renowned throughout Queensland. From early on there was a boarding house run by George Whittington who worked by day as an engine driver. The house had three bedrooms for paying guests and two more in a shed outside. Visitors who arrived too late for a bed had to shake down on the verandah.

Imbil's hotel was built in 1917 by Jim Larney. He did not enjoy a publican's life, however, and quickly sold out. The hotel has changed hands several times since. Two of its early licensees were Moss Reeves and Bidly

Millerick, who previously owned the Mining Exchange Hotel in Gympie. Initially the Licensing Court turned down an application for a hotel at Imbil on the grounds that the hotel at nearby Brooloo was adequate for Imbil's needs.

In 1919 Imbil held its first show. School teacher Viv Brown was the organising secretary for several years. Other early stalwarts of the Imbil Show Society included Harry Hole, Jim Watson and Frank Chippindall.



*courtesy D. Andreassen*

Main Street of Imbil in the 1920s.

Like Kandanga, Imbil had its own picture theatre, opened by Harley Maudsley between the wars. When television brought about its demise it was converted into a restaurant. A more recent enterprise was the cordial factory which Mr. Ernie Hinds ran for about a dozen years. But Imbil's population has depended mainly on the timber industry, at first the local mills and, increasingly since World War II, on the forestry work in the area.

On April 30, 1915, the Mary Valley railway line's Brooloo terminus was opened. It was thought at that time there was a future for a town at Brooloo. As it turned out Brooloo lost the race to Imbil though for a few years there were all the necessary ingredients for a town.

Township allotments at Brooloo—Mr. W. C. Anderson's subdivision of land selected about 20 years earlier by George Sutton—were put to auction on July 29, 1914. They sold for between £11 and £40 a block with the buyers including R. W. Meddleton, G. Smith, M. A. G. Smith, A. T. Hawkins, Emil Hansen, G. G. Hordern, A. J. Anderson, P. Anderson, J. D. Watt, F. J. Heathwood, Brooloo Timber Co. and Clara Heilbronn.

The following year a School of Arts was added to the township and it needed more than floods to dampen the occasion. For the week before the

official opening on February 20, it poured and poured. Twelve inches fell in one 24-hour period. But this did not deter the guest of honour, Mr. H. F. Walker. He and his wife had to swim across the Mary River before continuing out to Brooloo where they were welcomed by Mr. W. C. Anderson, the chairman of the hall committee. About 50 couples braved the wet for a grand opening ball. The hall on Bluff Road cost residents a total of £200 and comprised an open area of 30 feet by 38 feet and a stage 12 feet wide.

By then the township of Brooloo consisted of a hotel, a general store owned by Mr. Hordern, a bakery, a butcher's shop and several houses. The houses and shops lasted only as long as the local sawmills. But the hotel, the Grand, lasted until 1957 when it was destroyed by fire—on the same day that fire demolished the Post Office store in Kandanga.

For many years the local butcher was Billy Weller, who set up shop in the main street of Brooloo. Mr. Weller also delivered meat to the people of Imbil when their butcher went out of business—and brought bread back when the Brooloo baker closed down. There were no refrigerators or storerooms in those days. Fresh meat that wasn't sold was corned the next day. About 1920 Mr. Weller leased his Brooloo shop and opened another in Amamoor.

Amamoor was little more than a timber siding when the railway line went through. There were only about 20 settlers in the district, most of them felling timber in the Diamond Field. The land on which the township was built was owned by Thomas Busby, whose barn doubled as a meeting place and dance hall for the local community. In 1914 a well known surveyor around Widgee, Mr. Abbot, surveyed the first 40 blocks of Amamoor township. They went under the hammer on July 31 of that year and 24 were bought at prices ranging from £7 to £32.

Dagun, too, was only a quiet backwater when the railway station opened for business there in April 1914. There were just four cream suppliers handy to the station, their output being 84 gallons a month. Their cans were consigned by rail to the Gympie butter factory by the station mistress, Mrs. Houghton. The following year the handful of local farmers banded together to build a co-operative dip. The site they chose was a rocky one and explosives were required for the excavation.

Meanwhile, work was well under way at Maroonda, the experimental fruit growing farm on Mr. Henderson's big Amamoor estate. The sale of this estate, by auction at Gympie's Olympic Hall on May 26, 1917, led to the formation of Dagun township and greatly boosted nearby Amamoor.

The estate of nearly 6,000 acres had been taken up nearly 50 years earlier by William Henderson of Ferguson and Co. The company already had cut out the best of the timber, mainly pine, when the estate was put for auction. Blocks ranged in size from five to 250 acres. Terms were either 15 per cent deposit and the balance over 10 years at five per cent interest or over 20 years at 5½ per cent. In both cases there was a 24-month period of grace in which no principal repayment was required.

5,400  
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Terms @ 5½%

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In the Estate of WM. HENDERSON, deceased.

This is the Scrub Property which is quoted by all the Experts as being the best in Southern Queensland. Its great points for **Banana, Pineapple and Citrus Culture**, as well as for **Dairying and Mixed Farming** are—**Easterly and N.E. Aspects—Good Shelter—Altitude from 400 to 1,040 feet above Sea Level—Large Areas above Frost Line—Perfect Drainage—Good Water—Rainfall for 46 years averages 46·95 in.—Three Railway Stations—Gympie Butter Factory, 7 miles—Easy Slopes, not too steep—The Richest Volcanic Soil, carrying a huge percentage of humus and leaf mould.**



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At Maroonda Experimental Farm, which the owners established on the Estate at the end of 1912, and from which \*£1,756 2s. 11d. has already been received for Bananas, Pines, &c.

*\*These figures are guaranteed and Balance Sheet may be seen at the office of the Auctioneers.*

**There are 78 Farms from 10 to 256 acres, including several Township Blocks of 3 to 9 acres**

**The Sale will be held on SATURDAY, 26th MAY, 1917 at 2 o'clock**  
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Advertisement for the Amamoor estate

Three railway stations were either on or adjoining the estate, which ran from Calico Creek Road in the north to Amamoor railway station on the western side of the line.

The prime block was Maroonda, where an experimental station had been established five years earlier to show the potential of the land. It was a 32-acre block, mainly under bananas but including three acres of pineapples and three acres of citrus trees. The quality of the land was already evident. At the time of the sale over £1,750 worth of fruit had been sold off the farm. The pineapples, nurtured by manager Jim Long, had carried off the previous year's prize at the Woombye Show in the heart of the pineapple district further south. Maroonda was bought privately by Thomas Smith, a Woombye pineapple farmer, for over £13 an acre including the house and crops.

Most of the estate was sold for around £2 an acre, however, with other pineapple farmers from around Nambour and banana growers from New South Wales among the buyers. Bunchy top had ravaged the Tweed area by then and the banana growers were seeking disease-free land for their new crops.

In fact, most of the buyers went straight into bananas. But the two years after the sale were bad drought years and much of the hard work came to

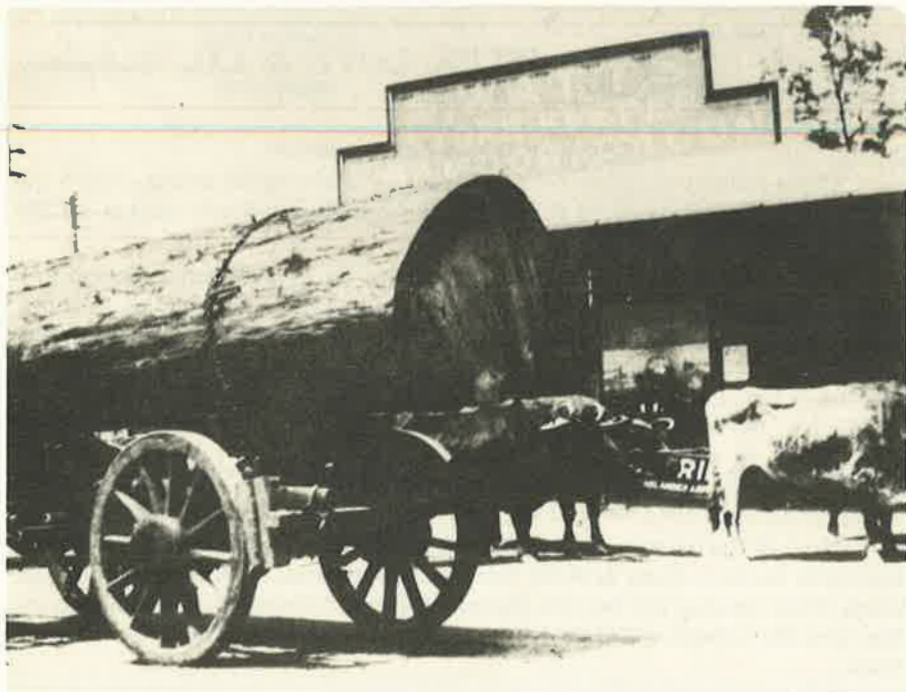


nothing. It was so dry that even some of the scrub was said to have withered and died.

There was still some good timber on a few of the blocks though most of the millable timber over 60 inches in girth had been cut out several years earlier. Some of the blocks had covenants stipulating that any further timber taken out had to be sold to the Union Sawmills at a shilling per 100 superfeet. Nearly all of the timber was hauled out by Ernie Wooster, a long-time Ferguson and Co. teamster who had only one arm and one eye. He lived in an unpretentious humpy almost on the spot where a school was later built at the corner of Calico Creek and Robinson Roads. But his team of horses matched the best in the district.

One of the buyers to benefit from the timber was Fred Robinson, who bought 100 acres. Within two years he had paid off the cost of his land in timber.

Mr. Robinson had been the Isles Love sales representative on the estate. He had camped there with his wife, two young daughters and son, Sid, 5, on the site later occupied by the Dagon Methodist Church. Mr. Sid Robinson, who eventually took over his father's farm, recalled that the only buildings nearby were the railway station and station master's house. He used to



*courtesy F. Grainger*  
Bullock team drawn up outside S. Watts' shop, the first store at Amamoor.

travel by train with his sisters to the Lagoon Pocket School. Mr. Sandy Parr operated a sawmill opposite the church. A few years later Jack Chapman and Jack Ormes took it over as a case mill for the growers of the district.

Another family which has a long association with the estate is the Smith family. George Smith had been hauling timber for Ferguson and Co. for many years before the sale and lived at the corner of Calico Creek and Imbil Roads. His son, Bert, cut timber there for many years and now grandson George is dairying there.

Other buyers of the Amamoor Estate included the former Maroonda manager, Mr. Long, in partnership with Dr. E. W. Paul and Mr. Charles Townsend.

Amamoor matched step with Dagon and soon surpassed it in size. Two general stores were opened, the first by Sid Watts, the second by Sam Pring. Bill Weller opened a butcher's shop and delivered meat by cart around the district. Every Sunday Jack Smith used to ride out from Gympie with an assistant to his blacksmith's shop to attend to the settlers' weekly needs—shoeing horses, sharpening grubbers and hoes, and fitting steel runners to the horse drawn-slides used for bringing the fruit down the hillsides. Jack Taylor opened a blacksmith's shop in the town and this was later taken over by Bill Sandercock. There was a bakery, too, with Eric Palethorpe among its first owners. The local cream carrier was Vince Jensen from Kandanga, who later had a succession of different drivers working for him on the run.

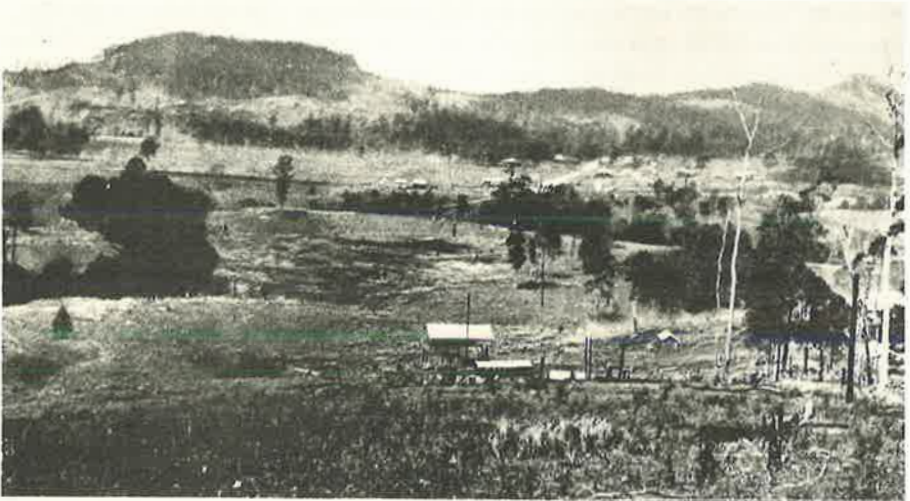
In 1921 residents got together to build the Amamoor Hall. Timber was provided by Jack Grainger, a bullocky since the age of 12 when he was so small he had to stand on a box to yoke up his team. Mr. Grainger was among the many bullock drivers employed on the Mary Valley railway line during construction. He was also an excellent dancer and built an open-air dance floor at Imbil to teach navvies working on the line how to dance.

When the sawmills of Amamoor were at their peak and dairying was a profitable business, the town supported a thriving sports scene. It had a football club, a tennis club of 78 members, 10 tennis courts and a cricket club. Cricket matches were always held on Sundays and when Anglican minister Joe Taylor rode out from Gympie to conduct the service, the cricketers took time off from their game to attend.

The rising fortunes of the Mary Valley could be seen on the payloads carried out by rail—pineapples, bananas, timber and for a while, manganese ore mined from Amamoor Creek. At the same time the success of the railway and the growing numbers of motor cars meant the demise of Mr. Suthers' Mary Valley bus service and the taxis of Messrs Ellis and Whelan.

One of the first regular customers on the Mary Valley railway was Mr. J. Solomon, the country correspondent of The Gympie Times who made the return trip to Brooloo once a week to call on the local "stringers" for copy. On other days he worked the stations on the main North Coast line.

With the increasing traffic on the Mary Valley line there came the rail motor—dubbed by its passengers the "Tin Hare" as regular driver Ben Hall



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

A view of Amamoor township in 1931

sent it rattling at a fair old speed on the downgrade section from Kandanga to Imbil.

As the dairy and banana industries prospered during the 1920s, their development went hand in hand with that of the churches. A Roman Catholic Church was built in Kandanga as part of the Parish of Gympie. Services were held by Fathers McSweeney and O'Donnell, both curates from St. Patrick's in Gympie.

The Church of England created a special Mary Valley Parish under the care of the Rev. J. Taylor, who held regular services at Kandanga, Amamoor and Dagun—usually in the schools—as well as in a church at Imbil.

The Methodist Church had been active even earlier. On October 2, 1887 it opened its first church in the Mary Valley, built at Lagoon Pocket by a Mr. Brown. It was followed by a church at McIntosh Creek in 1909 which replaced a slab church on Carl Neasler's property, Dagun in 1925, the building being moved there from Deep Creek, and Amamoor and Kandanga in 1935. Services also were held at Imbil in the Congregational Church which was bought by the Methodist Church in 1941. It was followed four years later by a church at Calico Creek.

Both before and since this period of expansion, religious services have been held in many other places—in homes, barns, public halls, or any place which made a convenient meeting spot. In particular, the Salvation Army was very active in the Bollier and Imbil areas very early on.

A former McIntosh Creek resident, Mrs. E. Mallett, recalled how community life there revolved around the tiny Methodist church in the post-World War 1 years before cars became common. Children at that time rarely went into Gympie except on Christmas Eve and on show days.

Sunday school was a highlight of the week. Children from the Sorrensen, Blackburn, Neasler, Treichel, Ziggenhaggen and the two Dodt families held little concerts in the church. Sometimes Mr. Jimmy Bennett, superintendent of the Red Hill Sunday school, would keep them spellbound with his tales of old Cornwall. Later the parents would join in and stay for a cup of tea.

Many of the farms on McIntosh Creek were selected in 1888 and 1889. Selectors included Charles Summers, Charles Aitchison, Robert Aitchison, Francis Grosvenor, John Ramsey and Jacob Stumm. After 1910 several of these farms were bought by families which carried on a long association with the area—among them the Treichels, Shanahans, Finselbachs and Ubanks.

Charles Treichel, who helped build the railway line between Maryborough and Gympie, established a vineyard at McIntosh Creek. He had a cellar where he made his own wine though he did not sell it commercially. Instead he took the grapes into Gympie where he sold them for threepence a pound.

Development of Calico Creek grew out of the Soldiers Settlement started there in 1922. Despite government assistance and their banana cheques, most of the ex-soldiers failed to make a go of their new life on the



*courtesy W. Beattie*

A worker's cottage on Mr. W. Beattie's Calico Creek property knocked askew by a landslide.

land. Some of them seemed more concerned with the road which was a horror section around the hills in wet weather. One irate settler warned that because of the road any councillor was likely to be shot on sight if he ventured into the settlement.

At the end of World War II when most of the high country properties had changed hands, one of the farmers, Steve Kanally, claimed he had seen a blade of grass split at the base as the earth beneath it moved. Within days a major earthslide was visible around the rim of the settlement area which is shaped like a huge amphitheatre at the head of the creek. One stubborn owner, Mr. F. Burke, opted to stay put despite suggestions that he move his house. That night it slid down the hill. However, neighbours helped cut the house into sections and carry it about 200 yards up the hill to be loaded on to trucks.

In front of another house two tall bunya pines gradually moved 200 yards down the hill; they are still upright and flourishing today. Another farmer saw his one-acre dam edge intact into the adjoining block. He bought out his neighbour to get his dam back. Eventually the landslides defeated the farmers and the Government bought back the land.

## The Town That Died

One hundred years ago Neerdie was known as a two-bullock town. That was the number of bullocks that had to be killed each week to keep the town in meat. But Neerdie was a town that died. And when it was dead it was buried. Now there is nothing of the town left to be seen, although occasionally an old stone bottle is ploughed up in the fields where Neerdie once flourished.

According to one popular belief, Neardie—as it originally was spelt—got its name from a group of prospectors who were “near death” when they camped there on their way to Gympie from Calliope. It was pouring with rain when they made camp for the night. When they awoke they saw the sun glinting on metal uncovered by a small earth slip. They thought it was silver and hurried on to Gympie only to be told their find consisted of the much less precious metal, antimony.

Less precious or not, an antimony mining industry was soon in full swing at Neerdie. At its peak in the 1880s Neerdie had a population of 200 or more, with most of the men working down the shafts while others cut and hauled timber to be used as pit props in the mines.

The town itself boasted a butcher’s shop, a bakery, a general store and a hotel, though it never served a beer. By the time the hotel was completed the town already was in its death throes and its owner, George Power used it as his home instead.

There was no formed road between Neerdie and Gympie at first but Neerdie was on the main postal route from Tiaro to Cootharaba. There were postal receiving depots on the route at Bauple, in Joseph Ostwald’s store at Neerdie, and at Goomboorian and Tagigan. Although Neerdie ceased to exist as a town after the antimony mines folded in the early 1890s, it remained on the old postal route for many more years. Peter Gilligan, at one time a Neerdie resident, was the last mail rider on the route. The first antimony claim at Neerdie was taken out in August 1872 by a syndicate comprising Samuel Glasgow, Percy Ramsay, R. F. Clarke, G. W. Dart, S. Southerden and W. Williams. The syndicate formed the Neardie Antimony Company which worked the mine for four years without making a profit before leasing it on tribute for two years to a Mr. Ahrenfeldt.

In 1881 the mine was leased to the Wide Bay Antimony and Smelting Company, whose managing director was Mr. H. E. King, MLA. This company did quite well for a few years. Ore was sent to England for smelting until the company installed its own furnaces and built a brick cooling flue which

extended over 300 yards up the side of a hill. Bricks for the flue were made locally while fire bricks for the furnaces were imported from Scotland. Some of the flue bricks eventually found their way to buildings in Gympie.

From the outset the mineworkers had an efficient organisation. They set up the Neerdie Accident Fund "for the purpose of paying of one pound per week to any member that may be injured in work at any way doing his duty to his employers or going to and from such employment." Each member was required to pay the sum of sixpence per week plus any other levy deemed necessary from time to time. Minutes of their early meetings have been preserved by Mr. P. O'Brien, who lives on the site of one - time township.

Neerdie also sported a cricket club comprising local miners and a few neighbouring farmers. In 1886 its members included George Power (president), James Armitage, Henry Armitage sr. and jr., John and Joseph Ross, Thomas Rop, John and August Jensen, John and Joseph McDonald, Peter Egholm, A. Cole, John Daly, Robert Lahey, William Cothel, T. W. Boyce, T. W. Brennan, A. Datson, J. Gillis and J. Kerridge.

Wide Bay Antimony and Smelting Co. went into liquidation in 1883 after various difficulties, not the least of them an expensive law suit. However, the mine was taken over by the Neerdie Antimony and Smelting Co. which worked it for another decade. When the mine eventually closed it had been worked to a depth of about 500 feet with several drives, the longest of about 800 feet, running off at different levels in a north-south direction.



Headworks at Neerdie mine

Just after the turn of the century fire destroyed the headworks and the shaft was filled in and abandoned. About 30 years later Jack and Michael McMahon sunk another shaft some distance away to a depth of about 100 feet but their mine did not reach the production stage.

Then in 1960, Mr. Philip Flood decided to investigate the old Neerdie shaft. He dug down about 40 feet through lantana-covered rubble to the old workings where he found the timbers intact.

Gympie interest in antimony was revived and a company, A.C.E. Mining Pty., was formed to exploit the mine. At the height of the Australian mining boom another company took an option on the A.C.E. mine and its drilling tests showed proven reserves of 24,000 tons of antimony plus another 81,000 tons inferred. However, the option did not lead to anything

more concrete and A.C.E. has not produced any commercial quantities of antimony from the mine though it has spent a considerable amount of money on plant.

The Sandy Creek area to the south of Neerdie was settled early this century. Its first settlers were the Boyces, who built a homestead at Butler's Knob on the bridle track to Gympie and who several years later opened a small sawmill. They were followed by the Downs, Dower, Craig, Collins, Malveny, Scott and Beutel families over the space of a few years. For some time the area was known as Downsfield—the name given to the local school—after early settler Alf Downs.

Round about World War 1 there was an influx of settlers from the Russia-Estonia area and inevitably the district gained the nickname "Little Russia". Among these selectors were the Roons, Aulbergs, Cooterbergs, Michaelsens and Kellos. Many of them had come via Canada where Oscar Roon was said to have proved himself the strongest man in a camp of 1,000 rugged lumberjacks. In his later years he still thought nothing of trudging over the hills carrying an eight-gallon can of cream on his back. Mr. Michaelsen was responsible for the design of the first hall at Sandy Creek. He built it in the style of his old country with a steep pitch to let the snow slide off. When the hall was rebuilt in the 1960s after being flattened in a storm the roofline was given a normal pitch.

The Kellos' old property, now Shaws, was the site of the Oaks Tennis Club and had the first tennis court in the district. Later a court was built beside the hall. The Oaks also boasted a cricket club and its players used to amalgamate with North Deep Creek and Anderleigh to play in Gympie eastern zone fixtures. Mrs. Hilda Cartwright, a daughter of another early settler, Mr. Tipman, went on to win several Gympie tennis championships.

Before the introduction of motor transport a number of bullock teams worked out of Sandy Creek, with Billy Foster, Mick Morley and Snow Godwin among the best known teamsters. Mail was brought out from Gympie by Joe Callaghan on horseback. After the horse and buggy era Bert Hook put the first cream truck, an International, on the run to Gympie. It was a difficult route over the range, especially near Downs' Downfall where a slip occurred three years ago. What misfortune befell Downs is no longer remembered, but a Mr. McNaught once met his downfall there when he lost a load of pigs.

When Dinny Dunlea opened the doors of his new Enterprise Hotel he no doubt had visions of doing a fairly brisk trade. The old Enterprise mine just across the road had been reopened and settlement of the area was quickening. Already there was a thriving Methodist church, and next door to it a Salvation Army Hall, around the corner on Old Veteran Road.

There was even talk that Enterprise might grow into a town and the road was widened to cope with the expected volume of traffic. But the mine did not live up to expectations and the township failed to eventuate. Shortly afterwards—three quarters of a century ago—the hotel burnt down and Mr. Dunlea transferred his licence to a new hotel, the Victory, which he built on



Cootharaba Road a quarter of a mile outside the Gympie city boundary. Three decades later the hotel was moved to its present site on Bath Terrace by the then licensee, Oscar Bonney.

Settlement of the Enterprise and Veteran area began almost 100 years ago on both sides of the Enterprise Road, then a bush track cut by timber workers hauling billet wood to the mines in Gympie. The Gympie end of this road is now part of Old Wolvi Road while the section out to the disappointing Enterprise mine forms part of the Old Goomboorian Road.

Alf Godwin jr., whose father selected a 40-acre Miners Homestead block at the junction of these roads, was for many years the major employer in the area. Godwin had several bullock teams hauling timber and, in 1907, introduced the first traction engine to the Shire. Its effect on horses was alarming. They invariably took fright and bolted when they came across his hissing, steam-belching mechanical monster for the first time. The Widgee Shire Council received so many complaints about Mr. Godwin's engine that it passed a special set of by-laws regulating the use of traction engines.

The area was rich in messmates and gums which housed thousands of koalas. But little of this timber was milled. It was nearly all felled and burnt to make way for dairy pastures.

Among the first settlers on the Gympie end of Enterprise road were R. Naylor, J. G. Williams, Duke Sanderson who had the small Star of the East mine further along the road, and William Clark, a blacksmith at the Columbia Extended mine in Gympie. Selectors further out included Josiah Gambling, who introduced the first small scale irrigation in the district, Bob and Charles Tompkins, J. F. Window who had a fair sized piggery, and A. Radke, a commercial pineapple grower three quarters of a century ago.

Mr. A. Cook was probably the first selector on Old Veteran Road in the early 1880s. There was little further settlement until the 1890s by which time the Bickles, Naylor and Browns moved into the area.

Around the turn of the century Gympie butcher Jack Jerks had a slaughter yard on Old Veteran Road. For many years there was another slaughter yard—owned by a Mr. Sundstrup and later by Matt Drummond—on Old Wolvi Road, This was adjacent to the old Kauper vineyard, one of the first to be established round Gympie.

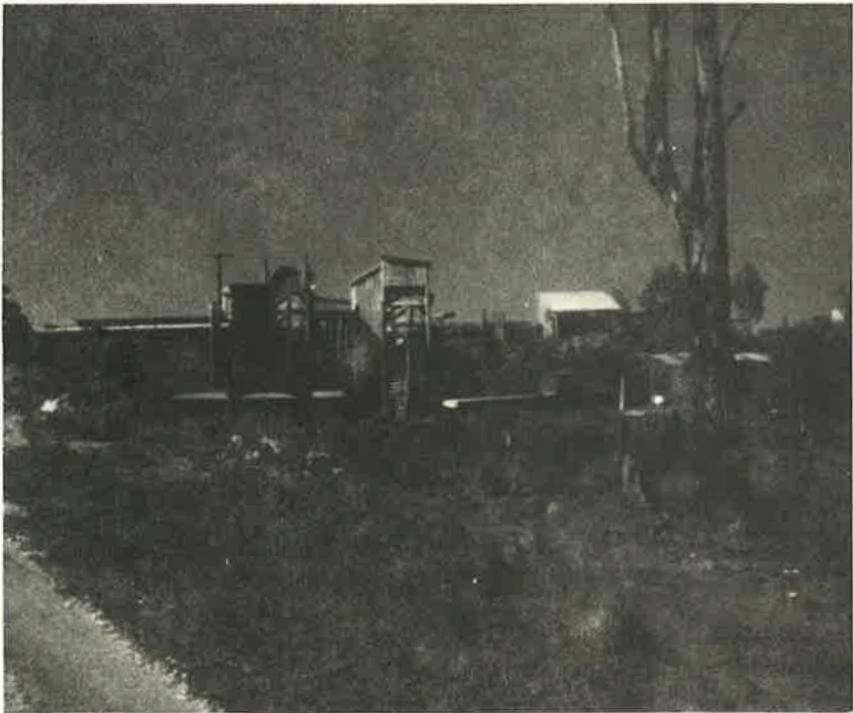
Settlement extended up Sandy Creek Road with the opening of Timber Reserve 502 in 1910. Selectors included Harry Langley, A. G. Portas who later served as a Shire Councillor for 37 years, and George Brown, whose son Henry had the first cream run from the Veteran area.

On North Deep Creek, near the early Ora diggings, there was very little settlement before World War 1 when the Shire Council put in a new road, the Ora Vale Road to replace the bush track known as Stony Gully. Shire ganger B. Naylor built a bridge over Exhibition Gully, opposite Mr. A. J. Enwright's homestead, which opened the area for further settlement.

Just after the war Veteran and Enterprise residents installed a cooperative dip, near the bridge on Enterprise Road. Initial shareholders included Jack Wyllie, C. Portas, Albert Matten and Frank Godwin.

In 1929 Mr. G. B. Scott convened a meeting of local residents for the purposes of building a Veteran School of Arts. At the founding meeting on July 16 Mr. Scott was elected chairman of a committee comprising K. Gray (secretary), V. Gray, A. G. Portas, G. Portas, J. Wyllie and G. Los. Messrs Scott, A. G. Portas and W. G. Window offered themselves as guarantors and trustees. The hall was built by William Tompkins at a cost of £292 and was opened on April 5, 1932 by Mr. V. H. Tozer, M.L.A. for Gympie. In the same year Mr. A. G. Portas became chairman, a position he held until 1978 when the Widgee Shire Council was asked to take over the running of the hall. Part of the hall was destroyed by fire a few years ago. Local residents contributed timber for rebuilding which was done by A. G. and Roy Portas, Merv Window and Pat Mitchell.

Tamaree, first stop on the railway line north of Gympie, was known at one time as Tamaree Harbour. The sea hasn't receded since—the coast was always a good 30 miles away. But during the Depression Tamaree used to harbour hundreds of swaggies waiting to ride the rails further north.



Lime works at Tamaree

There were often up to 300 swaggies congregated at Tamaree, the best spot to hitch a ride north since the railway inspectors in Gympie were always on the lookout for non-paying passengers. Sometimes the local stationmaster was sympathetic towards the swaggies, at other times plain hostile. Often the railways staff went out of their way to help.

Mr. Frank Nash, a longtime resident of Tamaree, recalled one instance when a swaggie who was accompanied by a kangaroo dog, spun the night officer a convincing story that he urgently needed to get to Townsville. A goods train was passing through and the night officer purposely mistimed his baton exchange, forcing the driver to stop. The stop was just long enough for the swaggie and his dog to scramble beneath the tarpaulin on one of the wagons.

Tamaree has nearly always been a major rail siding to hold Gympie's overflow rolling stock. Because of this it has had a fair sized permanent population of railway staff. One of the best known local railway identities was ganger Billy Heseltine, whose son Bill was a prominent cyclist.



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*  
Derailed carriages after the fatal rail smash at Tamaree in 1947.

Lime has been a local industry at Tamaree for over three quarters of a century. The limeworks were owned for most of this time by two generations of the Ambrose family. Their basic process was to build up alternate layers of

wood and napstone in a pit about 30 feet deep and 12 feet across. This was covered and fired. When it had burnt out and collapsed the quicklime was simply removed from the bottom.

The Ambroses excavated their limestone from the hills behind the works and employed a few woodcutters to supply the firewood. After the last war the Runges took over the business and installed a new plant a couple of hundred yards away from the old site. The Tamaree Lime Company now uses limestone quarried near Kilkivan.

Very early in its history Tamaree had a hall, built from stringy bark, and later a school. The latter was moved to Tin Can Bay.

Early selectors at Tamaree included the Konowski and Meier families on the Gympie side of the railway line and the Ambroses on the other. A later settler, Mr. Blake, had a wood run into Gympie to supply five-foot lengths of firewood for the Electric Light Co.'s boilers. Many years earlier 80-foot lengths of timber from his property were hauled to Gympie for the original poppet legs of the Scottish mine.

One of Widgee's worst disasters took place near Tamaree on October 18, 1947 when a Townsville-bound mail train and the south-bound Rockhampton mail collided head-on. Eight people were killed and 13 injured in the crash.

## Land of the Tall Trees

Goomboorian, for all its wealth of timber, might just as well have been a thousand miles away as far as the early sawmillers of Gympie were concerned. For between Gympie and the tall trees of Goomboorian, from which the latter district took its name, was a near impenetrable mass of scrub. And so it was left to northern interests, Maryborough sawmillers Ramsay and Co., to reap Goomboorian's first rewards.

The wealth was obvious. The towering hoop pines of the two Goomboorian mountains could be seen from miles away. And closer inspection found the surrounding rainforests studded with valuable cedar and beech. The only problem was how to get it out. Gympie was out of the question. The nearest settlement was Neerdie to the north, but from there it was still a backbreaking haul to the nearest railhead at Gunalda. Ramsays chose Tin Can Bay as their outlet.

The company was so keen to secure the Goomboorian timber that it applied for the land using several of its employees' names. They included William Cooke Rogers, Henry Armitage, James and Thomas Allen, Phillip Adams and Thomas Wells, all of whom applied on July 14, 1876 for 1,144-acre blocks. Most of the applications were either totally or partially rejected, but Ramsays finished up with over 1,500 acres of the best timber, which the company exploited for many years before succumbing to financial difficulties.

Unwittingly, Ramsays just beat Goomboorian's first intending settler to the draw. John Gillis, who had given up his mining job in New South Wales, tried to select the same piece of land. On missing out he applied on August 2, 1876 for 670 acres adjoining the Ramsay land and this time was successful.

Gillis built a slab house on the Tinana Creek side of the junction of Tin Can Bay and Webster Roads. There were no roads at that time however, and no houses for miles. The nearest white neighbours were Ramsay's timber getters working under the foremanship of Henry Armitage. But within months, settlement of the Goomboorian area became a family affair.

In February 1877 John Ross, a brother of Mrs. Gillis, selected 200 acres a little closer to Gympie. The slab house he built was demolished several decades ago. But a tree he planted, a Moreton Bay fig, towers next to the original homestead site just over Ross Creek No. 3 on the way to Tin Can Bay. About 200 yards further along the road another big Moreton Bay fig marks the site where he later built the first dip in the area.

Two years after the arrival of John Ross at Goomboorian his father, Joseph, selected land between the Gillis and John Ross properties, while further land was taken up by Joseph Ross, jr. It was John Ross, in fact, who had set the wheels of settlement in motion. He had been manager of the Cootharaba cattle run which extended up the coastal plains east of Tinana Creek. He had inspected the Goomboorian district which obviously impressed him greatly, before steering his brother-in-law to settle there.

Gillis and John Ross worked as a team, hauling their timber to Schnapper Creek to be rafted by Ramsays, along with the company's own logs to the sawmills at Maryborough. Gillis and Ross cut the first road through to Tin Can Bay and built the first bridge over Tinana Creek. The present Tin Can Bay Road generally takes a more northerly course to the one that Gillis and John Ross made. But one of the ironbark girders of their bridge is still intact across



*courtesy A. Taylor*

Ross Creek pioneers with local Members of Parliament in the early 1920s. Back row, from left: Fred Thompson, Charlie Sorensen, Tom Dundas, Fred Damm. Middle row: Joe Rogers, Malcolm Buchanan, Harry Walker (M.L.A. Cooroola), Tom Dunstan (M.L.A. Gympie). Front row: Jack Burns, Jim Kitchen, Alf Taylor, Bill Rogers. The woman and child are unidentified.

the creek several hundred yards upstream from the present Tinana Creek bridge. Although the road was rerouted before this century, the bridge was used at least until 1919, when it was redecked to help with the movement of sheep being agisted in the neighbouring countryside during a drought.

Probably the last Goomboorian timber to be rafted from Tin Can Bay was hauled out just after World War 1 by Ivan Gillis, a grandson of the first settler. By then the road to Gympie had improved sufficiently for bullock teams to take that route. Eventually they went only as far as Gentle Annie where the logs were unloaded and taken the rest of the way to Gympie by horse teams, or traction engines.

John Gillis earned his reputation as a trailblazer the hard way, cutting much of the first road out of Goomboorian to Wilson's Pocket to join up with the old Wolvi road to Gympie. He also blazed the trail for the Old Goomboorian Road—through the Yellow Scrub which was a quagmire in the wet, over the Gentle Annie and across Deep Creek to join up with the Enterprise Road which had itself been cut by timber-getters to make a track to Gympie. When the Old Goomboorian Road was surveyed in 1891, the Widgee Divisional Board awarded Gillis a one hundred pound contract to widen his existing track and to put in bridges and culverts.

The Goomboorian timber enticed several more families to the district, among them the Hinds, Williams, Marks, Henrys and Blys. The Gillis house remained the hub of the area. Many of the settlers were Roman Catholics and Dean Horan rode out from Gympie once a month to celebrate Mass in the Gillis house. The house was also the postal receiving depot, at first on the mail route from Tiaro to Cootharaba and later direct from Gympie.

The dairying industry was just finding its feet when the Government threw open the Ross Creek lands—including Mullins Creek, Wilson's Pocket and Sandy Creek—in 1910. There was a rush to select the lands though one successful applicant was warned against going ahead "because it rains there for nine months of the year and then it sets in." It probably seemed like that sometimes when boggy roads made travelling a misery.

The Ross Creek selectors were young and hardy and undeterred by weather. They quickly bent their backs to the task of felling and burning the scrub to make way for dairy pastures.

In those days a man stood or fell in the eyes of his fellows through his prowess with an axe. Just about top of the tree was Alf Taylor whose axe could devour an acre of scrub a day. The same Mr. Taylor had a gift for words and was a forceful advocate of the Social Credit system of government. Once he went to Brisbane as a one-man deputation to plead his fellow Ross Creek selectors' case for lower rentals. As an indication of the prosperity of the time he had to borrow a pair of trousers to replace his one and only pair of ragged dungarees.



W. N. Buchanan

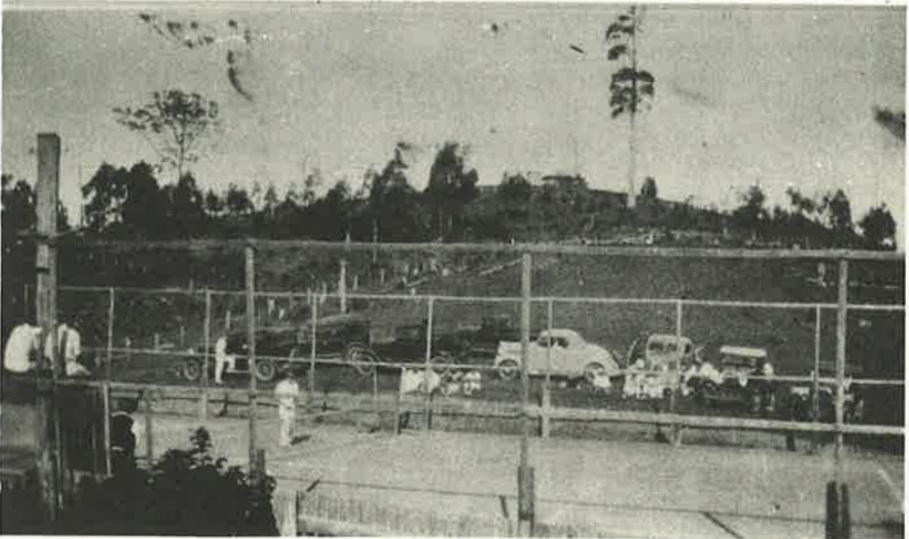
Many of these selectors made significant contributions to the progress of both their district and the Shire. One of the most respected was Malcolm Buchanan, a foundation member of the Gympie Fruitgrowers' Association and one of the industry's most eminent men. A son, Neil, later served on the Shire Council for 18 years, four of them as chairman. George Scott was another of the Ross Creek selectors who served on the Council. Others who broke the back of this land were Thomas Dundas, Ephraim and Emanuel Johnson, Ove Hansen, Arthur Mellor, Fred Burns, Percy and Eddie Kitchen, Fred Reeve and Bill and Charlie Sorensen.

Some of the selectors' land fell within the goldfield boundary.

They included Bill Rogers, who was a long-time chairman of the local progress association, Bob Tomkins, Ern Howard and Alf Godwin.

At the same time as the major settlement of Ross Creek, the northern end of the Goomboorian district was selected by the two Elliott brothers, James and George. They added several more blocks and began an AIS cattle stud on the expanded property which they called Kia Ora, the New Zealand Maori word for greetings.

Gradually the whole area took on the name Kia Ora, and when the first provisional school was mooted the local settlers plumped to call it Kia Ora in



*courtesy Mrs. E. Jamie*

Ross Creek tennis tournament at the home of Mr. A. Taylor



preference to North Goomboorian. When the telephone came the first exchange was installed in Mr. J. W. Elliott's house. The first Methodist church services were held in the house in 1937, before the church was built on another part of Kia Ora land.

Although Kia Ora is probably more of a separate entity today, it was an integral part of the general Goomboorian area when the first Goomboorian School of Arts was opened in 1914. It was built on land donated by Joseph Ostwald, a former Neerdie resident. Timber came from Albert Jolly's mill at Tagigan, Peterson Brothers of Kia Ora and from Ferguson and Co. of Gympie. The hall was extensively remodelled twice and its name changed to Goomboorian Memorial School of Arts in 1951.

When the district turned wholeheartedly to dairying there was a move to start a Goomboorian cheese factory. By October 1914 the local farmers had promised to take up 600 shares and plans for a 1,000-gallon plant were obtained from the Department of Agriculture. Mr. Williams and Mr. Watts were appointed the area's delegates to liaise with the Wide Bay Dairy Co-operative in Gympie to start up the factory. The outbreak of war put paid to further developments, however.



Opening of the Tinana Creek bridge on the Tin Can Bay Road, 1935

The first regular cream run to Gympie was started up by Jack E. Burns, a son of Mr. J. R. Burns. Other horse and dray carriers from the area included William King, Andrew Hill, Joe Portas, George McIntosh, Arthur Hook and the Tramacchi brothers. Tom Elliott had the last horse team on the run before switching to a solid-tyred International truck.

After World War II the focus of the area switched northwards—first with the opening of the Kia Ora Hall in 1947 on land donated by Mr. Jim Henry and then the start of the Forestry Department's work in the wallum country. Three decades of planting have seen the pine forests stretch from Tinana Creek through nearly to Camp Kerr, where the Australian Army established a training ground for its reserve forces on the site once known as Brown's camp, at one time a grazing ground for Kia Ora cattle.

Of all Goomboorian's many clubs and societies, none began anything like the local swimming club. It had its origins in a flash flood which gouged a deep waterhole at the crossing on Ross Creek No. 2, about 30 yards downstream from the present bridge. The first involuntary "member" of the club was Eric Du Rietz who was hauling bananas for Albert Ostwald at the time. He drove his team of horses straight into the hole and had to be dragged from the water. A few hours later workers on a nearby hill saw Bob Cousin become the second "member" as he rode at full gallop down the road and straight into the middle of the hole. Later the youths of the district formed a proper swimming club and installed a springboard beside the hole.

## The Tagigan Connection

Sleeping out in a hollow log as protection against Aborigines' spears, Emanuel Gâté must sometimes have wondered what he was doing in Widgee. Born and bred in France, Gâté was the son of a French count and had grown up in the luxury of a chateau with feather-filled mattresses. But adventure brought him to Queensland where he became the first man to select land at Tagigan—3,000 acres which had been part of the shortlived Tagigan station.

Tagigan run was tendered for in 1859 by Augustus Barton and was assessed as being capable of carrying 640 cattle. Barton's annual rental was £10/15/- for the run which started from a tree marked "B-R" on a stony peak in the Tagigan Range. Two years later the lease was transferred to Walter Hay and in 1866 to J. Eaton who let it lapse. Whether any of the lessees ever settled on the station is unknown though there was almost certainly some early dwelling. Pieces of willow pattern crockery were later ploughed up on the property and until recently there were remains of aged, hand-hewn cedar logs.

Gâté was the only man for miles around when he took up his selection, his nearest neighbours the timber cutters and teamsters working out of John Hillcoat's selection on Tinana Creek at Wolvi. Gâté had to blaze his own trail from Gympie since there were no roads in the area. He took with him the small herd of cattle and horses he had been working, first in the Chatsworth area and then at Canina.

According to his family, Emanuel Gâté had been an officer in the French Army before he came to Australia on remittance to gain colonial experience. One of his first experiences was to learn the art of horsebreaking from the notorious Captain Thunderbolt. Gâté had no idea of his tutor's real identity when he started work. Once a group of police rode up to them and to Gâté's astonishment, Thunderbolt leapt astride an unbroken horse and galloped into the scrub. He returned a fortnight later after throwing off his pursuers and claimed the police had blamed him for a crime he had not committed.

Later Gâté moved to Widgee station to work as a stockman and then on to the Chatsworth, before the Gympie gold rush, to run his own stock. In common with James Nash he married one of the Murphy sisters who were among the first white women to arrive in the Gympie district.

Gâté had many brushes with Aborigines who camped on his property from time to time. He chose the hollow log for his bed after several close shaves with spears through his tent. As a deterrent, he sent home to France for a dog, a massive Newfoundland. Not long after it arrived he was visited by a tribe of blacks whose leader menaced him with a spear. Gâté

called to his workman, Jack Ramus, who was holding the dog in a tent. The Newfoundland bounded out and, so the story goes, shook the warrior like a rat before Gâté called it off. The Aborigines took to their heels and were not seen in those parts for several years.

Some years later Gâté's attitude had mellowed when he came across a tribe about to kill and eat a young half-caste boy, according to one of his family. Gâté bought the boy's life in exchange for a red handkerchief and a bottle of rum. He educated and kept him for 25 years until one day his by then grown-up charge killed a bullock out of spite because it had kicked him. Gâté told him to go and did not hear from him again for several years when he received a letter asking for his birth certificate because he wanted to get married!

Gâté spoke seven languages and every now and then was called on to act as an interpreter. In March 1896 he was the court interpreter in Gympie for two Algerian prisoners, Mezroud ben Sherif and Mahomed ben Ame, who had escaped from the French penal settlement in New Caledonia. They made their escape in a tiny boat and finally beached at Double Island Point, where a third escapee died of exposure. Although the court story said the Algerians were captured by police, it was rumoured that they had actually been captured by a selector in the Tagigan-Wolvi area and were forced to work for him before he handed them over to officials.

Emanuel Gâté himself was involved in a drama at Double Island Point when he broke both legs in a surfing mishap. He became paralysed and went home to the family chateau in France where his brother, a doctor, somehow got him back on his feet. A family photograph of the chateau, which was destroyed in World War 1, shows Emanuel Gâté on crutches outside. Gâté returned to Tagigan and lived an active life up till his death in his 90th year.

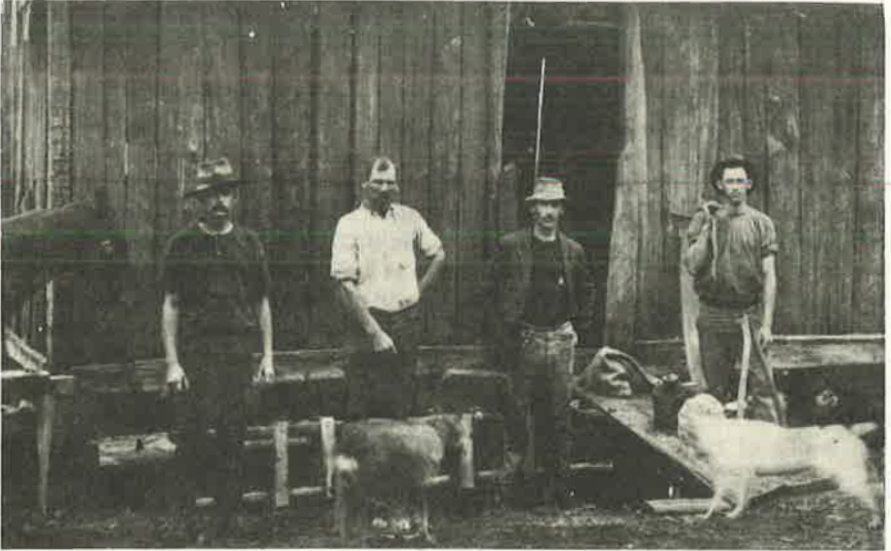
Until the turn of the century there was little land selection in the heavily timbered hill country behind Tagigan. Ferguson and Co. held most of the land around Mounts Wolvi and Coondoo while McGhie Luya had a big tract extending from Lake Cootharaba back into the Wolvi and Wahpunga Ranges. Other land was selected at Wolvi in the 1880s and 1890s but this was mainly by timber getters or teamsters acting in the interests of the sawmills to ensure a continuity of timber. Among them were the MacKenzies in the Tagigan Range, the Lindsay brothers around Como and Tommy Marks towards Goomboorian. Supplies were normally brought in from Maryborough via Tin Can Bay and Carland Creek, which was always known as Store Creek in those days.

Marks often told the story of a contretemps with the law when he drove his bullock team down Mary Street, the main street of Gympie, hauling a giant 90-foot tree. He tried to turn the corner at what was known as Market Square but the front of the load threatened to take off the front of Thomas' shop while the rear swung almost into Geary's (the Atlantic) Hotel. Traffic was banked up on both sides as Marks unhitched his lead bullocks and attempted to skid each end of the wagon sideways across the street to make

the corner. All this time a young policeman was constantly urging him to clear the street until the exasperated bullocky suddenly handed him his whip and said: "Here, see if you can do better." The policeman promptly returned the whip and disappeared from the scene and some time later Marks managed to manoeuvre his way round the corner to the cheers of the crowd which had gathered to watch.

Some of the teamsters had fairly large blocks and reared cattle which they sold as stores, among them Mr. H. Becker who bought land at Tagigan from the Bank of N.S.W. for 2/6 an acre. Once a year a buyer from Gootchie visited the area to inspect and purchase the cattle, there being no other convenient market at the time.

Apart from the Gâtés the oldest established settlers in the region were the Hillcoats, a branch of a family which was scattered all around the Widgee Division. John Hillcoat, from Bath in England, had the original timber lease near the head of Tinana Creek and one of his sons, Harry, remained in the area at Oakleigh Park, just past the Neusavale turnoff on Wolvi Road. Mrs. Hillcoat was the district midwife and later conducted the Kotoro Nursing Home in Gympie on Horseshoe Bend near the present Church of Christ.



*courtesy W. H. Robertson*

Wolvi and Kin Kin pioneers (from left): Bill Hose, Jack Hose, Charles Hopf and Louis Wieland

They were followed by James Dowzer at Tagigan and then about 1904 by the Neeb and Becker families who took up adjoining properties near Gâté. Dick Parkyn, a subsequent Shire chairman, also took up a Tagigan block in 1902 in addition to his other property at Goomong. Neeb initially went to Tagigan to work for Dowzer while Becker, one of the first dairymen in the area, milked about 20 cows and churned his own butter which he sold locally.

Kin Kin, part of Widgee Shire in the early 1900s, was settled independently of Wolvi, the range road linking the two districts not being opened until the start of World War 1. Before the road, it was generally considered easier to go the long way around Coondoo Mountain rather than attempt to cross the range. Charles Hopf, of the pioneer Kin Kin family, made such a ride around the mountain to Wolvi Flats as the area on Wolvi Creek was known. At the junction of Wolvi and Coondoo Creeks he saw a bush waving furiously and on investigation found a line attached to it and on the other end a large freshwater cod. There were fish aplenty in the streams before the days of fertilisers so Hopf, then 18, naturally kept the fish and rebaited the line.

Some timber blocks in the Kin Kin district were offered in 1894 but it was not until the next decade that land was made available for selection. It was opened progressively from the Cooran end and was settled mainly through the Risley and Moran groups. The Risley group comprised farmers from the Richmond River in New South Wales. In April 1908 they took up about 20 blocks and cleared the way for Kin Kin to become a prime dairying centre. Members of the group included Bill Risley, Dick and Bill Bowman, Jim Gallen, Sam and Blayney Keys, Bill Payne, the five Shepperson brothers, "Pardy" McWilliams, Bill Marshall, Oscar Nunan, Charles Vines, Fred Francis and Messrs Kelly and Simpson.



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

The slab home of one of the first selectors in the Kin Kin district. The "belfry" is the kitchen chimney.

They were followed to Kin Kin by the Moran group, led by former brewery traveller Tom Moran. Initial members were Maurice Condon, Harry Miller, John Forsyth, Frank Andrew and three Moore brothers. Two of the group were victims of tree-felling mishaps. Miller was knocked unconscious and carried on a litter to Gympie where he remained in a coma for a fortnight before making a full recovery. Forsyth was killed only a year after moving on to his block. Decades later a tornado swept across the Wahpunga Range and killed the couple living in a house on Forsyth's old property.

About 1912 Government Surveyor Peppercorn surveyed a route from Wolvi across to the Moran group farms and brought about the construction of the Wolvi Range Road. This allowed the southern side and top of Wolvi Mountain to be opened for selection. The newcomers included notable wood-chopper Arthur Davison, champion walker J. G. Hose, Bill Lloyd, Gus Kirkegard, Vic Dunstan and Dick and Jack Johnson. Initially the selections around Mount Wolvi went into Noosa Shire but later the boundaries were redrawn to return them to Widgee. The road over the range was always subject to slips and has now been closed for many years.

During the war Ferguson and Co. subdivided and auctioned 4,000 acres at Mount Coondoo and Eulama and helped build a bridge over the Kin Kin Creek at Wahpunga. Eulama district then became generally known as Coondoo. When the first telephone exchange was built in Yellow Gully, it was named Wolvi Exchange. Then when the line was extended to the foot of Mount Wolvi, opposite Mount Coondoo, the P.M.G. called that exchange Coondoo—the telephone district inspectors argued there was already a Wolvi exchange so they adopted the name of the prominent hill in view. To complicate matters further the Toolara forestry area later got the name of Coondoo, too, but eventually the anomalies were rectified.

The Robertsons who had taken up land on the Coondoo flat, were the first in the district to begin commercial dairying. Mr. W. H. (Toby) Robertson, jr., said the arrival of his father's first milking plant was an occasion to remember. It comprised a non-releasing, five single unit bucket plant with a four horse power steam boiler built by Waugh and Josephson. Bullock driver Jack Lehr picked up the equipment from the Cooran railway station and hauled it over Wahpunga and Nunan's Range.

"I had to stay home from school to chop several trees off the track," said Mr. Robertson. "The loaded team arrived before we had cleared the last two and the driver said: 'I'll fix that.'" We packed a few saplings on each side of a fallen log across the track and the driver jumped the wagon over. Dad was a bit perturbed on arriving home—the driver retrieved a packet of dynamite from inside the boiler which he had procured for a friend, presumably for fishing."

This was before the Wolvi Range Road had been made and the young Toby Robertson used to sling a pair of nine-gallon cream cans across a pack horse and take the old saddle track across the range to Tom Moore's farm in the Moran group. Moore kept the cream in his dairy until later in the day

when it was picked up by Jim Chapman in his horse and cart and taken via Kin Kin to Cooran where it was put on the rail to the Wide Bay Dairy Co's factory in Gympie. As production increased the Robertsons needed two packhorses to carry their cream. The Stewart brothers also went in for dairying and sent their cream to Gympie by the same route.

Soon after the Kin Kin farmers set up a cooperative butter factory of their own but the Wolvi district farmers mainly continued to support the Gympie factory. By then several farmers at Yellow Gully, Neusa Vale and Wilsons Pocket were also dairying or about to start and Jack Salmon and his brothers began a cream-carrying service direct to Gympie. Neusa Vale, now a general area, got its name from the Waller family's selection there.

A few years later when production had dropped away sharply after a severe winter and a dry spring, the run became uneconomic for the Salmons. Toby Robertson took over the cream run, employing a number of different drivers over the years. For a while Mr. H. Becker owned and operated the run.

Yellow Gully, between Wolvi School and the Wolvi Mountain turnoff, was notorious in wet weather as horses invariably became bogged there. Mr.



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

An old cream can depot on Wolvi Range



Percy Eaton said that as a boy he used to dread the carrier getting bogged as it always meant his father would go off to help, leaving him to do the milking.

In 1922 Wolvi got a motorised service—only the second in the Shire after Mooloo. Cyril Jones operated a solid rubber tyred “Traffic” truck and later sold to “Snow” Bellingham, who operated a pneumatic-tyred Thornycroft truck. “Snow” was a mechanic, which helped in those days, and for years was a legend in the district for his reliability in any sort of weather. Later Bob Sprenger operated the service for many years.

Droughts always seem to hit when farmers are overstocked. The bad drought years from 1913 to 1919 were no exception and many cattle were sent to the wallum country for agistment. Several Kin Kin and Wolvi farmers sent cattle into the wallum a couple of miles from Coondoo and for 18 months they paid Charles Hopf and Jimmy McWilliams three pence per week to look after them. The two men had a string of horses and used to follow the water courses checking the cattle as often as they could. At the end of the drought there was a big muster to sort out each owner’s animals.

No fee was required for grazing cattle on the wallum which was all crown land. However, farmers had to notify the Government where they intended to graze their cattle. Four different farmers once were given permission to graze their stock in areas each had specified—the Ironbark, the Sheep Camp, Milner’s Camp and Davidson’s Camp. To everyone’s surprise they found they had each picked out the same area of the Como country though each knew it by a different name.

Dairying took a back seat for a while during the banana boom of the 1920s. Men of many nationalities—in particular, Finns, Indians and Chinese—cleared thousands of acres of scrub on leased land around Mount Wolvi and Kin Kin to plant bananas. The Chinese also grew tomatoes and used to visit the school each Friday and hand them out—to stop the children from raiding their plots. There were about 90 Finns in the Wolvi area. They were regarded as a wild, hard-drinking bunch and there was little social intercourse with them although they caused little or no trouble outside their own group.

An old-time resident recalls the Finns were hard workers who took a pride in their physical condition. A number of them had considerable athletic ability and, during periods of leisure, a quite remarkable thirst.

Many of the Hindus returned to India to die since the Australian Government of the day would not allow them to bring in younger members of their families to take their place. When the banana bubble finally burst, there was a great exodus of growers and few of their descendants are left in the area. At one time there was a boarding house at Wolvi for the banana growers. But when they left it was forced to close down and the owner, Les Lee, also departed to embark on a fishing career at Tin Can Bay.

Motor transport was used to bring the bananas off Mount Wolvi. This was achieved mainly by adding extra blades to the cooling fan of the Chevrolet trucks which were used. This improved the airflow and kept the motors from

overheating on the long, low-gear climbs. Barney Walker had the first truck on the mountain, a 13cwt Chev capable of carrying 50 cases.

Cedar Pocket was named naturally enough for the red cedar which flourished there. And naturally enough it was smartly felled and hauled out by bullock teams, since Deep Creek was not normally deep enough to float the logs downstream. Settlement of the Cedar Pocket Road began from the Gympie end where Robert Cochrane took up a nine-acre Miner's Homestead lease in 1871. His widow later gave part of this land for the Cootharaba Road School. Sons David and Bob later farmed on opposite sides of the road.



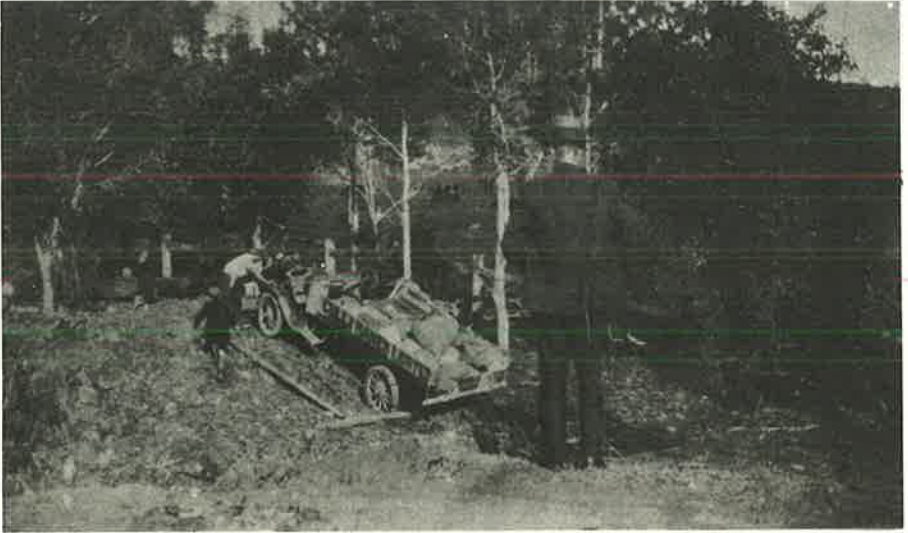
*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

Wolvi sawmill in 1931

Nearby selectors included Bill Sorrensen, John Green, and Jim Hopper. The road was known early on as Green's Road. Green's farm was recently cut into six to 11 acre blocks as the City View estate. Green's Creek was settled early this century by the Bath, Finch and Jepson families. Mr. V. Bath, the only descendant of these families still farming the area off Cavanagh Road, told of the hard times his father had when he settled there. "My father, Henry, had only 10/- in his pocket when he got married," he said. "It was all standing scrub when he took up the land. It must have been pretty tough at first. You had to mortgage just about everything, including your wife, if you wanted a mortgage then. Then when we were kids we used to spend many nights shelling corn by hand. If anyone dropped in they'd sit down and help while you had a yarn."

In 1910 a further area of Green's Creek was opened up between Cedar Pocket and Wolvi Range. Selectors included Charles Donald, Joe Shambler, Archie Cameron and the Jeffreys, all on 40-acre blocks.

Continuing along the road to Cedar Pocket, early settlers included Charles Bloss, who had a Jersey stud, Tom Saxelby and John Ormes. The Ormes family later donated part of their land for the Cedar Pocket School of Arts. A public subscription was opened in 1919 and in six months over £105 was collected to build the hall. Heading the list of contributors were T. C. Turner, Joe Tatnell snr., and jr., W. McHarg, A. B. Cameron, Mrs. D. Dunlea who had the Victory Hotel on Cootharaba Road, Norm Cavanagh, Ed Brabiner who was hall secretary for many years, J. Hewitt, J. Bertleson, T. Elliott, W. Jamieson, F. Bowman, J. Powell who had a store in Gympie, E. Cavanagh, Matt Cavanagh, Steve Tramacchi, A. Ormes, J. Cross, F. Meecham, J. Gear, C. Henry, T. Saxelby and L. A. Peck, the local school-teacher.



*courtesy A. Tramacchi*

Cullinanes delivery truck bogged at Cedar Pocket. The driver was Jim Dornan while watching is ex-Shire chairman Joe Tatnell.

At the top end of the road the first settlers were Jim Elliott—no relation of Tom Elliott who became a neighbour of the Ormes—and Joseph Tatnell; a Toowoomba-born dairyman who became Shire chairman and a director for many years of the Wide Bay Dairy Co-Operative.

Tatnell's 250-acre property was not far past the Woondum turnoff from the road to the Gap. In the early days a rocky cutting near there was just wide enough to take a bullock team. The bullock drivers used to give three cracks of their whips to ensure the road ahead was clear before advancing around the blind corner. Around 1918 this corner was dubbed McKewin's Downfall. Jack

McKewin was driving a bullock team to Gympie with a load of logs when a wheel went over the edge, sending his team and wagon crashing down to the rocky falls on Deep Creek below the road. About half a dozen of his animals were killed.

Another early settler in the district was Antonio Visini on the road to Woondum. He was a miner at the Dawn and at weekends used to walk out to his selection to clear the scrub.

A second wave of settlement starting before the turn of the century saw the arrival of second generation members of the Cavanagh family, pioneers of the East Deep Creek region, Herb Gear who bought about half a dozen properties along the Cedar Pocket Road, John Robertson, Frank Johns, and nearer the Gap, Jim Waddell and George Smith. After the war, settlement accelerated with the opening of a Soldiers Settlement on Bacon Road. New-comers included Albert Shadbolt, George Miller, Matt Cavanagh, Bert Morris, Sam Bacon and the MacDonalDs and Waters.

Around the same time Happy Valley, now Dreschers Road, was cleared for banana farms by the Drescher, Schwenke and Molloy families. Martin Molloy was a wizard on the accordion and often used to dance all night. Son Jimmy followed in his musical footsteps by becoming a national ballroom dancing champion. Beenham Valley also was opened up through the switch-back road known as the Hellhole, where the BegeDas and Newberrys were among the newcomers. It was in the early 1920s that the Beenham Range tennis courts were built by voluntary local labour on land donated by Wilhelm Sorensen. The club had over 40 members, with five Tramacchi boys among the most prominent players. One of them, Jack, had an early cream run and made the transition to the motor age with a Ruggles truck which he drove with a brother, Gilbert. The early pneumatic tyres were no match for the road and blew out often so the Ruggles gave way to a solid-tyred International.

The Tramacchis' father, Domenico, was among a number of Italian charcoal burners who settled on East Deep Creek Road in the early 1880s, all on 20-acre homestead blocks. Others included Domenico Spada, Gilbert Piccinelli, Bob Maniga, Jack Renaldi, Steve Bejoni and Jack Armanesco. Their charcoal pits were in a paddock owned by Tom Smerdon, just across the road from the old slaughter yard and a little nearer to Gympie.

They took up their land about the same time as the Cavanagh brothers, Charles and Ned, near Williams Road. Both had teams and hauled timber from the area for many years. Other early settlers along the road were the Gillespies, Leslies, Finselbachs and, later, Bill Sweetenham, father of the prominent swimming coach.

The slaughter yard on East Deep Creek Road was started before 1900 with the Sundstrops and Sam Wallace among the early owners. For the past 30 years it has been owned by the Nolans, first by Tom and later his brother, Pat. The yard has been upgraded and expanded in recent years and Mr. Nolan now employs 10 men there. The weekly kill includes about 90 head of cattle on

average, over 100 pigs, 90 calves and a small number of sheep. Meat is supplied to most of Gympie's butchers and a wide area of the Sunshine Coast. In conjunction with the slaughter yard Mr. Nolan runs a piggery and his weekly kill includes about 100 pigs reared on the property.

Randwick Road which cuts back to Cootharaba Road crosses Tannery Creek where Milners once had a tannery. It was closed about 80 years ago. On the one sealed stretch of the road where several new homes have sprung up was Edward Wright's Hermitage vineyard. This flourished for about 20 years up to the end of World War 1. Mr. Alex Tramacchi remembers regular Christmas visits to the vineyard as a boy when he used to get two gallons of grapes for two shillings.

The road took its name from Randwick Farm—60 acres taken up by Tristram Bath about 1900. He was preceded in the area by bullock driver Robert Kinch and, at the Cootharaba Road end, by Christian Moeller. It was said during the terrible 1902 drought that Deep Creek ran completely dry apart from Moeller's water hole, and teamsters hauling into Gympie from the east all stopped there to water their animals.

## What's in a Name?

Perhaps it is only coincidence, but much of Woondum once went by the name of Wyndham Farm. This was the cattle run of John Mogan, covering 3,300 acres and from which many of today's Woondum farms are derived. Woondum is the Aboriginal name for blue-tongued lizard. But whether the area got this name or Wyndham first is open to conjecture. Certainly land selection there began before the name Woondum appeared on any map.

Mogan was not the first selector. The first man in those parts was Robert Godber, who selected land on the old Noosa Road with a frontage to Woondum Creek. Mogan bought the block from Godber and, with further selections of his own, had accumulated a total of 3,180 acres on which he was running 300 head of cattle when the Widgee Division was formed in 1879. Over 30 years later following Mogan's death, the Mogan estate was sold as farms of about 250 acres to the south of Woondum Creek.

Early land selection in Woondum followed the course of the Noosa Road, the bumpy bush track on which one-legged Reuben Webster pioneered the Gympie-Noosa passenger run in 1869.

Cobb and Co. joined the run and a small hotel was built beside the Noosa Road about six miles from Gympie. It closed within a few years, however, as most of the passing trade preferred to call at William Casey's hotel the Halfway House, at Cooran. This hotel, which was even marked on Government maps as a reference point, was later bought by Daniel Martin, a Widgee councillor at the turn of the century. After the railway from Gympie reached Cooran the hotel continued to thrive since it was the changeover point for passengers wishing to continue to Noosa by coach.

During the building of the railway line another hotel was erected near Woondum railway station to service the needs of the 600 navvies employed on the job. Several rough buildings were erected with the canvas town of navvies. Remains of a bakery and old bottles on the site of the hotel can still be seen today. But there is no trace of the shop and post office which once were there, too.

In 1879 there was sparse settlement along the Noosa Road through Woondum. Nearest to Gympie on Four Mile Creek, A. J. O'Keefe selected a thickly timbered block of nearly 2,000 acres which passed soon afterwards to the Queensland National Bank. Most of the land was generally considered to have inferior agricultural qualities which accounted for the fact there was only a handful of selectors further on. Among them were Simon Hommelgard who called his 160 acres Caledonian Farm, Marcus Collisson who was the second

selector at Woondum, Thomas Whitmore and, south of Mogan's holdings, Patrick Rogers.

Rogers, a foundation member of the Widgee Divisional Board, selected several hundred acres south of the Sandy Creek tributary of Six Mile Creek. The land on the western side of Six Mile Creek and immediately east of Woondum station was taken up by another member of the first Widgee Board, John Ray. He sold out a few years later to one of Queensland's first free settlers.



John Gericke

The buyer was John W. Gericke, who arrived in Queensland in 1839 with the second batch of German Lutheran missionaries to the Nundah Mission station in Brisbane. He was the medical adviser to the mission, which had been given special exemption to stay within the 50-mile prescribed radius around the Moreton Bay penal colony.

Nearly 30 years later he was one of the first men in Gympie, and was among those who took out Miners Homestead Leases on the day the register for applications was opened. His was for 10 acres on the Monkland side of the Mary River near Old Imbil Crossing at a rental of 10/- a year.

The shallow ford across the river beside this land became known as Gericke's Crossing.

Gericke's two sons, Charles and Joseph, took up further land at Woondum and a later generation now farms part of the old Mogan estate. During the 1932 tornado Mr. C. Gericke's house was severely damaged. Roofing iron and furnishings were hurled over a mile away as the family clung for safety to stumps beneath the house.

Another major landholder early on at Woondum was John Pearen, whose property extended on both sides of Boundary Creek and also down to the Brisbane Road. Mr. Pearen ran cattle there but lived on another property at Dawn Pocket and later in Gympie. His son John, later built a homestead on the Woondum-Deep Creek Road north of the old Mothar Mountain school.

John Pearen, jr., was a timber man, as were many of the second wave of settlers who moved into Woondum from 1894. Among them were brothers William, Henry and Alfred Sanderson, timber haulers who later switched to dairying along Woondum Creek. Then there was Pat Toomey, who lived in a humpy on the creek, and Paddy Dwyer, on the other side of the Mogan estate towards Traveston. All of them hauled pine to Woondum siding where it was railed to the main milling centres. As well as the timber men there were Joe Riley who was renowned for his grapes, mine manager John Parkyn on Cullinane Road, and Mr. Bytheway, a carpenter who later built the Mothar Mountain School.

During the bunya season the Tewantin Aborigines trekked through Woondum on their way to set up camp near the Monkland before crossing

over to the Diamond Field and to other bunya forests further afield. Everyone was used to seeing the Aborigines as they headed along the road, the gins having the worst of it by having to carry the sacks and billies, and invariably with several hungry-looking dogs bringing up the rear. Some of the bulls weren't too keen on the visitors, however, as local resident Jim ("Rooster") Hopper, liked to relate. His story goes that a young Jersey bull took an instant dislike to a certain Emma Dunn who scaled a tree "faster than any goanna" and stayed there until locals drove away the bull!

The third wave of Woondum settlement came with the selling of the Mogan estate over a period of several years. Most of it sold for around 32/- an acre on one sixth deposit with terms of six years at six per cent interest. Purchasers included Jim Blake, Sid Johns, Hugh McAuliffe, Phil Charles, the Parkyn brothers and the Gerickes.



There was plenty of timber left on the land, including a good lot of iron bark. This was used for telephone poles, with 25-foot lengths fetching 13/- apiece and 30-foot lengths 15/- each.

Mr. Blake took out a fair share of the timber and at times it was hard to move at Woondum station because of the messmate he had piled up there, some of it five feet in diameter. The best of it went to the railway workshops in Ipswich for 11/- per 100 super-feet and some to Atwell's mill at Caboolture.

Later some of the Woondum timber went to local mills—Reg Rasmussen's on Woondum Creek and Mr. H. W. A. Marshall's on Woondum Road.

At one time Woondum was nearly all dairying and farmers ran their own cream to the rail siding. Initially most of it was railed to either Pomona or Cooroy. Then Bill Weber began going on through to Gympie with his cream on his buckboard. Soon he was taking a good few of his neighbours' cans, too. Eventually Percy Carne started a motorised cream run from the district. The last private carrier from the district was Kevin Spiller, who gave way to the age of bulk tankers.

During the 1920s the western face and part of the southern face of Mothar Mountain was cleared and cut into 20-acre blocks for banana plantations. Thousands of bunches of bananas came down the slopes by flying fox—on hundreds of yards of number eight fencing wire strung down to a receiving depot.



*courtesy A. Tramacchi*

Profile of Mothar Mountain



Most of this land was owned by the Jolly family before the boom. When the bananas were done most of the small blocks were brought back into one holding.

The Mothar Mountain Hall, the main landmark on the road to the rock pools, was built by voluntary local labour in 1957 after Jim Vidler, Arthur Jordan and Bill Gericke had canvassed the district for support. The materials were bought with money raised locally and the added help of Cooran sawmillers Straker Brothers, who over the years gave similar help to many district organisations.

Before the hall, residents had used the little 26 by 14 feet school for meetings. But, just as the school had become too crowded for comfort so, too, did the hall. It has been extended and widened twice.

Foundation organiser Jim Vidler is still a member of the hall's trustees and working committees and Mr. Reg Weber has joined him on both. Today the hall's finances are buoyant. Members from Traveston, Cedar Pocket, Cooran, Woondum and Gympie attend youth group meetings there twice a month. Activities in the hall include darts, table tennis, bowls, dances. Tennis is played on a concrete court at Woondum built by Mr. Vidler and Bob Newman at a cost of £200.

Until last year Mr. Vidler's home housed the Mothar Mountain telephone exchange, one of the last in the Shire to go automatic. The exchange was first operated by Mrs. A. Tardett in a forestry house near Woondum station.

## Cooloola — Coast of Contrasts

### TIN CAN BAY

The name conjures up visions of rusting tin cans bobbing about in the bay. But there are a lot more fish than cans in the bay and some of its residents would be happy to change its name. The township was, in fact, known by the name Wallu for a few years but was changed back to Tin Can Bay in 1937. And to complicate matters further, the township area is also known as Toolara, not to be confused with the Toolara forestry area.

How Tin Can Bay got its name is a subject of controversy. The generally accepted theory is that it came from tun-kin, the Aboriginal word for dugong. Others claim it came from tin-kin for big fish, or from tindhin, the Aboriginal name for mangroves.

Whatever the derivation, dugongs first brought industry to Tin Can Bay some time in the 1850s after it was found that dugong oil was more palatable than cod liver oil and other fish oils used for medicinal purposes. A dugong station was set up at the mouth of Kauri Creek as the industry flourished along the Queensland coast between Hervey Bay and Moreton Bay. An early report in the Brisbane Courier said vast herds of dugongs "came in and went out with the tide, just like huge mobs of cattle at mustering on a large cattle station." But years of wholesale slaughter left the sea mammal a threatened species, and now the dugongs are protected from further depredations.

The timber industry was next on the scene led by Sim and Pettigrew who laid the Kaloolah railway to bring their timber from the scrub to be rafted to the company's mill at Maryborough. For many years their paddle steamer Hercules plied from Tin Can Bay to Maryborough, towing rafts of logs averaging between 100,000 and 150,000 superficial feet.

In the early 1880s Mr. R. W. Leftwick took out an oyster lease near the mouth of Schnapper Creek. The oysters were cultivated and shipped on to coastal steamers off Inskip Point for the southern markets. There was a shanty settlement at Inskip Point at that time. The residents were all Port of Maryborough employees, who had sufficient children with them to have a school built at the Point.

One of Mr. Leftwick's sons, Fred, brought his wife to live at the little settlement of oyster farmers on Schnapper Creek. In this primitive backwater they had a daughter, the first white woman born at Tin Can Bay.

By the turn of the century, however, there was still no permanent settlement at Tin Can Bay despite the considerable activity in the timber

trade. But there was a boarding house known as Bonneys between Mullen Creek and the area known as the Pipeclay. Bonneys was home for bullock drivers and timber getters working in the area as well as the occasional visitor, though most of the Gympie sportsmen who visited the bay for fishing expeditions—not just a day's drive there and back at that time but at least a day's ride one way—preferred to camp on the beach.

Before Bonneys the boarding house was owned by John Gillis, who used it as his residence when working in the area, and before him by a man from Maryborough named Watson.

One early visitor to the boarding house said of her visit: "Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Bonney lived at Cooloo Creek when accompanied by Miss Ada Smith, daughter of the lighthouse superintendent at Double Island Point, and a Mr. Reg Booth of Tiaro, I visited their home in 1908 or 1909. We rode horses from Double Island lighthouse along what is now Rainbow Beach to the Rocks (eight mile) then travelled through the bush and swamps to Bonneys. About the same time Mr. Flynn, the telegraph line repairer in Maryborough, had to make trips from Tiaro to Inskip and Double Island Points with his packhorses. He was always accompanied by his son. Mr. Curtain, then P.M.G. line inspector, said it was the roughest route for any linesman to be sent and advised other arrangements for the inspection of the line."

Tin Can Bay resident, Mr. Les Armitage, made his first trip to the bay about 1911 with his father, Henry, a bullock driver. "There were no houses here then, just a few humpies," he recalled. "There also were fishermen's camps. They were doing a fair bit of dugong fishing and had camps at Teebar Creek, Kauri Creek and Poona. Then there were the Boonooroo fishermen. They used to work in Tin Can Bay long before there were any Tin Can fishermen. They used to come up here and get fish for smoking. From Kauri they used to put them on a packhorse and send them up through Bauple. Up at Kogle Point at the head of the bay was one of the main timber rafting grounds. Hughie Kogle and Billy Foster were two of the bullockys working here then."

Mr. Armitage's family association with the Tin Can Bay stretches back to the 1870s when one grandfather, Henry Armitage, was managing Ramsays' timber operations at Goomboorian and his other grandfather, "Modey" Allan, was cutting timber around the bay. Henry Armitage's brother, Ned, was one of the main bargemen on the Maryborough run with his barge, the Geraldine. Other early bargemen operating from the rafting grounds were Charlie Matheson and Bendy Weber.

"Every now and then when things got a bit tight Modey Allan used to do a bit of prospecting," Mr. Armitage said. "He'd go over to the other side of Double Island Point, near the bubbling springs, to get alluvial gold for a stake. He never found a lode there but always reckoned they'd find one some day. What he got out of it none of us ever knew, but the bills always got paid."

During drought years great flocks of sheep were driven from the west to be agisted on the wallum. Some were taken to Tin Can Bay where they were fenced in at night, in flocks of up to 3,000, by rolls of calico strung around the

trees. There were fears initially that dingoes would play havoc with the flocks, but as it turned out the losses were not heavy.

At the height of the 1919 drought the high water was still covered at the bay. Members of the Gilli family from Goomboorian saw brumby digging holes and drinking from them near the highwater mark on the western side of the point. On examination it was found these brumby holes contained fresh water. George Griffen was the only permanent resident at that time. He lived in a humpy on the other side of Schnapper Creek where he tended his oyster leases.

The township got its start with the sale of 25 blocks at the northern end of the point in May 1922. These were mainly half-acre blocks—between Oyler Road and the Fish Board site—and were offered for sale at a price starting from £40 with a £25 improvement covenant. Most of the buyers were Gympie and Widgee residents who wanted a weekend fishing retreat. They included Gympie storekeeper Arthur Schuman who kept the first private boat at the bay—Bob Hoyle, William Power, Harry Steele, Gus Austin, and the Sheldon, Dryer and Gillis families.

Mr. G. D. 'Gus' Austin was one of Tin Can Bay's foremost champions. A Gympie dentist and an avid angler, he was forever pushing Tin Can's case for development. A visiting cartoonist's likeness of Mr. Austin once appeared in the Gympie Times with the caption 'Mr. Tin Can Bay.'

The first residential blocks at Tin Can were sold complete with standing scrub and two third generation Gilli brothers from Goomboorian, Ivan and Fred, were hired to fell several of them at 30/- a block. Mr. Austin and Mr. Hoyle were the first to put up houses, both being hauled there from Gympie.

Some of the visiting youths about that time found good sport with the large population of brumbies along the coast. They used to drive the brumbies into the water, then jump on their backs and ride them without fear of being bucked off. Many of the brumbies were well bred, the result of a number of thoroughbreds which had escaped from their owners and joined up with the herd.

Tin Can Bay was still pretty much a backwater when Les Lee arrived in 1929. There were just seven houses and 17 sheds, mostly for weekenders. Some of the houses had been removed from Fraser Island after the running down of the sawmill at North White Cliff. There were only three permanent residents—Bill Wilson, who did a bit of fishing and crabbing, Jack Broad who was caretaker for Arthur Schuman's house, from which some supplies could be bought before the first shop was opened, and Hannah "Granny" Brown.

Granny Brown, whose son Henry had the cream run at Veteran, lived in a house on the site of the present caravan park. Living alone in a remote settlement held no terror for her. In her late evening she fell and broke her ribs. There being no transport—or proper road—to the nearest hospital at Gympie, she simply bound up her ribs and set off to walk to Gympie. Around Goomboorian she got a lift for the rest of the way.

During the early 1930s more land was opened up at Tin Can Bay, with blocks ranging from half an acre to seven acres. The largest block was bought by former Shire chairman Zachariah Skyring. This was later subdivided into the Skyring estate. There was an influx of population during the 1930s because of the depression, when cheap land and fish biting at the front door made Tin Can Bay an attractive proposition for those without steady work.

Viv Mason was responsible for opening up lines of communication to the outside world when he built the first shop at Tin Can in 1932. At that time the telephone line went only as far as Goomboorian and the road from there to the Bay dwindled to little more than a bridle track. But once Viv and his wife, Maud, installed themselves in the shop progress was the operative word.

By then there were about 35 permanent residents. Systematically Mr. Mason pushed the powers that be to extend the telephone line to the bay. They said they would provided he supplied the materials. Both sides kept their part of the bargain.

Next Mr. Mason got the post office going, then a twice weekly mail service, then a transport run. He brought a horse over from his parents' farm at Sandy Creek and ploughed up land opposite the shop for a tennis court. Next to the shop itself local residents built a hall.

"Sometimes we'd have a dance every fortnight," Mr. Mason said. "One of the kids would ride round on his bike and tell everyone that there was a dance that night—it was usually when all the fishermen came in.

"In 1935 we got our school. Bert Court was the teacher and every night he'd come down to the shop to listen to the news on our radio—it was the only



Tin Can Bay township before the boom

one there in those days. And, of course, when we were playing the English in cricket the whole town would be there to listen to the report."

The road from Goomboorian to Tin Can was built by relief workers during the Depression but many locals lent a hand. "Any spare time we had most of us would go and do a bit. Our local councillor, Tom Steele, set us all an example. He'd pick up his grubber and shovel and work alongside the relief workers for days at a time. Once the road was finished then we all had to maintain it. Most weekends or if any of us had a holiday we'd go up in my truck and fill in the worst bog holes with a load of gravel.

"That road to Gympie could get pretty bad at times. Somehow we don't seem to get the rain today that we got in those days. It used to come from the south-east and 80 inches in a year was the usual. The school teacher used to measure it. One year we had 36 wet weekends. Now the rainfall doesn't seem so high and our weather comes from the north.

"But the rain played havoc with the road. There were no bridges across Schnapper Creek or Kangaroo Gully so if the weather looked a bit risky Tom Impey used to make the trip to Gympie with me and help lever me out of the bogs. Trips at those times always took two days."

During World War II the single-strand telephone party line that Mr. Mason won for Tin Can Bay proved an invaluable link. Everyone on the coast was a plane spotter and all aircraft sightings, numbers and flightpaths had to be telephoned through to the wartime authorities.

Two elderly bachelor brothers, Evelyn and Archie Allen, and their sister Beatrice had lived on a hill at the top of Kauri Creek for years. Their property was accessible only by boat.

"During the war Archie who was 60 or 70 performed an amazing feat," Mr. Mason recalled. "I'd rung through one day that three of our plane had passed over but only two had landed at Maryborough. One had apparently crashed between Tin Can and Maryborough with two airmen on board.

As it turned out they'd come down on some long grass but as they'd descended they saw the Allens' place up ahead. They walked up there and Archie rowed them the 18 miles round to Tin Can. When I saw the three of them walking up to the shop I said to them, "You're not those two airmen?" and they were. Archie didn't even stay for a cup of tea. He just got back into his boat and rowed the 18 miles back.

"A few days later a test pilot and a couple of engineers came down and Tom Soanes drove them across country in his truck to the plane. It didn't been damaged structurally so when the engineers pronounced it airworthy we had to get to work cutting down vegetation with brush hooks. Most of Tin Can had come out on Tom's truck. We couldn't believe that the pilot could take off from there. Tom drove his truck up and down to flatten the long grass but the ground underneath was very bumpy. The pilot said that he'd take off and head towards Double Island Point then he'd turn back and land again if there were any problems. Well he did take off, missing the top of a gum tree by about a

foot and when he turned back he dive bombed us before making for Maryborough. He was there in 10 minutes—it took us hours to get back.”

Tin Can Bay’s growth as a fishing port and holiday resort was a gradual process until 1957, when the situation changed dramatically overnight. The catalyst was prawns.

A little earlier local fishermen Fred Langford had discovered prawns within the bay. The Government sent a boat skippered by Evan Pasdon outside the bar in the hope of finding a main prawning ground. It was there all right, just a few miles outside the bar.

When news of the find broke out the first three boats on the scene were the Tamoi, Viking and Pathfinder. Within weeks over 75 boats had arrived at the bay to share in the spoils. From a sleepy lagoon (the name adopted by the town’s first hotel when it opened two years later), Tin Can Bay was suddenly a boom town. Every vacant weekend shack in the town was soon rented by the prawners and real estate values boomed.

The giant tiger prawns, up to a foot in length, were worth up to two shillings each at the time and many trawlermen made quick fortunes. In just one fortnight of trouble-free operation one young trawler skipper was reported to have cleared more than £3,000.

The local fish board had to increase its staff from three to 19 to cope with the catches. Eventually the catches tapered off but by then Tin Can Bay had made great strides, getting electricity at the same time as the hotel, a sealed road and a reputation throughout the country for its fishing and waterways.



Some of the fishing fleet at Tin Can Bay in 1958

This was of special significance during the 1960s and 1970s as the leisure industry boomed. Tin Can Bay, once a place where wives preferred to let their husbands go to on fishing trips alone, became a popular boating and fishing resort for all the family.

Fishing is still the major industry with about 20 commercial fishermen operating from the port. The Queensland Fish Board's Tin Can Bay Market opened for business in 1945. Because of the Bay's increased stature as a fishing port a new market was built in 1971 adjacent to the old, retaining the old wharf and incorporating some of the original building.

Peak year for prawns was 1964 when the Market put through 468,709 lb. In the 1978-79 financial year the Market handled 410,338 kg of seafood. This comprised 243,092 kg of whole fish, 317 kg of fillet, 104,620 kg of prawns, and 62,309 kg of other catches including Moreton Bay bugs, lobsters, squid, crayfish, sand crabs, oysters and 8,391 mud crabs.

### RAINBOW BEACH

Rainbow Beach, one of the Shire's best known beauty spots, has a short history going back little more than a decade. Before then it was usually referred to as Back Beach and was accessible only by four-wheel drive across a forestry track or along the beach from Noosa. With the instigation of a



Queensland Premier, Mr. G. F. R. Nicklin, opening the road to Rainbow Beach. With him are Gympie M.L.A., Mr. A. M. Hodges, and Shire chairman, Mr. W. H. Kidd (left).



sealed road through to Rainbow Beach by the sand miners, a new beach resort came into being.

On March 26, 1969 the Lands Department offered the first land for sale at Rainbow Beach, the subdivision work having been carried out by the Widgee Shire Council. Only seven of the 25 blocks offered at auction were bought on the day, at upset prices ranging from \$600 to \$700. The first private buyer was Gordon Elmer, a former Amamoor bean farmer who in 1967 started his vehicular ferry service from Inskip Point to Fraser Island. Elmer's confidence in Rainbow Beach paid off and the extra traffic through the township saw his ferry service expand. He was also the first private owner to build at



Fraser Dawn | . . . . Gordon Elmer's first ferry on the Fraser Island run

Rainbow Beach, after three houses built by Queensland Titanium Mines Pty. Ltd.

In 1970 a small wooden shop opened on the beach front to cater for day-trippers and mines employees. Phil Rogers, a Gympie fruiterer, was the township's first businessman and lived in a caravan parked among the trees. When he shut up shop for the last time the little wooden shop was moved into the yard of mines employee Ivan Udovic. As Rainbow Beach gained in popularity, the shop became a full-time business. Mr. Udovic gave up his engineering job with the mining company and in 1972 built a brick shop-cum-post office. The original wooden building was moved to Tin Can Bay as the first clubhouse for the Country Club.

By this time the last of the original 25 allotments had been sold and slowly a few more houses began to take shape, as well as the first motel—the Rainbow Beach Motel, built by Hug Brothers of Maryborough who tendered for the site in May 1971. In the same year Percival Engineering Co. of Brisbane tendered successfully for the adjacent caravan park.

In February 1972 the Lands Department held its second auction of Rainbow Beach land and more than 300 people crammed into the Gympie City Council Chambers to bid for the 40 blocks. Upset prices ranged from \$800 to \$2,500. But keen competition for the blocks, on a hill with panoramic views of the Pacific and Tin Can Bay, brought a top price of \$7,500 and a total outlay of \$171,800 instead of the reserve of \$72,400.

Three months later a further 38 residential allotments and five commercial sites were auctioned and the sale realised \$117,350. The land included the two magnificent blocks on which the Mikado Motel was built. They were bought for \$4,000 each by Trustees of Bursill's Superannuation Fund.

Further residential subdivisions were auctioned in 1975, 1977 and 1978. All blocks were sold, with the two auctions last year proving the most successful ever undertaken by the Lands Department. The 90 blocks offered were sold for a total of \$1,037,300. Top price for a residential block was \$20,300 while a business site was sold for \$65,000. The year also saw the opening of the first hotel after Hugs successfully tendered to the Licensing Commission for a hotel licence for the Rainbow Beach Motel.



PART THREE

Shire of Industry



Map of forestry areas and national park within Widgee Shire. The forestry areas are contained within the shaded section while the diagonal section depicts the area of the Cooloolool National Park within the Shire.

## Forests — The Full Circle

Cedar was the magic word which brought timber getters to Widgee more than a century ago. It was this cedar, scattered in the rainforests bordering the Mary River and its major tributaries, that enticed the first timber getters to the district. It was a year-round process—during the winter they felled the giant cedars, and in summer when the rains came, they freshed the logs down the creeks and rivers to the mills.

Cedar was particularly in demand for cabinet making and boat building, but just as much went into the building of houses and barns. In the period up till Queensland's separation from New South Wales in 1859, most of the cedar came from along the Brisbane River. But as this was worked out many of the cutters moved north to the Maroochy and Mooloolah Rivers and then across to the Mary.

It was a cut-throat business. Often when one timber getter moved in on another's territory there were more than angry words exchanged. William Pettigrew, a timber pioneer of the Wide Bay area, found some of the tactics employed by his fellow timbermen so disgusting that he wrote to the Secretary for Lands and Works, Arthur Macalister, urging a change in regulations. Pettigrew said it was common for one gang to drive away the other's bullocks as a form of revenge. Fighting was another. "But a worse one—apart from the shedding of blood—is the setting on fire of their opponents' timber. As a rule timber men all hate one another," he wrote.

Pettigrew's letter brought the desired remedy when, in 1864, the Government decreed that from then on leases would be issued giving exclusive rights to cut timber within a defined area.

The timber industry has been good to Widgee. It was Widgee timber that built the city of Gympie; the timber for its houses, for pit props in the mines, for firewood to stoke the boilers. It was Widgee timber that helped feed the hungry sawmills in Maryborough, as well as the many mills which blossomed around the Shire. It was Widgee timber that for over a century kept thousands of men in work—as axemen, teamsters and millhands.

Now the timber industry has turned full circle. Much of the natural forest has been removed. But it has been supplanted by a new industry—reforestation, though not the cedar and beech of old but hoop pine mainly in the plantations west of the Mary and exotic slash pine to the east.

Although the new forests contain more merchantable timber than the old, modern sawmill techniques, plus the swapping of axes for chainsaws and

horses and bullocks for tractors have brought about a great reduction in numbers of both mills and workers.

Widgee, once boasting dozens of mills, now has but five—Woodland's big particle board plant on the outskirts of Gympie and its modern pine mill at Pie Creek, Hyne's thinnings treatment complex at Melawondi, and two smaller private hardwood mills at Dagon and Wolvi. And today 45 per cent of the Shire consists of State forest or National Park.

Before the Gympie gold rush, all timber cut in the Mary Valley was floated down the river to the mills at Maryborough. Then in the early days of the rush Widgee got its first sawmill. It was opened in 1868 at Chatsworth under the name of Ferguson and Co. The partners comprised William Ferguson, William Henderson, Robert Dath and Thomas Bartholomew. In the same year the mill was shifted to Mary Street in Gympie to cut timber for the burgeoning goldfield.

The company's operations were extended in 1876 with the opening of another mill at Lake Cootharaba under the name of Dath Henderson and Co. From there timber was loaded on to the company's steamer Adonis at Tewantin and taken to Brisbane. The major partners in these enterprises were Ferguson and Henderson. Ferguson was one of the first chairmen of the Widgee Divisional Board and Henderson acquired large timber blocks at Mount Coondoo, Cooroy and Amamoor.

In the early 1870s three miners who had made a quick fortune on the Caledonian and Mount Pleasant reefs in Gympie established the first sawmill at Lake Cootharaba. They were James McGhie, A. F. Luya and F. G. Goodchap, who traded under the name of McGhie-Luya and Co.

Sawn timber from their mill was loaded on to pontoons and towed down to the loading wharves at Tewantin where it was loaded on to the paddle steamer Culgoa, which plied three times a fortnight between there and Brisbane with cargoes of up to 35,000 feet of timber. Some hardwood from the area was sent overland to Gympie to be used as pit props in the mines.

In 1873 the mill was wrecked when the boiler exploded killing five men. It was rebuilt, however, and a wooden railway was constructed into the bush to help bring the timber out. A second fatal explosion at the mill about three decades later is believed to have led to boiler inspections being carried out by Government officials on an annual basis.

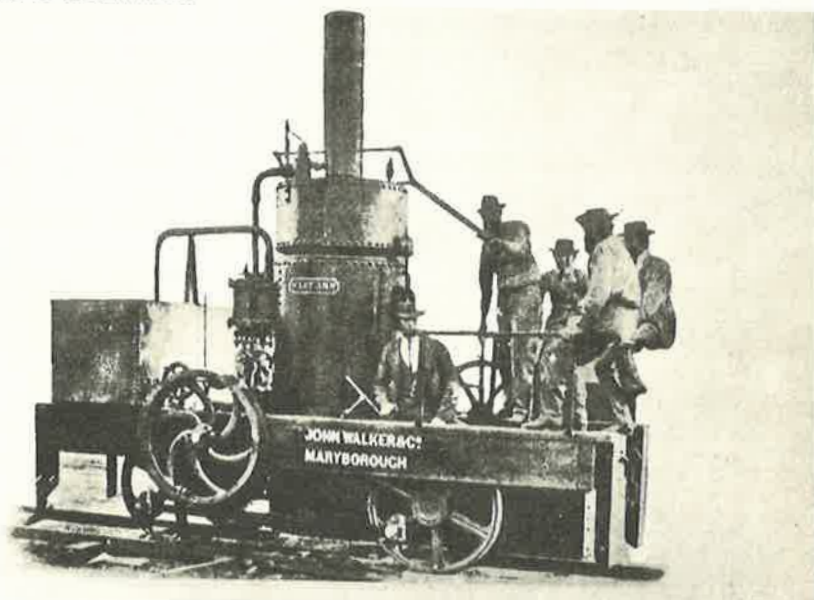
By 1882 the two Cootharaba sawmills employed over 200 men and each mill had 23 teams hauling timber. Total output was estimated at 175,000 superficial feet per week. However, the industry entered the doldrums a few years later following the imposition of a one shilling per 100 superficial feet royalty on pine—a severe blow to the cutters—and unrestricted imports of timber allowed from New Zealand and the United States, which hit the mills themselves.

McGhie Luya and Co. were forced to temporarily suspend operations and many of the laid-off workers left to find work elsewhere. The company never regained its former stature. McGhie returned to Gympie where he

dabbled unsuccessfully on the local share market, then managed dredging operations in the Mary River for a while before heading off in 1895 to the new gold fields of Western Australia to manage a mining company. His son William remained to look after the family's timber interest. Luya also left the area to embark on a political career in Brisbane.

At Tin Can Bay, William Pettigrew and William Sim had first pick of the rich Cooloola rainforest, which was named after its abundance of cypress pine, known variously as kaloolah, cooloola or kululu. There was no cedar in the scrub but there were large stands of beech.

Sim took out a lease on 1,000 acres in 1872 and some of the timber was used as track for Queensland's first private railway—the Kaloolah Railway—which was built to carry timber to the bay. When it was opened on October 1, 1873 there were three and a half miles of 3ft 3ins. gauge track extending inland from the rafting grounds and jetty built at Poverty Point. The steam-driven engine, the Mary Ann, was built by John Walker and Co. (later Walkers Ltd.) of Maryborough and was the first locomotive constructed in the Colony of Queensland. It was named Mary Ann since both partners had a daughter of that name.



*(Courtesy John Oxley Library)*

Mary Ann, the first locomotive on the Kaloolah Railway

In 1876 a second and more powerful locomotive than the 8hp Mary Ann was put on the Kaloolah track. This was the Dundathu, named after the mill the partners started at Maryborough in 1862. The track was extended to a total distance of about eight miles into the scrub. The exact route is no longer



known—though some earthworks are still evident a couple of hundred yards north-east of Camp Milo—but it probably crossed the present Rainbow Beach Road to finish on a hill near the head of Seary's Creek. At the end of the line a stationary traction engine was set up to assist with loading. Near the original terminus at Poverty Point there was a small hardwood mill, principally for renewing the hardwood rails made from spotted gum. A windmill also was erected to draw water for the boilers.

The railway was in operation for just over 10 years and served its purpose well. Sim did not however, live to see the railway at its peak. Just one month after the opening—for which the Mayor of Maryborough and other dignitaries were brought in by boat—Sim was fatally crushed by a log in the rafting grounds. Two of Sim's nine children, William and James, continued in the business but after the 1893 flood and a fire which badly damaged the Dundathu mill Pettigrew and Sim's activities at Tin Can Bay went into a decline.

By then other Maryborough sawmill companies were active in the area. Simeon Ramsay and Co. were on the scene in the 1870s and built a rafting ground on Kauri Creek, behind the present golf course. In the following decade Hyne and Sons began a half-century era of rafting from the bay. Robert Hart, one of the founders of Wilson Hart and Co., also took up a timber stand in the Cooloola forest. Hart's operations at Tin Can Bay were not extensive, however.

Rafting of the softwood timbers—hoop and kauri pine and beech—ceased in the late 1930s when Hyne and Son began to log hardwoods. The last softwoods taken to Maryborough were salvaged hoop and kauri which had been damaged in the 1951 wild fires which penetrated the Cooloola rainforests in many parts.

Much of the timber was punted to Hyne's mill by Bendy Weber on the Gloria and later by Hyne's own vessel, the Otter. The last timber to be taken out of Tin Can Bay was punted from Poverty Point in 1962 by Frank Fuchs.



*courtesy L. Armitage*

The Gloria, Bendy Weber's boat which towed rafts of timber from Tin Can Bay to Maryborough.

The timber run to Maryborough depended purely on the tides. Les Armitage, who worked for Bendy Weber, described the operation: "It used to take a tide to get from the rafting ground to Kauri Creek on the outgoing tide. Then we'd wait over there, go and get the punt and attach the raft to the punt at the mouth of Kauri Creek. Then we'd catch the early flood tide and that would take us over to the overflow which is round about Stewart Island, and then catch the outgoing tide to the head of the Mary River. By the time we got there the flood tide would be going up the river. With a good run in good weather we'd get up there in a total of two days and two nights."

The rafts of timber were held together by chains threaded through metal spikes known as dogs, which were driven into the logs. The spikes had to be unfailingly removed before the logs went through the mill. If they were not these pieces of metal which cost about three pence each could cause hundreds of pounds worth of damage to the saws.

As well as timber rafted from Tin Can Bay and floated down the Mary, a lot of timber cut in Widgee Shire was sent to Maryborough by rail. Gympie's sawmilling capacity was often inadequate for the amount of timber felled and hauled to town. Maryborough's situation was the reverse, with plenty of sawbenches and not enough timber, hence the railing of log timber.

Not all of the trees were felled for their timber. Many valuable areas of timber were cleared to make way for pastures. The process of clearing was accelerated following the introduction of Rhodes and Paspalum grass and the rapid expansion of the dairy industry. This destruction of forest on a grand scale gained further impetus during the banana boom of the '20s when high country ridges throughout the Shire were cleared willy nilly to make way for bananas.

And this industry itself spawned a new sawmilling industry. Small case mills mushroomed around the Shire to provide containers for the boom crop. Many of these mills closed down as soon as the banana trade dropped off.

Before the Forestry Department had really put down roots, the Government itself was a partner to some of the wanton destruction of forests. This was underlined by the Denham government's resumption of the Cooroy estate from sawmiller Henderson in 1907. At that time Cooroy was part of Widgee and had but one house, the station master's residence close to the railway line. The 5,000 acres on which the township was subsequently built was covered in dense scrub—hoop pine, beech and some cedar—and as part of the purchase agreement a time limit was put on its removal.

Four bullock teams owned by Henry and William Duke, Percy Armitage and C. Dunn, worked long hours to beat the deadline but because of wet weather only the best timber was removed. This included 50,000 super feet of red cedar found at the eleventh hour about halfway up Cooroy Mountain in heavy vine scrub. The cedars, some over three feet in diameter, were quickly cut down and snigged to the railway station before the time limit expired.

The government then subdivided and sold the estate, mainly to dairy farmers from the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales. The timber

remaining included good commercial quantities of hoop pine. But the Government, anxious for progress at any price, refused to allow the settlers to sell any of the timber off their land with the result that it all was promptly burnt down.

In December 1910 the Gympie Lands Office conducted what was then the largest auction of standing timber ever held in the Widgee Shire. The timber was at the head of Eel Creek above Groundwater's selection. As an indication of the amount of timber being offered, the lots ranged from 80,000 to 2,484,000 superficial feet to be taken out in periods of up to five years. Most of this timber was snapped up above the upset price of 1/6 per 100 super feet. Buyers included D. J. Groundwater, W. F. Tamlyn, Oden Meyers, E. W. and W. Treeby, T. Griffiths, and James Campbell and Sons.

The vast stands of timber on Eel Creek resulted in the setting up of two large mills there by Oden and Christie Meyers and James Campbell and Sons. The fact that the timber was on rugged and inaccessible country was no barrier at all. Since the first settlers became Australians there was a national determination to prove oneself. While this trait can have its drawbacks, for the timber industry it proved a boon. Had it not been for a timber getter saying to his mate, "Geez, you'll never get that load of logs out of that gully, mate" much of Widgee's timber would have been a lost cause.

It was this ever-present urge to prove oneself, to compete and win, that pushed the pioneer to progress. Timber, tall and broad, was cut down and hauled from seemingly impossible places with primitive equipment, brute strength and a keen competitive spirit.

Timbergetting was and still is a dangerous business, particularly when felling thick vine scrub. Felling scrub tree by tree could be painstakingly slow. To overcome this a "drive" tree was selected. This tree is a particularly large tree and cut so as to fall in a particular direction. Its fall path is used to knock down other trees which have been cut partially through. But sometimes tree vines up to 100 feet long and as thick as a man's arm can upset the designed procedure and even reverse the process of collapse back towards the drive tree with dire results for the unwary.

Shooting logs down hillsides sometimes brought instant death to anyone in their way who failed to hear warning shouts of "timber". Logs which were barked to make them slide and nosed so they wouldn't splinter if they hit a tree were shot down the hills like rockets. Nothing stood in their way. Even giant hickory trees would be poleaxed when hit by a rocketing log.

Springboard chopping was another dangerous practice if a tree fell the wrong way, particularly if the axeman was working on a second lift position. As well as the danger from the toppling trunk, the axeman had to be careful not to land on a stake or break an ankle as he jumped to the ground. Some axemen refined springboard chopping to such an art that they could step straight on to the severed stump as the trunk fell away. Springboards were used to give an even base for felling trees on steep slopes, or to get to the soft

wood above the knotted spurs of a trunk. However, the practice of using springboards has fallen into decline since the advent of chainsaws.



*courtesy W. H. Robertson*

Jack and Bob Tomkins on springboards while tree felling in the Wolvi area

Some timber cutters preferred to use a crosscut saw for bigger trees. Sometimes they cut in pairs with a man to each end. Some men preferred to use a “dummy” sawman. This was done by attaching one end of the saw to a pole by a piece of strong rubber, usually a bicycle tube, which helped the lone sawyer to make a level cut.

The fledgling Queensland Forestry Service began its involvement in Widgee Shire shortly before World War 1 by building a large sawmill in the Imbil area. It was worked for about 10 years but in the long term was not a financial success. Reforestation work within the Shire did not begin until the end of World War 1. The planting was done near Imbil but, like the sawmill, it was not a wholehearted success at first.

A few hundred hoop pine seedlings were taken from what is now Noosa Heads National Park and planted beside Western Creek and at Derrier, part of the old Imbil station. They were planted in a pocket surrounded by established rainforest at Derrier and had to compete with fullgrown bush wattle and weeds in the roughly cleared area. At Western Creek the seedlings were planted along narrow lines brushed through the rainforest and some 30 years later the few spindly survivors had reached a maximum height of about 20 feet.

The theory of the day was that root competition made for healthier growth and that the young pines would “reach up for the light” and prosper.

Unfortunately this was not the way of the forest and the seedlings that survived made only stunted progress.

A few years later forest officer William Fraser, son of a former Widgee chairman, noticed that young hoop pines were thriving around the edges of the existing forest and, consequently, a more enlightened policy was adopted. This was to first remove the marketable timber from the forest, burn off the remainder of the scrub and then plant the seedlings in the ashes.

Reforestation began on a token scale which hardly began to compensate for the amount of timber being felled each year. It was confined at first to the Imbil area. A nursery was set up at Sterling’s Crossing—where teamster Bob

Sterling once cut oaks for his bullocks' yokes—and in 1920 the Imbil forestry office was built, the first in the Shire.

Local dairy farmers were vehemently opposed to the Imbil forestry operations and urged that the Mary Valley pine forests be revoked and opened for selection. However, the Minister for Lands, Mr. J. Coyne, steadfastly supported the forestry work, warning that the alternative would be a timber famine and soaring prices.

Gradually the forestry programme picked up and hoop pine plantations were extended towards the Amamoor area. Regeneration of hardwood forests also was attempted immediately north of Gympie in the early 1920s but was less successful.

Among the early forestry workers at Imbil was Jack Donald, who started there in 1921. There were up to 150 men employed there at that time, he recalled. Many were returned soldiers. Hard work was the order of the day and some men stayed only a couple of days. Roads were cut through the scrub and gravelling was done with a horse and dray.

The first pine nursery at Sterling's Crossing included experimental plantings of several species. Among those that failed were cedarelas, used for making cigar boxes. But bunya pines grew to huge trees despite early losses to wallabies. This was overcome by netting young trees to keep the wallabies at bay.

Most of the forestry employees boarded at Imbil in the early days of plantation work. Then as the roads progressed the men took tents and camped out for the week, but in the wet season often were caught by the fast-rising Yabba Creek.

"It used to come up very fast, without any rain lower down," said Mr. Donald. You'd go to sleep at night when all was quiet and wake up to hear it roaring. Sometimes you could cross the creek in the morning and hardly get your horse's feet wet. Then in the afternoon you'd have to swim your horse back."

The first few years of work saw little more than 100 acres of plantation pine established. But in successive five-year periods from 1925 the plantations increased by 1,000, 2,000 and 3,000 acres until World War II brought a temporary slowing down.

The early forestry work at Imbil bore fruit just after World War II when plantation pine in the Mary Valley was cut for commercial purposes for the first time.

Before chainsaws came into general use after the war, the timber getter's basic tools were his crosscut saw, his chopping axe, broad axe and sapping axe. The heavy broad axe was used for squaring girders while the sapping axe—a lighter variety with its handle specially bent for left or right hand use—was generally used for sapping light poles and house stumps. A man's prowess as a timber feller was measured by the amount he could fell in scrub clearing jobs. An acre a day kept you up with the best!

Just about the fastest scrub feller Widgee's forests have ever seen is Vic Summers, who began scrub clearing in the Mary Valley in 1939 to help clear the way for new plantations at Kandanga and Amamoor.

Mr. Summers who at 14 won his first open competition chopping event at Condamine in 1932, went on to win eight world championships plus numerous Queensland titles for tree felling and standing chops. He held several world records and once unofficially broke the world record for tree felling at a Gympie Show where he outchopped his archrival George Parker. During 36 years of competition which took him on the southern circuit and to New Zealand, he amassed a vast showcase of trophies and over 400 ribbons. He also took part in a chopping display for the Queen on her first visit to Australia.

The tallest trees he felled in Widgee Shire were three ironbarks from Wolvi and another from the Borumba Dam area before it was built. All were over 100 feet long and were hauled to Chinchilla for a forestry fire tower.

By far the tallest tree still standing in Widgee is a towering 215-foot Gympie messmate in the Como forestry area. It used to be known as the biggest eucalypt in Queensland but foresters now doubt this claim.

In 1949 the big messmate was measured at 210 feet high with a girth of 22 feet. In thirty years its girth has increased by six inches and its height by five feet. The tree is estimated to contain up to 20,000 super feet of timber.

Interestingly, messmates are confined almost solely to the eastern side of the Mary River and grow only on the coastal strip between Pomona and Bundaberg.

The Mary Valley's sawmilling history is synonymous with that of the Doyle brothers from Kilcoy—John, James and Andrew.

First of the brothers to enter the business was John, who set up a pine mill at Upper Kandanga around the turn of the century. Most of the pine for this mill came from around Mitchell's Creek and the sawn timber was hauled to Traveston Siding for railing to Gympie and Maryborough. The plant consisted initially of a vertical breaking-down frame in which two saws were worked with two circular saw benches. A 12 h.p. Robey engine was used initially but this gave way to a more powerful 25 h.p. machine supplied by a Cornish boiler.

Some of the earliest workers at the mill were Jack Spicer, Fred Dodt and Jim Hodge. At its peak the mill employed about a dozen hands. Teamsters supplying the mill included local residents George Schmidt and John and Alf Tincknell.

Next of the Doyle brothers to begin his own mill, this time at Brooloo, was Andrew, better known as "Buller", perhaps because of the reputation he gained for his brute strength—he set a cracking pace for the men who worked with him and did not suffer kindly those who flagged.

James Doyle emulated his brothers by buying a mill in the Kandanga township shortly after the railway went through in 1914.



*courtesy J. Spicer*

Workmen at the Kandanga sawmill, circa 1920

This mill was started by a company whose partners included Charles Mitchell, Sid Stephens, Reg Rasmussen and Steve Polkinghorne. It was managed by Rasmussen whose brother Tom was head benchman. The company mill prospered and was responsible for much of the early settlement of Kandanga, some of the houses being brought from Gympie to accommodate its workers. The Pebberty family bought the mill but soon after sold to James Doyle.

A second generation of Doyles joined the business and the mill was taken over by James Doyle's son, Richard. After several years the Maryborough firm Wilson and Hart took over, running the main plant mainly as a hardwood mill and setting up a smaller thinnings mill. Both were closed down several years ago.

In addition to Andrew Doyle's mill, which was later bought and modernised by Luttons, there have been three other mills at Brooloo. John Grogan established a mill a few hundred yards past Doyle's mill on the road to Brooloo Gap. It was later run as the Bluff Milling Co. and closed about 1931.

When the railway line was pushed through to Brooloo in 1915 a large tank with a capacity of about 10,000 gallons was erected above the end of the line. Water was pumped about three quarters of a mile to the tank from

Coonoon-Gibber Creek and it was the engine driver's task to ensure the tank was full. He was paid overtime for the job of getting the often stubborn pump working and the water flowing. Water from this tank was also used to fill the boiler of Doherty's mill on the Imbil-Brooloo Connection Road. The mill closed through lack of working capital despite Doherty's attempt to interest local settlers in a partnership.

The fourth mill in the district was founded by Thomas Rodwell, sr., near the Brooloo Hall. Timber for the hall was cut by this mill which was of comparable size to the others at Brooloo. All employed several men on the bench but none had a planing machine. Rodwell sold his mill to William Shaw and Charlie Page. Subsequent owners included Archibald Mesten, sr., and David Stephens who shut the mill down in the 1930s.

Between the wars two large sawmills were established at Imbil, the first by Oden and Christie Meyers and the second by the Richmond River Timber Co. The former became Lutton and Meyers, then Lutton and Sons until it closed in 1973. At its peak it employed 60 mill hands plus another 50 cutters and carriers.

Sandy Parr opened a sawmill shortly after Dagon township was created. It has had more changes of ownership than any other mill in the Shire, the first transfer being to Jack Ormes and Jack Chapman who operated it as a case mill. Its present owner, Mr. John Steele, purchased the mill in 1970 and employs about half a dozen men, mainly filling government orders for hardwood sleepers.

Amamoor has had four different mills of varying importance. The first was built before World War I between Townsend's Crossing and the township. It was started by Ernie Jensen and later taken over by Bob Hawkins. About 1931 it was acquired by James Doyle who upgraded the plant. Just across the road Mr. J. Lefroe operated a smaller mill driven by a vertical steam boiler for several years. A third, one-bench mill was opened outside the township by Ernie Neisler and in 1947 a fourth mill was started by Hyne and Sons, which employed a staff of 17 as well as 22 men in the bush.

Hyne and Sons first took an interest in the Mary Valley about 1915 through the purchase of a timber block near Kandanga. But the company did not begin milling in the district until 1947 when it built the Amamoor mill. This was the first mill in the Shire deliberately designed to deal with small pine thinnings. Managing director, Mr. L. J. Hyne, was especially conscious of forest waste. It was his grandfather and the company's founder, Mr. R. M. Hyne, who as M.L.A. for Maryborough successfully moved in State Parliament in 1889 a motion calling for the creation of a Department of Forestry, saying "that in the opinion of this House the present rapid rate at which the exhaustion of the timber of Queensland is proceeding calls for some immediate action in the replanting of our forests."

When the Mary Valley plantations began to produce trees of merchantable size, the pre-war policy of the Forestry Department to thin and waste the stems of poorest form and size, favouring the better trees, was changed to one



of complete utilisation. The first sale of pine thinnings in the Mary Valley was made in 1944 by Mr. R. H. Doggrell, later Gympie District Forester, who was then in charge of experimental work in the district. Treatment of certain plots involved heavy thinnings and some relatively big straight stems were cut down. Small sales were made to Jack Lutton and Dick Doyle—the first sale of any hoop plantation pine in Queensland. The following year another small sale was made to a group of bush workers led by Percy Brittain who operated a very basic mill beside one of the best plantations at Amamoor. This small enterprise closed when Hyne and Son established their specially designed mill.

Mr. L. J. Hyne visited Norway and Sweden at the end of the war to look at milling procedures for small timber. On his return he suggested to the Forestry Department that a small lot of thinnings be put to public auction. In 1946 the first thinnings were auctioned and Mr. Hyne was the buyer. Over the next few years Hyne and Son acquired four established Mary Valley mills as the thinnings operation expanded. These were Liston Andres' bush mill near Kandanga, Wesley Lutton's mill on the road to the Imbil Forestry Department headquarters, Jim Ehrenberg's mill next to the Imbil Showgrounds and the Neisler mill at Amamoor.

The company's milling operations in the Mary Valley were consolidated into one with the building of a million-dollar complex at Melawondi, which was opened by the Premier, Mr. J. Bjelke-Petersen, on September 24, 1976. The Melawondi complex consists of a sawmill centring on a pair of eight-inch Firano twin bandsaws which allow a wide variation of sawing to suit each particular log. Other equipment includes a preservative treatment plant, drying kilns and a processing mill for seasoned timber including planing and resawing facilities. This modern plant makes maximum use of each of the 700 to 800 logs which go through the mill each day. It also provides year-round decentralised employment for 35 millworkers and another 25 in the bush. Mill superintendent is Mr. F. W. Grainger, who earlier was manager of Hyne's at Amamoor for 25 years.

Pine thinnings also are utilised by Woodland Ltd., which began its operations in Widgee Shire in a relatively small way with the purchase of Harold Kidd's Pie Creek mill in 1955. Twenty years later it built a large particle-board manufacturing plant on the southern outskirts of Gympie. This \$8.75 million operation processes 47,000 tonnes of logs each year and provides employment for 75 workers.

Its Pie Creek mill handles 15,000 tonnes of logs annually and has a work force of 42. Another 56 men are employed in the Shire's forests providing timber for the two plants.

The company also has a pulp mill on the drawing board but the 64 million dollar question at the start of 1979 was "Where?" A Woodland spokesman said the company had long term contracts with the State Government for the utilisation of pine thinnings in the Gympie and Maryborough forests and these

contracts included the installation of a pulp mill somewhere in the region in the 1980s.

Mount Tuchekoi has seen at least two sawmills come and go. The first was a general mill beside the old Brisbane Road which was operated by the Neilsen brothers, who owned Tuscot Park farm on the other side of the road. The second was a case mill set up by timber hauler Paddy Dwyer during the banana days. This mill was on the site of today's Mount Tuchekoi Christian Outreach Centre. During the banana boom the Carter brothers set up a steam-powered case mill further down the road at Carter's Ridge.

However, most of the timber from this area was hauled to the mills at Imbil and Brooloo. The timber cutters of more than half a century ago dumped their logs at the junction of the Tuchekoi-Kenilworth Road (then the main Brisbane Road) and the road across the Bollier. This spot acquired the local name of "Dump Corner" and from there the logs were collected and hauled to the mills by Mary Valley teamsters, who included Paddy Dwyer, Billy Quinn who ran two bullock teams, Mr. Gorlick who had a horse team, Danny Robinson from Imbil and Bob Gilroy, father of the Imbil storekeeper.



*courtesy D. Alford*

Dave Alford's bullock team hauling logs to Traveston Siding

The transition from bullock teams to trucks and tractors began about 60 years ago. The phasing out of the bullockys brought to an end one of the most colourful chapters in the Shire's history. A whole generation has since grown up without seeing the magnificent sight of 22 or 24 bullocks straining up a pinch with a vast log in tow, and without hearing the colourful language of the bullocky as he alternately coaxed or berated his animals while they laboured at their task. Nearly 20 years have passed since the Shire's last bullock teams

were retired. Probably the last were those of George Hillcoat, working from Harry Sanderson's property at Sandy Creek, and Dave Alford, working in the Traveston area.

Patience was a prerequisite for bullock drivers, according to Mick Morley who was one of the Shire's best known teamsters and who, in 1925, drove the last team along Channon Street and Horseshoe Bend in Gympie.

"You didn't knock your bullocks about," he said. "You had to talk to them. You'd know the names of every bullock and you'd call them all by name. When you yoked up in the morning you'd call them to come in by name and they'd all come when told."



*courtesy M. Morley*

Mick Morley's bullock team hauling timber from Moses Richardson's Neerdie mill in 1922. Following behind is Billy Foster's team.

The yoking up process took about half an hour. The leaders—always an intelligent pair of animals with large horns—were always the first to be yoked up and the last to let go. The team then was progressively yoked up back to the polers. The yokes were 50 inches wide and specially contoured to allow a lower pull on the inside shoulder by the bullocks as they took the weight on the chain.

The bullocks understood a special language with words like "Wah" (come in), "Gee over" and "Gee back". When rounding a tight corner a teamster had to issue a constant stream of individual instructions to each beast to ensure the correct path through the bend—by taking a wide sweep in much the same way as a large semi-trailer negotiates a tight spot today. Some teamsters talked to the bullocks all the time. Like Bill Geary—everyone knew his team was approaching, before it was ever in sight, through his constant urging of "Paree, paree."

The pace was slow but steady, about eight or nine miles a day with a load. This was only half the rate of horse teams, which also had twice the pulling power of bullocks. Nevertheless most teamsters preferred bullocks because of their steadier and more even pull and their superiority in wet weather. Horse teams virtually had to pull in a straight line and were handicapped in the mud. It was always much easier to manoeuvre a bullock team through the bogs.

First mill in the Pie Creek area was a pine mill opened by Harry Coop at Mooloo during World War 1. It was driven initially by a traction engine, then by a colonial type steam boiler. Eight to ten men were employed on the benches.

Mr. Coop was one of the first traction engine drivers in the Shire, hauling for James Campbell and Sons and later for his brother-in-law Alf Godwin. Once Mr. Coop was driving over Larney's Bridge on the South Side when the big 5¼-inch axle snapped. The traction engine remained on the bridge for five weeks until Walkers in Maryborough could make another axle. A small temporary bridge had to be built beside the main bridge to let other traffic past. Broken axles were an accepted risk with traction engines. After a few years the axles became brittle and were prone to snap like carrots. There were no motor mechanics around in those days and drivers had to do their own repairs as best they could.



*courtesy R. Bell*

This restored traction engine was owned by Charlie Lewis and often was used to haul timber from Glastonbury to Gympie. It usually was operated by Bob Bell and Sid Johns.

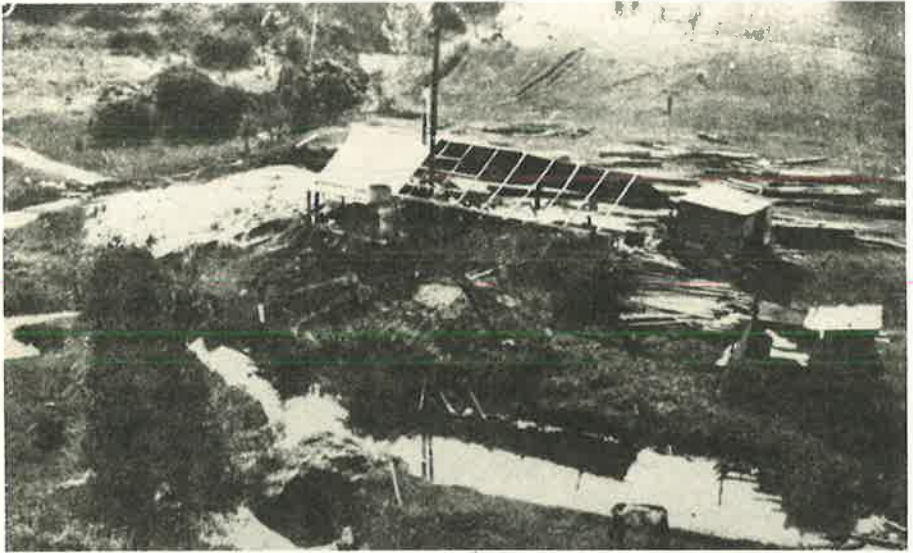
After a few years the Mooloo mill was moved to Widgee, then in 1934 Mr. Coop set up a hardwood mill in Chapple Street, Gympie. During World

War II vast quantities of hardwood were put through this mill and sent overseas for building projects in the war effort in New Guinea. Every day a 30-foot railway wagon was loaded with sawn timber from the mill.

The Coop mill at Mooloo was replaced for a while by the Neisler mill beside what is now the recreation reserve. It was operated by the three Neisler Brothers during the 1920s when there was a host of mills a little further out from Gympie on Eel Creek.

In addition to the big Meyers and Campbell operations at Langshaw, the Drysdale Sawmilling Co. ran a mill employing about a dozen hands on Mahons' property on Eel Creek Road. Small case mills, basically one-man operations, were also set up by John Patroni and Bob Hunter on Coppermine Creek.

Mary's Creek Road at one time boasted three mills—Harold Kidd's at the junction with Pie Creek Road, and a few miles further on, the general mill of Oscar Bonney and J. Burns and then Pratts' case mill.



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

A long gone case mill at Mary's Creek.

Off Glastonbury Road, just in from the Palms subdivision, Harold and George Meyers established a large scale general mill. It was active during the 1920s and employed about 15 millhands. Further out, the Glastonbury Sawmill Co. at Greendale employed an equal number of men for the best part of half a century.

To the east of Gympie the only Widgee mill remaining is that of the Wolvi Timber Company. It was started in September 1924 by George Lorenson and Herb Gilmour on the present site. Current owner Noel Lorenson said that for the first 34 years the mill got all its timber within a radius of no more

than seven miles. Now it has to take timber from as far as 50 miles away.

Mr. Lorensen said a Main Roads Department official once told him that the Wolvi mill had supplied more Bruce Highway bridge timber than any other mill in the region. During its 55-year history the mill has operated continuously apart from a brief shutdown for two months in 1932 during the Depression and for eight months in 1975 because of a downturn in the economy.

Sawmilling has always been fraught with danger. One of the most horrible accidents in the Shire occurred at a Wolvi mill when a workman overbalanced backwards on to a big Canadian saw which threw him to the ceiling. Then he was ripped apart as he fell back on to the saw.

Although mining has always been considered one of the most hazardous occupations around, probably more people have been killed or maimed in the forests and mills of Widgee than in Gympie's mines.

Until the relatively recent introduction of safety devices in the mills, there was hardly a ten-fingered benchman in the Shire! No matter how experienced the man on the bench, something could always go wrong as he guided the end of the timber past the unguarded saw. No one had heard of microsurgery, and sewing fingers back on was pretty rare until a few years ago. Often the bleeding stump was roughly bandaged with a handkerchief and then it was back to work.

At Meyers' Langshaw mill, for example, Frank Chorley was one of the first benchmen. After a series of mishaps he finished up with only the little finger left on one hand. Later after Cronins had taken over the mill Henry Schultz suffered similar painful losses. He finished up with only the thumb and one finger on his right hand. But he adapted to his misfortune so well that he continued working and made a name for himself as one of the district's leading cricketers. He was a bowler and used his right hand!

Sometimes accidents were more serious. While there has been none as bad as the boiler explosion in 1873 which killed five men at McGhie Luya and Co's. Lake Cootharaba mill, scores of men have died in Widgee's mills over the years. Sometimes there were accidents in the yards; no matter how much care was taken, unloading logs from bullock wagons claimed many lives before modern machinery made the task much safer. Sometimes a log could be fractured inside but to outward appearances was solid. The danger was that in cutting timber like this a piece could be thrown back from the saw, crushing or spearing an unsuspecting benchman.

The timber belt between Kin Kin and Goomboorian has supported dozens of mills over the decades. One of the first was a general mill opened in the Wahpunga Range by a brother of the world champion sculler, Arthur Townes. Further towards Lake Cootharaba mills were operated by Messrs Davis and Braddow in the Como scarp and by Messrs Kildey and Davis. Two of the Moran Group settlers, Allan Stewart and Albert Davidson, set up a pine mill about 1918 which supplied timber to Gympie for several years. It was powered initially by a crude oil tractor purchased from the Noosa Shire Council. The mill was later acquired by Jim Hinds. Andrew Doyle also had a

fair-sized mill north of Kin Kin before he joined his brothers in the Mary Valley.

Other general mills in the area were Rasmussen and Walker's on part of the Mogan estate at Woondum and a general and case mill opened by Yandina sawyer George Lewis on Bacon Road at Cedar Pocket. Smaller operators included the Atkinsons in the Como area, the Tompkin brothers at Wilson's Pocket, Alf Salmon and George Hillcoat at the top of the Wolvi Range, Eddie Kitchen at Ross Creek, Jack Burns and Alf Taylor at Ross Creek, Tom Soanes at Goomboorian, Clyde Foster and J. Peterson at Kia Ora, and Lloyd Borchert and Harold Stephan, also at Kia Ora. For several years Emanuel Gâté ran a slightly larger mill at Canina which employed up to a dozen hands.

Alec Hinds started the first conventional sawmill in the general Goomboorian district early this century. Before then he was the main pit-sawyer in the area.

Hardwood mills were established later on by a Mr. Boyce at Sandy Creek, Moses Richardson at Neerdie, Cowies nearer Kia Ora and Albert Jolly at Tagigan. The latter was taken over in 1935 by Reg and Fred Meyers and moved to central Goomboorian. In 1944 Reg Walker joined the partnership, but in the same year the mill was burnt down. It was reopened on a new site further out from Gympie and in 1966 was sold to Queensland Sawmillers of Brisbane. However, it was destroyed by fire later in the year and so Goomboorian lost its last sawmill.

At Traveston, there was a small mill on Mr. R. W. Kenman's property about 1920 and Jack Martin operated a mill at Tandur a few years later.

While Widgee's sawmills began a general decline shortly after World War II, reforestation work went ahead in leaps and bounds. This was brought about by the Forestry Department's acquisition of a major tract of wallum country along Coondoo Creek.

This was generally regarded as poor, sandy land of little value except for agistment during drought years. Experiments had shown, however, that certain exotic trees, including slash pine, would thrive in these conditions. In 1947 the Forestry Department began acquiring large areas of the wallum belt and embarked on a major forestation programme with much of the work being carried out by immigrants from the Baltic countries. Slash pine plantings at Toolara quickly outstripped hoop pine plantings in other parts of the Shire. By 1978 the area of exotic plantations was over 46,000 acres, nearly double the Shire's 23,700 acres of hoop pine plantations.

Much of the spadework for the Toolara venture was done by Mr. R. H. Doggrell, Gympie District Forester for 20 years from 1952. During this era significant changes in forestry techniques took place. Site clearing and preparation became increasingly mechanised and improved seed stock was developed. This new stock has been planted at Toolara since 1966 and gives an average 15 per cent increase in tree volume as well as better tree characteristics. Similar breakthroughs have been achieved with hoop and caribaea pine

in the past few years. Planting also became mechanised and about two thirds of the planting of exotic pine is now done by machine.

Exotic pine planting peaked in the mid-1970s. Over the past five years the Forestry Department added an average of nearly 5,000 acres of exotic plantations per annum. Last year's winter planting at Toolara was about 4,570 acres and District Forester, Mr. T. Ryan, expects the Toolara programme to stabilise at between 2,500 to 3,000 acres p.a. over the next five years.

The Toolara nursery which sustains the exercise has grown to about 50 acres, the second largest in Australia after a private tree farm in Victoria. It is the only Forestry nursery left in the Shire, the sole hoop pine nursery for the Gympie district being at Kenilworth. In addition to raising an annual crop of exotic pine seedlings, fast growing eucalypts are produced for planting in open spaces in the moister belts of coastal hardwoods from Fraser Island to Beerburum district.

Initially most of the forestry centres had their individual nurseries, ranging from quarter of an acre in size. There were eight nurseries in the Gympie forestry district—at Imbil, Toolara, Kenilworth, Como, Brooyar, Eel Creek, Amamoor and Pomona (for hardwood). Separate nurseries became uneconomic as transport and roads improved and from 1952 most were closed down, the last to go being Imbil, the oldest in the Shire.



*(Courtesy R. H. Doggrell)*

Imbil forestry nursery, circa 1936

There now are about 335 men employed by the Forestry Department in the Gympie district and over 600 more work in directly associated industries such as logging, carting and milling. All sections of the timber industry have seen sweeping changes in the past decade, particularly on the logging side where modern machines such as fellerbunchers, delimiters and forwarders have begun taking the place of chainsaws and tractors. Trials also have been carried out with skylines to bring hitherto inaccessible hoop pine out of rugged country in the Mary Valley.

The future of the forestry industry in Widgee has been assured both through the vigorous plantation programme and the building of a major Forestry Training and Conference Centre at the Two Mile just north of Gympie. The \$1.5 million first stage which includes classrooms was opened



by the Premier, Mr. J. Bjelke-Petersen, in September last year. The second stage will include major buildings to house the Gympie Forestry district office, a research centre, a timber museum and other facilities. First principal of the centre is Dr. D. Gilmour.

In recent years the Forestry Department has developed scenic drives through the Imbil and Brooyar state forests and has made picnic places and lookouts at other spots, such as Mount Mullen on the Rainbow Beach Road.

The Imbil Forest Drive, on the road to Lake Borumba, features some of the best virgin pine in the Mary Valley as well as some of the first plantation pine.

The Brooyar drive from Greendale on Glastonbury Creek across to the Wide Bay Highway features a number of different hardwoods, young plantations and some spectacular scenery. The view is best from Point Pure Lookout, which is a short walk from a series of natural sandstone caves. It offers an uninterrupted vista taking in Gympie, Mount Cooroy, the Blackall and Manumbar Ranges, the Groggy—highest peak in Widgee—and part of the Wonga district. A fire lookout tower can be seen on the other side of the new Brooyar plantations.

## The Lure of Gold

Widgee's gold prospectors were a breed of optimists. They had to be—it sometimes made starvation a little easier to stomach. The prospectors were an itinerant breed who panned just about every creek and rivulet in the Shire. Colours they found aplenty, but for all their efforts there was often precious little gold.

In the early days of Gympie there were major rushes to Jimna, Imbil and Kilkivan, and 20 years later Glastonbury was given the same treatment. Around Gympie there were extensive workings at Jones' Hill and Dawn Pocket in the south and at the Two - Mile, Chatsworth and Veteran to the north. However, none ever threatened to outshine the fabulous Gympie reefs.

Jimna was rushed in 1868 and in its heyday 1,500 men were reported at work. In 1869 a provisional goldfield of 10 square miles was proclaimed and the Government outlaid £135 for the provision of a regular gold commissioner's and mining court. Some of the early arrivals found easy pickings: one group of four men sold 20 ounces of gold after a week's work. Few records were taken of Jimna's yield, however. Some fortunes were made but the first flush of enthusiasm soon passed.

By 1871 the population of the field had fallen to 300, the bulk of the diggers having moved on to the more promising new fields at Kilkivan or to the security of employment on the Gympie field. The services of the mining warden were rarely needed again. Few new claims were lodged and few were worth disputing. The population steadily dwindled until the 1893 flood which forced the abandonment of the field. When the waters rose, there were between 60 and 70 people still trying to eke out a living at the diggings, spurred on by the occasional find of good alluvial. A local farmer, Mr. Spell, went to their rescue as the water subsided and found the diehard group, which included three women and six children, subsisting on a diet of bunya nuts.

The Imbil rush of 1868 was equally disappointing in the long run, though it brought to light some notable characters, among them the blacktracker Constable Thomas King. He and Inspector Lloyd were sent out from Gympie following a fatal fracas between two Chinese fossickers. The surviving Chinese fled into the bush but Constable King tracked him down to a creek bed after deducing from his footprints that he had been walking backwards to lay a false trail for his pursuers. Lloyd's trousers were ripped to shreds in a scuffle with the enraged Chinese and he had to ride back to Imbil with his tunic fastened kilt fashion around his waist. King went on to perform many

valiant tracking deeds around the district and later was sent to Victoria to help track down the notorious Ora gang. Unfortunately his jealous southern colleagues enticed him on to the bottle and he was returned home in disgrace.

The alluvial work at Imbil was carried out on both sides of Diggings Road between the Bellbird Habitat—where a picnic ground has recently been created—and Imbil township (which came nearly half a century later). Several hundred miners worked their way across the flat, digging holes up to 30 feet deep and then moving on without ever filling them in. Gradually they worked their way back into the hills and upwards along Western and Breakneck Creeks, looking for the main reef. This was never found and most of the miners left, though some of the more stubborn optimists like the Durhams and the Dautils continued working on and off for several decades.

For a number of years James Durham together with his father and brothers, John Dautil and his son, Tommy, and the Morgan family worked a leader about two miles up Breakneck Creek from Imbil. For a while they made better than wages and erected their own one-stamper crushing battery using equipment discarded by a Gympie mine. Like most of the independent miners who had to work on a shoestring budget, they built a tramway of sapling rails into the mine shaft and hauled out the dirt in a pine cage truck attached by strong wire rope to a windlass.

Most of the gold was sent to assayer John Burbidge in Gympie, though few records were kept of the amount taken out. Some of it found its way straight to the hotels of Gympie. In true wild west fashion one of the syndicate used to slap a bag of gold on to the bar and say, "Tell me when it's cut out."

The Durham syndicate mine was abandoned shortly after the turn of the century when the gold leader disappeared into hard rock, too tough to tackle with the primitive equipment available.

During the depression years of the 1930s there was a revival of interest in the Imbil field which attracted about 20 prospectors, among them Mr. T. A. Thomsen at Breakneck Creek and Mr. A. Carlson, sr., who developed a small reef show on Western Creek where he set up a one-head crushing battery powered by a small diesel engine.

Some gold was extracted, but to use a well worn phrase, there was an awful lot of Queensland mixed with it. Old prospectors claim there is far more gold left at Imbil than ever was taken out. It may have to remain there since it is now on Forestry Department land.

The early miners were hardworkers and often hard drinkers. Wherever they went a sly grog supply usually followed. Imbil was no exception and in 1871 a Mrs. Thredgold was fined £1, with court costs of 4/6, for selling sly grog at the Imbil diggings. Around the same time the authorised publicans at the Kilkivan field threatened to withhold their licence fees amounting to £180 per year until the Government got rid of the "notorious shanties of music and dancing, pickpocketing and fighting. Their wares and their women are displayed before the face of day and their casks of grog actually standing in the street."

Gold was found at West Coast Creek near Kilkivan in May, 1868 by a party of New Zealand prospectors including Stewart, Preston, O'Neill and McMullen. Four thousand miners flocked to Kilkivan and in 1869 J. M. Thompson and party discovered the Black Snake reef, which produced crushings of nine ounces per ton until a landslide cut off the seam. Over the next few years eight distinct lines of reef were found, each of them promising to be the salvation of Kilkivan as a gold town. In January 1874 Allen Cook and Tom Harding unearthed the Rise and Shine reef which yielded 54 ounces of gold from its first crushing of one ton. The richest of Kilkivan's reefs, it had been largely worked out by the time Kilkivan was severed from Widgee Division in 1887. Interest then was centred on the Kabunga mine at Black Snake which had been purchased the previous year for £220,000—and subscribed twice over—by a London syndicate headed by the Earl of Gosford. A few months earlier another English syndicate led by the Duke of Manchester had taken over Kilkivan's cinnabar mines which produced quicksilver (mercury) lode. The first cinnabar discovered in Queensland, it was found in 1872 by Edward Godfrey, a shepherd on J. D. MacTaggart's Kilkivan station.

In Gympie's early gold years, the "Southside" diggings gave as much cause for optimism as most of the mines on the Gympie goldfield proper. From 1868 a series of shafts were dug and several smallish reefs were traced from just north of Jones' Hill down to Dawn Pocket.

Claims in the area included the No. 2 and 2A South Ellen Harkins Leasehold, Lone Star, the Hit or Miss on Jones' Hill itself, the North Jones to the west of the hill and, to the south, the Otago, Jones and Enniskillen Reefs, the No. 1 North Otago, Rose of Australia, New Chum and Dawn Reefs.

The major reefs were the Jones, Otago and Dawn which produced a higher percentage of gold than many of the better known Gympie reefs. For a few years they offered dreams of untold prosperity, but as the shafts got deeper and the cost of working them rose, one by one the claims were gradually abandoned and by 1888 the diggings were at a standstill.

Biggest producers up to this time were the Otago with 3,350 oz. from crushings totalling 1,150 tons, Dawn with 2005 oz from 2,194 tons and Jones with 1,021 oz from 724 tons—on the face of it excellent yields.

The principals of some of the reefs included: Jones (Richard Jones, Arthur Jones, Richard Jones jr., T.C.D. Byrne, and E. Warford); Hit or Miss (William Green, John Bergin, John Smith, James Puller, John Sheedy and Thomas Shanks); Enniskillen (J. McCoy, John King, Thomas Currie, Thomas Miller, David Scott and William Judd); Dawn (J. Lawrence, J. Lawson, H. Huny, C. Huny, M. L. Kreitmayer and A. Thorborne).

In 1902 work was resumed at the Dawn by the New Dawn G.M. Co., which installed a 10-head battery at the site to eliminate the cost of carting the quartz to the Gympie batteries, which had been one of the main stumbling blocks earlier on.

From 1904 to 1911 the mine yielded 7,360oz. from 11,432 tons—valued at £23,090 or an average of £3/2/9 per oz.—but again this proved unprofitable

with calls being levied on shareholders right to the end to supplement the deficit balance sheet.



*courtesy John Oxley Library*

Early employees of the New Dawn mine

The Southside diggings remained dormant until 1931 when several new leases were taken out near the Dawn. The new generation of optimists included E. and D. Stephens and Marlowe, Letheran and party, Arthur Hanson, Treloar and party, W. E. and A. R. Saunders and Hart and Roberts. An attempt also was made by Mr. G. Austin of Gympie to refloat a company to revive the New Dawn lease, but it failed to come to much, especially after a government geological survey suggested "the available records do not warrant the reopening of the mine, and the prospector is advised to confine his search to the surface."

The Southside renaissance finally came to an end, with little to show from the latest activities, soon after a fatal accident in one of the shafts.

Within a seven-mile radius from Gympie, the northeast quadrant contains a number of reefs worked at various times between 1869 and 1900. The reefs, mainly running in a north-south direction, include the Exhibition to the east of the old Neerdie Road and, about a mile further out, the Ora. The only crushing recorded as having been taken from the Ora reef, was one of 62 tons 10 cwt which produced over 67 oz. of gold. This was put through one of the Gympie batteries in 1870 and apparently was considered uneconomic, since the holders of the claim did not bother to follow it up with several more tons of quartz already raised to the surface. The Exhibition fared no better, though a

fossicker there in 1870 was said to have picked up a 14 oz. nugget from the ground.

A few miles to the south, Mr. T. Hunter discovered the Veteran reef in 1879. Three years later it was let on tribute to a group of miners including G. Mills, the tribute being 12½ per cent of the gross yield for five years. The first 11 tons of stone taken from the reef returned two oz. to the ton. The second of 52 tons yielded slightly under 2 oz, still good money with gold prices of £4/1/9 per oz. at the time. A five-head stamper battery was erected at the reef, since the cost of carting to Gympie was 30/- a ton. However, the yield subsequently tapered off with the next 300 tons yielding an average 14dwts to the ton. With problems underground, production came to a halt.

Altogether more than 600 oz. of gold was taken from the Veteran and adjoining New Year reefs, with a lot more lost in the tailings because of the very fine nature of this gold. Kerridge and Stephan reopened the mine in 1931, but like everywhere else made little headway.

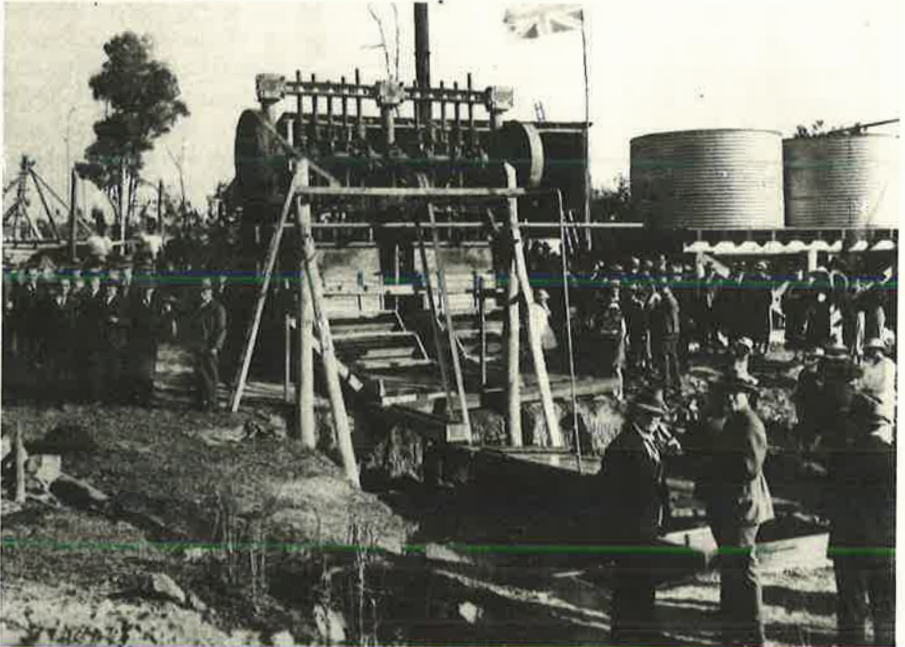


Headworks at the Enterprise mine

*courtesy John Oxley Library*

About two miles south of the Veteran was the Enterprise reef, discovered about the same time. In 1886, its busiest year, it yielded less than 38 oz. of gold from 123 tons of crushings, far below viable limits. Nevertheless, the mine was reopened in 1935 and nostalgic ex-miners from Gympie trooped out to the Enterprise to hear once more the sound of stampers as they crushed down on gold-bearing ore. The Minister for Mines, Mr. J. Stopford, set in motion the 10-head stamper erected by the new Enterprise Gold Mines N.L.

But like half a century before, the mine failed to live up to the splendour of the opening, and once again it had to be abandoned.



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

Opening of the new crushing battery at Enterprise in 1935

Of all the reefs on the fringes of the Gympie goldfield, none had a better average than those of the Two Mile and Chatsworth immediately northwest of the town. From 1870 to 1888 when work virtually came to an end, these reefs had produced an average 3 oz. 6 dwts. per ton of crushing. Yet only 2,427 tons were put through the batteries, for a total of 8,055 oz.

The reason for such a small output of stone was the patchiness of the reefs. Most of the gold occurred in small, well defined reefs. As soon as the yields fell off, the miners cut their losses and moved to other prospects. Most of the gold was won at a comparatively shallow depth. The deepest, the Occidental at Chatsworth, went down to a depth of about 250 feet and was worked with a horse and whim, but was never a paying proposition. Ironically, 30 years later and only 50 yards away, John Lidgard got about £20,000 worth of gold at a depth of 50 feet.

By far the richest reef was the London at the Two Mile which produced 2,420 oz of gold in one sensational crushing from 80 tons of stone. The total gold extracted from the reef was almost exactly double this figure from a total crushing of 511 tons.

The main lines of reef, starting from the Two Mile, were the Hibernian, Canadian, Napoleon and Chatsworth. At the eastern extremity near the Old Maryborough Road were the Peter and Paul and the John Bright. Yields up to 1888 when most had been abandoned included the Chatsworth with 824 oz., Sadowa 784 oz., Bristol 747 oz., Homeward Bound 516 oz., German 162 oz., and Hibernian 118 oz.



*courtesy John Oxley Library*  
The Peter and Paul mine at the Two Mile

A tunnel into Corella Mountain also was worked for a number of years by Dillon and party. A dray pulled by a team of four horses was a frequent sight on the road to Gympie with its loads of ore. The shaft regularly yielded half an ounce to the ton until a collapse of the shaft wall and rising costs made further work out of the question.



*courtesy Mrs. R. Doggrell*

The Sadowa mine on James Fraser's property at the Two Mile

In 1904 the Chatsworth reef was reworked and one gold patch realised 179 ounces. This spurred further activity for a while along the Napier and Bristol reefs, though without the same degree of success.

Many of the holes which dotted the paddocks around the Two Mile were not filled in for many years. To wander off the road at night was to risk



one's neck, as one old pensioner of more than half a century ago was well aware. At the time there were a number of pensioners living in humpies at the back of Mr. James Fraser's paddock at the site of the new Forestry Department Training Centre. One of them was returning home one night a little the worse for drink, with a stick in his hand to feel the way since there were no street lights in the area. Suddenly he could feel nothing in front of him, or all around him. Somehow he knew he was in the middle of a hole without having fallen down. Fearfully and gingerly he sat down to wait for the dawn. When morning came all was revealed. His stick had simply snapped in half—or so the story goes!

In the shortlived revival of mining interest in the 1930s three syndicates, Chatsworth, New London and the London and Bristol, began work in the area. In 1934 the New London lease yielded 91 oz. of gold from 25½ tons of crushing, but this was mainly from a patch contained in a few hundredweight of stone and was not repeated.

Glastonbury was rushed in 1886 and 1887 following Patrick Green's chance discovery of gold near Glastonbury Creek. The rush began as a mere trickle, the main body of miners not arriving until after the source had been traced back to Stoney Creek.

A visitor to the diggings in September 1886 reported: "The workings are in a pine scrub on a part of a forfeited timber lease formerly held by Ramsay and Co. of Mungarr. Prospectors include A. Burgess, F. Atherton and D. McFie about four miles from T. Betts' hotel. Two trials gave a return of 1¾ ounces to the ton. The claim was discovered by Burgess who has been working there for over a year. Atherton has backed seven or eight fossickers there, too, working in Stoney Creek."

Three months later another visitor reported finding 70 men at the diggings but said nine out of ten were barely paying their way.

The Queensland Government gave Glastonbury every chance to prove itself. It proclaimed a goldfield covering 3,030 acres bounded by Glastonbury and Widgee Creeks and took the unusual step of giving, without being asked, £200 to the Widgee Divisional Board to build a road from Glastonbury township to the diggings.

Cartage to Gympie for crushing, costing 28/- to 30/- a ton, proved an early obstacle to the miners though the yield was incentive enough for them to invest in a crushing battery of their own. Total Glastonbury crushings in Gympie up to the end of 1888 yielded over 730 ounces. The contributing mines were Without a Friend with 218 oz. from 151 tons, Great Western Amalgamated 40 oz. from 36 tons, Doran 113 oz. from 89 tons and Tasman 59 oz. from 161 tons.

There was insufficient water in Stoney Creek for the crushing battery to be installed at the diggings and it was set up behind the racecourse beside Glastonbury Creek, which still meant the ore had to be carted about four miles. The new site was too wet, however. The big flood of 1890 damaged the five-head stamper and after further floods it was moved to Stoney Creek.

There crushings were carried out only during the wet months.

Glastonbury never really lived up to its promise. Its best year was one of the first when 542 tons were put through the battery in 1889 for 649 oz. of gold, with alluvial accounting for another 74 oz. Mining was continued for an unbroken period up to 1920 during which time the Doran shaft proved consistently the best with top yields of 394 oz. in 1915 and 453 oz. in 1916. However, it topped 100 oz. in only eight other years. The original owner of the mine, Bill Doran, was said to have taken £7,000 from his labours only to lose it all on some other risky venture. The mine later was owned by the O'Sullivan brothers.

The second rank of Glastonbury mines included the Tonbine Extended with a best of 276 oz. from 128 tons in 1906, United Glastonbury with 112 oz. in 1894 and King with 128 oz. in 1919.

During the 1930s several of the old mines were reworked, among them the King by Jim Shepherd. However, total output of all the workings during the decade was only 325 oz.

Some of the old shafts are still reasonably intact, the blue gum shoring having weathered the years well. At the bottom of the hill beside Stoney



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

Sand being taken from the bank of the Mary River near Kidd Bridge to be treated to extract gold left in the old tailings dumped in the river.

Creek are many rusting relics of the old mining era—remains of the old Doran and Shepherd batteries beside a disused well, railway lines and trolleys, winches and forges.

The mining bug has not been extinguished completely at Glastonbury. A Gympie syndicate including two locals, Bill and Lionel Williams, recently worked a shaft just a few yards off the Diggings Road beside an old mine manager's house, while across the creek a start has been made on two fresh shafts.

As a carryover from the mining days, several places around Widgee and Gympie continue to be prefixed by the word "The". For example, Chatsworth was first known as "the Chatsworth diggings", and most local people still use "the Chatsworth" instead of "Chatsworth". It's an odds-on bet that anyone referring to "the Monkland" or "the One Mile" is someone from the district.

At one time no one lived "in" Gympie. People always lived "on" Gympie, a reference to living on the goldfield. However, this practice has largely fallen out of use except by a few of the oldest residents.

## Land of Milk and Butter

For the best part of half a century Widgee Shire was regarded as the premier dairying district in Queensland. Its dairy farmers prospered and the factory they supplied set record after record as the biggest butter producer in the Southern Hemisphere, if not the world. Over the past 20 years the situation has changed dramatically, however. Many of the remaining dairy farmers are battling to stay in the industry, and the butter churns of Gympie have been stilled, perhaps forever.

Widgee's earliest dairying was confined to the farms around Gympie, which had a ready market for their milk on the goldfield. Some of the farmers made a little extra income by making butter, a long and laborious task often carried out by their wives. This was done by skimming the cream from the milk after it had been allowed to settle in a wide open pan. The cream was then shaken vigorously in a container until it turned to butter. Then it could be sold to the miners for about six pence a pound, a fairly meagre return for a lot of hard work.



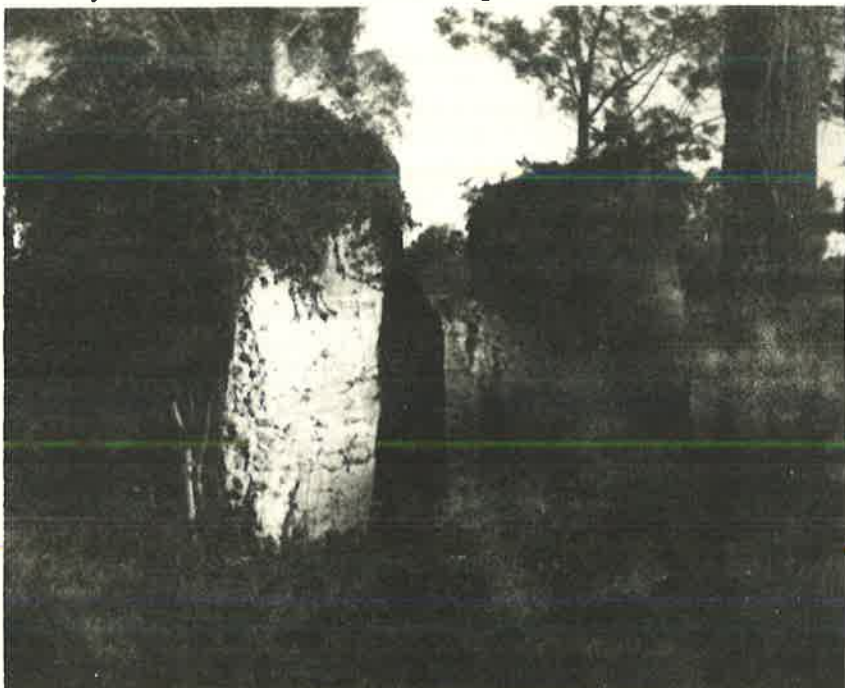
*courtesy Du Rietz family*  
Hugo Du Rietz on a visit to his native Sweden

The man to revolutionise all this was Hugo William Du Rietz, a Swedish-born architect who lived on Gympie's Southside. While James Nash put Gympie on the map, Du Rietz ensured that it stayed there. In 1882 he imported the first cream separator into Queensland, a move that laid the foundation stone of the dairy industry which brought new prosperity to the district as Gympie's mines began to falter.

Du Rietz spied the innovative separator at a Sydney Show and managed to acquire it ahead of two New South Welshmen who also were showing an interest. He installed his new machinery on land he rented from Thomas O'Brien on Pie Creek. He built a concrete floor dairy on the site of the present Pie Creek Hall and then produced his first butter for the Gympie market.

In 1885 he took up land between Stumm Road and the Mary River, half an hour's walk from Gympie. There he built a dairy which for many years was regarded as the finest in Queensland. The mortar and stone walls were two feet thick, the floor was of concrete and brick with cement drains to facilitate daily washing and the roof was made of shingles. A small storage room

opening off one end of the dairy had slots which Du Rietz inserted large blocks of ice brought by dray from Maryborough, about 60 miles away, since Gympie did not have its own ice works at that time. A visitor to the farm once noted that on the hottest day of summer when the temperature on the shaded verandah of the homestead reached 106 degrees Fahrenheit, the temperature in the dairy—without ice—was a full 20 degrees lower.



Crumbling remains of the old Du Rietz dairy

Like the majority of farmers, Du Rietz ran mainly Jersey-Shorthorn crossbred cattle. He milked up to 30 cows which each produced an average of seven pounds of butter a week until he switched from dairying to poultry raising because of river pollution from the mines tailings. The dairy fell into disuse but its crumbling remains can still be seen on the old Du Rietz property, now owned by another dairy farmer, Mr. F. Kilvington.

Today Du Rietz would be virtually guaranteed of a government subsidy or sponsorship to promote such advanced experimentation. Instead he lost money on his dairying venture.

But the government of the day had begun to notice the quiet revolution that was under way in the industry. It, too, bought up some of the new equipment on the market and set up a mobile dairy.

In September 1890, the Government's Travelling Dairy made its first appearance in the Widgee Shire with a demonstration to local farmers on the

property of Isaac Butler, one of the pioneers of Lagoon Pocket. The farmers, not used to having much to do with the Government apart from paying taxes received the Travelling Dairy with scepticism initially and failed to provide enough milk to be given a practical demonstration of cheese making. They were impressed enough the next time however after the manager of the Travelling Dairy cajoled a sufficient supply to show off his radical apparatus.

According to a contemporary report, the cheese making plant consisted of a wooden vat with a perforated pipe on either side to admit hot water and steam. Inside this was a tin vat in which the milk was placed. Underneath was a copper fire box to boil the water and on top two blades to cut the curds, which sank by gravity to the bottom of the tin, and a syphon to take out the whey. The vat also was a salting and cooling tank, as soon as the temperature of the curd had been reduced to 75 deg. Fahrenheit salt was added in the ratio of one pint to 40 gallons of milk. The curds then were placed in a rack covered with white cheese cloth and removed to the press for half an hour. The mass was clothed in fine muslin, pressed overnight and then removed to cure for about two months. Simple though the process might sound today, it was eye-popping at the time for farmers more accustomed to cattle being beasts of burden apart from the odd house milking cow or those bred for their beef.

By 1894 dairying was gaining respectability, In the Gympie Land Agent's district there were 120 dairies, four of them each milking over 100 cows daily and 60 over 20 each. Most of the milk was, however, purely for town supply.

Co-operative dairy factories started to make an appearance in other parts of the country in the mid 1890s and in April 1896, a preliminary meeting was held in Mr. F. C. Walker's Gympie office to discuss the setting up of a creamery and freezing works in the district. Mr. James Fraser, subsequently a Widgee chairman, pointed out that Gympie alone was spending thousands of pounds to import butter which could easily be supplied by the farmers of the district.

In May 1896 a Gympie Co-operative Dairy, Ice and Cold Storage Company was formally proposed with 6,000 shares of 10/- each, the co-operative members being limited to a maximum of 100 shares per person and a minimum of five. A prospectus issued to farmers said: "The company will buy either milk or cream; establish creameries at suitable centres when sufficient inducement offers—in other words where sufficient cows are or will be milked; manufacture bacon; make ice and provide cold storage. Our country neighbours will have a certain market at the highest price for their milk, cream, pigs etc. and, if they can avail themselves of the cold storage, and hold their perishable articles until the market improves".

The farmers were not so optimistic. Two years later only 125 of them had subscribed, taking up a total of 2,952 shares. Although the interim directors said 2,000 more shares needed to be taken up so the company could start on a sound financial footing, they went ahead and purchased one acre of

land near the Gympie Railway Station for a factory site. It was bought from Mr. H. Tucker for £50. The One Mile Saw Mill Company was commissioned to build the factory and Mr. C. J. McCormick, formerly of the Government's Travelling Dairy, was appointed manager. In October 1898, Gympie's first butter factory went into operation.

The plant comprised a Hercules refrigerator which, it was boasted, could turn out three tons of ice daily in addition to reducing the cooling chambers attached to the factory to freezing point. It was driven by a 12 horse power horizontal engine manufactured in the United States by the Troy engineering works. Steam was supplied from a 12 hp vertical boiler manufactured in Brisbane by Evans, Anderson and Co. The steel ice tank measured seven feet by four feet by five feet and was fitted with moulds to turn out 50-pound blocks of ice. The butter-making room contained a Lightning butter extractor capable of turning out five cwt of butter at each churning which lasted about 15 minutes.

Mr. W. Bowdery was the successful tenderer for the delivery of ice from the factory to Gympie and the surrounding district.

But the first brave attempt at cooperative dairying ended in inglorious failure. In August 1899, the Gympie Butter Factory suspended operations and could pay its creditors only 7/6 in the £. In September the company called tenders for the purchase of the factory and the following month accepted an offer from the Silverwood Dairy Factory Co. of £2,000 for the land, building and machinery and £100 for other stock assets. This left the sad but wiser vendors with £373 to divide up after clearing all their debts. At no stage had the factory been able to produce more than one ton of ice per day though three had been expected. Butter production had never topped two tons per day.

Silverwood made a better fist of running the factory, its expertise in management keeping the factory's head above water even during the drought and redwater scourge when cream production was reduced to a trickle.

But agitation for a new cooperative factory led to a meeting in Mr. G. F. Lister's store at Mount Pleasant on March 3 1906 to investigate a cooperative. The meeting elected a steering committee comprising Messrs W. C. Anderson representing Brooloo and Imbil Road, H. F. Walker (Brisbane Road), George Glasgow (Eel Creek), J. Ellis (Deep Creek), F. Barsby (Imbil Road), George Jorgensen (Tamaree), J. McFarland (Kilkivan), J. T. Williams (Goomboorian), Ed. Cross (Glastonbury), and G. F. Lister and G. H. Mackay (Gympie).

Once again the cooperative movement's stalwarts touted the district for support, this time with more luck in the disposal of the shares than had been the case 10 years earlier. Rather than set up a factory in opposition to Silverwood, the shareholders negotiated with Silverwood and bought the factory back for £2,800, along with its "Golden Nugget" brand.

The shareholders elected a board of directors comprising Messrs H. F. Walker, G. Glasgow, J. Stumm, E. Butler and J. T. Williams, who in turn



*courtesy Lorensen family*

A shingle-roofed dairy on Rocks Road



Remains of a bark-roofed dairy near Harvey's Siding





*courtesy G. Tramacchi*

Cream wagon of Jack Tramacchi on the Cedar Pocket run



*courtesy H. Portas*

Cream wagon driven from Widgee and Glastonbury by Joe Portas for Dave Bermingham.

elected Mr. Walker as chairman, a position he held for the next 23 years apart from a couple of short breaks.

The directors appointed Mr. W. E. Allen of Maryborough manager from 26 applicants, but rescinded the appointment before he had taken up the post, which was given to Mr. W. D. Forbes instead. The changeover from Silverwood to the Wide Bay Co-operative Dairy Company took place on September 1, 1906. The new factory began with 175 suppliers, who in the first week sent in 12,784 lb. of cream from which 5,532 lb of butter was produced.

Tenders were called for the "carriage of cream on Imbil, Glastonbury and Kenilworth-Eumundi roads for 12 months on the following conditions—triweekly delivery, to collect all cream on route, route to be subject to variation as required, covered-in spring waggon to be used, directors to reserve the right of terminating contract by one month's notice, tenders to state price per 100 lb. cream delivered to the factory."

Mr. J. M. Smith was the successful tenderer for the Imbil Road area with a quote of 2/6 per 100 lb. from Upper Kandanga and Bollier, 2/- from Bunya Creek and 1/- from Lagoon Pocket. However, he found these prices uneconomic and over the next three years there were several changes in carriers operating from the Mary Valley, including J. Nobbs, James Doyle, D. Lane and James Tincknell.

Mr. J. C. Hassall of Mount Ubi was awarded the Kenilworth contract at 2/- per 100 lb. delivered to Eumundi, from where it was railed to Gympie. Inroads were made on his run the following year by Mr. A. Davies, then Mr. J. Pinkerton of Traveston who started a pickup from the Brisbane road for 1/8 per 100 lb.

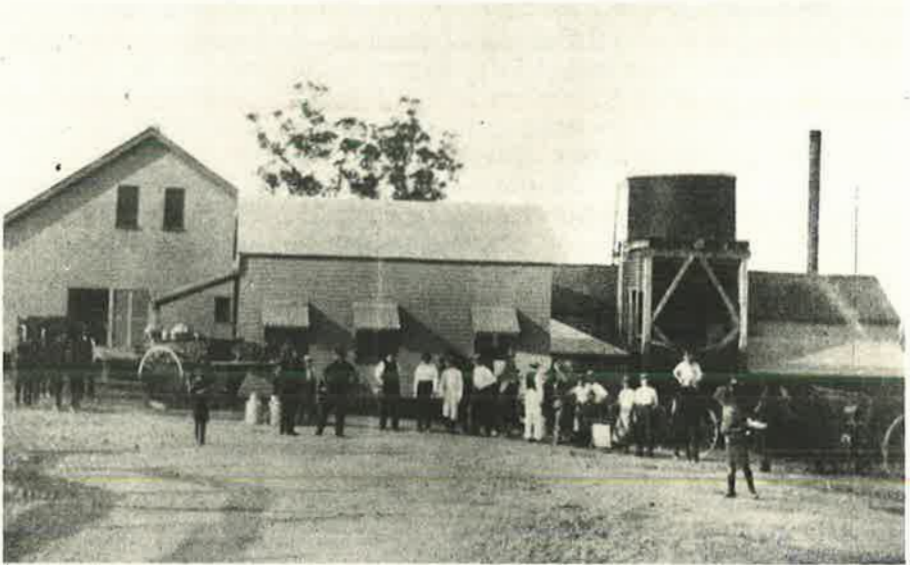
Mr. T. E. Betts jr. was awarded the Glastonbury run on an interim basis for £3/10/- per week. The directors felt quotes for this run were too high and called tenders again. John Stockden was the successful tenderer at 2/1 per 100 lb. from Glastonbury and 2/6 from Widgee. However, he met with an accident soon afterwards and Mr. Betts was reinstated. Under a new agreement the factory subsidised Mr. Betts with 2/- per 100 lb. for all cream carted while the suppliers contributed 1/6 per 100 lb. There were a number of renegade suppliers on this run who played off the Tiaro factory against Gympie for two or three years before plunging en masse for Gympie.

Other cream runs started up in the first two years of the factory's operations included one from Kin Kin, where the first carriers were H. Slade and A. J. M. Chapman, and from Goomborian where Cecil Gillis was awarded a contract at 3/6 per 100 lb.

Some less populous areas had no carriers at all. Suppliers from these parts carted their cream several miles to the nearest railway station or straight to the factory. Many of them were naturally bitter about the subsidies to which they contributed for areas with pickups.

The start of the cream runs opened up a great service to the outlying settlers of the Shire. For the carriers were more than mere carters of cream. They became the deliverymen of the country. Often the carrier returned from

the factory with a bigger load than on his inward journey, with a mountain of fresh bread and other commodities requested by farmers on his run. Whether it was a skein of wool or a bottle of rum, the carrier could nearly always be relied on to deliver the goods. For the majority of farmers the days of isolation were over with the cream carrier's regular delivery of newspapers and goods. The personal service of the cream carriers is remembered with fondness by Widgee's farmers.



*courtesy Gympie Times*

Wide Bay Dairy Co-operative factory, Gympie 1910

By 1910 the Wide Bay Co-operative Dairy Company's increased production had led to the installation of new plant. Already it had distributed £120,763 among its suppliers, some of them from as far afield as Wondai and Beerwah.

Production kept climbing and in 1915 a branch factory was established at Cooroy which began with 116 suppliers. Its first manager was Mr. B. C. Cummings, who in 1924 took over the managership of the Gympie factory. By then the Gympie factory was bulging at the seams. Production was up to 58 tons of butter and 20 tons of ice per week—double that intended for the plant. A new factory was built and was opened on September 25, 1925 by the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. W. Forgan Smith. It was built by J. Wildridge and Sinclair at a cost of £66,000 and was paid off by 1931, financed at the rate of one third of a penny per pound of butter. The railways also built a siding into



World champion snooker player Walter Lindrum examining Gympie butter at Selfridge's, London in 1934.



Wide Bay's champion butter maker Mick O'Brien with the P. and O. Cup for Australia's best butter, circa 1925.

the factory to help with loading and unloading. The new factory was said to be the biggest in the world. The investment paid off, for just over a decade later its production was claimed to be a world record.

In March 1939 the company produced a world record 607 tons 972 lb—with 496 tons 376 lb. coming from the Gympie factory. Suppliers reaped a bonanza dividend of £79,071 at the rate of 1/2 per lb. for choice cream, 1/1½ for first grade and 1/0½ for second grade. This figure was topped when butter production for January 1942 reached 644 tons 2,078 lb. In these heady days the factory had between 1,600 and 1,700 suppliers and had a work force of over 50 employees.

In 1953 dairy farmers were given an alternative outlet with the opening of the Nestle factory on the northern outskirts of Gympie.

Present manager, Mr. D. C. Telfer, remembers well the factory's first day of operation when it took in 460 gallons of milk. However, gradually many producers switched over to Nestle, mainly because of the convenience of the company's whole milk operation instead of cream.

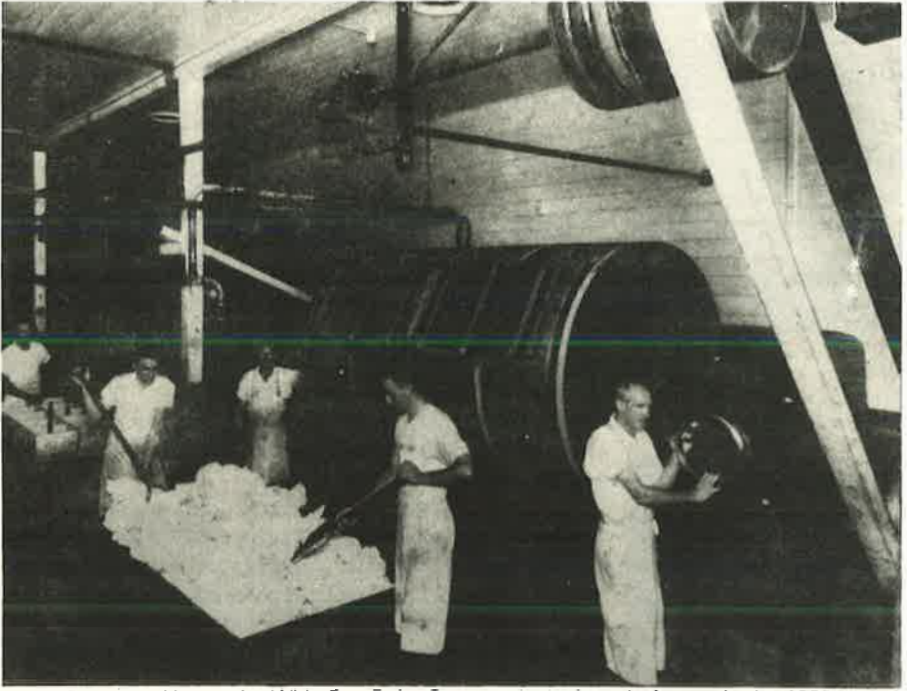
Some switched because Nestle operated a machinery pool, which enabled suppliers to hire equipment ranging from harrows to haymakers without having to outlay large sums for capital expenditure.

The Wide Bay factory did not make the switch to a milk pickup until 10 years after the arrival of Nestle. By then the dairy industry had started its downward spiral.

The downturn began in the late 1950s through a sharp rise in the costs of production accompanied by a dip in prices. The majority of Widgee dairy farmers were almost wholly dependent on a butter economy and suffered a great decline in income, which accelerated with the stepping-up of dairying in the southern states, particularly Victoria. Opposition from margarine was not a major factor at the start of the decline, but in later years made great inroads into butter sales.

The writing was on the wall for the Wide Bay Dairy Co-operative as far as butter production was concerned. In December 1975 it closed its Cooroy branch factory, which had produced butter and nothing else. The building was leased to a manufacturer of water beds and bean bags.

On May 2, 1978, the Gympie factory produced its last churn of butter. It was a sad day for the factory, whose golden days of big butter production had



Butter making at the Wide Bay Dairy Co-operative's Gympie factory in the 1920s.

prevented Gympie from becoming a ghost town when the gold mining came to an end.

“At the peak of our production in the 1950s there were between 1,600 and 1,700 farmers supplying us with cream.” manager Graeme Hayling said. “Now there are 45, and the quantity of cream they are producing is just not enough. At one stage our association was the largest single butter manufacturing factory in Australia, and possibly in the Southern Hemisphere.”

Golden Nugget butter did not die with the end of butter production in Gympie, however. Cream from the factory's remaining cream suppliers is sent to the South Burnett factory at Murgon to produce a small amount of butter under the Golden Nugget brand.

The Wide Bay factory now has entered an era of packaged consumer-type products in place of butter, casein (which was manufactured from 1962 to 1975) and milk powder (in the early 1970s). In 1976 the factory diversified into production of items such as flavoured dairy drinks and cream, both for local and catering markets, and in 1978 launched its first cheese—Cooloola Cheese—manufactured under its Golden Nugget brand. Fresh milk is sold locally under the Gold Land label.

Wide Bay chairmen of directors since the co-operative's founding have been Messrs H. F. Walker, J. Stumm, J. Ellis, D. J. Caulley, J. T. Tatnell, C.

M. R. Glover, J. Long, H. Cochrane, G. F. H. Zerner, T. A. McNaught and R. J. Sexton.

In July 1978 the Shire's local supplier groups voted for amalgamation in a twin-edged attempt to cut costs, by doing away with duplicate pickup routes for rival factories, and to form a united front to gain higher market quotas.

At that time Wide Bay had 114 milk suppliers and about 30 cream producers, Nestle had 170 suppliers and Kraft in Kenilworth also had a small number of suppliers in Widgee Shire.

In its first quarter of a century in Gympie, Nestle's intake had grown to well over 12 million gallons of milk a year, more than double that envisaged when the company set up its operation. It is now a multi-million dollar operation with a staff of 140 employed in the manufacture of Sunshine full cream powder and Lactogen milk powder for infants. Wide Bay's work force during the same period has been halved to 25.

The dairy industry in Widgee Shire may be down, but it is not yet out. Mr. Hayling, of the Wide Bay Co-Operative, is one who believes there are signs of recovery. "We believe the Mary Valley area is in an ideal situation geographically and climatically to gain advantage for markets around Brisbane and in the near north growth areas where little dairying is carried out," he said.

## From Harvest to Market

Widgee Shire's first commercial fruit and vegetable growers were not particularly well liked by the rest of the community; often they were despised. For they were Chinese—usually referred to as Chinamen by white pioneers not noted for their racial tolerance.

Early in the Gympie gold rush hundreds of Chinese fossickers descended on the field. Many turned their hand to growing fruit and vegetables, both for themselves and the fast-growing town of miners. The pattern was the same at Imbil and Kilkivan as other strikes were made. Chinese market gardens sprung up around each new field.

The first of the Chinese gardeners simply squatted on the land, just as the station owners of 20 years earlier had done, and planted their vegetables in the fertile river flats beside Gympie. As Gympie grew, some of the Chinese took up land further out at Chatsworth, on the Southside and along Pie Creek. At the Chatsworth they were ahead of most of the early white selectors and included men such as Bong Tong, Ah Kie, Ah Cong and, later, Ah Mee, Jimmy Ah Hing, Ah Young, Ah Chuck and Shew Wah—names that mostly have long since vanished from the district.

Some stayed on well into the 20th. century, and many Gympieites and Southside residents remember the once familiar sight of weather-beaten coolies, bent almost double beneath their yokes, walking into town to hawk their produce to the local shops.

Among the last of the old Chinese were Harry and Georgie, whose family names have been lost in time. They lived in a pair of humpies on five acres they leased beside the river off Stumm Road.

Old Harry was hardly a Prince Charming, but one day after returning home to find his garden plundered, he went looking for a Cinderella. Gone was one of his prize watermelons, but the culprit had left a clue behind in the shape of a bare footprint. Harry measured off a piece of straw against the footprint, then did the rounds of the local children to see whose foot fitted the "slipper". The naughty Cinderella, the daughter of a local sharefarmer, was not discovered.

Apart from the early Chinese, the first man to begin fruit growing near Gympie was probably George Flay, who arrived on the goldfield in 1868. For a while he washed for alluvial gold at Walker's Pocket with a mate named Hugh Carey, then worked the Homeward Bound locality at the Two-Mile which gave him sufficient capital in 1871 to start what became the famous Green

Park farm. There he grew citrus fruits, grapes and then strawberries with phenomenal success. "Phenomenal" was the name he gave to the giant strawberry he developed himself and which became the most widely grown strawberry variety in Australia. Flay's Strawberry Garden at the Two-Mile was a landmark in the district until near the end of the horse and buggy days. Sunday afternoons would see up to 70 horse and sulkies drawn up outside the gardens while the visitors tasted its delights.

Both Green Park Farm and the neighbouring Delaware Gardens originally owned by Dr. Benson, grew grapes and were renowned for the wine they produced. Both places were favourite watering holes for miners seeking a change from their usual rum. Other early grape growers were Edward Wright, who owned the Hermitage vineyard on Randwick Road, and the Burkhardt and Wersalli families around Lagoon Pocket, where the last grapes for wine production were grown by Jack Butler.

For a quarter of a century Chatsworth was the fruitbowl of the Shire as many of its pioneers established citrus orchards to supplement their incomes. Some of the first attempts to grow wheat as a cash crop also were carried out there by Henry Spiller, who in 1889 set out to prove that the Darling Downs did not have this market to itself. He planted 16 acres of the Red Lamas variety with such success that he commissioned sawmillers Ferguson and Co. to build him a threshing plant.

In February 1892 he railed 80 bushels of wheat to Brisbane, the first to be sent from the Shire. Similar attempts to grow wheat on a commercial scale were made by William Chippindall at Bunya Creek and Adam Mulholland at Widgee Crossing. None of them persevered, however, possibly because of the 1893 flood which ruined their crops.

Sugar cane also was tried by some farmers, mainly around Kybong and Cooran, but interest stagnated when growers' efforts to establish a co-operative sugar mill failed when the Government refused to give financial support, deeming the nearest mills at Nambour and Bauple to have ample crushing capacity for any cane grown in the Widgee area.

The sugar cane industry enjoyed a brief renaissance during the 1920s and the Depression years of the 1930s when farmers at Lagoon Pocket and Goomboorian turned to cane production. However, World War II and the closure of the Bauple mill again brought cane production to a halt.

It was not until the banana boom began and the fruitgrowers co-ordinated their activities that the Shire found any crop worth growing on a grand scale. Prior to the banana boom agricultural crops such as maize, potatoes and hay were the main crops. The banana boom came just after World War I when the Gympie mines were beginning their rapid decline and when something was urgently needed to boost the local economy. In the following decade Widgee Shire became the biggest banana producing area in all of Australia.

Sugar bananas had been grown in the Gympie district from the early days but were purely for local consumption. The commercial Cavendish





*courtesy W. Greenhalgh*

A burn near Bells Bridge. ... this was how most of the land was cleared for bananas and other crops

variety was not introduced to the Shire until just before the turn of the century. Credit for their introduction has been given to Neerdie selector George Power, who also produced the first commercial crop. This was at Goomboorian in 1908 where he transplanted about two acres of bananas from stock he had brought in by dray over a decade earlier. Urged on by Mr. Power, other Goomboorian and Ross Creek settlers including Malcolm Buchanan, Alex Hinds, and H. and E. Mason hesitantly followed suit. On the other side of Gympie William Tweed, who had a farm opposite Long Flat Hall and Harry Friske, who had a large property between Gympie and the Amamoor estate, were among the first growers west of the Mary.

At first they found it hard to crack the southern markets with any degree of financial consistency and Mr. Friske let it be known that anyone could take the pick of his bananas for a shilling a bunch. He soon found he had to supervise his visitors, who were inclined to cut a bunch, then abandon it on spotting a larger bunch.

Banana suckers brought up from Buderim were planted on the Maroonda experimental farm at Mr. Henderson's Amamoor Estate in 1913 and two years later the first fruit was cut and railed into Gympie. The banana business was such a curiosity then that 50 people turned up to watch Tom Connors, a buyers' agent from the south, give an exhibition of packing and handling of these bananas for the southern markets.

As the area's growers gradually gained a bigger share of the southern markets, more and more farmers turned to bananas, leading to the formation

of the first Gympie and District Fruitgrowers Association. At a meeting in the Gympie Town Hall on March 9, 1916, the following representatives were elected: Messrs H. Greenhalgh of Corella for the Maryborough line as far as Gunalda, W. Allen for Chatsworth, W. Tweed for Mary Valley, Z. D. S. Skyring for Southside, S. Parr for Woondum, J. Tatnell for Deep Creek and J. Power for Goomboorian. The foundation office bearers included Gympie businessmen G. D. Austin (president), J. A. Cullinane, A. Henderson and H. Sedgman.

About this time bunchy top disease hit the Tweed area of northern New South Wales which had produced most of the bananas for the south. As the disease brought the Tweed to its knees, Widgee Shire went on a banana bender.

The early banana crops were railed to Roma Street in Brisbane then shipped as deck cargo to Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne at a total cost of just over four shillings a case from Gympie to Melbourne. In 1919 consignments went to Landsborough where a special fruit train was made up, then in 1921 Gympie became the starting point of the fruit train. The fruitgrowers appointed Martin Webster as their official loader in Gympie and he saw consignments rise from about 20 tons or 460 cases a week in 1921 to 340 tons in 1930 when the banana bubble burst.



*courtesy W. Greenhalgh*

A banana wagon with undercut front wheels for greater manoeuvrability

Bananas sent the population of Widgee Shire skyrocketing. The boom coincided with the establishment of Soldiers Settlements and hundreds of other men, including many Finns and Hindus, leased acreage from landowners to start banana plantations. Most of the bananas were planted with a hoe in untilled soil after the scrub had been felled and burnt. Then, as demand grew, the hillsides were cultivated with horse-drawn implements. The scrub-covered hills around the Shire were cleared at a rate rarely seen before in a mad rush to plant bananas.

There was a spinoff for the timber industry, too, as case mills sprang up to deal with the packaging side of the business. Even the farmers who stuck to dairying profited from the boom by leasing off part of their land, though this proved disastrous for one Greendale farmer, Austin Green. He leased out

some land which was guaranteed to be frost free. But the clearing of the scrub let the frost in and ruined his lessee's bananas. The banana grower successfully sued for substantial damages.

The dramatic rise of the banana industry can be illustrated by freight figures for 1924 which showed that 63,283 cases of bananas were consigned from the Gympie district excluding the Mary Valley compared with 37,549 the previous year. In 1924 another 73,127 cases were consigned from railway stations along the Mary Valley line including over 19,000 from Lagoon Pocket, over 12,000 from Dagon and nearly 22,000 from Amamoor.



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

Banana getters and their horse-drawn sled outside a packing shed

All good things have to come to an end, however, and for the Widgee Shire banana growers this came with the Rust Thrip infestation—which made its first inroads in the Chatsworth district—the world economic depression and then the recovery of the Tweed plantations in New South Wales. The falling-off of the industry was as spectacular as its rise, and by 1935 loadings from Gympie had declined to about 150 cases a week.

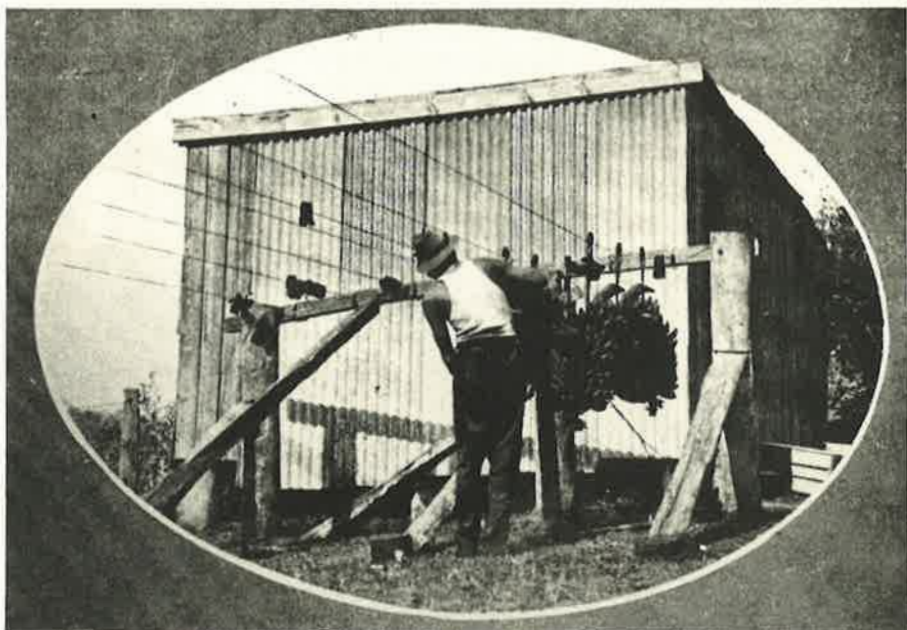
The growers' predicament was ably summed by Mr. R. V. Wyke when he visited Widgee Shire in 1931 for his "Caravan Tales" which were a regular feature of *The Queenslander* magazine.

"Anyone who wanders in the Widgee country at the present time must be struck with the productiveness of this part of the country," he wrote. ". . . there are bananas retailed in the shops at 50 a shilling or any old price if you



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

Flying fox. . . this is how the bananas came down the hillsides



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

At the receiving end of the flying foxes

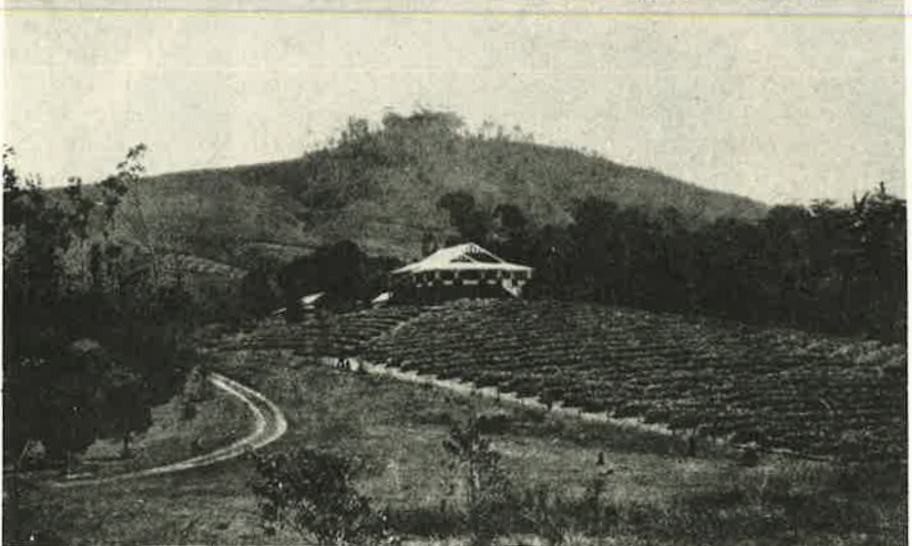
care to pick them up; there are vegetables galore that it does not pay to send out of the district. . . There is, in my opinion, enough produce going to waste in the Widgee country to feed all the unemployed in Queensland, but the freights, cartage and cost of handling do not enable it to reach them."

After another week in the Shire he wrote: "Any man foolish enough to sing, or even warble, a ditty relating to bananas (such as 'Yes, we have no bananas') would, at the present juncture, be very unwelcome in the Widgee country, for there are here bananas to burn and to bury and to throw away."

During this period of depression, a Canina grower, Salen Ukran, pioneered the bagging of banana bunches as a control against Rust. It is a practice which has now become standard through the country, although commercial banana production in Widgee Shire is a thing of the past apart from a couple of small plantations at Greendale and Mount Corella.

The collapse of the banana industry sent the Gympie Fruitgrowers' Association into liquidation and its premises near Gympie Railway Station were taken over by the Queensland Fruitgrowers' Society. However, after the war the association was able to buy back the building, which by then had been taken over by the C.O.D. Mr. M. Buchanan was secretary of the association and official loader at the time.

The banana collapse also triggered an exodus from the Shire of many men who had been leasing land for banana plantations. The rest of the growers turned mainly to pineapples and beans as an alternative crop. Within a few years Widgee Shire became one of the major pineapple producing areas in the State, though the returns generally were not up to those of the banana



*courtesy Queensland Newspapers*

Maroonda, the experimental farm on the Amamoor estate

days. The first pineapples grown commercially in the Mary Valley were planted at Maroonda during World War 1. Two acres were planted under the supervision of Mr. J. Long who half a century later was awarded the M.B.E. for his services to a different industry, that of dairying.

Pineapples flourished in Maroonda's rich scrub soil, with the biggest weighing just under 16 pounds and measuring 23 inches in girth. Buyers of the Amamoor Estate, notably the Smith family from Woombye, made this area one of the premier pineapple producing districts in the Shire though it was not until the opening of the Northgate canning factory in Brisbane that the crop came into its own. There were hopes for a while that the cannery would be built near Gympie. A site was proposed beside the railway line at Monkland, but C.O.D. officials from Brisbane rejected it as unsuitable after a secret inspection, which caused considerable controversy when it was disclosed.

Beans had been a sideline crop during the banana days with several growers planting them around their young banana suckers while waiting for their first crop. The first growers of beans on a commercial scale near Gympie were Bill Anderson and George Watson at Calico Creek. Mr. Anderson went on to produce the first disease-free seed for the bean industry.

When bean growing got under way in Widgee Shire most of the seed was grown either in Victoria or on Norfolk Island. These producers made little effort to eradicate Halo Blight which was one of the growers' biggest bug-bears. However, developmental work by Mr. Anderson which was followed up by the Department of Primary Industry led to the introduction of disease-free seeds used practically throughout Australia in the production of both fresh beans and canned beans.



Pineapple plantation in the Mary Valley

A second bugbear for the growers came in the form of merchant canvassers for the Melbourne and Sydney buyers. During the picking season there were so many canvassers operating in the Mary Valley and other areas, and even in the loading yards, that their presence became unbearable.

At the instigation of the Lagoon Pocket Fruitgrowers' Association, the parent Gympie and Mary Valley organisations decided to take action. They decided that not only were the canvassers a nuisance but they must also be costing them money since it would have cost at least-£10 a week to keep each representative in the district. The southern buyers were told that any who sent canvassers into the area during the season—from May to October—would get no beans at all. This united action by the growers produced instant results. They saw their average return shoot up from 15 shillings a case to £1 in the first year of this operation.

Until the late 1930s all beans were grown under dry cultivation which meant that towards the end of winter the crops had tapered to nothing.

The benefits of irrigation were not unknown. In 1902 a Chinese farmer at Eel Creek irrigated his market garden with a horse and whim arrangement. And about the same time James Tincknell at Upper Kandanga Creek had a semi-rotary hand pump connected to a 20-foot well which was capable of throwing out 1,300 gallons of water an hour.

Large scale irrigation was attempted for the first time just before World War II. It was carried out on an experimental basis by three of the Buchanan brothers at Goomboorian—Neil, Ivan and Eric. Their equipment consisted of a small deep-well pump driven by a large 8 h.p. kerosene engine, an old Ruston-Hornsby which once had been used to drive a small case mill. This was somewhat akin to using a sledgehammer to crack a nut, but geared right down to barely tick over it served its purpose admirably.

The Buchanans felt they were taking a big gamble by installing irrigation for two or three acres of winter beans. But their beans thrived, and coming after an exceptionally dry spring their impact on the market was immediate. These late beans fetched over a shilling a pound on the Sydney market and other Widgee growers sat up and took notice.

The first man to follow their example on the other side of the Mary was Mr. W. Beattie at Calico Creek, who in later years received the M.B.E. for his services to the fruit growing industry. Mr. Beattie was a little sceptical of the salesman who promised him a pump that would raise water over a 200-foot ridge from the creek to his farm. They reached an agreement that Mr. Beattie should pay only when water was flowing out the top end. Mr. Beattie's misgivings evaporated when the pump did its work and in 1946, a drought year, any past doubts were dispelled when he loaded half the beans consigned from Lagoon Pocket railway station.

Growers throughout the Shire installed irrigation equipment as fast as it could be supplied after World War II. Those without running water on their properties had dams made for this purpose.

Prior to the war there had been only a few small earth dams, purely for stock watering purposes. Few farmers had even heard of bulldozers until the American forces used them for building airstrips during their island-hopping campaign in the Pacific. After the war bulldozers owned and operated by the Widgee Shire Council and private contractors, Saunders Brothers of Amamoor, were used to build many dams in the Shire.

As the bean industry grew, many of the growers built cottages to house the pickers who also included many women from Gympie. As motor transport and roads improved after the war, most of these houses were no longer needed. Many Gympie women still make the return trip each day during the season to pick beans on properties where they have worked for up to 25 years.

In the early days of bean production the beans left Gympie twice a week on the fruit train. Some enterprising growers then discovered that by paying the freight rate for passenger trains they could consign beans nightly, ensuring they were at their best when they reached the market. Growers carted their cases of beans on to the main platform at Gympie Railway Station until the Railways Department decided to provide trucks in the goods yards for the growers to load direct. These trucks were then hooked on to the passenger trains which passed through each night.

A further refinement was added in the early 1960s when—following a joint meeting of growers, road transport operators and the Railways—a nightly fruit train from Gympie was introduced to suit the Melbourne market and freight was reduced from 25 shillings to 18 shillings. In addition to the nightly fruit trains, beans are transported to Melbourne by road at the peak of the season.

Over the past two decades there has been considerable diversification in the Shire's fruit and vegetable industry. Official figures for the Gympie Fruitgrowers' Association loadings at the C.O.D. rail siding in Gympie for 1955 show that produce worth £1,494,000 left the district that year. This was made up of 20,000 cases of bananas, 900,000 cases of pineapples, 10,000 of tomatoes, 15,000 of papaws, 85,000 of beans, 20,000 of cucumbers and only 3,000 cases of other varieties.

By the mid 1960s, in addition to the main exports of beans and pineapples through Gympie, there were other items such as peas which averaged 11,350 packages a year, eggfruit (10,895 packages a year), avocados (1,564), rockmelons (2,120), capsicums (1,467), passionfruit (1,970) plus 27,500 packages of various other produce.

In the year ending June 30, 1978, a total of 342,862 packages worth about \$3.5 million were railed through Gympie including 133,514 of beans, 82,299 of zucchinis and 7,907 of pineapples. Another 39,567 packages were sent by road. The main pineapple producing area, the Mary Valley, has sent an average of 15,000 to 20,000 tons of fruit per annum to the cannery in recent years, plus another 1,000 tons p.a. for the fresh fruit market.

Directors of the Gympie Fruitgrowers' Association in 1978 were Messrs M. T. Dower (chairman) and M. F. Stephan for Sandy Creek, W. J. Beattie



and D. Wilson (Lagoon Pocket), N. Knox and G. Kath (Langshaw), R. A. Euston and P. G. Hughes (Glastonbury), A. P. Miles and L. M. Carlson (Mooloo), E. G. Hawkins and R. J. Cross (Chatsworth), L. W. Stephan and W. N. Buchanan (Goomborian), W. Renwick and L. A. McIntyre (Wolvi), B. W. Granshaw and F. G. Shadbolt (Cedar Pocket), K. Nichol and S. Jenkins (Gunalda), C. V. Crust and T. Thrupp (Amamoor) and F. G. Nissen (Tandur). Secretary and chief loader for the past 22 years has been Mr. S. J. Lowe.

## PART 4

### The Second Century



## The Second Century

The winds of change that have carried Widgee through its first century promise to blow just as strongly for the next 100 years.

Already they are blowing Widgee in a new direction, towards tourism as a major industry. For its first 100 years, Widgee Shire's economy was almost wholly rural based. But following the decline in many sectors of primary production and the opening up of the Cooloola Coast, tourism has offered new and exciting prospects.

The most dramatic changes of all are expected to take place at Rainbow Beach, which until little more than a decade ago was just another sand dune. But for the late W. H. Kidd, Rainbow Beach might still be a pipedream. In the words of present chairman K. De Vere: "Widgee Shire was very fortunate in having Billy Kidd as chairman. He was an outstanding chairman with foresight and vision far beyond the ordinary man. He saw the Shire was losing population and said we have to open up our coastal regions. He had the drive to follow it through and saw Rainbow Beach off the ground."

Now Rainbow Beach, the youngest township in the Shire, promises to far outstrip its elders. Although the last of the mining leases along Inskip Point do not expire until the mid-1990s, provision is being made for a major tourist development along the point from Rainbow Beach. The Shire Council does not, of course, have a crystal ball to tell the future. But it does see signs that over the next 20 years Rainbow Beach will rapidly increase in size to hold a permanent population of between 3,000 and 4,000—and a holiday population of 30,000 to 40,000.

Widgee Shire Council firmly believes that this area cannot help but go ahead. What other place could offer the national parks of Fraser Island immediately to the north and Cooloola to the south, as well as surf on one side of the development and Tin Can Bay's extensive waterways on the other?

An overall development plan still on the Shire's drawing boards could well turn out to be the blueprint for development of the Cooloola Coast. It includes an upgraded airstrip for Rainbow Beach away from the township area and—as well as normal residential development—features such as a hospital complex, housing for elderly people, a commercial area, shopping centres, golf course, greyhound track, horse racing track, landscaped gardens and ponds, highrise developments and, at Inskip Point itself, a major international resort. Perhaps it might even include a casino one day given a change in State Government attitudes. Thought also has been given to the provision of marinas and, possibly at a later stage, canal or island development on the bay

side which would still leave a fisheries protection area between Bullock and Inskip Points.

While Rainbow Beach seems destined to be the pacesetter for development along the Cooloola Coast, it is likely to become at a later stage just an integral part of a united tourist development embracing Tin Can Bay and Cooloola Village.

Town planning for Tin Can Bay allows for a major population gain over the next century, with land set aside for an industrial complex and facilities such as a hospital, an ambulance sub-station in the near future and commercial development. Funds already have been approved for a start on a marina complex and another marina is envisaged at the mouth of Mullen's Creek.

Future development of the twin towns of Tin Can Bay and Rainbow Beach will possibly bring about a bridge connection at some time—from Tin Can Bay township to the western side of Teewah Point and then across to North Cooloola Point. In the meantime, a vehicular ferry has already been mooted between Tin Can Bay township and Carlo Point.

The private development at Cooloola Village completes the residential development area. Though there has been virtually no building there so far, already over 300 residential blocks have been sold, mainly to Victorian buyers. Potentially the development will provide about 3,000 blocks of land with areas set aside for community centre, motels, shopping centres, etc.

Tourist development will not be the prerogative of the coast, however. The Mary Valley has its own unique attractions, not the least of them Lake Borumba where a start has been made on a \$200,000 tourist project which will concentrate on horse riding, boating and nature pursuits.

Timber, for over 100 years one of the mainstay industries, will continue to play a vital role in the economy of the Shire over the next century. Survival of the industry has been assured for several generations through the Forestry Department's continuing programme of reforestation, which has given the Shire some of the biggest softwood plantations in the country. The establishment of the Two Mile Forestry Training Centre has given a boost to population and future exploitation of the pine forests could give still more, though this depends also on the eventual siting of the pulp mill project.

While the primary producers will always be an important entity of the Shire, the numbers involved are still falling, in line with the increasing trend towards urbanisation.

Land subdivision was virtually at a standstill in the early 1960s. But over the past two or three years between 15 and 20 sub-divisions a month for the South Side alone have been flowing through the Council. The trend away from city living, with more and more buyers preferring a half-acre block in the country, has seen building starts jump to 160 a year. And the figure is still climbing.

Nor is it confined to the more apparent areas such as Rainbow Beach and South Side. Many of the new houses are tucked away off the main roads at places such as Tamaree, North Deep Creek and Cedar Pocket.

The growth pattern which is adding 400 to 500 people to the region each year has resulted in one controversy. Eventually it could produce a second far greater storm.

The first involved Council's acquisition last year of part of the Gympie Showgrounds as a site for future office premises. This action was opposed by a number of ratepayers, particularly old established residents of the South Side. Cr. De Vere explained the rationale behind the Council's decision:

"Soon the Shire will be growing at 1,000 people a year if we can keep pushing up the rate of growth. In ten years time we could be dealing with double our present population of nearly 9,000. Administration costs of local government are high so we need maximum efficiency. An efficient office set-up is as important as efficient plant. In the long run it pays for itself. We will inevitably need more space. Renovations and extensions to the present Shire chambers, lovely building that it is, would simply not be economical in the long run."

The second and more complex question to be faced in years to come is one that could radically alter the shape and context of the Shire.

Again Widgee's rising population is the crux of the issue. For a century Widgee Shire and Gympie have enjoyed a special relationship, their separate local governments working in harmony for the benefit of the district as a whole. Gympie has been the senior partner in terms of population. Widgee for its part has been a shire of small towns and widely scattered farms.

Times have changed, however. While Gympie's population is relatively static, Widgee's is steadily growing. On present growth rates, it will not be many years before Gympie is very much the junior partner in terms of population. And much of Widgee's population will be concentrated in areas immediately outside Gympie's city limits.

The question of amalgamation of the two councils will inevitably have to be faced. For the present, neither council is ready to take the first step; nor is it necessary in the immediate future.

But one of the possibilities arising is that one day Widgee will swallow Gympie administratively—with the new local body having proportional representation from the Mary Valley and other rural areas, from the widened residential area based on Gympie, and from the coastal townships. Already coastal development has led to the creation of a fifth division within the Shire to ensure coastal representation on Council. This was done as an internal Council matter by splitting off one seat from the large Number One Division on the eastern side of the Mary River—with the first election for the new seat taking place this year.

Another school of thought believes the Cooloola Coast should one day have a separate administration, with Widgee reverting to its former status as a wholly rural shire. This proposal would be likely to find little favour, however, with Widgee which has worked long and hard to open up the coast as part of the Shire.

Widgee's pioneers from the horse and buggy age would find the Shire a much changed place today. In our computer age of rapidly developing technology and changing lifestyles, who knows what the future holds for Widgee a hundred years hence?

# APPENDIX

## CHAIRMEN OF THE WIDGEE SHIRE COUNCIL (Widgee Divisional Board until 1903)

1880-83	M. Mellor	1907-08	G. Preston
1884-85	J. Broadbent	1908-11	J. Fraser
1885-86	W. Ferguson	1911-12	Z. D. S. Skyring
1886-89	W. T. Chippindall	1912-13	W. M. Tweed
1889-90	W. Ferguson	1913-14	T. T. Powell
1890-91	W. T. Chippindall	1914-15	T. H. Steele
1891	J. Flood	1915-16	T. E. Betts
1892-93	W. T. Chippindall	1916-17	Z. D. S. Skyring
1893	J. Flood	1917-18	J. E. Farrell
1894-95	A. G. Ramsey	1918-20	T. H. Steele
1895-97	W. T. Chippindall	1920-21	R. B. Parkyn
1898-99	J. Fraser	1921-24	J. T. Tatnell
1899	W. T. Chippindall	1924-69	W. H. Kidd
1900-02	J. Fullerton	1969-73	W. N. Buchanan
1902-03	W. C. Anderson	1973-76	M. V. MacDonnell
1903-04	J. Fraser	1976	K. De Vere
1904-07	W. C. Anderson		

## MEMBERS OF THE WIDGEE SHIRE COUNCIL

Abdy, T. — 1889-90, 1892-95, 1898-99, 1908-11	Damm, N. P. — 1943-46
Anderson, J. W. — 1952-45	Davidson, E. 1898-1901
Anderson, W. C. — 1899-1909	Davies, A. — 1880-84
Bainbridge, J. — 1887-89	Davies, W. — 1896-1900
Barsby, A. — 1949-67	De Vere, K. — 1964-
Bath, H. — 1924-43	Downing, R. — 1899-1900
Beattie, E. K. — 1955-	Doyle, Jas. — 1907-11, 1913-16, 1927-36, 1939-44
Beattie, W. J. — 1945-61	Dunmall, R. — 1914-19
Becker, A. G. — 1919-27, 1933-34	Dwyer, P. — 1907-09
Betts, T. E. — 1912-18	Ellis, G. L. — 1921-24
Beutel, T. J. — 1973-	Elworthy, W. — 1885-91
Broadbent, J. — 1880-88	Farrell, J. E. — 1916-19
Buchanan, W. N. — 1955-73	Ferguson, W. — 1882-90, 1892
Burridge, C. — 1924-27	Fittell, H. — 1904
Burridge, W. D. — 1949-65	Flood, J. — 1889-91, 1893-97
Burtenshaw, G. P. — 1970-	Fraser, J. — 1895-1912
Chapman, D. J. M. — 1910	Fullerton, J. — 1887-92, 1898-1902, 1904-07
Chippindall, F. E. — 1921-42	Gerler, B. H. — 1880-83
Chippindall, V. F. — 1965-73	Green, J. — 1902-05
Chippindall, W. T. — 1880-99	Groundwater, C. — 1949-73
Clark, W. — 1886-88, 1890	Groundwater, D. J. — 1924-30, 1933-49
Clarke, W. A. — 1903-09	Haldane, F. G. — 1946-55
Colburn, C. C. — 1976-	Hansen, G. C. — 1936-45
Conway, A. P. — 1918-24	Hawley, J. — 1892-95
Cross, E. — 1901-11	Henderson, W. — 1895



Henry, S. H. — 1921-24  
 Hetley, F. — 1880  
 Hewitt, C. G. — 1943-52  
 Hughes, A. — 1887-91  
 Hutchinson, A. — 1880  
 Johns, S. H. — 1936-43  
 Johnson, B. R. — 1970-73, 1975-76  
 Kelly, A. B. — 1976-  
 Kidd, W. H. — 1919-69  
 Lillis, P. — 1882-85  
 Lowe, A. H. — 1903-06, 1918-19  
 Lutton, J. W. — 1942-55  
 MacDonnell, M. V. — 1973-76  
 McClintock, A. D. — 1972-  
 McIntosh, D. — 1896-98  
 McIntyre, S. L. — 1924-27  
 Martin, D. — 1895-1907  
 Matthew, A. — 1880-82  
 Mellor, M. — 1880-82  
 Mellor, M. — 1880-86, 1892-99  
 Meyers, G. A. — 1927-33  
 Meyers, O. — 1924-25  
 Mulcahy, D. — 1913-18  
 Mulholland, A. — 1890  
 Myles, J. W. — 1888-94  
 Neale, R. J. — 1973-  
 Neucom, C. — 1934-55  
 O'Brien, J. J. — 1927-39  
 O'Brien, M. J. — 1882-83, 1890-94  
 O'Dwyer, P. (jr.) — 1918  
 O'Farrell, E. J. — 1936-39, 1944-49  
 O'Neill, P. — 1890-92  
 Parkyn, R. B. — 1917-21  
 Percival, H. G. — 1916-27, 1932-33  
 Polley, D. J. — 1970-75  
 Pollock, R. A. — 1881-86  
 Portas, A. G. — 1933-70  
 Portas, J. H. — 1939-55  
 Potter, J. — 1890-92  
 Powell, R. H. — 1916-17, 1921-24, 1927-30  
 Powell, R. S. — 1969-70  
 Powell, T. T. — 1910-15  
 Power, F. I. — 1885-87  
 Preston, G. — 1900-01, 1905-10  
 Ramsey, A. G. — 1892-97, 1905-07  
 Ray, J. — 1880-81

Rodwell, T. L. — 1920-21  
 Rogers, P. — 1880-83  
 Roots, W. — 1919-21  
 Rose, T. — 1884-87  
 Sandercock, W. J. — 1921-27  
 Scott, G. B. — 1927-31  
 Shadbolt, F. G. — 1965-  
 Shepherd, C. T. O. — 1927-36  
 Skyring, D. — 1893-1903  
 Skyring, Z. D. S. — 1902-04, 1907-18  
 Smedron, W. — 1900-03, 1911-12  
 Smith, A. T. — 1911-13  
 Smith, H. J. G. — 1955-65  
 Smith, W. — 1961-64, 1967-72  
 Spiller, C. — 1912-15  
 Steele, T. H. — 1911-21, 1933-36  
 Stubbins, C. W. 1955-70, 1973-  
 Sullivan, A. M. — 1972  
 Tamlyn, W. — 1890-1892  
 Tatnell, J. B. — 1910-1913  
 Tatnell, J. T. 1918-1924, 1930-33  
 Transon, T. B. — 1883-86  
 Tweed, W. M. — 1909-1919  
 Webster, D. — 1902-04  
 Williams, R. P. — 1961-  
 Wilson, A. — 1955-61  
 Zerner, G. — 1924-27

## SHIRE CLERKS

1880-95 J. G. Kidgell  
 1895-96 R. J. Fraser  
 1896-97 J. H. Maynard  
 1897-1900 R. J. Fraser  
 1900-14 C. Brasch  
 1915-30 G. A. Buist  
 1931-67 A. W. Mitchell  
 1968- K. C. Rafter

## SHIRE ENGINEERS

1923-37 H. I. Kay  
 1937-61 E. J. Channer  
 1961- D. W. Clarkson

# INDEX

- Aborigines — 16, 19, 69, 168, 181, 185, 187, 216  
 Amamoor — 130, 190, 196, 199, 253, 286  
 Antimony — 203  
 Archer brothers — 12  
 Bananas — 77, 161, 191, 222, 229, 285  
 Beans — 291  
 Beenham Range — 128  
 Bell's Bridge Board — 53  
 Betts, T. E. jr. — 55, 165, 169, 279  
 Bidwell, J. C. — 17  
 Bollier — 129, 184, 279  
 Borumba Dam — 89, 298  
 Boundary changes — 34, 35, 46, 53, 70, 80, 86, 134, 187, 220  
 Bridges — 36, 52, 86, 110, 143, 166  
 Broadbent, J. — 28, 35, 60  
 Brooloo — 92, 130, 195, 251  
 Buchanan, M. — 213, 290  
 Bullock drivers — 145, 167, 187, 205, 217, 224, 228, 255  
 Bunya Creek — 123, 181, 190  
 Bushrangers — 33, 156, 216  
 Butter factories — 275, 276, 280  
 Calico Creek — 200  
 Cattle studs — 97, 178  
 Cattle ticks — 48  
 Cedar Pocket — 128, 223  
 Charcoal burners — 149, 225  
 Chatsworth — 148, 154, 284  
 Cheese — 275  
 Chinese — 106, 148, 180, 284  
 Chippindall, W. T. — 28, 108, 182  
 Churches — 149, 151, 164, 200, 205, 212, 214  
 Cobb and Co. — 63, 141, 157, 187, 227  
 Conondale — 17, 34  
 Convicts — 12, 39  
 Cooloola forest — 245  
 Cooloola National Park — 97  
 Coondoo — 220  
 Cootharaba Road — 127  
 Cooran — 44, 92, 219  
 Corella — 153, 269  
 Court cases — 36, 51  
 Cream carriers — 154, 160, 165, 188, 190, 215, 221, 229, 279  
 Cream separators — 162, 175, 273  
 Cumbrae — 158  
 Curra station — 17, 70  
 Dagon — 130, 196, 253  
 Dairy industry — 97, 152, 178, 214, 273  
 Deer — 167  
 De Vere, K. — 101, 297  
 Diamond Field — 190  
 Double Island Point — 11, 12, 26, 95, 108, 113, 124, 217, 232  
 Downsfield — 205  
 Doyle, James — 190, 192, 251  
 Droughts — 48, 158, 212, 222, 232  
 Dugongs — 231  
 Durramboi — 12, 17  
 Du Rietz, H. — 175, 273  
 Eel Creek — 120, 156, 248  
 Elworthy, W. 28, 62  
 Enterprise — 134, 267  
 Exhibition Reef — 266  
 Ferguson and Co. — 26, 74, 217, 244  
 Fish — 102, 232, 237  
 Flay, G. — 150, 284  
 Flood, J. — 37, 39, 173  
 Floods — 37, 106, 184  
 Forestry Department — 79, 249, 260, 298  
 Fraser Island — 13, 96, 238, 297  
 Fraser, J. 46, 51, 150  
 Fullerton, J. — 49, 157  
 Gate, E. — 216  
 Gericke, J. W. — 228  
 Gerler, B. — 30, 158  
 Gillis, J. — 210, 232  
 Glastonbury — 120, 163, 258, 279  
 Glastonbury Division — 26, 27, 35, 45  
 Gold — 65, 78  
 Chatsworth — 268  
 Glastonbury — 163, 270  
 Gympie — 18, 23, 52, 263  
 Imbil — 18, 179, 263  
 Kilkivan — 264  
 Two Mile — 268  
 Goodchap, F. G. — 29, 34, 244  
 Goomboorain — 133, 210, 259, 279, 285  
 Greendale — 33, 122, 167, 287  
 Green's Creek — 223  
 Groundwater, D. — 48, 158, 161  
 Gympie — 27, 299  
 Gympie Aerodrome — 93  
 Gympie and District Fruitgrowers Association — 287, 293  
 Gympie Bridge Board — 37, 38  
 Gympie Ferry Board — 112  
 Gympie Industrial Estate — 104, 143  
 Henderson, W. — 74, 190, 196  
 Hillcoat, J. 216, 218  
 Horses — 99  
 Hotels — 71, 107, 143, 150, 155, 163, 179, 192, 194, 203, 205, 227, 236, 239  
 Hyne and Son — 246, 253  
 Imbil — 129, 180, 193, 253  
 Imbil station — 60  
 Inskip Point — 96, 108, 124, 297  
 Irrigation — 90, 91, 292  
 Jimna — 263  
 Jones Hill — 130, 179, 265  
 Kandanga — 92, 130, 191, 251, 279  
 Kenilworth — 14, 66, 279  
 Kia Ora — 134, 213, 260  
 Kidd, W. H. — 75, 162, 297  
 Kidgell, J. — 29, 37, 152  
 Kilkivan — 27, 35, 120  
 Kilkivan station — 16  
 Kin Kin — 219, 259, 279  
 Kybong — 128, 144, 285  
 Lagoon Pocket — 121, 181, 285  
 Lake Cootharaba — 13, 44, 120, 244  
 Land—goldfield homesteads — 26, 46, 149, 170  
 Group settlement — 43, 219  
 Resumptions — 25  
 Selection — 25, 79, 180

- Soldiers settlements — 77, 201, 225  
 Sub-divisions — 169, 174, 176, 298  
 Langshaw — 159, 161, 258  
 Long, J. — 151, 197, 291  
 Luya, A. F. — 29, 244  
 Lynch sisters — 157  
 MacDonnell, James — 173  
 MacTaggart, J. D. 16, 61  
 Main Roads Commission — 80, 87, 105  
 Mary River — 12, 13  
 Mary's Creek — 258  
 McGhie, J. — 29, 244  
 McGill, J. — 26, 180  
 McIntosh Creek — 200  
 Mellor, M. — 28, 34, 62  
 Mellor, J. — 28  
 Messmates — 251  
 Mogan, J. — 227  
 Mooloo — 257  
 Mothar Mountain — 127, 229  
 Mulholland, A. — 149, 155  
 Mullaly, J. — 48, 144  
 Nash, James — 22, 216  
 Neerdie — 126, 203, 260  
 Nestle Ltd. — 281  
 Neusa Vale — 122, 221  
 Noosa — 27, 53, 134  
 Ora diggings — 206, 266  
 Pearen, J. — 180, 228  
 Petrie, Andrew — 14  
 Pettigrew, W. 243, 245  
 Pie Creek — 159, 161, 284  
 Pineapples — 191, 197  
 Plantations — 251, 253, 260  
 Poulsen, P. C. — 186  
 Powell, Thomas — 64  
 Power, F. I. — 170  
 Prawns — 236  
 Races — 155, 165, 176, 184, 192  
 Rail disasters — 146, 209  
 Railways — 34, 43, 71, 74, 112, 191, 227, 231, 245, 293  
 Rainbow Beach — 91, 95, 237, 297  
 Ramsey, A. G. — 40, 171  
 Rates — 30, 72  
 Roads — 77, 86, 97, 141, 235  
 Rogers, P. — 28, 36, 228  
 Ross Creek — 136, 212, 215, 260  
 Saleyards — 91  
 Sand mining — 97, 297  
 Sandy Creek — 205, 260  
 Sawmills — 151, 159, 167, 189, 244, 257  
 Schools — 119  
 Shipwrecks — 113  
 Showgrounds — 85, 93, 176, 299  
 Silverwood Dairy Factory Co. — 276  
 Simpson, Dr. Stephen — 14  
 Skyring, D. — 17, 26, 50, 147  
 Skyring, Z. — 17, 26, 162  
 Skyring, Z. D. S. — 54, 156, 169, 234  
 Slaughter yards — 150, 187, 206, 225  
 South Side — 134, 170, 284  
 Spiller, H. — 152, 285  
 Squatters — 14  
 Strawberries — 150, 285  
 Stumm, J. 40, 174  
 Sugar — 44, 285  
 Swanson brothers — 16, 68  
 Tagigan station — 17, 216  
 Tamaree — 133, 207  
 Timber — 68, 145, 198, 229, 231, 243  
 Timber cutters — 18, 248, 250  
 Tin Can Bay — 13, 90, 135, 210, 231, 245, 298  
 Toolara — 231, 260  
 Tooth, Atticus — 16, 57  
 Tooth, W. B. — 16, 57  
 Tozer, Sir Horace — 29, 46  
 Traveston — 24, 128, 145, 260, 279  
 Traveston station — 17, 23, 63, 144  
 Treeby, E. W. — 48, 72  
 Tuchekoi — 185, 255  
 Tuncal  
 Tuncal — 184  
 Two Mile — 123, 148  
 Veteran — 206, 267  
 Walker, H. F. — 42, 146  
 War — 72, 82  
 Warrawee — 166  
 Wheat — 285  
 Whitmore, T. — 43  
 Wide Bay Co-Operative Dairy — 279  
 Widgee Crossing — 155  
 Widgee Division — 16, 26, 27  
 Widgee Divisional Board — 28, 33, 49  
 Widgee Marsupial Board — 34  
 Widgee Mountain — 13, 18, 106  
 Widgee Shire Council — 53, 74, 76, 101, 206, 238, 299  
 Widgee Shire Council — premises — 47, 86, 299  
 Widgee Shire Council—plant — 74, 83, 85, 104, 173, 293  
 Widgee station — 161, 28, 35, 49, 57  
 Wine — 150, 206, 226, 285  
 Wolvi — 131, 220, 258, 260  
 Woodland Ltd. — 254  
 Woondum — 126, 227, 260  
 Yabba station — 16, 68

