

**LANDSCAPES
OF
CHANGE**

**A History
of the
South Burnett**

VOLUME 1



Dr Tony Matthews Ph.D.

LANDSCAPES OF CHANGE

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Published by Participating Members of the South Burnett
Local Government Association — the Cherbourg Community Council,
and the Shire Councils of Kilkivan, Murgon, Wondai and Kingaroy.

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Councillors and senior staff members of the various participating councils responsible for this publication.



Cherbourg Community Council.

Back from left: Cr. Gordon Wragge, Cr. Percy Stewart, Cr. Paddy Alberts, Cr. Bevan Costello.

Front: Mayor Cr. Ken Bone, Cr. Ada Simpson, Cr. Bert Button.

Source — Cherbourg Community Council, reproduced with the permission of The South Burnett Times.



Kilkivan Shire Council — councillors and senior staff.

Back row (left to right): D.H. Banks, G.S. Knight, P.W. Driver (director of administrative services), F.P. Webb, P.C. McIntosh, M.R. Lawless, R. Harding (director of community services), R.C. Brooks.

Front row (left to right): A.I. Robbins (director of engineering services), R.C. Currie (chief executive officer), D.J.B. Lahiff (mayor), H.K. Dascombe (deputy mayor), M.M. Angel.

Source — Kilkivan Shire Council



Murgon Shire Council — councillors and senior staff.

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Source — Murgon Shire Council



Wondai Shire Council — councillors and senior staff 20 May, 1997.

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Source — Wondai Shire Council



KINGAROY SHIRE COUNCIL

The Kingaroy Shire Council - councillors and senior staff, 1997.

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Source — Kingaroy Shire Council

Other books by Tony Matthews

FICTION:

Cry of the Stormbird

A Cleft of Diamonds

NON-FICTION:

This Dawning Land

A History of Oppression in Queensland.

Crosses

Australian Soldiers in the Great War.

Beyond the Crossing

A History of Dalby and District.

Shadows Dancing

A History of Japanese Espionage Against the West, 1939–1945.

River of Dreams

Volume One

A History of Maryborough and District.

River of Dreams

Volume Two

A History of Maryborough and District.

The Coffee-pot Mill

A History of the Elgin Vale Steam-powered Sawmill



Author — Dr Tony Matthews

About the Author

Tony Matthews was born in Swansea, South Wales, in 1949. He arrived in Australia in 1972 after which he soon became involved in researching Australian history. Working in television for eight years, he wrote and produced a number of highly acclaimed television documentaries that have been broadcast across Australia. He is the author of eleven books on a wide variety of subjects, ten major television documentaries and approximately four hundred radio programmes which he wrote and narrated for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. His books and feature articles for many newspapers and magazines have been published in Australia, England, the United States and New Zealand and his television documentaries are distributed educationally world-wide. Dr Matthews is a former lecturer of the Hervey Bay campus of the University of Southern Queensland, he has an honours degree majoring in history and completed his Ph.D. in 1995. He is married and lives with his wife, Lensie, in Warwick, Queensland, and is currently researching a history of one of Queensland's leading educational institutions, The Southport School.

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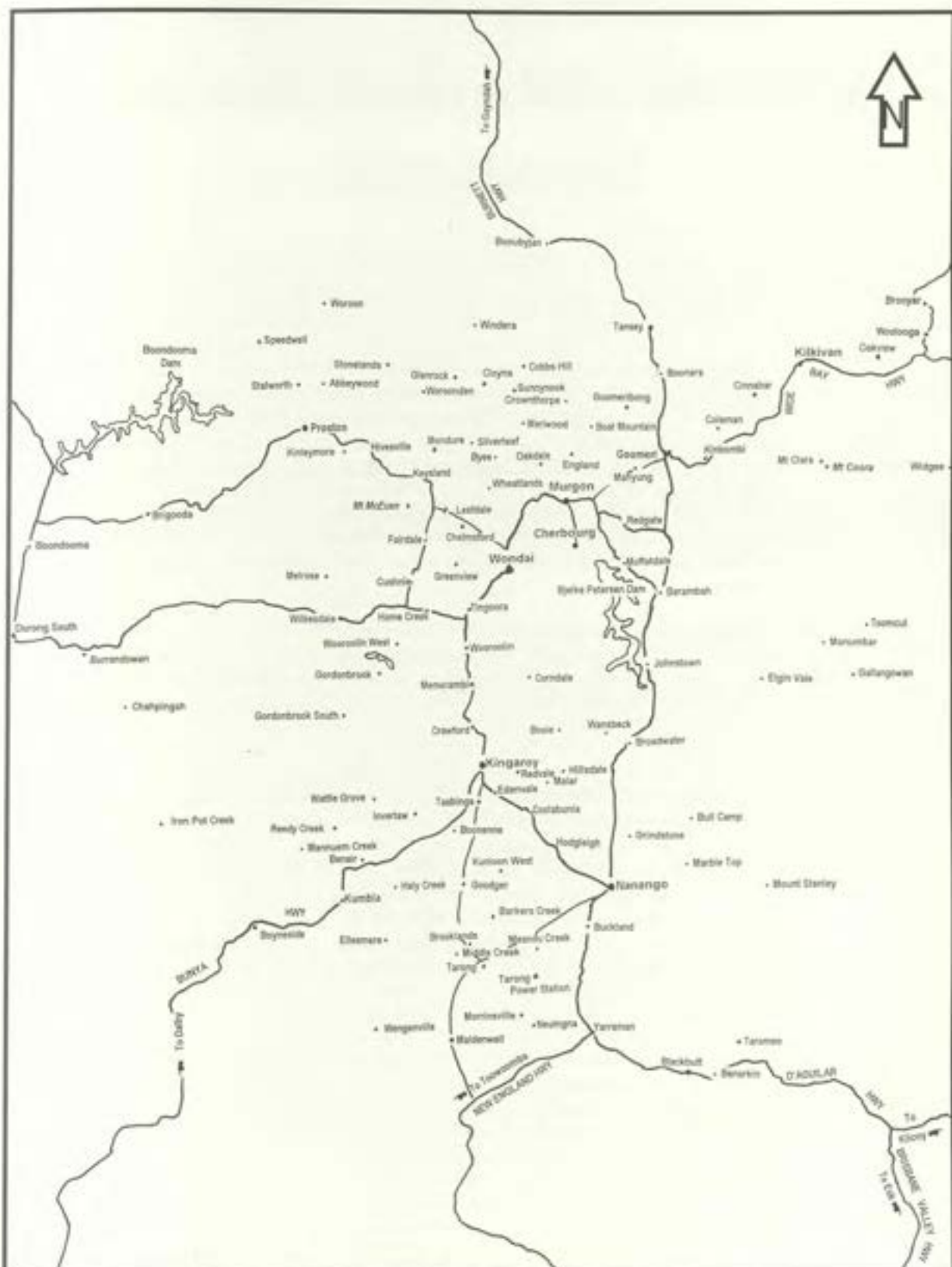
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THE SOUTH BURNETT LOCALITY MAP

Landscapes of Change

A History of the South Burnett

Introduction

This publication is, essentially, a socio-economic history of the South Burnett region which concentrates on the people and the major events that shaped and moulded their lives. It covers the shires of Kilkivan, Murgon, Wondai, Kingaroy, Nanango and the community of Cherbourg. During the compilation of this history it has been necessary to follow the natural and chronological trend of development from pre-European settlement of the land to the contemporary aspects of modern history within those regions. As with many other rural centres, that progression of development followed a stylized pattern, aboriginal history and traditionalism, the first contacts by white men — largely runaway convicts from Moreton Bay, the closure of the Moreton Bay penal settlement, the opening up of vast tracts of land to a group of men and women who commonly became known as the squattocracy, the hostility of the indigenous people as they realised their lands were being taken from them, the introduction of closer settlement and the final development of the various centres through agriculture, mining, industrialisation and the introduction of local administration and essential services such as railways, roads, electricity, hospital facilities, aviation and much more.

Central to all of these events are the people who made it all happen, firstly, the indigenous people to whom the land belonged and also the non-indigenous settlers who arrived with their families, staff, flocks, wagons, horses and bullock teams, to face the hostility of the aboriginal people who bitterly resented this intrusion into their sacred lands. Therefore, I have elected in this history to concentrate on the people of the region and to investigate and report upon those events that principally shaped their lives. In many respects this is a personal history, the people who came to take up the land had private lives, private concerns and most were honest, hard-working, God-fearing people who simply wanted to be allowed to begin a new life in the harsh and sometimes dangerous environment in which they found themselves. Therefore, rather than concentrating on the religious, political or architectural history of the region, I have found that it has been necessary to focus on the people themselves, those who formed the backbone of the history of the South Burnett, who they were, where they came from, how they came here and what they did once here. From the most prominent persons, the powerful and forceful politicians and leaders of industry, to the far more humble farmers, each with approximately 160 acres of prickly pear-infested scrub, all the people of the region have played an important part in its development, and many today, descendants of those farmers, those political and religious leaders and business-people, are proud of the endeavour demonstrated by their forebears. Evidence of this is everywhere. Since closer settlement brought the everyday man onto those small selections at the turn of the century, people have been knowingly and unknowingly recording the history of the region. Schools and churches, regional halls, sawmills, factories, associations, local authorities and even private individuals have steadfastly continued to have their histories recorded in a variety of convenient forms, books, pamphlets, tape recordings and memoirs, and so it is evident from this mass of information now available that the people of the region are intensely interested in having these details recorded for posterity.

Defining the Parameters

A socio-economic history, as I understand its definition, is one that investigates, reports and interprets both the social fabric and the economic development of the region. Clearly, within such general parameters, over such a large area, it would be quite possible to continue researching those fundamentals for dozens of years. Therefore, it is necessary to decide where research will commence and end in order to delineate the precise perspectives of the history and to remain within those perspectives. In the case of this history, those perspectives fall within the human

and economic boundaries of the region's past, to report upon the people, families and events, and the economic structures of the district. These structures included agrarian and industrial growth, the vast pattern of crop development, and the various industries that grew alongside them. The peanut industry, for example, and the genesis of the marketing body that was formed to promote and manage that industry, the cattle industry and the construction of the meatworks at Murgon, the navy bean industry and the development of the body formed to market the crop, all these, and many others, serve as examples of the socio-economic development of the South Burnett.

During the recording of a history of this dimension, covering as it does such a large area, it has been necessary to keep its scope into some form of perspective and to apply a stylistic discipline. It has not been possible, for example, to research and write the histories of every club, sporting body, association, church and school — that would clearly be a task well beyond the scope of this history. Following the guide-lines of these parameters, I have included details of the lives of many of the early settlers to the district we now know as the South Burnett. This has necessitated obtaining information from a wide variety of sources, including obituaries, memoirs, and other family documents located at various depositories. It has not, of course, been possible to check every detail with the thousands of families involved, and family histories themselves are frequently prone to conjecture, therefore, an apology in advance is warranted if any errors have been made in recording details of family histories. Additionally, as will be appreciated by readers of this publication, while I have included details of the lives of many of the early settlers, it has not, of course, been possible to include the names and details of every early settler. Rather, I have chosen to cover a select cross-section in the hope that in this way I can demonstrate the sequence of events that must have been experienced by almost all those first settlers to the land. To record the history in any other way would become repetitive and somewhat disfunctional.

Background to the History

The compilation of the history of the region has long and frequently been on the public agenda. Nanango, the first town in the South Burnett, as long ago as 1946, was preparing for the publication of a history of the region. The subject was a topic on the agenda of a South Burnett conference which took place that year, and was again brought up at various council meetings in 1948. It was then considered advisable to publish a history that could be used to not only record those important early events but also to assist with the promotion of the shires. The release of a special South Burnett centenary postage stamp was also tabled.¹

Tenders were then called seeking a competent person to compile the history, five applications were received, and after careful consideration J.E. Murphy and E.W. Easton, were recommended to carry out the commission. Murphy, the principal author, had worked with the Magistrate's Court and the Native Affairs Department, he was a member of the Australian Journalists' Association, the author of several books and a regular contributor to national newspapers and magazines. He attended a meeting of the Nanango Centenary and South Burnett Historical Committee, held at Goomeri, in December 1948. He outlined his plans for the compilation of the history, recommended a book of 125,000 words, and was appointed to undertake the task.²

This action, taken on behalf of all the local authorities of the South Burnett, demonstrates the willingness of those shires, and their determination to have their history recorded. The subsequent publication, *Wilderness to Wealth*, was released in 1950 to warm acclaim, its title was authored by Mrs E.E.I. Bettiens of Nanango who won two guineas in a competition that called for proposed titles.³

Wilderness to Wealth was reprinted once more, again with local authority funding, in 1974, some editorial alterations having been made, but, like the first edition the history was neither sourced nor indexed and what errors the first edition contained remained largely uncorrected in the second edition.

Since then there have been a number of other histories published in the region, all detailing certain aspects of various centres. These have included the late Dulcie Logan's *Where Two Rivers Run*; an excellent collection of local identity histories entitled *The Big Scrub*, edited by Jack Coe; *Pioneers of Taabinga Village and Kingaroy*, which is an important collection of family histories and other relevant data compiled by R.E. Murray; Sydney Stock's interesting history, *Cradled in*

the Ranges, provides a fascinating insight into the histories of Blackbutt and Benarkin; and a host of other smaller publications, mainly schools, clubs and association histories.

Despite the re-release of *Wilderness to Wealth* in 1974, by the early 1980s there was a general perception among local government authorities that there were some evident omissions and errors in the history. During a meeting of the South Burnett Local Government Association, held in June 1981, Councillor Bob Downes of Kingaroy stated: '*Wilderness to Wealth* has some fairly noticeable omissions. I'd like to see something done to have that information published and collated.' Councillor Harry Hunter of Nanango added: 'It's time to go back and collect all our past information.' While no concrete plans were made at that meeting, there was a general agreement that each of the shires should begin to collate their histories into some form of usable collection.⁴ By that time it was too late to ask the original principal author of *Wilderness to Wealth* to include any omissions in a new edition, James Edward Murphy was killed, aged sixty-four years, when he was struck by a train in Melbourne on Friday 21 May, 1971.⁵

For the following five years the concept of re-publishing *Wilderness to Wealth* stagnated until I wrote to the South Burnett Local Government Association in 1986 offering to re-write the history. My letter went before a meeting of the association in June that year and received a mixed response. Cr. Reg McCallum of Nanango was interested in having only an update of the history written and warned that if the association did not go ahead with the project his council would publish a supplement updating just the history of Nanango shire.⁶

Despite applications for funding made in association with the bicentenary, the project went no further for several years, this was largely due to the fact that some of the shires were then sponsoring the printing of other regional histories, but none of those histories brought together the entire region as one under a single title that could show in detail how each of the areas had independently and in association with each other managed to progress through local government, industrial, mining and agricultural pursuits to become one of the richest regions in the state.

In December 1994 I received a letter from Ron Knopke, then secretary of the South Burnett Local Government Association, explaining that the association was considering updating *Wilderness to Wealth* and asking for a submission. My submission, to completely re-write the history, was presented soon afterwards. I attended a meeting of the association at Wondai on Friday 8 September, 1995, and despite some objection from Cr. Reg McCallum who still wished to have only an update of *Wilderness to Wealth* written, I was appointed to research and write a completely new and comprehensive socio-economic history. Cr. McCallum's objection centred around his belief — and apparently the belief of his council — that the previous book *Wilderness to Wealth* was already a definitive history and should not be written once more in its entirety. Having held to this belief the Nanango Shire Council then disassociated itself with this history and called tenders for a historian to complete only an update of Nanango shire's history and to re-publish the Nanango section of *Wilderness to Wealth*.

This history, however, which was begun fifteen years after that initial 1981 meeting, has attempted not to replicate what has already been published in these other important publications such as *Wilderness to Wealth*, all of which stand alone as vital independent histories. Other than certain essential aspects, I have attempted to look at a more general socio-economic overview describing, sometimes in considerable detail, the events that shaped the lives of both the indigenous and non-indigenous residents and settlers of the South Burnett. Where *Wilderness to Wealth* was, ultimately, approximately 170,000 words in length, this history is approximately 750,000 words, evidently considerably more detailed, without, I trust, imposing too much on the events recorded in that earlier history.

Therefore the people of the South Burnett will, I believe, find much that is new and exciting recorded within the pages of this, the latest history of the South Burnett region.

Dr Tony Matthews.
1997.

Notes and Sources

Abbreviations

- Archives Office of New South Wales: AONSW.
Brisbane Courier: B/C.
Colonial secretary's in letters: CSIL.
Courier Mail: C/M.
Kingaroy Guardian: K/G.
Kingaroy Herald: K/H.
Maryborough Chronicle: M/C.
Moreton Bay Courier: MBC.
Nanango News: N/N.
Nanango Advocate: N/A.
New South Wales Government Gazette: NSW GG.
New South Wales Votes and Proceedings: NSWVP.
Public Library of Queensland: PLQ.
Queensland Government Gazette: QGG.
Queensland Country Life: QCL.
Queensland State Archives: QSA.
Queensland Parliamentary Papers: QPP.
South Burnett Times: SBT.
Sunday Mail: S/M.
Toowoomba Chronicle: T/C.
Wilderness to Wealth: WW.

Notes and Sources

Introduction

1. *South Burnett Times*, (hereinafter referred to as SBT.), 14 October, 1948, p 3.
2. SBT. 23 December, 1948.
3. Letter from Mrs E.E.I. Bettiens to the Nanango Centenary and South Burnett Historical Committee dated 22 June, 1949, and letter from that committee dated 30 June, 1949, in which Mrs Bettiens was advised that her suggestion had been adopted, Nanango Shire Council archives.
4. SBT. 1 July, 1981, p 10.
5. *The Kingaroy Herald*, (hereinafter referred to as K/H.), 26 May, 1971, p 2.
6. SBT. 11 June, 1986, p 9.

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1. The South Burnett Local Government Association, (funding being provided from the Kingaroy, Murgon, Wondai and Kilkivan Shire Councils and the Cherbourg Community Council).
2. Tarong Energy Corporation Ltd., formerly Austa Electric.
3. Tarong Coal — Pacific Coal Pty. Ltd.
4. The National Australia Bank.
5. The Local Government Association of Queensland Inc.

1

The Indigenous Peoples of the South Burnett

The first occupiers of the land now called the South Burnett region of Queensland were, of course, the aboriginal people. For many thousands of years, since the first occupation of Australia by humans, these people have roamed and lived in the South Burnett area in a natural form, as one with the environment and the land they revered, protected and loved.

Yet, apart from some early publications such as Howitt's *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*,¹ up until the middle of this century the indigenous people of Australia, generally, were largely ignored in serious historiographical studies. Up until that time the role of aborigines had been generally neglected and this oversight, in part, still continues, especially so during the publication of the many local histories which, during the past twenty years or so, have become prolific throughout Australia. This was not always the case, prior to the 1850s there were many publications that respected the role of overall aboriginal history and recorded much of that history, yet gradually this attention to aboriginal history disappeared from our books, being replaced by the rather more acceptable models of white colonial settlement and the difficulties and dangers experienced by those white colonists. Some early authors of this period considered that if the aboriginal history of Australia were ever to be written it would, '... only be founded on conjecture.'²

During the following hundred years or so, until the tide of intellectual reasoning swung more favourably towards a closer examination of aboriginal history, many of this country's major historical works generally ignored this vital aspect of Australian history, consigning the topic to brief entries in appendices or simply making disparaging comparisons with other indigenous races such as the North American native-born people or the New Zealand Maoris.

During the long, bitter and frequently bloody years of white colonial settlement in Australia, the newly arriving colonists were greeted with mixed reactions. In some regions there was confusion on the part of the indigene, frequently indignation, but very little violence, while in other areas the arrival of the newcomers sparked long and deadly conflicts that often resulted in aboriginal genocide.

Reverend John B. Gribble, the missionary who spent the major part of his working life with the Australian aborigines, wrote in 1884: 'It has been the greatest drawback to the extension of the English good character for humanity that the aborigines of Australia have been so left out of the circle of the usual interest displayed in foreign missionary effort. If there is a people to whom England owes a debt of serious import it is the suffering nation from whom she has taken the vast continent of Australia. This (aboriginal) nation may still be numbered by hundreds of thousands. From the Murray River on the south to the Gulf of Carpentaria on the north, they still wander and die, for the most part "Unwept, unhonoured and unsung".'³

In the whole of the Wide Bay and Burnett region there were two distinct aboriginal nations, the *Kabi (Cabee)* of the Wide Bay and the *Wakka Wakka* (frequently reported as the *Woka Woka* and *Waka Waka*) of the Burnett. These two peoples spoke similar but separate dialects and each was composed of individual 'tribes'. These nations were then also split into moities or clans, smaller groups of up to seventy or eighty people who lived together under a strict system of laws, codes and customs. According to historian J.G. Steele, the *Bujiebara* (also reported as *Bujibara*) people lived between the Blackbutt Range and Kingaroy, with the Bunya Mountains as their western boundary. The *Gourburra* people lived between Nanango and Kilkivan.⁴

In 1910, John Mathew, who had spent many years investigating and writing about the aborigines of the Wide Bay and Burnett, claimed:

The country of the *Wakka Wakka* lay to the west of the *Kabi*. It took in a small part of the Dawson basin, extended over a great part of the basin of the Burnett, its boundary passing eastward by about Coonambula, including Gayndah, and meeting the northern *Kabi* boundary at Walla. It also included the upper waters of the Brisbane ... To the west of the *Wakka* the *Tarambol* or Dawson River blacks were located. The *Wakka* country was roughly triangular in outline, the base running northward along the 15th line of longitude from Cooyar Creek on the south to Walla on the Burnett, a distance of 125 miles. The perpendicular would run west near the 26th parallel of latitude for a distance of about 80 miles, so the area would be about 5000 square miles.⁵

Prior to the coming of the white colonists during the early part of the nineteenth century, these indigenous people lived simple and overall harmonious lives, their everyday existence governed by their needs for survival, food, shelter and simple clothing. They loved to hunt and managed the land in such a way that their hunting was almost always a profitable undertaking — burning the grasses to facilitate better growth thus attracting the herbivorous animals such as the kangaroo and wallaby. Their staple diet consisted of wallabies, kangaroo, possums, fish, birds, eggs, lizards and a variety of plants such as the cabbage tree palm, water-lily bulbs, fruits and berries of various descriptions, and numerous roots.

In his unpublished paper, *Where the Wuccas Roamed*, Fred Borchardt claimed that the aboriginal people, in small groups, roamed throughout their territories and that there were no places such as aboriginal 'towns' or permanent camps, he stated that most of the camps were set up close to waterholes, creeks or rivers and that at times they conserved water in containers made from the cork tree. Borchardt added: '... The flesh of animals, reptiles and fish was generally roasted on the coals. When a special dinner was being prepared the wallaby, for example, would be wrapped in leaves and mud, and when the animal was baked, the fur would peel off with the mud. Birds were treated in the same way. Yams, roots and wild fruits formed the vegetable diet.'⁶

Borchardt also claimed that dingoes were captured when young and were trained for hunting, that the aboriginal people 'read' the country like a book and knew when food sources were at their best or most plentiful. For example, when the ti-tree blossomed the mullet were at their best, and when the dingo pups were heard yelping in the bush it was time to look for emu eggs.⁷

Each of the regions in the area we now know as the South Burnett was originally known by aboriginal names, and in many instances these names have been perpetuated, although there have always been differences of opinion regarding the precise translation of these aboriginal names. Murgon, for example, is reputed to mean 'lily covered pond.' When The following list was compiled in 1927 the *South Burnett Times* published that it had been checked with aboriginal elders at that time and confirmed as being correct. Aboriginal names of the place appear first, the name of the 'tribe' or clan location second, and the meaning of the word third:

Byee	(Mondure)	iron-bark tree.
Barambah	(Barambah)	wind, (also reported as 'place where the water ripples').
Manyung	(Boonara)	mountain.
Cloyna	(Mondure)	wild dog (dingo).
Proston	(Mondure)	bottle tree.
Windera	(Mondure)	swamp.
Mondure	(Mondure)	greenhead ant.
Wooroon	(Wigton)	leaves of trees.
Wondai	(Mondure)	aboriginal man speared in back of neck.
Wooloolin	(Proston)	water hole.
Tingoora	(Mondure)	wattle tree.
Memerambi	(Proston)	sugargum tree.
Taabinga	(Nanango)	a plant that grows on various trees (mistletoe).
Kingaroy	(Nanango)	red ant.
Goomeri	(Boonara)	speared on shield (or broken shield).
Kinbombi	(Boonara)	aboriginal woman coming.
Boonara	(Boonara)	bloodwood tree.
Boobyjan	(Boobyjan)	rock.
Miva	(Miva)	chestnut tree.
Woolooga	(Miva)	ankle of human being.
Yarraman	(Nanango)	horse.
Gympie	(Gympie)	stinging nettle. ⁸

The aboriginal people were governed by a complex system of laws and codes, punishments for transgression of the laws varied greatly but were frequently harsh. In 1904 Howitt recorded:

When an Australian tribe is looked at from the stand-point of an ordinary observer, the conclusion that there is no recognised form of government seems to be justified. Apparently no person, or group of persons, has the right to command, under penalties for disobedience, or who is obeyed by the community. There seems to be no person to whom the whole community yields submission, who has peculiar privileges which are patent to observation, or who is surrounded by more or less of savage pomp and ceremony. All that is seen by a general superficial view of an Australian tribe is, that there are a number of families who roam over certain tracts of country, in search of food, and that while they appear to show a considerable respect to the old men, all the males enjoy such liberty of action, that each may be considered to do what seems best to himself.

A more intimate acquaintance with such a tribe, however, shows that there must be some authority and restraint behind this seeming freedom, for it is found that there are well-understood customs, or tribal laws, which are binding on the individual, and which control him, as well as regulate his actions towards others ... there are stringent laws which regulate the intercourse of the sexes, which relate to the secret ceremonies of the tribe, which restrict the choice of food, and so on; and these laws or customs are enforced by severe penalties, even in some cases by death itself.

It is quite true that many such laws or customs are obeyed without the dread of physical punishment being inflicted for their breach, by any tribal authority, individual or collective. But such laws or customs are obeyed because the native has been told, from his earliest childhood, that their infraction will be followed by some supernatural personal punishment. Take, for instance, the universal law of mutual avoidance of each other by the man and his wife's mother. I know of no rule which is more implicitly obeyed. The belief is that some result of a magical nature will follow a breach of this rule, for instance that the person's hair will become prematurely grey. The nearest approach to a personal punishment for this offence, if it can be so called, which I have met with, was in the coast ... tribes, where any personal contact, even accidental touching of one by the other, was punished by the man being compelled to leave the district, his wife returning to her parents.⁹

The boundaries in which these people lived and hunted were often vague, especially so as many of the people had 'tribal' or clan affiliations in various directions. The language between the *Wakka Wakka* and *Kabi* had certain similarities, and the two nations shared many of each other's customs. Each of the clans was governed through its own gerontocracy, a council of elders that exercised its authority over matters such as family disputes, marriage, education, the punishment of offenders against clan law and many other matters involving the everyday social life and customs of the clans. This system of law and control was generally an extremely conservative one and could, when necessary, exercise its complete control, often without compassion.¹⁰

In his book, *The Native Tribes of South East Australia*, published in 1904, A.W. Howitt states that the 'tribe' which occupied the lands around the Bunya Mountains were the *Kaiabara*. Howitt wrote:

The tribes may be divided into inland, fishing, and coastal tribes, the inland tribes visiting the coast at intervals.

About 60 miles from Maryborough there was the *Kaiabara* tribe, who lived in the Bunya Mountains ... All of these tribes had the same organisation and met at the great tribal ceremonies. Indeed, it was in the *Kaiabara* country that 'bunya-bunya feasts' were periodically held. The *Kaiabara* were one of the above-mentioned inland tribes.¹¹

Whether the *Kaiabara* people were an independent 'tribe' or a large clan belonging to the *Wakka Wakka* is not clear, however they shared the same language with other clans in the region and their common bora ring was near Kingaroy with a fighting ground at Barambah. Rock paintings discovered at Bains' Paddock north of Maidenwell are a rare example of local indigenous art, charcoal remains near the paintings have been carbon dated and prove that aborigines were using that site more than forty thousand years ago.¹²

The two bora rings at Malar are significant of the known bora rings in the South Burnett region. Located on the Coolabunia-Booie road, both rings are still in good condition.¹³ In 1956 the

Kingaroy Junior Chamber of Commerce did much to persuade the Kingaroy Shire Council to carry out work to protect this site.¹⁴

The impressive Mannuem Creek ceremonial grounds are still in existence, this site, situated at Glenvillan close to the Mannuem Creek road, is recognised as one of the more important ceremonial locations in the South Burnett, today it is covered with small fragments of rock, some of which are arranged into bora rings, the site is a known aboriginal burial ground.¹⁵

In the Wondai shire there are two known sites, both in the Boondooma region, these are rock paintings, officially designated JC:A29 and JC:A30.¹⁶

One of the highlights of the *Wakka Wakka* calendar was the bunya nut harvest, a great celebration during which many nations gathered together to feast, to consult, to sing, dance and to settle old scores. Archibald Meston wrote in 1895:

Once in three years the tribes who owned the Bunya Mountains speaking 'Cabee' (sic) in the north and 'Wacca' (sic) in the south invited all the tribes within a certain radius as guests to a feast on the bunya nuts. These invited strangers came from the Clarence on the south to the mouth of the Burnett River on the north, and west to the Moonie and the Maranoa. The strangers were received with every hospitality. The banyas were gathered by the proprietor tribes and presented to the guests who were not allowed to climb the trees or take the banyas for themselves. The days were spent in hunting, in feats of arms, in duels and sham fights, the nights with anecdotes, tales, riddles, songs and corroborees.

They decorated their bodies in fanciful patterns, cut with stone knives or shells, the cuts were filled with clay or charcoal, so that they healed in ridges. Some of these were elaborately and beautifully executed.¹⁷

Local historian Arthur Bright adds:

My father Harry Bright, was born in Nanango in 1868 and grew up with the aborigines as well as helping his mother run the Burnett Inn. He told me the big bunya season was every four years, it coinciding with leap year. Naturally all trees were not of the same age but the big year was every leap year, not three years.

My dad also knew which clay was good for healing wounds, how to climb trees with the use of a vine, how to track bees and a white-ants' nest was always on the north side of a tree. Bunya or pine trees were never more than one mile from the edge of scrub. Many of the aborigines and their women worked at the Burnett Inn and were honest and trustworthy at all times.¹⁸

John Mathew also wrote about the ceremonies and circumstances surrounding the bunya nut harvest, he claimed that:

So far as my experience went it (the bunya tree) seemed to bear annually, but it is said to be most prolific every third year. The cone sometimes attains a great size, the maximum diameters being as large as 16 inches by 9 inches. The seeds are an inch and a half long and half an inch thick at the thicker end. Their tissue is like that of a potato. When the seed is young, it is juicy and soft and it is eaten entire and raw. As it matures the embryo assumes a more definite form and is rejected; the surrounding tissue at the same time becomes drier and less palatable. When mature, the seed is preferred roasted. Before being roasted, each seed is partially bruised with a stone. When it has been in the fire for a minute or two it gives a crack, the signal that it is cooked. They sometimes pounded and roasted seed into a kind of meal which they called *nyangu*. They showed exceptional foresight in laying up a store of banyas. They picked the seeds out of the cone, leaving untouched the tough envelope with which they are covered, then they put them into netted bags and buried them about the beds of the creeks to be ready for future consumption. Banyas thus stored came to have a very offensive smell, which they imparted to all that came into contact with them. Still the blacks ate them with great relish, although they made their breath smell much worse than if they had eaten raw onions. The ripe seeds have a resinous flavour when roasted, which is more decided when they are boiled. The best evidence of their value as a nutritious food was the way the natives thrived on them. In the bunya season they became visibly fat.¹⁹

A.W. Howitt also recorded other aboriginal practices of the bunya feast:

At the Bunya feasts ... the strangers on a visit did not climb the Bunya trees for the cones, all the trees belonging to the people of the place. A father gives certain trees to his sons, who can invite their friends to come and eat of the fruit. The visitors purchased bags of seed when they returned home. The Bunya feast lasted for about a month ... The Bunya-Bunya tribe had a curious custom which they practised when an inland and coast tribe met. It was considered a great honour to send word to a man on the other side that you would like him to pull your beard and whiskers out ... A meeting generally took place about mid-day, and with a little bees-wax on the fingers the operation was gone through, fat and burnt bark being rubbed in. As a rule the young bark of the bloodwood tree, which makes a very fine white ash is used.²⁰

Marriage customs through the Wide Bay and Burnett regions seem to have had close similarities, as Howitt recorded in 1904:

Female children were always allotted to certain men when they were very young by their parent, and a girl so allotted was obliged to go with the man when he came for her. This relationship was called Kunki. If the girl had no Kunki and her father was a vigorous fighting man, the young men on the look-out for a wife would solicit his consent, and he, giving it to someone, his daughter, if she liked the young man, would comply. But sometimes she liked a man to whom her father objected, and the difference was settled with a fight between the men. If the girl had been promised to another man, the suitor had to settle matters with him. But eloping with a woman, and then keeping out of the way as long as possible, was as common a way of obtaining a wife. Even if such a couple remained away a long time it generally ended, when they returned and met her father, by an all-round fight. Clubs and shields were the weapons used on each other, and knives were used on the women, being drawn across thick or muscular parts, such as the thigh, with a long gash. Another way of obtaining a wife was by the exchange of a female relative ... When the Wide Bay, Burnet (sic) and Brisbane tribes met for the purpose of 'making young men' the daughters of one tribe were given to the great men, or their sons, of the other tribe. In such a marriage all the respective relations on each side were considered to be related to each other and could travel in the country of either tribe without danger. A woman was sometimes given as a reward for some heroic action. In making these marriage arrangements the mothers were seldom or never consulted. The marriage ceremony was merely that the father and mother led their daughter up to their son-in-law's hut, and left her there. From this time the mother and her daughter's husband never looked at or spoke to each other. It was considered monstrous for a man to marry his brother's widow, and it was never done, but he had a voice in giving her to another.²¹

During the course of his many years of research into aboriginal life and customs, Howitt also recorded that, despite a certain incidence of infanticide — especially during difficult times such as drought, aboriginal children were generally well looked after.²² Mathew claimed: 'They were as a rule very indulgent to children, and just as kind to their dogs. Fathers would sometimes nurse the children and carry a little one straddling on their shoulder.'²³

Mathew's observations of the indigenous people of the Burnett region are an important aspect of our knowledge of those early residents of the area and of their habits, customs, beliefs and laws. He wrote of them:

When shifting from one camping-ground to another, they usually moved slowly through the bush, the families separating and gathering their food on the way — opossums, bandicoots, honey, grubs, birds, and so forth. At other times they marched along singly, the lords of creation stepping out with elastic tread and graceful bearing, carrying their light weapons with perhaps some game, the weaker vessel loaded with the chattels and possibly a baby on the back in a loop of a rug or sitting stride-leg on a shoulder. Some would carry live fire sticks to save the trouble of producing fire by friction. Arrived at the familiar, well-chosen rendezvous, it was the duty of the women to cut the bark for the humpies (dwellings) and prepare the fires.

The ordinary style of house was a mere bark shelter. Three or four sheets of bark were set obliquely with the lower ends in a semicircle, on the ground, and the upper ends, overlapping, gathered together and supported by light saplings. This sufficed for a family. The dwellings were placed a little distance apart, facing in the same direction and each had

its own small fire in front. A large fire would have roasted the inmates. Grass was strewn on the floor for a bed. If rain threatened, a rut was dug around the back of the humpy to serve as a drain. The warriors' spears were stuck in the ground, ready to hand, at the side of the rude shelter.

The blacks were astir early, but they could afford to be, as they often slept in the daytime. In the evening, before retiring, they would squat by the fire or lie awake discoursing, or indulging in a quiet corroboree. On occasions there would be bad blood in the camp, and accusations and retorts would be volubly poured forth in stentorian tones late into the night, followed, perhaps, by the clatter of weapons used in single combat. They were great at invective and wordy strife.

There was much of interest to be observed on visiting a camp. The family could be witnessed at their rather irregular meal. They might be regaling themselves on the eucalyptus-flavoured opossum, the leg of a kangaroo, or the tender, white flesh of a snake. A joint would be placed on the fire, and as it became partially cooked, it would be taken up by the head of the house, who, after helping himself to a few mouthfuls, would be followed by his wife, and then one after another of the children would take a bite in turn, whereupon it would be replaced at the fire. No doubt, eaten in this way the gravy would be delicious, and the adhering ashes would give the zest of salt. Large game, like emus, was cooked in improvised ovens, prepared by scooping a hole in the ground ...

The man's chief home duties consisted in cooking and eating. He would also spend much time in fashioning his weapons, using a stone knife or chisel and a shell. The ends of the spears were hardened by fire. Cords were manufactured of fur and of hair, human hair included. Sinews were drawn from the kangaroo's tail to serve as twine. They were used for sewing opossums' skins together to form rugs. Much time was spent in preparing the rugs. The flesh was rubbed off the skins with stones. Generally a rude linear design was scratched on the inside of each skin and coloured with *kuthing*, a red clay. The women were skilled in the manufacture of nets and of dillie-bags made of grass or twine ...

The men might go out for the chase either in a band or singly. They used to fire the grass in a line from one projecting point of scrub to another and force the game away to a corner, formed by the scrub margin, where their comrades would be lying in wait to effect the slaughter. At other times, just by loud shouting, they would confuse the mobs of marsupials, while they would be following them up, running with a long stride, and prepared to strike with spear or waddy as chance offered. It stirred the onlooker's blood to see them, in a state of nature, running and leaping through the bush, as wild-like as the creatures they were pursuing, and to hear their hunting halloes reverberating in the virgin forest ...

In the territory of the *Kabi* and *Wakka*, as we have seen, food was plentiful and in great variety. The animal food embraced almost every living thing from a fly to a man. The presence of large grubs, called *buruga*, in living trees, was detected by the wood-dust they dislodged, which could easily be seen on the ground or at the entrance of the hole they had made. If the grub was far in, an incision was made in the tree, and it was picked out with a pointed stick. They ate the grub, either raw or roasted, rejecting the head. These grubs are a delicate food. They have the flavour and consistency of a soft, rice pudding, enriched with eggs. I speak from experience, having eaten them repeatedly. The natives were very expert in catching animals, knowing exactly how to get hold of them so as to prevent injury to themselves. Fresh-water turtles were captured very neatly. The black would swim very quietly till he got near where the creature's nose was visible above water. When approaching still closer, he would tread water, slip his hand under the unsuspecting turtle, and catch it without any difficulty. The eggs of the turtle, found in their holes in the bank, were also eaten.

All kinds of marsupials were eaten. The flesh of the kangaroo has very much the same flavour as beef. Opossums have a rather objectionable taste of their staple food, the gum-tree leaf. The bandicoot, a small marsupial, is very plump, and when roasted on the coals, is as tasty as sucking-pig. Snake flesh is very white and tender in appearance. All lizards were eaten. The iguana has an oily, fishy taste. The same remark applies to its eggs, which are deposited in a string in a disused ant-hill.

Birds of all sorts were counted good eating. The scrub-turkey, or *wawoon*, was a great favourite. Its eggs, laid in a large mound formed of soft soil and withered leaves, were as large and as palatable as those of the domestic turkey. The boomerang was used for killing ducks.

Fish were speared and also caught with a small hand-net fixed at the end of two pieces of wood, which were held by the other ends. Eels were also an article of diet.

While all these kinds of animal food mentioned, as well as many other kinds, not necessary to be mentioned here, were eaten generally by some, certain animals and other kinds of food as well, were forbidden to the young, and at times to women. Thus, eels were forbidden to children. They were warned that if they ate them their nose would become cancerous. I knew a man whose nose was partly eaten away by gangrene, and the cause was said to be that he had indulged in eels. The young were not only prohibited from eating emu eggs, they were not even allowed to look at them. Infringement of this rule, it was believed, would be followed by pimples breaking out on the nose. One season, the women told me that bunyas were *mundha* (tapu), to them, and they begged for mutton. Other kinds of food prescribed to minors on pain of disease or sickness were, porcupine, snakes, fresh-water fish ... scrub-turkey eggs, and the flying fox.

Of vegetable food ... Yams, fern-roots, the roots of the *cunjevoi*, the core of the top of the cabbage-palm, and a few wild fruits, such as the quandong, the native plum, and the native lime, were the most common. It was the recognised duty of the women to dig the yams (*Dioscorea Transversa*) for family use. They were regularly provided with the yam-stick for this purpose, a staff about five feet long, the thickness of a stout walking-stick, and pointed at both ends. It served another purpose equally well, being the women's fighting weapon. They used it like a single-stick with great deftness in their feminine encounters.²⁴

Mathew claimed that the aboriginal people wore little, if any, clothing, sometimes covering themselves with an opossum rug or the soft pliable bark from the tea tree, worn like a shawl over the shoulders, especially during the cold nights.²⁵

Fred Borchardt, who made a study of the *Wakka Wakka* people, (whom he termed the Wuccas), claimed that the aboriginal people of the Burnett often communicated with message sticks. Borchardt had observed the aboriginal people closely and his writings on the subject are of particular interest. He wrote:

The question of tribal fights must be linked with the Aboriginal 'letter' or 'card.' This consisted of a stick, or series of sticks, marked with various cuts and signs which gave the necessary information. A common cause of quarrel was that of the missing tribesman. A venturesome warrior might proceed into the neighbour's territory and fail to return. His friends would report the matter to the king and a formal challenge to battle would be issued per medium of the 'stick message,' borne by a messenger. This 'card' would state the time and place. I have seen several of these 'stick messages.' One is a very complicated affair consisting of a series of sticks and not unlike a xylophone in form. Another that I saw had on it, among other markings, representations of boomerangs and spears, while part of the stick was coloured red. This represented a note from the battle field to those at home, stating that there had been a fight with boomerangs and spears and that there had been bloodshed. Tribal battles varied in intensity. When the two 'armies' met there was always a great deal of shouting and warlike gestures. All warriors were decorated with grotesque markings. A few missiles might be thrown, but as often as not, one of the more venturesome from each side would engage in combat, and the victor here would be regarded as having brought victory to his tribe. Sometimes several of these contests would take place, but, at other times, a general 'dust-up' would take place with more serious loss of life ...

When a death occurred in camp a move was made next day to a fresh site. Before the coming of the white man the Aborigines seldom buried their dead. They placed them in hollow trees and stumps, or on platforms of bark in the fork of a tree. Often the outer skin of the deceased was removed, leaving the underlying skin white, while the removed grisly relic was kept by relatives for the purpose of 'faith healing.' Later small bones might be procured from the body and kept as 'charms' to ward off evil spirits, and as a protection from misfortune. After the advent of the (squatters') stations the native was buried by his relatives in a shallow grave, often in the vicinity of the homestead.²⁶

Notes and Sources

Chapter One

The Indigenous Peoples of the South Burnett

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2

Sorcery, Magic and Medicine

Before the coming of the white man, the aboriginal people of the South Burnett relied, of course, upon the natural remedies and medicines available to them in the bush. The effectiveness of these cures varied greatly, depending upon the condition of the patients, whether or not the disease was in an embryonic or advanced state, and the availability of the necessary ingredients to effect the cures. Disease among the aboriginal communities was relatively rare, they ate a wide variety of foods and enjoyed a healthy lifestyle with plenty of exercise. Dietary deficiencies were uncommon, although among the aboriginal community generally there were some deficiencies of vitamin C and calcium, the latter of which sometimes led to the onset of rickets — although these conditions were more prevalent in later years when the aboriginal people were at the various mission stations where they depended largely upon the white population for their foods.¹ Yet despite their healthy lifestyle, the aboriginal people were subject to a variety of common illnesses, including cancer, fungous and parasitic infections, diarrhoea, heart and lung disease, arthritis, diabetes, tooth decay, blindness, etc. The aboriginal people were also, of course, subject to numerous injuries including cuts and abrasions, burns, serious wounds inflicted during the many ceremonial or personal battles. Children were often burnt during cooking procedures on open fires and many aborigines were subject to burns during the grass firing operations carried out to rejuvenate the land and to attract more wild-life to the region. Fractured bones were a considerable problem, light fractures of the arms, for example, were relatively simple to repair, but leg fractures, unless prolonged rest could be taken, frequently resulted in death.²

Remedies included the application of mud, earth, leaves, flowers, bark, and varieties of pastes made from similar natural ingredients.

The application of medicines was generally carried out by the clan 'medicine man' who usually claimed to have a variety of supernatural powers, the ability to fly, for example, or to dive underground and to emerge at any given spot, sometimes many kilometres away.

In 1910 John Mathew wrote:

Before they became tainted with diseases contracted from Europeans, the aborigines were a healthy and hardy race. Their out-door life and the necessary struggle for existence kept them toned up physically. No epidemics are known to have occurred. Their maladies were such as would arise from accident, exposure, strain and errors of diet. Indigestion, rheumatism and toothache were common troubles. Leprosy was unknown, but I knew the case of a man whose nose was in a state of chronic gangrene. Heart disease, probably the result of strain, judging from cases I witnessed, would not be rare. The partial adoption of European habits both aggravated the maladies they were naturally liable to and induced others of a more serious nature, such as syphilis and phthisis. Since contact with white people, the great majority of deaths has been the result of phthisis, and this scourge has been specially fatal to the young.

In their pristine condition the natives seemed to have lived to an old age. I knew a few people of seventy years and upwards. One woman, who used to be carried about from camp to camp, had become wizened like a mummy.

Their medical skill was very limited, for the most part mere illusion, and of surgical skill they had virtually none. To allay pain they would apply a tight bandage, and sores they would cover over with clay or ashes. Ligatures were fastened above boils or wounds on the limbs, to give relief by checking the circulation. A favourite treatment of local pain was for the Manngur (wizard) to suck the part if accessible to his mouth. The sucking would of itself relieve inflammation and the doctor would increase the relief by a mild deception. A friend

of mine saw one treating a sore part by suction and expectorating blood, which was supposed to be drawn from the affected part in the patient. But as a matter of fact, the doctor showed my friend a kundir (quartz crystal), with which he had been lacerating his own gums while performing the operation, so that it was a case of bleeding by proxy.

I once saw a similar but more elaborate process of bleeding. A boy, complaining of a pain in the stomach, had one end of a cord fastened about the abdomen. The other end was immersed in a vessel with water. The Manngur held the cord near the middle by both hands, see-sawing it across his gums, and from time to time expectorating into the vessel. This was supposed to be a bleeding of the patient. It was carried on with much patience and seriousness, and as medicine to be efficacious must needs be nasty, when the operation is over, the boy drinks the potion in the vessel. I was scowled at for regarding the operation with amused credulity.

Sickness, not the obvious result of accident, was always attributed to sorcery. The ordinary belief of the blackfellow who had mysteriously become sick was that some enemy, from a place of concealment, had launched a magic stone at him, which had become embedded in his body. It was the business of the sorcerer, by his hocus-pocus tricks, to extract the stone or whatever other foreign body was causing the pain. As if on the principle that like cures like, a magic stone was sometimes applied to the affected part to allay the pain. The stones known as kundir and minkom, when imagined to be residing in the sorcerer's own body, were assumed causes of exceptional vitality, but they could be utilised by him as lethal weapons.

Ginggil ginggil, a kind of mange contracted from the dogs, was very prevalent. The only treatment applied was pressing the pimples of the rash with a dull-pointed stick a few inches in length. This operation seemed to be much enjoyed — at least it was often practised, and was carried out with apparent zest, the body being picked all over very methodically ...

There were different methods of disposing of the dead. One mode was to erect a stage for the body on a tree, or to construct one of saplings and bark resting on upright forks. On such stages the body was left until completely desiccated, when the bones would be deposited in a hollow tree. After contact with Europeans the common method was interment in the ground. One grave I knew was marked by small logs being carefully arranged on the surface, which were said to represent the brothers of the deceased, and the position of the logs was intended to point out where they lived ...

The duration of mourning was about six weeks. At night mourners could be seen flitting about the camp carrying glowing torches, for the purpose, it was said of driving off the spirits ...

As a sign of mourning the women tied bunches of emu feathers in their hair all over the head, and these were left to drop off gradually in course of time. During mourning certain kinds of food had to be avoided as *mundha* (tapu). Fasting for the dead was called *ngarin*. The names of the dead were not uttered. They were usually referred to as *kananngur*, ie., poor fellow.³

Notes and Sources

Chapter Two

Sorcery, Magic and Medicine

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3

The Coming of the White Man

Prior to the arrival of the European colonists during the 18th Century, the aboriginal people had lived in Australia for many thousands of years, their lives guided by the seasons, the weather, and by their own codes of conduct, their laws, beliefs and faiths. Yet this inherently idyllic lifestyle was about to be shattered. The area we now know as Queensland was not opened up for free settlement until 1839, following the closure of the Moreton Bay penal settlement. This settlement was first established by Surveyor-General John Oxley in September 1824. There had, of course, been several visits of Europeans prior to the establishment of this settlement, most notable of which was the visit of four shipwrecked sailors, Richard Parsons, John Finnegan, John Thompson and Thomas Pamphlett. These men had set out from Sydney in an open boat on 21 March, 1823, their destination the Five Islands. However, they soon became caught in a gale and for more than three weeks — during which time John Thompson died of thirst and hunger — they remained at the mercy of the sea, finally coming to land at Moreton Island on 16 April that year. The three shipwrecked sailors were finally rescued (at various stages, Richard Parsons only being found after the establishment of the settlement) by John Oxley who had travelled to the region aboard the cutter *Mermaid*. Oxley had been sent north by Governor Brisbane in search of a site where a penal settlement could be established. In company of Lieutenant Stirling of the 3rd Regiment and another man named John Uniacke, Oxley had travelled firstly to the Port Curtis region, and finding that this was not suitable for his needs, he sailed south once again to Point Skirmish where he was amazed to discover John Finnegan, and would later meet up with the other two shipwrecked sailors.¹

Oxley interrogated these sailors and was pleased to find that they had discovered a large river which emptied into the southern end of Moreton Bay. The following morning Oxley and his party, accompanied by Finnegan who was acting as a guide, set out to navigate this river. They travelled upstream, landing periodically so that Oxley could examine the various locations to ascertain if they would be suitable for penal settlement. In his official report Oxley later recommended that the site was indeed suitable.² The report was favourably received and on 1 September, 1824, His Majesty's Colonial Brig *Amity* left Sydney for the Brisbane River. Aboard the vessel were, of course, John Oxley, Lieutenant Miller of the 40th Regiment, who was to be the commandant of the new settlement, his wife and two sons, the botanist Alan Cunningham, an assistant surveyor named Robert Hoddle, Lieutenant Butler, some servants, a sergeant, corporal, twelve privates and their families, a commissariat store keeper, his assistant and thirty convicts. This group was the genesis of white settlement in what later became known as Queensland.

Oxley established the settlement at Red Cliff Point, but it was later moved up to the present site of Brisbane. The first buildings were huts for the convicts and soldiers, a store, gaol and guardhouse. The convicts quickly planted a hundred acres of maize. Over the following years the settlement grew slowly and sometimes with great difficulty, successive commandants being replaced at periodic intervals. Miller was replaced by Captain Peter Bishop in August 1825. Bishop was relieved in March 1826 by one of the settlement's most notorious commandants, Captain Patrick Logan. It was an appointment that was to bring extra hardships into the lives of the convicts at Moreton Bay, and Logan himself was never to survive the appointment.

Under Logan's charge at this time were hundreds of convicts, many of whom complained bitterly of Logan's harsh treatment of them. Logan was certainly one of the most feared of all the settlement's commandants, his punishments and rigid methods of discipline are now legendary. When he arrived at Moreton Bay he had the authority to award the convicts anything up to fifty lashes for serious offences. However, he was disgruntled with the lack of solitary confinement

cells with which to dispense justice and as a substitute decided to increase the use of the lash. Some prisoners received up to two hundred lashes.

Many convicts, terrified at the prospect of further torture under Logan's command, took to the bush around present day Brisbane. Some of these filtered through the bush to become the first white men to live in the regions we now know as the Wide Bay, Darling Downs and the Burnett. A few of these escaped convicts managed to live among the indigenous people, while others were seen as transgressors and were quickly killed. Some of the convicts were reported to have even murdered their fellow prisoners in order to be themselves hanged for the offence, claiming that death was preferable to the suffering and humiliation meted out to them at the settlement.

During his period of command Logan took an active interest in the surrounding countryside, exploring and making notes for survey and mapping purposes. In 1830 Logan received instructions that he was to be transferred, and he decided, before he left, to complete one last exploration towards Mount Esk. On the 9th of October that year he set off with his batman and a group of five convicts.

Soon after their departure they were attacked by a party of aborigines, a shot was fired and the attackers fled. Logan and his group continued on their way and shortly afterwards completed his mission, however, exactly what occurred on the return journey is still something of a mystery.

Logan apparently decided that he would temporarily part company with his party for a brief exploratory tour, leaving instructions with his batman and the five convicts to meet him that night at a pre-designated location. Logan camped that evening in a disused aboriginal hut, ignoring the rendezvous he had previously made with his batman. In the morning he was eating a breakfast of roasted chestnuts when he was suddenly set upon by a large group of aboriginal men.

Logan ran to his horse, ignoring the saddle and bridle in his rush to be away, and galloped across a gully, however, the aborigines were close behind and when Logan lost control of his horse they were quickly upon him with hunting spears and nulla nullas.

Another version of Logan's death came many years later when a convict's diary was allegedly found. It was said to have recorded that the five convicts escorting Logan, finding that they had their much hated master at their mercy, overpowered and attempted to flog him to death in revenge for his savage and brutal treatment. However, Logan, it seems, was stronger than they had anticipated, the convicts found that they could not kill him with the lash so they battered in the back of his skull and buried him face down in a shallow grave. How much truth there is in this version of Logan's death is difficult, if not impossible to establish. In his 1882 history, William Coote claimed that there was, '... reason to suppose that the contemporary rumours of participation in the murder, by some of the white criminals, were not altogether unfounded.'³

When news of Logan's death reached the penal settlement there was great rejoicing among the convicts, however, their celebrations were to be brief. Logan's replacement, Captain Clunie was also a strict martinet who sometimes ordered that even more than two hundred lashes were to be administered to recalcitrant convicts.

The convicts at Moreton Bay at this time were living under exceedingly harsh and difficult conditions, food was monotonous and dull, the work load heavy. With severe commandants such as Logan and Clunie ever ready to impose particularly harsh regimes of discipline, it is little wonder that many of the convicts dreamt of escape. During the penal settlement era at Moreton Bay more than 2200 prisoners passed through the system, 138 of whom were women.⁴

Archibald Meston was to play an important role in the history of aboriginal people in the colony. He was born at Donside, Towie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, in 1851, the son of a farmer named Alexander Meston and his wife, Margaret (nee Clark). He arrived in Australia in 1859 aboard the *Saldhana* and subsequently purchased his father's farm in the Clarence River region. In 1874 he was the manager of *Pearlwell* plantation in the Brisbane River district and later became the editor of the *Ipswich Observer* and *Brisbane Evening Observer*. He subsequently became editor of the *Toowoomba Chronicle* and *Townsville Herald*, was involved in sugar production and was later declared insolvent. He was appointed the protector of aborigines in 1898. His subsequent appointments included the Queensland Tourist Bureau in Sydney, which he managed, and

chairman of the Cairns Divisional Board. He became M.L.A. for Rosewood on 26 November, 1878. His publications include *The Geographic History of Queensland*, (1895), *The Sacred Ibis*, (1902) and *Scheme for the Improvement of Aborigines*, (1895).⁵



Archibald Meston. Source — John Oxley Library print number 68274.

In 1895 Archibald Meston gave an interesting description of the settlement at Moreton Bay. He wrote:

All the land now occupied by the Botanic Gardens and Government House, and thence along the river to Creek Street, was all under maize. Through this crop ran a muddy mangrove creek to Frog's Hollow, now covered by Albert Street. A second creek ran up to the present corner of Albert and Adelaide Streets, with mangroves to Edward Street.

Andrew Petrie's (superintendent of works) garden fronted the river at Eagle Street, near there stood a pine tree to which convicts were tied and flogged. There, too, was a gum-tree with a sentinel box in the fork, 40 feet from the ground, where a sentry watched the blacks swimming over from Kangaroo Point to steal corn. The Point was all under wheat.

The soldier's barracks stood on the site of the present Treasury Buildings; the women's factory on the site of the present Post Office. The lumber, or working yard, surrounded by a high wall, stood where a hotel now stands close to Victoria Bridge, at the head of Queen Street. The commandant's house stood next to the site of the present Government Printing Office, and his garden faced the river in front. The convict hospital stood on the site of the Supreme Court, and the land from there to Roma Street railway station was all under maize. Spring Hill was covered with gums, ironbark, bloodwood and stringy bark. Water was carted from the spring at the quarries near the Grammar School. The present Observatory is the old treadmill, where the convicts, twenty-four at a time, ground the corn and wheat.

The burial ground fronted the river along the North Quay, west from Turbot Street. The commissary stores stood in front of the commandant's house. The Government stockyard

was erected on the corner of George and Charlotte Streets, the yard for yoking bullocks stood on the north-east corner of Albert and Queen Streets. The first race-course, for steeplechases, began where the kiosk stands in the Botanic Gardens, crossed fences and ditches in Frog's Hollow, and ended at the winning post near the present Post Office. The men's gaol was a two-storied walled building, afterwards occupied as first Parliament House and Supreme Court, in Queen Street. All the river frontage of South Brisbane was under maize and wheat.

The chain-gang convicts wore grey caps, grey jackets and canvas trousers buttoned down the side so as to be put on and taken off without removing the irons, which were riveted.

The loose chain between the feet was held up, when walking, by a string fastened to the waist-belt.

The chained prisoners were fed three times daily on porridge only, receiving no tea, sugar, or tobacco. The prisoners tanned leather from local cattle hides and made their own boots.

They also made all their own wooden implements, men were punished by flogging, and the women had their heads shaved and were chained to the floor from a ring around the neck.⁶

However, to escape from the settlement, while it remained a physically simple act, was in fact a particularly difficult undertaking fraught with danger. Convicts were generally allowed to work with little supervision, there were simply not enough guards to watch every convict at every location every day, and so the temptation for the convicts to wander into the surrounding scrub must have been an attractive proposition.

Yet once in the scrub, life could be tenuous indeed. Few, if any, of the convicts were conversant with bush foods, how to procure them and which foods should be avoided. They carried no weapons so the shooting of game was not possible. Most convicts who decided to escape had to run the risk of hunger and the increasing hostility of the local aborigines. The convict register, now housed at the John Oxley Library in Brisbane, lists the names of those incarcerated at the Moreton Bay settlement, against a number of these names is written simply the word, 'Run'. Some of the escaping convicts remained in close proximity to the settlement, attempting to live in the wilderness for a short period until they were eventually driven back to the settlement, half starved, where they would face the certainty of the lash, chains, solitary confinement or a combination of all these punishments. The principal medical officer, Doctor Bowman, visited the Moreton Bay settlement in May 1829 in order to report on the state of the hospital there. In his report, dated 13 June, 1829, he stated that a number of the patients were former runaways who had been admitted to the hospital: '... in a state of extreme debility.' The doctor reported that the men had been suffering from starvation because they had had no means of procuring food after consuming the provisions they had taken with them when they had left the settlement.

Others, however, simply disappeared and were never heard of again. Most of these would certainly have been either killed by the local indigenous people or would have died of hunger. Some convicts were returned by the aborigines, while others were tracked by constables, soldiers or prisoner overseers and recaptured. In February 1827 Captain Patrick Logan had written to the colonial secretary: 'I have much pleasure in reporting the very friendly terms we continue to preserve with the natives, who begin to make themselves useful in apprehending and bringing in runaways. I beg leave to request that a supply of blankets and tomahawks may be sent for them, they value these articles very highly.'⁷

Yet, despite these measures to recapture them and the difficulties they faced in the bush, there were a few convicts who remained free and survived, who lived with the aboriginal people, were later manumitted and, following the closure of the penal settlement in 1839, gave excellent service to the squattocracy and the government in the form of guides and interpreters, these were the first non-indigenous explorers of south-east Queensland. Shipwrecked sailors Pamphlett, Finnegan and Parsons were, as we have seen, the first white men to roam the region we now know as Queensland, but the next of the breed, the first to live on the Darling Downs, the Burnett and the Wide Bay were the escaped convicts. Among these men and women, and certainly the most well known, were John Sterry Baker, John Graham, David Bracewell, Samuel Derrington, John Fahey and the legendary James Davis.⁸ Two women were known to have escaped from the settlement, Honor Connor and Mary Byrne. Both escaped in October 1834 and remained at large for just four days.⁹

The escaping convicts moved into various regions, John Baker escaped from Moreton Bay on 8 January, 1826, and wandered for many days through the bush until he met a group of aborigines at what later became known as Lockyer's Creek. He, like many of the other escaped convicts, was 'recognised' as the reincarnated form of a dead aboriginal man and welcomed into the clan. Baker remained with these people for fourteen years, wandering through the Gatton, Laidley and Darling Downs regions, until he gave himself up to the authorities at Moreton Bay on 4 August, 1840, after the closure of the penal settlement.

John Graham escaped on 14 July, 1827, and was welcomed into a clan in the Noosa region. He lived among the aborigines of the Tewantin and Maroochydore areas for more than six years, returning to the Moreton Bay settlement on 1 November, 1833. His term of imprisonment was over and he claimed to be a time expired convict but he was again sentenced to a further three and a half years in order to make up for the time lost during his escape. He later played a significant role in the rescue of Eliza Fraser, shipwrecked from the *Stirling Castle* in May 1836 on the Great Barrier Reef. For his part in this dramatic rescue, Graham was awarded his freedom and ten pounds reward.¹⁰

Samuel Derrington escaped from the settlement on 22 December, 1827, travelling firstly north, and later west, into the bunya region, where he lived among the aborigines, and was therefore probably the first white man to roam through the South Burnett. He remained in the Burnett region for almost nine years, returning to the settlement at Moreton Bay on 28 April, 1838. He was later sent to Sydney.

David Bracewell escaped numerous times, the first, for just six days, on 14 May, 1828, and was later instrumental in aiding the first organised white expedition into the Wide Bay region. James Davis escaped on 30 March, 1829, and was later recovered by the same expedition.

John Fahey was another convict who escaped from Grose's Farm, Monaro, and was also to be one of the first white men to roam through the Burnett region. Fahey absconded on 6 March, 1840, was recaptured but escaped a second time on 11 November, 1841. He was again recaptured but finally managed to escape on 24 April, 1842, travelling north to the Bunya Mountains. He remained at large, living with the indigenous people for more than eleven years. The Native Police, (q.v.) attempted many times to recapture him and he was finally taken in December 1854 by the notorious Lieutenant John O'Connell Bligh (after whom Bligh Street in Kilkivan is named) and his party of Native Police. Fahey was sentenced to a year's imprisonment in chains and was made to work on the roads.

From the early thirties, it was clear that the future of the Moreton Bay settlement was becoming increasingly uncertain, that the northern 'frontier' regions we now know as south-east Queensland contained rich pastoral lands that would, and must, be opened up for pastoral use. In New South Wales there existed an army of hopeful squatters, men like John Eales from the Hunter Valley, Alan Cunningham, William Forster, Gregory Blaxland, the Archer brothers and many more, most of whom wished to select vast tracts of land, hundreds of square miles on which to depasture tens of thousands of sheep. In December 1832 Secretary of State Viscount Goderich recommended to the governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke, that the settlement at Moreton Bay be broken up as the convicts there did not seem to be employed in a productive manner. Goderich went on to state: 'By assigning the Settlers such of these Prisoners as may be more tractable, and by employing upon the roads or in any equally severe labour, those desperate and incorrigible characters, the Colony would receive much benefit from their labour and the Mother Country would be relieved from the heavy expence (sic) entailed by the Settlement in question.'¹¹

During the following years, under successive and relatively humane commandants such as Foster Fyans, the numbers of convicts at the penal settlement steadily declined. In 1837 Andrew Petrie, who had been appointed superintendent of works, arrived at the settlement aboard the steamer *James Watt*. Commandant of the prison at the time was Major Sydney Cotton, who had arrived at the settlement in July that year. Petrie was particularly interested in exploring the unknown interior of the country. In 1837 he and Cotton travelled from Ipswich to Brisbane on foot, a journey normally made only by river. In 1838, accompanied by his eldest son John, two convicts, two aboriginal guides and a pack bullock, Petrie travelled north to the Maroochy River. During this expedition Petrie discovered specimens of the bunya pine and later reported its importance as a food source to the aboriginal people. This report led to the now well known

proclamation of Governor Gipps who stated that no licences for the occupation of lands or timber cutting would be granted in the bunya region. Petrie was the first white man to climb Mount Beerwah, the tallest peak in the Glasshouse Mountains.

Meanwhile the penal settlement continued to decline. In May 1839 Lieutenant George Gravatt was appointed commandant of the settlement, by this time the numbers of convicts had dwindled to a little more than ninety. On 1 July that year Governor George Gipps wrote to Lord Glenelg: 'I am happy to be able to report to your Lordship the further measures which I have adopted for reducing the Establishment of that place, and for throwing the district open to Settlers. The whole of the women, 57 in number, have been withdrawn, and the Male Convicts reduced to 94, a number which will be barely sufficient for the custody and protection of the property of the Home Government, particularly of the Flocks and herds, which cannot be advantageously disposed of until the Country shall be opened to Settlers.'¹²

George Gravatt was withdrawn as commandant in July, after only a few months in the position, he was replaced by Lieutenant Owen Gorman who was to be the last commandant of the Moreton Bay penal settlement. Soon afterwards all convicts, with the exception of those who were required to help surveying parties or who were 'indispensable' to the settlement, were withdrawn, bringing to an end the convict era.

The colony which later was to become known as Queensland now entered the epoch of the pastoralists, wealthy squatters, often financed by Scottish money, who began to move their enormous flocks of sheep into the newly opened territories. First among these was the Scot Patrick Leslie with his brothers Walter and George who, in 1840, overlanded their flocks, around five thousand sheep, from the New England region to the Condamine River on the Darling Downs. Archibald Meston wrote in 1895:

The first squatter on the Darling Downs, and therefore the first in Queensland territory, was Patrick Leslie, who, accompanied only by a servant named Peter Murphy, arrived on the site of *Tooburra* station on 20 March, 1840. Walter Leslie followed his brother with 5,600 sheep, 10 saddle horses, 2 bullock teams and drays, and a team of horses and dray. Their assistants were twenty-two ticket-of-leave men, said by Leslie in a letter of 1878 to be, 'good and game as ever existed, and equal to any forty I have ever seen since.' The solitary faithful servant who came with Patrick Leslie on the Pioneer trip was a life-sentence prisoner sent out by the ship *Countess of Harcourt* from Dublin in 1827. His brave and gallant conduct with Leslie was represented to Governor Gipps, who awarded him unconditional freedom. This historical old pioneer died at Charters Towers, North Queensland, on 6th April 1878. His name is commemorated by Murphy's Creek, on the line from Helidon to Toowoomba.¹³

Murphy's history was typical of many hundreds, possibly thousands of other such convicts who formed the backbone of Queensland settlement. The closure of the penal colony at Brisbane did not necessarily signify the complete cessation of convictism in the northern districts. Many of the new wealthy squatters, like the Leslies, brought with them dozens of convicts, and there were hundreds of British prisoners who, rather than accept imprisonment in Britain, opted instead to join the colonial labour force at the Moreton Bay settlement. More than five hundred of these arrived at Brisbane between 1849 and 1850, and many of these accompanied the new squatters into regions such as the Wide Bay, the Darling Downs and the Burnett.

By 1841 land hungry squatters were moving into the area now known as south-east Queensland, taking up vast holdings such as *Cressbrook*, near the present site of Toogoolawah, *Kilcoy* station in the Stanley River valley and *Durundur* station to the east of it.

In July 1842 the first Brisbane land sale was held in Sydney and investors paid a total of £4637/10/-, mainly for land they had never seen, and in December that year Captain Wickham was appointed police magistrate. Doctor Stephen Simpson was appointed crown lands commissioner for Moreton Bay and Christopher Rollison was given the same position for the Darling Downs.

On 4 May, 1842, a small expedition set off from Moreton Bay on what was to be one of the most important explorations into the fledgling colony. Aboard the tiny captain's gig that was to carry the members of the expedition were Andrew Petrie, Walter Wrottesley, a former midshipman

named W.K. Jolliffe, (whose long black beard was an object of much mirth and admiration '... especially to the blacks').¹⁴ Henry Stuart Russell, who was later to become one of the first squatters on the South Burnett, five prisoners of the crown and two aboriginal guides. They sailed north, firstly to Noosa Heads, and over the following days discovered two runaway convicts, David Bracewell and James Davis. They found and explored the Wide Bay (later Mary) River and it was this discovery that led to the establishment of the first station in the Wide Bay region, in the vicinity of Tiaro. This station was taken up by a wealthy squatter from the Liverpool Plains region named John Eales and run for him by W.K. Jolliffe. It was doomed, however, to failure, aboriginal attack, the difficulties of obtaining supplies and shepherds, scab in sheep and a host of other minor problems all contributed to the station's demise and it was later abandoned.

While there had been the infrequent arrival of escaped convicts among the indigenous people of the Wide Bay and Burnett regions, the aboriginal people did not experience wide scale invasion of their lands until the early 1840s. With the opening up of the district to squattocratic settlement, the entire system of aboriginal culture, laws and traditions almost immediately started to become lost. The land-holdings in the South Burnett taken up by the various squatters rang the death knell for the aboriginal people and began the systematic destruction of their entire culture. While these early squattocratic runs will be investigated in greater detail later in this history, there were several distinct phases involved in this invasion, some of which overlapped, both temporally and spatially.

Taromeo station was taken up by Simon Scott circa 1842, followed by W.E. Oliver's *Nanango* station and John James Malcolm Borthwick's *Tarong* station shortly afterwards. Soon afterwards Charles Robert Haly and his brother William O'Grady Haly took up *Taabinga*, near Kingaroy. Henry Stuart Russell, following his various inland explorations, took up *Burrandowan*, also near Kingaroy, in 1843. *Barambah* station near the present site of Murgon was taken up by John Stephen Ferriter and Edmund Uhr circa 1843. *Mondure* station was taken up by Richard Jones in 1844, *Kilkivan* by a man named James Sheridan in 1845, *Boobyjan* and *Winderera* by Paul and Clement Lawless circa 1846, *Boondooma* by Alexander and Robert Lawson, in 1846, *Boonara* by the ill-fated Edward Brace Hawkins, also in 1846 and *Manumbar*; which was taken by John Mortimer in 1848. All these stations played a significant role in the early formation of European settlement of the South Burnett, bringing hundreds of thousands of sheep, many families and workers, and striking hard into the very heart of traditional aboriginal life and culture.

The man to whom the Burnett region and the Burnett River owe their names is the surveyor James Charles Burnett, one of Queensland's early non-indigenous explorers. Coupled with the explorations of people such as Andrew Petrie and Henry Stuart Russell, the work of Burnett filled in enormous gaps in our knowledge of the geographical formations of the Wide Bay and Burnett regions.

Following up on the work of both Petrie and Russell, and an earlier (November 1846) expedition he had carried out with Deputy Surveyor-General, Captain Samuel Perry, on 1 March, 1847, James Charles Burnett left Brisbane to explore the river systems of the Wide Bay and what later became known as the Burnett districts, and to ascertain if there was a suitable site for a seaport that could service the inhabitants of those areas. His task was to discover whether or not the Boyne River, named by John Oxley in 1823, was, in fact, the same river which Henry Stuart Russell had crossed during his explorations in November 1842. Russell was convinced that the river he crossed was the same as that discovered by Oxley, the Survey Office in Sydney was also of the opinion that the river was the same, but to be sure they wanted the mid-section of the river explored to ascertain if it was a navigable waterway.

Burnett managed to trace what was then thought to be the Boyne to the region of Bundaberg where he was forced to turn back but not before he was 'sufficiently near the coast to be certain that the outlet of the Boyne was in Hervey Bay.'

In July 1847 he again attempted, this time successfully, to find the sea outlet of what was believed to be the Boyne, leaving Brisbane by boat with a crew of seven men. Finding the outlet, he stated that the river was too small to be of any major importance, and then explored the Wide Bay River, as had Petrie five years previously. He claimed that it was suitable for navigation for major shipping. As a tribute to Burnett, Governor Fitz Roy declared that the river, which had

previously been known as the Boyne, would be called the Burnett. In later years the name was transferred to that branch of the stream rising in the Burnett Range west of Bundaberg and the name of Boyne was restored to the tributary rising in the Bunya Mountains which later joins the main stream near Mundubbera, therefore there are two Boyne Rivers in Queensland.¹⁵

James Charles Burnett also became well known for his work in surveying the township of Drayton in 1849 and Sandgate in 1852, although he was not to live to enjoy his successes, he died, aged thirty-nine, in July 1854.¹⁶

How the aboriginal people reacted to these first powerful explorations and pastoral incursions into their sacred tribal lands is a moot point. We know that they reacted violently, we also know that in some cases they greeted the newcomers with curiosity, caution, fear or friendliness, depending upon the merits of each individual case. Yet it seems clear that the incursion of the white man almost certainly created internal disputes within the aboriginal nations and clans. The aboriginal people were torn by two distinctly different forces, the need to retaliate, and their increasing affection for white man's possessions such as tobacco, alcohol, steel axes, knives, candles, biscuits, sugar, tea, flour, mutton, and many other items which the indigenous people readily accepted into their traditional communities. As historian Henry Reynolds points out, these problems almost certainly created inter-tribal tensions as the various factions debated the traditional needs of the people, weighing up those needs against the newly acquired fondness for white man's goods.¹⁷ This tension would certainly have been stronger before the aboriginal people realised that accompanying the gifts of food and tools etc, the white men were also importing measles, whooping cough, small-pox, influenza and venereal diseases.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Three

The Coming of the White Man

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The Native Police

By the turn of the century the aboriginal people of Queensland were, almost certainly, '... the most totally conquered minority in Western history.'¹ During the previous fifty years or so, the aboriginal population of the state had been so completely decimated that only the stragglers, the remnants of the once great and powerful aboriginal nations, could creep, defeated and humiliated, into the settlements the Queensland government was in the process of establishing. Those fifty years had seen the destruction of a stable aboriginal society, a society steeped in culture, laws, religious beliefs, family values, territorial rights and intricate family systems. This destruction was caused greatly through ignorance of the aboriginal race, its customs and its traditional ways of life. It was caused through fear, misunderstanding, lack of sound judgement, irrational responses to perceived aggression, antipathy, alienation and racial prejudice. It had been fifty years of bloodshed and terror, and that terror had been brought forcibly home to the aboriginal people by the now infamous Native Police.

During the colony's formative years, the attitude of white colonists to the increasing incidences of aboriginal attack were varied — although mostly they were brutal, yet there was heightening concern — especially at the seat of government in Sydney, that the wholesale slaughter of aboriginal people should not continue. Long before the squatting runs of Queensland were opened up to free settlement, the northern borders of the colony of New South Wales were regarded as 'frontier' areas — a term quite unacceptable and offensive to contemporary aboriginal thinking. At these 'frontiers' and beyond lay country that was subject to land grabbing and widespread aboriginal hostility.

The massacre that occurred at Myall Creek in 1838, while far removed, both spatially and temporally from what later became known as the South Burnett, was significant to the actions of the general squattocracy and the attitudes of those squatters towards local indigenous people.

In June that year a large number of stockmen armed with muskets, pistols and swords travelled north from various head-stations with the intention of hunting aboriginal people. At Myall Creek they rounded up some thirty or so aborigines and led them into the foothills. Soon afterwards local squatters heard several distinct shots, later they found a gruesome scene, the aboriginal people had been slaughtered and lay in a widening pool of blood. After these killings the men responsible for the crimes returned to the various stations where they worked. They believed that no retribution against them was possible. The killings of local aboriginal people was then a common occurrence, no white man had ever been punished for what was euphemistically termed — 'dispersing the blacks.'

However, finally, after years of such atrocities and under mounting pressure from the British government, Governor George Gipps was determined to stamp out the practice of mass slaughter. The Myall Creek killers were arrested and tried during the most sensational court case of the century. Never before had any white colonists been brought to trial for murdering aboriginal people. The defendants were found not guilty, but immediately after the verdict was announced it was decided to hold the eleven defendants in custody for a re-trial. In November, after substantial legal wrangling, seven of the original eleven men were again tried and found guilty of murder. On 18 December that year these men were hanged.

Yet, as we have seen, the war continued for years as white settlement forged farther north and east from Sydney and Brisbane. Dozens of white settlers were speared to death and thousands of aboriginal people were killed. In an attempt to prevent this mass slaughter, and as a direct result of the Myall Creek massacre, in 1838 the Border Police force was formed.

This force was entrusted with the task of maintaining the peace in the 'frontier' regions of the colony, and to bring to justice any aboriginal or white law breakers.

The force, however, was comprised of ex-convicts, labourers, out of work stockmen and ruffians from the Sydney wharfs who were attracted to its ranks because of the availability of almost unlimited power. Over the following years they were to prove to be a brutal gang of cut-throats who killed often and mercilessly.

By the early 1840s landholders were strongly petitioning the government to do more to stop aboriginal raids. At *Kilcoy* station, one of the very first to be established in what was later Queensland, the killing of sheep and European retaliation was quickly coming to a head. A shepherd's hut was suddenly attacked by a large group of aborigines and two of the shepherds were speared to death. Those who escaped the attack laced all the stores with arsenic, a poison used to control scab in sheep, before fleeing for their lives. The aborigines fought over the spoils of battle, killing sheep, making the contaminated flour into roasted johnny-cakes, and enjoying a huge victory feast. The following day approximately sixty of them died.

News of this horrifying incident travelled quickly among the local people and the scenes of death were woven into an intricate ceremonial corroboree at a special meeting of aboriginal elders. The aboriginal people had been deceived and poisoned like pests. The survivors were bitter, hostile and frightened by the events shaping their future. This dread of the unknown forced them into making the only decision possible under the circumstances. They decided upon a concerted effort of armed resistance.

Throughout the frontier region of the colony the killings increased. Squatters, shepherds, women and children were suddenly attacked and speared or clubbed to death without compassion. Stations were built like fortresses with heavily stockaded walls into which small rectangular holes were cut to facilitate musket-fire. Even so, the might and ferocity of the attacking aborigines was so great that many such outlying stations were abandoned, often many times.

Into this melee of death and destruction came one man who was ultimately responsible for the large scale deprivations against the indigenous people in New South Wales and the region which would later become known as Queensland. His name was Frederick Walker.

There is considerable conflict of opinion today regarding the career of Frederick Walker. Some historians and researchers regard Walker as being little more than a drunkard, however, others claim that he was a man who was confused only with his own good intentions. Walker was plagued by the turmoil of his conscience and emotionally torn by his duties.

The Native Police were lured to the work by the privileges they were offered, a horse, a carbine, a pistol, a smart blue and white uniform, alcohol, food, tobacco, blankets, regular pay — and women. This force was to become one of the most deadly and ill-disciplined in the colony. Nineteenth century historian G.W. Rusden described the Native Police corps as: '... a mere machine for murder', adding, '... if there be any pre-eminence in evil, Queensland must bear the stigma of deserving it.'²

The force was largely staffed by British officers — most of whom were reasonably well educated — who controlled aboriginal forces of varying sizes. There is a growing belief that the force has been much maligned since those times and that a dispassionate view of its activities would reveal that the Native Police actually prevented the white settlers from turning violently on the indigenous people. However, this is certainly a subjective view and one open to considerable conjecture. Yet, as historian J.P.M. Long points out, there is an argument that the most effective method of protecting the aboriginal people during the latter half of the nineteenth century may well have been carried out by the squatters themselves — squatters who employed many aboriginal people on their stations and gave them protection from the wide-scale depredations of the Native Police.³

Frederick Walker was given the task of forming the force in 1848. He was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age when he was appointed commandant, notification appearing in the *Government Gazette*.⁴ Walker initially recruited fourteen troopers from the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Edward River areas and trained these recruits in armed combat. His first real

skirmish against the aboriginal people occurred in May 1849 near the MacIntyre River. At the camp of William Tooth, Walker found aborigines spearing cattle. A tremendous fight reportedly followed and the indigenous people learned for the first time of the devastating effectiveness of Walker's men.

On Walker's recommendations two more officers were appointed to the force soon afterwards, Lieutenants Purvis Marshall, and George Fulford.⁵ On 17 January, 1850, Thomas Whitmill was made sergeant-major of the Native Police.⁶ When Walker and his force arrived in the Maryborough and Wide Bay and Burnett regions it quickly became evident to those squatters who had called for the formation of the force that in Walker's Native Police they were not to have a highly trained formation of peace-keepers, but a group of ill-trained, mostly illiterate and brutal men, lacking discipline, who would often take advantage of their commander's weaknesses to kill, rape and destroy wherever they could.

Despite Walker's presence in the newly opening regions of the colony, aboriginal attacks on lonely homesteads continued to frequently occur. In January 1851, the *Moreton Bay Courier* published the following report which is interesting not only for its information regarding the operations of the Native Police against aborigines on *Taromeo* station, but also for its use of language, particularly the disparaging use of the collective nouns such as 'herd' and 'mobs' when referring to a group of aboriginal people, and the tongue-in-cheek italics used in reference to: '*poor innocent darkies*'. The article reported:

I am glad to inform you that the Native Police reached the Upper Brisbane and Burnett just in time to meet a large assemblage of blacks, who had been driven from the Upper Burnett and Wide Bay, and had commenced operations by killing a man at *Colinton*; and just the day before Commandant Walker, with his troopers (and fine men they are), arrived at Mr Simon Scott's (*Taromeo* station). The blacks had been amongst his fat wethers, and driven a lot off. The men, under the very prompt directions of the Commandant, were soon on their trail, and came up with them, when, behold! there was a muster of about 300 *poor innocent darkies*. The little band of police, headed by their resolute Commandant, charged them, and the whole took to the scrub; but as soon as they reached it they showed battle, throwing their boomerangs and spears fast and thick. In spite of all, however, the troopers dismounted, drove the whole herd into the ridges, and recovered about fifty of the sheep. Nearly all the blacks that have been concerned in the murders in this and the surrounding neighbourhood were with this mob. Commandant Walker, I believe, proceeds to Wide Bay direct.⁷

In order to meet an ever increasing demand on his services, Walker's force was strengthened and as this expansion continued Walker's restricted organisational abilities were tested to their limits and found to be wanting.

One of Walker's major problems lay in the size of the territory he had to cover. With a limited number of men under his command the task of policing this vast territory was almost impossible, and when a large proportion of his men became ill with influenza, some even dying, the problem was compounded.⁸

In June 1852 the *Moreton Bay Courier* published:

The aborigines continue their outrages unchecked, and a general feeling of dissatisfaction is growing up amongst the frontier settlers, from the inefficient means taken by the Native Police to protect them; their orders being to patrol from station to station, consequently when required for active service their horses are knocked up. It is stated that the Attorney-General directed the officers to make a display of forces, and they continue making these displays, till at last, when required for active service, their horses cannot carry them into action. From their movements ordinary observers would imagine they are always at work, when in fact they are doing more harm than good, by riding knocked-up horses. Such are their instructions, and such is the wretched system displayed by our legislators, in making men responsible to the Attorney-General or Colonial Secretary, in Sydney, six hundred miles away. Can any worse system of government be imagined? Each post brings news of fresh outrages on the Dawson, or in other district adjoining. About ten days ago a Chinaman on Messrs. Miller and Turnbull's station was reported missing. Three sheep only being short, it was supposed that he had lost himself in the bush, and an active search was instituted, when at last his remains were discovered buried in a blind gully, by the Native Police under

Lieutenant Murray, he having been murdered by the aborigines. Since then they have baled up Messrs Hay's men, in the Wide Bay district, and taken from them forcibly their pipes, knives, and tobacco, with 270 sheep. As the winter advances these outrages will increase ...⁹

Walker was certainly disorganized and he lacked the ability to command respect in his men. These problems were caused through his fondness of alcohol, an example which his men quickly followed. The pressure being forced upon him by the squatters, combined with his own ineptitude to deal with such pressure, was the reason why he repeatedly turned to the panacea of alcohol, and he was frequently seen trying to perform his duties while drunk.¹⁰

In July 1852 fifteen other squatters throughout the Wide Bay and Burnett regions wrote to the colonial secretary complaining of Walker's conduct. Walker refuted these allegations, but the fact remains that aboriginal aggression in the area, rather than decreasing, was actually intensifying. In order to strengthen his force Walker began recruiting 'trusted' aborigines directly from the squatters' stations. These aboriginal people had often been employed to aid the settlers in the event of an aboriginal attack. As the months progressed, and under mounting aggression, Walker sank deeper into the mire of controversial social, economic and political tension.

By now the aboriginal people were at the height of their ferocity. Skirmishes and thefts of goods throughout the entire Burnett and Wide Bay region were becoming more frequent. In some areas aggressive groups of aborigines were numbered in their hundreds. Travellers and shepherds, especially in remote regions such as the South Burnett, went in fear of their lives.

In September 1849 the *Moreton Bay Courier* reported:

We continue to receive reports of the savage outrages perpetrated by the native blacks in the Burnett district. A few days since they murdered a shepherd in the employment of Mr Archibald Campbell; and another villainous act of the scoundrels has been the cause of a most melancholy accident. The natives attacked the station of Mr Taylor, and drove away all the men, who took refuge at the station of Mr Percival Stephen. The huts on the station were burned to the ground, and ten bales of wool, the property of Mr Thomas Windeyer, utterly consumed. Mr Windeyer was preparing to proceed in quest of the outlaws, and was about to mount his horse for that purpose, when by some accident his gun exploded, and the contents lodged in the unfortunate gentleman's thigh, shattering the bone. We learn from a gentleman who has just left the scene of this disastrous accident, that Mr Windeyer lies in a very precarious state. Application had been made to Mr Walker, for the assistance of the Native Police, who are stationed on the Condamine River, but the Commandant had not felt himself at liberty to comply with the request. The complete impunity with which the natives are indulging their savage and bloody propensities in this unprotected district, calls for the prompt interference of the Government, and we hope that the appeal for help, now made for the hundredth time, will not be made in vain.¹¹

In April 1850 a Chinese shepherd working on *Burrandowan* station was killed by the aboriginal people, the press claiming:

The victim was a Coolie shepherd, in the employment of Mr G. Sandeman, at *Burrandowan*. He was killed while out with his sheep, having been found speared in the back of the neck, and afterwards tomahawked. As the body was not stripped, nor any of the sheep taken away, the murder is believed to have been caused by revenge for the deceased having ordered some of the natives from his hut on the previous day, when they had been importuning him for flour, and upon which occasion they showed much violent conduct. The murderers were tracked for some distance from where the body was found, but up to our informant's departure none of them had been overtaken. The settlers are crying loudly for the Native Police, and we hope that our frequent representations on this head will have the effect of inducing Mr Marshall (Native Police officer) to visit the district with his corps immediately. Since our last notice of the necessity for the police at the Bunya, Mr Haly's station (*Tuabinga*) has been twice robbed of sheep by the natives, and, although no murder has yet been committed there, such outrages may be daily looked for. Some of the settlers are most indignant in their complaints, and declare that they will resist payment of the money from which the Native Police is maintained if their wants are not promptly attended to. We abstain, however, from further remarks at present, in the expectation that what has already been said will prove effectual.¹²

Lack of understanding of aboriginal culture, law, society and civilization allowed squatters and settlers an easy excuse for the atrocities they carried out, most of the early non-indigenous settlers had little or no understanding of aboriginal culture and were strongly influenced by peer pressure. Few white people lived and worked with the aboriginal inhabitants apart from those early escaped convicts such as James Davis, but one man, an early traveller through the Wide Bay and Burnett, did live among the aborigines and came to know and love them like his own family, his name was John Green.

Green was a strong supporter of the aboriginal people, he championed the cause of aborigines and fought for their rights. Having lived among them he knew their customs and laws, and as the holocaust of aboriginal people steadily continued, he became disgusted with many aspects of white society. His diaries, and those of his son, James, were published in 1995. On 16 April, 1851, John Green and his aboriginal guide and friend, Dhakkanguini, (named David by John Green), were riding south towards Bullcamp near Nanango when they came upon the scene of a particularly terrible massacre, a massacre Green believed may have been the work of J.D. Mactaggart of *Kilkivan* station whom he referred to as '... the mad scot'. In his diary entry for that day Green wrote:

A foul stench floated towards our person as a stiff wind came upon us and a scene of disgust came into view. I turned David's eyes away and told him to return and watch the horses. On closer inspection, 11 male bodies lay mutilated by repeated peppergun wounds, 3 had been hanged and with revulsion I record, gutted as though a meat carcass by which the ravens were feasting. The entrails hung downwards and covered the ground where great hordes of ants had gathered. There were 4 young males tied to trees and flayed (sic) by the stockwhip to their death. There was blood sprayed in all directions. I report with much disgust that the scrotums of all the men had been severed from their bodies as was the practice for gathering coin bags from the buck wallabie (sic). This was indeed a dastardly deed of an inhuman act. I was able to take note that none bore the warrior sign and therefore these men must be of a western clan or from the *Kgikgami* clan. A rum cask lay nearby — a reminder of some wild celebration. I report that our guide Dharakgauwani took sudden fright at this calamity and with haste, gave farewell and hurriedly took his direction northwards to his own lands ... I have fear for his safety. Is this the work of the mad Scot of Kilkivan? If it so can be proven, I trust he rots in hell for such an inhuman deed. I became sick from the slaughter.¹³

By 1852 the situation was clearly becoming more serious and Walker, facing severe public criticism and also criticism from within his own body of officers, attempted to defend his actions and the actions of the men under his command by pointing out their value to the squatters. Writing from Callandoon to the colonial secretary on 1 March, 1852, he claimed that he was treating the problem with great intelligence. He claimed that he was allowing the peaceful aboriginal people to remain at the various stations, thus ensuring that those responsible for committing crimes were quickly tracked and brought to justice. He added that since the force had been formed, many stations in the areas under Native Police protection had increased dramatically in value. There is no doubt that Walker was treating the difficult situation with intelligence and moderation, he was in the position of being able to see both sides of the question, the case for the squatters and for the dispossessed people whom it was his task to bring under control. Yet despite his position, his need to effectively carry out his duties and to appease the hostile squattocracy, his sympathies were evidently with the dispossessed people, as his letter to the colonial secretary clearly demonstrates:

Sir, I have thought that you might wish to know from me what are the causes of difference between me and some of the northern settlers; that are, as far as I understand them, explained by the following:

Two settlers stated that the Government would not allow the squatters to shoot blacks, but have sent up the Native Police to do so; a similar opinion was expressed in Sydney by a Mr Cowper, and many settlers have satisfied me that such were their views.

One settler stated that it was necessary, and the duty of government, to evince a certain amount of vindictiveness against the blacks ...

Some of the settlers are quite indifferent as to what the consequences may be to the officers of Native Police. They still fancy that a system of warfare ought to be authorised by

Government, and do not try to produce evidence upon which the police can legally act, and in some cases have prevented the officers from obtaining such evidence.

The object of these persons is to have it in their power to shut the mouth of Government, should any enquiries be made into their proceedings against the aborigines, by saying that the officers of the Native Police are tarred with the same brush as themselves.

Previous to 1849, settlers in the outer districts, finding that they were beyond the protection of the law, and not being able to put up with the injuries done to life and property by the aborigines, took up arms in their own defences, and attempted to put a stop by main force to a state of things which government had not been able to alter. In so doing, however justifiable the original motive may have been, yet each settler acted from a feeling of self-interest alone, not in the least with a view to the public good. It was impossible the settlers could act without showing, in some cases, motives of revenge and feelings of vindictiveness; and as most of their servants were men of no education, frequent instances of harshness and abominable cruelty were heard of.

In many districts the settlers succeeded in putting a stop to the hostilities of the aborigines, but in some they signally failed; for instance, the MacIntyre, where after nine years' warfare, the blacks were as far from subdued as ever.

Many settlers, either from a wish not to have their comfort constantly disturbed, or perhaps, in some cases, from religious feelings, wished the Government to interfere, and by protecting their interest, render it no more necessary for them to protect themselves.

In 1848 the Government determined to interfere, and to attempt to protect the settlers, as well as provide that the blacks were not oppressed. It was resolved to try the experiment of a Native Police Force on a small scale, and the forming of such a corps was entrusted to me.

When I undertook the raising of the police force, I saw all the difficulties, and I resolved upon my own plans. I knew that I would have to deal with men who had never been in the habit of reflecting, because they had nothing to reflect upon; and that they would, like all ignorant people, be fond of fighting for the mere fun; that the idea of duty was to them unknown. From the very first, therefore, having picked my experimental party from among men who for five years had known me well, and purposely from among blacks inhabiting a country one thousand miles from where the Native Police was to be at first employed. I lost no opportunity of improving the men morally, of practising their memories, teaching them to reflect, and argue among themselves; also in inculcating habits of regularity, obedience, and cleanliness. I think from the fact of there never having been one instance of insubordination, not one instance of intoxication, not one quarrel of a serious nature among them, and that no bad or obscene language has ever been heard from these men, since they have joined the police, and that during three years and a half they have been remarkable for their orderly and good conduct, is a pretty good proof that I have not failed in my endeavours; and I have been rewarded by receiving tokens of gratitude which far surpassed even my sanguine expectations. There is, however, room for further improvement, which I have not lost sight of.

During the four years in which I have held the command of this force, it has never acted unless I knew that a felony had been committed and I had reasonable grounds of suspecting the offenders, warrants have been issued, or affidavits clearly pointing out the offenders ... At all events, I have always thought that I was right, morally and legally. When mounted police had hostile encounters with armed felons, I presume that their officers had similar views.

The Government therefore never allowed any proceedings towards the aborigines that were not warranted by law. It is remarkable that the persons who were most clamorous against the Government for not interfering, should be the first to exclaim against them when they do.

I have thus, I hope, disposed of the first cause of dissent. As for the second, although I can make allowance for the irritation, and perhaps, feelings of revenge, which may actuate a man at the time he sees his fellow creature cruelly murdered, or his property wantonly destroyed, I cannot but look with feelings of contempt and indignation on any person who can for any length of time feel vindictively towards such miserable and ignorant wretches as the aborigines of this continent in their natural state. And should any officer of the Native Police evince any vindictive feeling in his dealings with them, he would be unworthy of the confidence of the Government. The only object he must have in view is, by endeavouring to put the law into force against offenders, to intimidate others from committing crime.

I now come to the third cause of dissent. When the experimental force was raised, it was first sent to the MacIntyre. With the exception of three stations, the blacks in that portion

of the Darling Downs District were in a manner outlawed in their own country, being hunted from the river and creek frontages, and thus deprived of means of lawfully obtaining food. Driven to desperation, they carried on a constant war of retaliation with the whites, and lived solely on cattle. So accustomed were they become to this life, that force had to be resorted to, to make the ringleaders submit. The Native Police arrived in May, 1849; in October the settlers laid aside their weapons; the blacks were admitted everywhere at the stations; and a run which would not have fetched £100 in May, 1849, was disposed of in January, 1850, for £500, so much had property risen in value by the increased security of life and property. One settler told me, that for eight years he had expended £150 per annum on his cattle station, and now for the first time had a return from it in the shape of fat stock ...

So long as settlers carry on the system of preventing the blacks from obtaining their lawful means of livelihood, and persist in not showing to them that all old grudges and vindictiveness are thrown on one side by the whites, which the blacks will believe when they are allowed at the stations, and not till then, so long will a system of depredations be carried on, which the Native Police may check, but cannot permanently put an end to. Such is the case in the districts of Burnett, Maranoa, and Wide Bay.

In conclusion, it is needless for me to say that everything in my power for the protection of the settlers will be done by me. His Excellency the Governor General has already shown that he has sufficient confidence in me,

FREDERICK WALKER.

Commandant, Native Police.¹⁴

The publication of this letter in the *Moreton Bay Courier* seemed to infuriate many of the squatters, one unnamed squatter writing from the Burnett region in August 1852 declared that the squatters were better protected from aboriginal attack before Walker had commenced operations in the region, and referred to Walker's police force as a 'police farce'.¹⁵

Walker, however, remained dedicated to the belief that common sense and discipline within the force would overcome all his problems. In November 1852 Walker and a detachment of his Native Police arrived in Brisbane en-route to the Pine River region and were quartered in the police buildings near the court-house. The press later pointing out that: 'They were drilled in the court-house square and the manner in which they went through the military exercises, first with the carbine and subsequently with the sword, elicited the admiration of all who witnessed it. The men are young, active and for the most part well formed, and they have an appearance of intelligence and of military regularity which plainly shows that much care has been taken in their training ... Mr Walker ... informed us that some of the men in the section had been in the force ever since 1848, they are chiefly natives of the Murray and Edward Rivers ... Judging from the appearance and demeanour of the men who arrived yesterday, it would appear that the interesting experiment in which Mr Walker is engaged (the formation and operations of the force) has been entirely successful.'¹⁶

As the press pointed out, it was difficult to reach an intelligent conclusion on the issue, letters to the press from a wide variety of squatters gave two sides of the story, some bitterly condemned Walker, claiming that his force was not only disorganised but a provocation to the aboriginal people, while others wrote that: '... the police force had restored order and security to the districts in which they were stationed (and) that the Commandant evinced great zeal and devotion to the service, and that the attacks which were made by the opposite party (those who condemned Walker) arose entirely from private pique and personal dislike.'¹⁷

Yet by 1854 it was clear that the force, as a tool of justice, had degenerated into little more than a drunken gang of murdering brigands, and after a stream of reports and a strongly worded letter from Lieutenant Marshall complaining of his commandant's abuse and drunkenness, the colonial secretary announced that an official board of enquiry was to be set up.¹⁸

The enquiry began its hearings on Tuesday 19 September, 1854. While Walker almost certainly realised that this was to be his last chance to retain his command of the force, the pressure was evidently too great for him, he was late arriving at the hearing and when he finally made an appearance he was so drunk he could hardly recognise his fellow officers.¹⁹

In light of his obvious failings and despite the fact that the commandant was sincere in his wishes to maintain and utilize an honest, fast, efficient and humane force, Walker was dismissed from command.²⁰

In September 1861 he wrote a letter to the colonial secretary in which he castigated the actions of the Native Police:

For the last four years especially, the whole system carried out by the servants of the government (the Native Police), has been a practical denial of God's justice on earth.

To appeal to the Sydney government was more than useless, but we did expect redress when the colony of Queensland was proclaimed (in 1859), and we had a government almost on the spot. In this we have been disappointed, denied justice ... There is but one remedy — to appeal to a British public — one that will not call the deliberate murder of innocent people an *indiscretion*.

I have therefore forwarded to my brother-in-law, Captain Reginald Yorke, the copies of all correspondence and a narrative of the crimes committed by the government during the last four years, in order that he may give the whole matter into the hands of the editor of *The Times*.

I have also forwarded to Captain Yorke the names of all the witnesses in every case alluded to by me.²¹

For several years after his dismissal Walker contracted his services to individual squatters in the Wide Bay and Burnett regions. By this time he had formed his own quasi police force with which he attempted to bring peace and harmony to the region. However, these independent attempts were never particularly successful and he died of 'diarrhoea' at Flora Villa, aged forty-six, approximately twelve years later.²²

The man who replaced Walker was one of Walker's lieutenants, Richard Purvis Marshall. However, Marshall too was to experience major problems within the ranks of the force, including ill-discipline and desertions. Like Walker before him he found it extremely difficult to control the wide regions under his care, and indeed, aboriginal attacks and robberies did not seem to be slackening, rather the reverse was the case. In November 1856 a select committee was appointed to enquire into the state of the Native Police force, and in January 1857 the committee reported that reductions that had previously been made in the force had led to the problems then being experienced by the squatters and that as a result the numbers of aboriginal attacks had increased.

In May 1857 Edric Vaux Morisett was appointed commandant of the Native Police, superseding Marshall, but Morisett too experienced all the difficulties of his predecessors.

It was during the period of Morisett's command of the force that the infamous attack on *Hornet Bank* station on the Dawson took place.

In the pre-dawn light of 27 October, 1857, a lone aboriginal stockman crept quietly around *Hornet Bank* station and with an iron tomahawk killed all the guard dogs. It was the first move in a terrible and tragic sequence of events. During the following fifteen minutes eleven people were to die, a widow named Martha Fraser, all but two of her children, and two shepherds.

This lone attack was to prove a catalyst in Queensland history, what followed was a mass destruction of the aboriginal people in most settled areas of Queensland, including the South Burnett.

Hornet Bank was originally settled by Andrew Scott in 1853 and stocked with a large number of sheep. The local *Jiman* people, neighbours to the *Wakka Wakka* of the South Burnett, naturally resented this and speared one of the station shepherds before driving off over a thousand head of sheep. The Native Police were called in. They found the aboriginal raiders enjoying a large mutton feast. A battle took place and many of the aborigines were 'dispersed' a euphemism for killed.

In March 1854 Scott leased *Hornet Bank* to John Fraser. However, within the year Fraser had died of dysentery leaving his wife Martha to bring up their large family and to handle the daily

running of the property. The family consisted of Martha, aged 43, the eldest son, William, John 23, David, 16, Sylvester, 15, James, almost 7 years of age, Elizabeth, 19, who was engaged to be married to a Wide Bay squatter, Mary, 11, Jane 9, and the youngest, Charlotte was just three at the time of her death.

Also at the station at the time of the massacre were Henry Neagle the family tutor, R.S. Newman, a shepherd, and a German hut-keeper named Bernangl.

The aboriginal stockman who killed the guard dogs and betrayed the family was called Boney. He had been employed on various stations in the area prior to the attack and was a trusted employee. Immediately the dogs were dead, Boney summoned his aboriginal friends. Over a hundred aborigines rose from their places of concealment around the station before silently rushing the homestead. The time was 4.45 a.m.

Sylvester Fraser, the only survivor of the massacre, was awakened at the sound of voices. Suspecting trouble, he climbed from his bed on the verandah and grasped a shotgun. A solid blow from a nulla nulla immediately knocked the gun from his hands. Another blow to his head sent blood spraying and he dropped behind his bed barely conscious. The aborigines, thinking him dead, left him where he fell and attacked the remaining members of the family.

John Fraser and Henry Neagle were the first to die, their bodies terribly mutilated by tomahawk blows. The rest of the family followed in quick succession. Martha, the mother had locked herself in her room with her daughters. Boney persuaded the terrified woman to open the door, promising to spare their lives if they did so. Martha Fraser believed him and shortly after stepping from the security of their room, they were all dragged down the verandah steps to the ground outside. Martha, and two of the girls, Elizabeth and Mary, were raped before being killed. The other children were simply despatched with waddy blows.

The two shepherds, hearing the cries of the women, came rushing from a nearby hut where they had been sleeping. However, the odds were overwhelming and they too were soon dead. After the massacre, the aborigines looted the homestead, taking everything they could lay their hands upon. They then fled, knowing that white retribution would be both swift and terrible.

Sylvester Fraser eventually managed to crawl from under his bed and although badly wounded he went straight to *Eurombah*, the closest station, to raise the alarm. That afternoon when an armed party arrived at the scene of the massacre it was a shocking sight that met their eyes. The flies had gathered thickly on the bloody corpses, the pathetic broken bodies littered the verandahs and ground around the homestead. The aborigines had wiped blood from their hands on station slip-rails and floorboards and the area was scattered with broken tomahawks and waddies.

The grim task of burying the bodies was quickly carried out. Sylvester set out for Ipswich to alert his only surviving brother. The punitive party galloped off on the trail of the culprits. William was loading stores onto his wagon when news of the massacre finally reached him and it is said that he later stood at his mother's grave, an aboriginal tomahawk in his hand, and swore a bloody and terrible vengeance.

The armed punitive party had little luck in capturing the perpetrators of the crime. However, to the white population it mattered little. The massacre acted as an excuse to slaughter every aboriginal person in sight, man, woman and child. Throughout the northern colony (now south-east Queensland), an indiscriminate slaughter took place.

It has been widely reported in the press that William Fraser was given unofficial governmental approval to carry out retaliatory killings and wherever he went no aboriginal person was safe. (There is no official record of such approval ever having been given). Fraser killed ruthlessly and often. On one occasion he spotted an aboriginal woman in Rockhampton wearing a dress that he believed had belonged to his mother. For the unfortunate woman it was a death sentence. William Fraser despatched her on the spot with his pistol. On another occasion he simply pulled out his gun and shot an aboriginal person at the Toowoomba races. He had no fear of the law, his only concern was the total annihilation of the indigenous people. The aborigines were simply there to be slaughtered. During the two years following the massacre many hundreds, and probably thousands of aborigines were shot and killed. The Native Police roamed throughout the Wide Bay

and Burnett indiscriminately killing the aboriginal people, not only in the bush but even riding up to stations and outstations and killing the aboriginal people working there.

During all this bloodshed, no one had bothered to ask why the *Hornet Bank* massacres had taken place.

Hornet Bank station was situated on the site of an ancient aboriginal sacred ground. This intrusion would normally be enough to warrant the killings. However, it was also known at the time that William and his older brothers were in the habit of sexually abusing some of the aboriginal women, 'rushing the gins' as it was known. Thus the tribe saw fit to return that abuse by raping the white women before killing them. In his study of Aboriginal history Doctor David Horton claims that the Frasers had been at war with the aboriginal people of the region for some time and that the aboriginal people had been poisoned after eating Christmas pudding laced with strychnine.²³

Writing forty-eight years later, pioneer Mrs Cambell-Praed who lived near *Hornet Bank* at the time of the massacre stated:

The blacks had surprised the station, and till the sun was up made horrible revelry. Then the district rose to a man. The squatters called a council of war which was held (on) *Naraigin* verandah, and a band rode forth and took vengeance on all the blacks they could find, sparing only the gins and piccaninnies. Those were exciting times, and the memory of them remains with me still. I have a vision of our mother with us children in the kitchen one evening during the squatters' raid — and of a black face — the glittering eyes peering through a loose slab shutter. I remember the hurried barricade of doors and windows; then our unexpected deliverance from terror by a returning company of the raiders who had captured the blackfellow and chained him to a tree. He was one of the ringleaders in the Fraser murders, but there must have been treachery in the camp, for he escaped his bonds during the night.²⁴

In March 1855 George Lang visited Maryborough, and, horrified at what he found, wrote an account to Reverend Dunmore Lang:

I learned from various sources that a party of twelve squatters and their confidential overseers — went out mounted and armed to the teeth and scoured the country for the blacks, away from the source of the murders of the Frasers altogether, and shot upwards of eighty men, women and children. Not content with scouring the scrubs and forest country, they were bold enough to ride up to the head stations and shoot down the tame blacks whom they found camping there. Ten men were shot in this way at Ross's head station on the Upper Burnett. Several at Prior's station, and at Hay's and Lamb's, several more. The party in scouring the bush perceived an old blind blackfellow upon whom they immediately fired, sending a ball through his back, another through his arm which shivered the bone to pieces, and a third grazed his scalp. This old man had been for a long time a harmless hanger-on at the different head stations, and of course could have been in no way identified with the Fraser murderers. A black boy belonging to Mr Cameron of *Coonambula*, long employed by that gentleman in carrying messages and rations to his out-stations ... went to Mr Prior's station on the Burnett and was shot there. A blackfellow was caught in the bush by an armed blackfellow in the employ of Mr Hay, who supplied him with a carbine for the purpose. The black brought the prisoner to the headstation, tied him to a sapling in the presence of all the white residents, and having addressed him in broken English in the most cruel and disgusting manner, placed the muzzle of his carbine to the helpless man's arm, and broke it with the first shot. He then addressed him again in the same strain as before, and shot him through the head.²⁵

How letters such as these were to affect the attitude of the general public towards the aboriginal situation is difficult to ascertain. There is no doubt that the public generally were somewhat anti-aboriginal, especially after the attack on the Fraser family, as the massacre was seen as being simply a horrendous crime, unprovoked and unwarranted. There was a general feeling that there was only one course the white people could take in the face of such brutality, and that was to meet force with force.

Boney, the aboriginal station hand who had betrayed the Frasers, escaped retribution for over three years. He was eventually killed in a skirmish with Native Police troopers in the Carnarvon Ranges.²⁶

Reverend Lang later wrote an article for the *Saturday Review*, London, the article was reprinted in 1911 in the *Maryborough Chronicle*. Lang wrote: 'This state of mutual distrust and apprehension on the part of the two races on certain frontier stations, gives rise to a horrible practice which I fear, however disgraceful to the British name, was at one time but too extensively prevalent in Australia — I mean that of mixing up arsenic or corrosive sublimate in the dampers or hominy, with which the settlers and squatters occasionally treated the natives. The idea that such a thing had been done in any part of the Empire has doubtless been scouted in certain quarters, but I have no doubt that it was done again and again. Nay more, it is consistent with my own knowledge that it has been openly defended and justified by people who have had not less than ten years' experience in the bush of New South Wales, and whose education, whose profession, and whose station in society ought to have taught them better things.'²⁷

Diarist John Green was angered and greatly saddened by the senseless deaths and was particularly affected when he learned of the deaths of his close aboriginal friends, the methods used in their destruction and the grotesque practice of scrotum removal. On 4 July, 1859 he wrote: 'Horror! I was told today of the deaths of Dharakgauwani, Kgilankgulawa and Jalijalimare by the hands of the stockmen when they were caught killing sheep ... They were shot, their scrotums removed and the bodies mutilated unseemingly. I wept at the news of their deaths — they were like brothers to me, their love was such they would have given their lives to protect me ... I have a hole in my heart — I shall miss my dear, dear friends.'²⁸

J. and A. Mortimer of *Manumbar* station were so angry over the needless killings then occurring throughout the region that in 1861 they published an advertisement in the *Moreton Bay Courier*. This advertisement castigated one Native Police officer for the massacre of a number of aboriginal people on *Manumbar*; the killings had taken place on Sunday 10 February, 1861, the delay in the appearance of the advertisement was caused through flooding which slowed the mails.

John Mortimer wrote:

To the officer in command of the Native Police who shot and wounded some Blacks on the station of *Manumbar* on Sunday the 10th instant. Sir, — If in future you should take a fancy to bring troopers upon the Station of *Manumbar* on a sporting excursion, we shall feel obliged if you would either bag or bury the game which you shoot, as it is far from pleasant for me to have the decomposing remains of four or five blackfellows laying unburied within a mile or two of our head station. If you will do neither, please be kind enough to remove the corpses from water-holes near the head station from which we sometimes use water for culinary purposes. As most of the blacks you left dead on our run were feeble old men, some of them apparently not less than 80 years of age, will you please to inform us whether these hoary sinners are the parties chiefly engaged in spearing bullocks ... etc, or whether you just shoot them because the younger ones are too nimble for you. Besides the four or five you left dead on our run, you have wounded two of our Station blacks, who have been in our employment during lambing, washing and shearing, and all other busy times for the last 8 or 9 years, and we have never known either of them to be have been charged with a crime of any kind. One of them came to the Station with a bullet wound through one of his thighs, another through one of his arms and another through one of his hands. The other (aboriginal) had a bullet wound through one of his arms.

These blacks, being in our employment, very naturally look to us for protection from such outrages, and we are of opinion that when you shoot and wound blacks in such an indiscriminate manner you abused your commission, and we publish this that those who employ and pay you may have some knowledge of the way in which you perform your services ...

J & A Mortimer

Manumbar, February 22, 1861.²⁹

This letter caused a parliamentary debate which, in turn, led to a select committee of the Legislative Assembly being appointed on 1 May that year. The committee, headed by R.R. Mackenzie, Queensland's first treasurer, was to investigate the organisation and

management of the Native Police and to report on methods that might be used to ameliorate the plight of the aboriginal people of Queensland, but it was largely a whitewash. The committee sat for a total of twenty-four days and many witnesses gave evidence — including John Mortimer — however, no aboriginal witnesses were called as their evidence was legally inadmissible at that time, aboriginal evidence in Queensland courts only became admissible in 1884. The only victim of the committee hearings was Lieutenant John Murray who was used as a scapegoat and dismissed from the force in order to leave untarnished the name of the commandant's brother, Rudolph Morisett. Murray was dismissed for handing over the command of his police detachment to a junior officer who had then carried out the killings on *Manumbar*. According to the *Maryborough Chronicle*, some thirty or forty men, women and children had been killed by the Native Police on *Manumbar*.³⁰

Despite these findings — and perhaps because of them — the Native Police atrocities continued unchecked.

In March 1861, the *Maryborough Chronicle* lamented:

Taking advantage of the known hostility between various tribes of aborigines, and training their savageness rather than endeavouring to overcome it, able-bodied blacks belonging to one district are transferred to another 200 or 300 miles away, taught to use firearms, thoroughly equipped and then under the guidance of a European officer — upon the principle of set a thief to catch a thief — they are sent out with full licence to shoot and destroy as many blacks as they can find. There are those who from excessive sympathy with the oppressed and from mistaken views advocate the claims of the black man as superior to those of the white, — this is one extreme, arising naturally as it does from the bloodthirsty vindictiveness of those who, because a single man has been murdered, would treacherously exterminate an entire tribe. Now do the Native Police perform the work required of them? We unhesitatingly reply, no. They do not succeed in checking the outrages of the blacks as our various journals testify in the continual reports of murders on stations and the loss of property even in the towns. The indiscriminate vengeance taken by the Native Police does but add fuel to the fire, and so the guerilla war goes on and hundreds of valuable lives are sacrificed. It really would appear as if retaliation and not prevention were the object sought after and that the business of the Native Police was to punish crime rather than prevent it ... For every guilty native who is shot, at least half a score of perfectly innocent ones share the same fate. That this inspires the blacks with terror at the very sight of the police is true, but it has no effect in preventing crime because it is not justice.³¹

The killing of aboriginal people on John Mortimer's station was not to be an isolated incident. On 21 October Mortimer wrote to the editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier* regarding the killing of an 'educated blackboy.' Mortimer wrote:

I have seen a paragraph in your issue of the 15th instant, headed an 'Educated Blackboy Murdered.' It reads thus: 'Mr William Giles' favorite blackboy, educated, and a Christian, has been murdered. It appears that he, with another boy of Mr Giles', was in camp near a sheep station, in the neighborhood of *Manumbar* (Mortimer's) when they were set upon by five or six blacks, who instantly killed Jemmy, the other escaped by diving into a waterhole, after receiving some very severe wounds. Jemmy was called James Elliot, was baptised, and a most useful blackfellow.' This may be all true, but it is not the whole truth, and if you will allow me a small space in the *Courier* I will try to give you the whole truth, so far as I have been able to ascertain it. In the first place, it will be necessary to say a few words about James Elliot, the murdered Christian blackboy. He was a man, to all appearance, of from 25 to 27 years of age; he may have got a little education, and been baptised in his youth or infancy. No doubt he was, but that he deserved the name of Christian any more than nominally, from the fact of his having been baptised, few who have seen him, as I have, and know as much about him as I do, will be very willing to admit. About six years ago (and I have not heard of his conversion to Christianity since) he was upon the station of *Manumbar*, eating the bunya amongst hundreds, if not thousands of other blacks; engaging with them in their fights, amusements, and corroborees, with his skin painted, and wearing the same amount of clothing which blackfellows generally do on such occasions; rather an equivocal sign of his Christianity, I think. Jemmy was likewise the blackfellow (for I saw him on this occasion also) who conducted the party of Native Police, under Lieutenant Morisett, from the station of *Widgee* to an encampment of blacks on the station of *Manumbar*, on the 10th of February last, when the party of Native Police, under

Lieutenant Morisett, attacked and slaughtered six or eight of them — (I beg pardon; Lieutenant Morisett says that it was the blacks who attacked the Native Police). Be this as it may, it appears that on this occasion Jemmy was no idle spectator, for it is well known that he shot a most inoffensive white-headed, decrepit old man, as he sat by his camp fire — a man who had always been a friend to white men since the very first settlers came to the districts. Another old man he shot while diving in a waterhole, and a third, also an old man, he has himself often been heard to brag of having killed with a dagger. The one he killed with the dagger was the father of a blackfellow named Jerry, who is accused by Sammy, Jemmy's surviving mate, of being the actual murderer of that Christian blackboy. So much for Jemmy's Christian character.

I shall now tell you all I know about the black tragedy that has just taken place on the station of *Manumbar*. On Monday, the 30th ultimo, Mr W. Giles, superintendent on the station at *Widgee*, came to the station of *Manumbar*, accompanied by two blacks. He told me that he was looking for some blacks to assist him in branding cattle. I told him that if he could find any blacks on my station willing to go and assist him, I had no objection, but that I would not hunt them off the station so long as they were doing no mischief on it. In the course of the afternoon he met with a black who promised to go with him next day, but before next morning he had made his escape to the bush. On Tuesday morning Mr Giles left the station of *Manumbar*, accompanied by the two blacks he had brought from *Widgee*, intending, as he said, to return by the station of *Cabongo*, where I told him that I had a white man and some blacks making bough-yards; that I thought that some blacks were there from the station of *Widgee*; that I did not want them, and that, if they were willing to go with him, I had no objections, but that I would be no party to attempt to enslave them. The blacks had got notice that Mr Giles was looking for them, and made off to the bush before he got to the place where they had been at work. He then went on to *Widgee* himself, leaving his two blacks at *Cabongo*, instructing them to collect as many blacks as they could and bring them to the station of *Widgee*. The two blacks left by Mr Giles were armed with guns and pistols, and it is reported by the blacks on this station that in the course of the afternoon, Jemmy, the black who is now murdered, met with a blackfellow before referred to, called Jerry. As soon as Jerry saw the black from *Widgee* (he) followed, very soon overtook, and fired at him, but missed. Jerry then made his escape by swimming a creek, which his pursuer, being on horseback, could not cross at that place. It appears that before night the blacks from *Widgee* had managed to collect four or five blacks who had frequently assisted Mr Giles to brand cattle. They camped together with three or four blacks employed by me in assisting some of my men at a lambing station, between four and five miles from the head station; the camp was no great distance from the hut where my men were living, and a little after sundown it appears that either the other blacks set upon the two blacks from *Widgee*, or a general fight took place amongst them. I am inclined to think that the former is the truth of the matter, although we have two versions of the story. Sammy, the surviving black, Mr Giles left behind him, is a very intelligent boy, and speaks English pretty well. He says that the other blacks came upon and attacked him and his mate unawares, and that two of them, after beating him very severely, left him for dead, whilst the others murdered his mate. The other blacks say that Jemmy, the murdered party, was the first to commence the affray by firing a pistol at Jerry's head whilst he was drinking a pot of tea, and they also say that the bullet went through the pint-pot Jerry was drinking out of. One thing is certain; firearms were used in the affray, as the report was heard by my men at the hut; and shortly after Sammy came to the hut for protection, at the same time telling my men that the blacks had killed his mate, and had attempted to kill him also.

John Mortimer, *Manumbar*, 21st October, 1861.³²

In October 1861 another massacre took place at *Cullin la Ringo*, on the Nogoia, near Springsure, which effectively sealed the fate of the aboriginal people of Queensland. If the terror that had descended on the aboriginal people after the Fraser family massacre was not sufficient to complete the genocide of the race, then the events at *Cullin la Ringo*, and the terrible aftermath, came close to achieving that aim.

Horatio Wills was a 50 years' old squatter and former politician from Victoria who arrived in Queensland in October 1861 with a group of settlers, men, women and children, complete with horses, cattle, bullock wagons, and driving a large flock of sheep. Soon after his arrival Wills and his companions began to build a homestead which he called *Cullin la Ringo*. Wills believed in efforts of pacifism with the indigenous tribes, and indeed encouraged this to such an extent that he would not even allow the firearms of the settlers to be unpacked. The reason for the subsequent attack on his party will now probably never be revealed, and the details of the massacre

come from the memories of one man, John Moore, who survived, and who was a witness to the whole affair.³³

After the arrival of Wills' party, the aboriginal people clustered around them, eager to see and touch the bullock wagons and bags of provisions. Wills ordered them away from the camp, but the aborigines refused, claiming they were doing no harm.

On the day of the attack John Moore was too hot to sleep in the oppressive afternoon's temperatures, and so he moved into a small scrub under the shade of a tree before falling asleep.

He was awakened by cries as the aboriginal people attacked, and looking through the foliage he saw several aboriginal men, one of whom was pushing down Mrs Baker, the overseer's wife. Moore heard her cry, once, 'Murder,' as she was beaten to death with nulla nullas. Moore looked on horrified as the massacre continued, in all, nineteen bodies were later found, Horatio Wills himself, the overseer and his wife, Mr and Mrs Baker, their daughter Elizabeth and sons David, Iden just five years' old and another boy, an infant of seven months. Also dead were Patrick Maynon, his wife and child of three months, their eight years' old daughter Mary Ann, and seven shepherds, George Long, James Scott, Henry Pickering, George Elliott, Charles Weeden, Edward McCormack and a man known only as Tom.³⁴

A report of the event, as described by John Moore, later claimed:

He concealed himself as long as he could in which he was aided by a flock of sheep coming up at the time without a shepherd. Being among the sheep and dust, and fearing the blacks, he managed to creep on his hands and knees down to the creek. He heard a shot fired (this from the revolver of Mr Wills who was later discovered with the weapon in his right hand and a double barrellled gun close by his left hand with both barrels loaded). At the time he woke up he saw a horse within ten yards of him but he dared not make a rush for it as he would have been noticed by the blacks.³⁵

Moore managed to escape and the next day he arrived at nearby *Rainworth* station. The owner of *Rainworth* mustered a party of nine men who hurried to the site of the massacre. They arrived at dark, and because of the danger of further aboriginal attack, decided to wait until the following morning to bury the dead.³⁶

What occurred following the attack is not entirely clear. A punitive party from *Rainworth* station certainly tracked the local aboriginal people and 'dispersed' them, but how many aboriginal people were killed during this 'dispersal' remains something of a mystery. Yet the killing of Wills and his party, while those events were enacted at a considerable distance from the South Burnett, acted as an anvil upon which the genocide of the aboriginal people was forged. For months after the attack at *Cullin la Ringo* the aboriginal people all through central and southern Queensland were hounded and hunted, shot and butchered. Entire clans were wiped out, tribes destroyed, nations decimated. A long time afterwards, fifty years or so, the remnants of the *Jiman* people, those who had miraculously survived the holocaust and their progeny, would be herded into Barambah settlement, later known as Cherbourg, near Murgon.

Another of the officers who was to win infamy for his actions against the aboriginal people in both the Wide Bay and Burnett regions was Lieutenant John O'Connell Bligh. At the age of nineteen years Bligh was appointed to the New South Wales Civil Service in 1853. Two years later he was given the position of protector of aborigines in the Moreton Bay district. To have appointed such a man as a protector of aborigines was little short of scandalous, as historian Ailsa Dawson stated in her paper: 'The name "Protector" was a sad misnomer for Bligh, for his callous and inhumane treatment of the natives was little short of a scandal.'³⁷

Bligh later became police magistrate at Gayndah, gold commissioner at Kilkivan and in 1874 was sent to Gympie. He died, aged forty-six, on 12 December, 1880, from an dose of chloral mixed with whiskey. There is still some speculation that this lethal dose may have been a suicide. The report of the subsequent magisterial enquiry stated that the two doctors who had attended Bligh criticised the pharmacist who had supplied the drug without warning Bligh of the danger of mixing it with alcohol. The coroner's verdict was death from an overdose of drugs accidentally taken.³⁸ Bligh was buried in the Two Mile cemetery, his epitaph reads, 'Lamented by many good men.'

A commentator writing on the actions of the Native Police in 1861, stated: 'It is becoming difficult to decide whether the officers or men of that force are the greatest plagues to the country. The lusts of the one cause many a poor husband or father or brother to be butchered, while the examples of the other have given that strong colouring of deceit and drunkenness which now distinguishes the society they move in.'³⁹

In 1884, Reverend J.B. Gribble wrote:

The treatment they (the aboriginal people) have received from some of our own favoured nation may perhaps be best gathered from one or two incidents.

A white man who was sergeant of black native troopers or police, captured a black woman and took her away to his own home. The husband of this woman lay in wait for this sergeant and threw a spear at him. He missed; was captured, flogged, and then incarcerated in a wooden lock-up, from which he escaped. A second time the injured husband endeavoured to avenge himself by throwing a boomerang at this sergeant. On this occasion also he did not hurt him, but was captured. The same man then who had taken the wife and ruined the poor black fellow's sweetest home joys, had the husband tied by his neck, body and legs, to a log of wood, and took an axe and chopped his head off.⁴⁰

There was little, if any, trust between the aboriginal people and the white population, especially in regions where the squattocracy was the dominant force and where aboriginal people were frequently subjected to excessive hostilities. Where trust did exist it was a fragile thing, easily discarded and forgotten. For example, in 1866 a large group of aboriginal people gathered in the Dalby district in order to hunt and to socialise. Many of these people were from clans in the *Burrandowan* and other Burnett districts but the gathering also saw people coming from a wide variety of areas, the press reporting them as being: 'Calandoon, Wallanbilla, Condamine, Chinchilla, Juandah, Burrandowan, Bundambah, Weranga and Burnett districts.'⁴¹ Two of the aboriginal men were wanted by the police, and they resorted to subterfuge and deceit in order to apprehend them, the wanted men being promised work as trackers and when thus employed were later arrested, one man making a desperate attempt to escape was subsequently shot. In carrying out such an operation the police had clearly demonstrated to the aboriginal community that they were not to be trusted, even the press headlined: 'Treachery Towards Blacks.'⁴²

For year upon year the atrocities, mutilations and killings continued. Diarist John Green was particularly disgusted with the practice of using aboriginal scrotums as tobacco pouches, a practice he witnessed in both Maryborough and Gympie. He subsequently wrote:

I left David (his aboriginal friend and guide) to watch the supplies, as thieves about the port (of Maryborough) can strike when not on one's guard while I took to small refreshment of ale at the ... (unclear) ... wine house near the wharf. I was taken into conversation with some timber cutters returning from the upper Mary River forests where much settlement has taken place. They sided to me and made an offer for the sum of three shillings that they could make me the proud owner of a large special 'scrotum' bag to house my coins of the realm. On enquiry for an inspection of the goods, I was aghast when informed that these were not of the black wallabie (sic) but obtained from a hunting expedition of forest natives by the timber cutters and graziers recently in the upper valley. They elaborated in crudities of the size of the previous owner's parts. I immediately took reference that these obscene articles could only have been cut away from the *Kgaiyani* males — the only natives who could have possessed the size of such objects offered for sale. Their conversation was overheard and a large gathering of males came to admire and joke about the offending souvenirs — an act of desecration to a man's being.

I took further note that the cutters had indeed a large collection of these human ball bags which were fully cured and ready for use. They sported these trophies with such pride — it was my revulsion of such an act on a man — I voiced my opinion and was chastised. As an act of revolt to my rebuke, the respectable business men even took to buying the objects as a prized souvenir. I estimate some 80 objects were sold within minutes. The cutters waved their small fortune at me in contempt and said they would bring back more for those who missed out — their crudities and jokes continued to much laughter by all those present. What hypocrisy by the leaders and citizens of this port! I believe they may have killed off the *Kgaiyani* clan — none could have survived.

Gympie 18 January, 1870

I refer to the incident at the wine house of a few days earlier. It has come to my attention that the wearing of Scrotum money bags is the fashion, for I have witnessed large numbers of them being worn by the miners and respectable townfolk today. I am appalled. I took to disgust when spying a preacher wearing one. It seems that the timber cutters of my Maryborough experience have already dispersed large quantities of their disgusting souvenirs throughout the minefields. A sizeable sum of monies has indeed been collected before departing for the port. I am sick with the inhumanity of these wicked deeds. I am now certain that the *Kgaiyani* and other menfolk of the river clans to the south of the minefields are being hunted to the death for these human artifacts.⁴³

Green saw aboriginal massacres on many occasions and was graphic in his descriptions of them. In addition to blaming the squatters he also laid the responsibility at the feet of the timber-getters and the timber millers — particularly of Maryborough. Green believed that the Maryborough millers were sending out teams of timber workers to hunt and kill aboriginal people in order to facilitate easier access to rich stands of timbers that then existed in the Wide Bay, Cooloola and Burnett regions. In June 1864 Green and his aboriginal friend, David, came upon a particularly horrific scene of massacre. On the 13th of that month Green wrote:

We awoke to the sound of much gunfire in the distance and presumed we must be near to a new homestead with the occupants hunting wildlife, waterfowl or whatever for food supply.

I record a great tragedy. David went to get new water when he made a call for attention. I ran to his aid and he pointed to the waters which were running red of colour. We mounted our horses with much speed after dousing the fire in haste. David was quite good now in riding the horse. We made haste continuing along the old trail towards Kgauin-kgauindha, the old fighting ground where the little black ants are in profusion. On breaking forth from the scrub into the clearing, we came across a most despicable act of humanity.

The view before us was that as if a great war had been fought. There were native corpses covering the grounds and the stream-waters everywhere. Some terrible calamity has befallen these native people. On closer inspection, I recognised that these were the *Dhilumi* peoples of which I had previous acquaintance. I recognised the Elder with one ear peppered with gunshot. Sadly near to him was his woman bearing signs of harsh raping of her body — her throat slashed on completion of the deed. I found their son not far from where they were killed.

The cooking fires were still burning with animal turning to charcoal — their shanties and possessions lay strewn about the ground. It was to my disgust that these shy, ancient and good people had been shot to their death at some period of the morning — the sounds of such shot being heard by us to which we had taken no heed. Who could have done such a dastardly deed?

I took to the immediate thought in the knowledge that the squatters were slowly spreading northwards from the south but I fear timber-cutters and those scoundrels of millers from Maryborough are indeed responsible for this deed. I have heard rumour of such killing fields of the natives but these went on with closed eyes and were not reported to the government authorities or settlement officials. Damn them all! The evidence of their deeds are easily erased — these pillars of society and parasites of progress in their fine clothes as they parade themselves in their churches for hypocrites they are of Lucifers' chair. They are given deed of greatness for the achievements of their good works by the corrupt officials. I fear this new land will be no better than the sewers of the England we left behind. A shame on their race! I took to find any survivors of the massacre. David shook with fear.

I viewed the scene with contempt and found that none had survived. This last group of the *Dhilumi* were all quite dead. There were 43 members of the clan as I had counted — five old men and eleven other males who had all had their scrotums cut away, five old women, six young women who had been tied down, brutalised by the murderers with signs of virginity lost or rampant bodily attack, then shot in the head. David sat near a fire place and painted his body in black and white ash and began a mournful wail. It was a pitiful sight for I am now seeing David as a grown man performing customs of his people. I was moved visibly.

A further search by me found six young boys and six young girls of the near ages of 9 to 12 years who had also been brutalised in a most cruel manner similar to their mothers — blood seeping from their front and rear orifices. Bastards! Bastards! The last were found in

the creek bushes — 4 babies (2 boys and 2 girls) hidden but found — their throats cut open and left to die. This lone act with the children emptied my stomach of its contents. What manner of animal could do such atrocities to another human being?

I shall indeed report this orgy of lust to Brisbane and Maryborough and the sickening slaughter that is evident. I doubt however if such report will receive any attention or become of public interest. These timber-cutters/merchants and large landholders ... their marks are everywhere ... will not be punished ... their deeds the joke of mirth at the wildmen's demise at the camp-fire.

David ceased his song of death. He informed me that we had to make much smoke to chase away all the spirits lest they stay here and make this a very evil place because of what happened here. It was hard work gathering the remains on one location and covering their bodies with their possessions, leaves, dried branches and the remains of their shanties, but it was finally done. We were of the putrid odour of death — our bodies and my clothes covered with the colour of so much blood that we went to the stream and bathed of the cleaner waters. David continued the death ritual in honour of the peoples. I watched with tears in my eyes beholding a large obstruction within my throat from emotion at the scene.

He continued until the sun was about to go down over the hills. He then made fire under ceremony during the ritual and lit the pyre of which in short time could have been seen from a large distance. The smoke was intense and quickly covered the area like a thick mist. David had repainted himself and danced around in frantic action scattering the smoke in all directions for some time in trance of boundless energy with singing of the chant. I left the scene to a place nearby for my own emotions.⁴⁴

The activities of the Native Police and the squatters who often promoted their actions were a contentious issue for many years. On the one hand the colonists of Queensland were determined to protect their holdings, but, as the tide of bloodshed grew, as the infamy of the holocaust became more generally known, they too experienced misgivings over their actions and the actions of the Native Police.

For example, in May 1880, a correspondent to the *Queenslander* wrote:

Nothing is easier than to sit down at desk or table, and — on paper — work out a civilizing code that shall make the savage a docile tractable being, anxious to work and eager to please; and nothing harder than to take one's flocks and herds and get out into the desert and carry the theory into practice. As I intend to speak decidedly and openly on this subject, I may say that I have lived for sixteen years in this colony, and as a rule in outside country always; that I have been at the settlement of North and West, and have had to hold responsible situations where blacks had to be utilized for want of other labour. I think I may say that I have been as successful in getting as much work as possible out of them as other men; and that my experience pretty well comprises the boundaries of Queensland. I say this merely to show that I am not writing on a strange and unknown subject, but one that has been continually under my notice. Furthermore, I am what would be called a 'white murderer', for I have had to 'disperse' and assist to disperse blacks on several occasions. The blackfellow of Queensland is an embodiment of contradictions: he is a brave man, and an abject coward; an angel for good nature, and a demon for cruelty; the personification of laziness, and yet capable of untiring perseverance; a riddle, and a hopeless one, so far as guessing him is concerned. A blackfellow learns our vices, and unlearns what savage virtues he possesses, with fatal facility. The uncivilized 'myall' is bad enough; the half-civilized 'Johnny Campbell' is ten times worse. The question then arises: what lives are we to sacrifice — black or white? Are we to protect the black or protect the white? Shirk it as we will, this is the question. So long as we have country to settle, so long as men have to trust their lives to their own right hands, so long shall we come in contact with the natives, and aggressions and reprisals will take place ... Is there room for both of us here? No. Then the sooner the weaker is wiped out the better, as we may save some valuable lives by the process. If the blackfellow is right in murdering white men for invading and taking possession of his country, then every white man, woman, and child who sits at home at ease in our towns and townships is a murderer, for if they had the courage of their opinions they would not stop on in a colony built up on bloodshed and rapine. Do they do this? do our black protectors — our philanthropists of today — go out and enquire into the truth of the many stories that are brought in from the back country, or do they rather sit in the high places, and partake of the corn and oil leaving it to the sinful to go out and bear the heat and burden of the day? I rather think they do the last. Hide it as you will, our policy towards the black is bad, but it is only the game we played all over the world; and it starts with the

original occupation of the country, and any other policy would be equally outrageous that entailed the taking of the land from the blacks. Say that we make reserves, and put the natives on them — have them guarded, and watched, and cared for — is not that just as arbitrary and high handed as shooting them? Would we recognize the justice of a superior race coming here, curtailing our boundaries, picking out our best country for their own use, and instituting a fresh code of religion, law, and morality for our benefit? Would we submit tamely, or prefer a quick and easy death to it? ...

In conclusion, I wish to be *thoroughly understood* that I am not defending the acts of individuals. I, in common with other bushmen, am regretfully compelled to admit that deeds of blood curdling atrocity have been committed by white men, but parallel acts are to be found in the history of the subjugation of any barbarous nation; and my object in writing is to condemn the wholesale slander of the whole white race in the colony for the acts of the few.⁴⁵

To say that the aboriginal people were often treated like dogs, is not far from the truth. Dogs, of course, were variously treated by their masters, but a typical comment on this aspect of aboriginal treatment was published in 1898: 'Great tact is necessary in the education of the aboriginals. Neglect turns them into lazy besotted brutes who are of no use to anybody; too kind treatment makes them insolent and cunning, too harsh treatment makes them treacherous; and yet without a certain amount of bullying they lose all respect for their master, and when they deserve a beating and do not get it, misconstrue tender-heartedness into fear. The "happy medium" is the great thing; the most useful, contented and best behaved boys that I have seen are those that receive treatment similar to that a highly valued sporting dog gets from its master.'⁴⁶

Diarist John Green was profoundly affected by the physical decay of the aboriginal people and laid the blame firmly at the door of the white men. In 1885 he recorded an entry in his diary, the entry was probably written while Green was somewhere near the Mary River between Widgee and Wide Bay Creeks, he wrote:

Tuesday 8 September, 1885

We rest with the *Kgaiya* who have taken ill with the coughing sickness. Other clans in the area are also very ill. Only the old ones remain of the *Kgikgami*, *Kgaiya* and the *Kguli* — the young ones are long gone at the hands of graziers and settlers — these old ones are the last and soon they will take to the ... illness and will be gone. The *Kguthari* took to the demon ... (unclear) ... drink killing many of them. Many dead corpses of severely beaten *Kguthari* have been found floating in the river by the *Kgaiya*. It will not be long before they too are gone from the evils of the civilisation now upon them. These pitiful creatures are all that remains of the great clans of the Mary River — they bear no resemblance to the proud and great culture which once ruled these lands. When next I return — I fear that they will be gone forever. There are Europeans everywhere like hordes of ants, tearing down the jungles for grazing and timber-cutters strip and rape the land of the giant trees leaving nothing but barren wastelands of burnt edifices. Even the crystal clean waters of the Mary so filled with water bird and fish creatures in the past, have turned to mud and stench. Fish swim in large numbers dying bellysides upwards. I bear witness to the destruction of paradise for human greed.

Friday 11 September, 1885

It has been a sad day for my dear friends of the *Kgaiya*. I have used all my munitions to procure food to sustain them in their illness. I sought help from some passing travellers on way to Gympie asking if they could procure assistance from the townspeople and the preachers in that settlement. It has been four days now and I fear none will come — not that I expected much from the religious bigots who so earnestly wanted to save their souls in the first instance. Where are they when they are needed most in the direction of their preachings?

Saturday 12 September, 1885

I fear I may be catching the illness for signs of fever are showing and my mind wanders. I have long lost faith in this European culture. They raped and destroyed the lands from whence they came with their greed, hatred, religious bigotry and ignorance — now they inflict these evils upon these innocents and destroy them without mercy. I doubt if there was ever a God — just an invention to reap their own reward and pleasure. I confess I display great anger today with those of my own kind in my thoughts and writings. I am powerless in this place of death.

Wednesday 16 September, 1885

David is mourning the passing of his father, mother, brother, sister and their children. Those who are still in good health I have directed to leave quickly and seek shelter in the safety of the mountains and ranges far away from this place for their leaders are now gone. They will be able to live their last days in those places in peace hopefully. Alas, the sound of the children will be no more for there is none to bear them — they are the last of the *Kgaiya*. David and I have been of weeping most of the day with our burnings. Still there has been no sign of a doctor, government official or those bastard preachers — none have ventured in assistance. What hypocrites they all are — the vultures of the primitives — they befriend them, use them, and then pick the eyes out of them, and when there is no more to gain from them, they discard them to rot in the European excrement of filth, greed, corruption, and disease. Where is this so-called Christian charity we declare ourselves to while the missionaries and preachers grow fat in their fancy edifices with those of the new society. People are like the sheep we graze — they follow the good feed until the kill — then prostitute themselves. I fear I am ill and have finally succumbed to the fever for my mind is beset upon by the devil.

Wednesday 28 October, 1885

The fever and sickness is gone. I have been unable to make notes. David has survived but he is weak. We are alive but all the others are gone. We have made final preparation to depart this place and not return. I take relief that David's wife and family are safe near Nanango. There is a great sadness as we torch the last of the shelters — the clan is no more. David embraced me with tears falling from his eyes as we took one last view of memories to last a lifetime. I wept with him as final grief overcame me the extermination of the Mary River clans was now complete. David and his family were the last of their kind.⁴⁷

Notes and Sources**Chapter Four****The Native Police**

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5

Barambah/Cherbourg

Despite growing public concern, very few real efforts were made to prevent the 'dispersal' of aboriginal people during the latter half of the nineteenth century, although there were several reserves established at places such as Fraser Island and Durundur. These reserves were doomed to failure for a number of reasons, they received little support from the government and had to rely largely on subscriptions raised locally. Reserve administrators also experienced great difficulties banning such imports as opium and alcohol, both of which continued to have a severely demoralising psychological and physical impact on aboriginal people. Reverend Edward Fuller's modest mission on Fraser Island, established in 1870, encountered great difficulties and had closed by 1871.¹

Apart from the annual blanket distribution and the provision of rations, there was little further interest in the welfare of the aboriginal population until the mid 1880s with the establishment of missions in the north of the colony. Missions were established by the Lutherans at Cape Bedford in 1886, with others near Cooktown and Proserpine. The Native Labourers' Protection Act of 1884 also paid attention to some aspects of the many problems associated with aboriginal conditions, but most of the reports of aboriginal conditions were patronising, ill-informed, and based upon what was often only rudimentary research.

Over the following years other missions were established, these were controlled by a variety of religious groups, Mapoon, near Cape York, in 1891, Reverend John Gribble's mission, Yarrabah, near Cairns, in 1892, and Deebing Creek, near Ipswich in 1893.

In 1895 Archibald Meston, a former politician and businessman who claimed to have a special understanding and knowledge of the aboriginal people, submitted a plan to the home secretary which outlined provisions for the improvement and preservation of the colony's aboriginal population. Meston stated that while all previous missions had failed, for a variety of reasons, he believed that such segregation could and must be implemented.²

In 1896 Archibald Meston was appointed special commissioner by the Queensland government, his role was to investigate the state of the aboriginal population in Queensland and to make recommendations on issues concerning aboriginal administration. Among other things, Meston recommended that the best way of maintaining the remnants of the aboriginal people was to segregate them from the white population. He claimed that only complete isolation, the deprivation of destructive influences such as alcohol, and opium, better medical care and instruction in 'industrial habits' was the only way of saving the aboriginal people from complete destruction at the hands of white people. He also recommended the abolition of the Native Police. Meston claimed that in order to do this it was necessary to create special reserves, fully isolated from the white population, and that a protector of aborigines be appointed with the power to send aboriginal people to these reserves and to keep them there completely segregated from the white population. These powers were provided under the 'Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act of 1897' which actually came into force on 1 January, 1898.

This act was to have a profound impact on the lives of aboriginal people, whereas prior to the act aboriginal people had been allowed a choice of where they wished to live, after the act came into force they largely had no choice in the matter, and almost all aboriginal people, at one time or another, lived and worked on one of the many reserves.



Cherbourg dancers.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 14152

It is significant to here note that the general belief at that time — especially among the white population of Queensland — was that the aborigines of the colony were doomed to extinction and that the setting up of the reserves was a way in which the aboriginal people could die out quietly and with some dignity. Archibald Meston himself believed that the aborigines of Queensland had only fifty years before they would become completely extinct.³ While the policy was generally regarded as one that would ultimately mitigate the suffering of the aboriginal people, little, if any, consideration was given to the moral aspects of incarcerating the aboriginal people into the reserves where children could be, and were, separated from their parents and where a strict regime of discipline would be enforced. Many white colonists, including, of course, religious leaders, believed that if there was a moral question then the benefits of incarceration into the reserves were sufficient justification because such incarceration would prevent the physical and moral dangers and social decay the aboriginal people faced if they were allowed to retain their freedom. Yet such incarceration was in itself a danger to the aboriginal people, the violence of the outside world would be taken away to be replaced by a more insidious and passive violence, that of the deprivation of traditional ancestral identity, the inculcation of white values and the attempted destruction of aboriginal cultural heritage and independence. The question must also be posed, what were the real motives for the establishment of the reserves? Was it genuine government concern over the welfare of the aboriginal people or were the reserves created in order to segregate the aboriginal people from white society, to establish a cultural hegemony and to provide white settlers with an easily accessible and inexpensive labour force?

Under the 1897 act it was not long before the aboriginal people were being placed onto reserves. Meston, in the south, and another protector, Walter Edmund Roth, in the north, aided by commissioners of police and the police force, gathered aborigines into reserves such as those at Fraser Island and Durundur, near Caboolture.

The establishment of an aboriginal reserve on the South Burnett had long been the dream of one man, William John Thompson. In 1900, the *Nanango News* claimed: 'In regard to the proposed establishment of an Aboriginal Protectorate in the Burnett District, it was learnt that it was the intention of the promoters to apply for 1280 acres as a Mission site. Mr W.J. Thompson has discovered a suitable piece of Crown land about nine miles along the stock road from *Barambah* to *Mondure* and about 35 miles from Nanango. The site has permanent water and good fishing.'⁴

Thompson was a Salvation Army lieutenant well known in Nanango where he could frequently be seen preaching on street corners. Like Meston, he strongly believed that the only way the aboriginal people could be rescued from the decay they were then facing was to incarcerate them into camps. Also like Meston, he too outlined his proposals for the aboriginal people by writing to the home secretary in June 1899 and requesting that land on the South Burnett be provided by the government for use as a reserve. He wrote that he was: 'Desirous to interview the Home Secretary re Aborigines, Nanango and District,' and recommended a block of land in the Nanango region.⁵

The land suggested by Thompson had, however, already been set aside for closer settlement and the home secretary pointed out to Thompson that there was already an adequate reserve at Durundur.⁶

Thompson then solicited and received the support of the Ipswich Aboriginal Protection Society, the operators of a similar mission at Deebing Creek. Another block of land was selected but this too was later found to be unsuitable as a portion of it had been set aside for the construction of the rail link from Kilkivan to Kingaroy. Eventually, some seven thousand acres, part of the Cherbourg occupation licence held by the Moore brothers of *Barambah* station, were applied for. The brothers agreed to prematurely allow the land to be resumed and the reserve was gazetted as a mission station on 23 February, 1901.⁷

Thompson immediately began to gather local aborigines onto this new reserve, but his endeavours were, initially at least, quite disappointing. Facilities at the reserve were almost non-existent, Thompson himself lived in a tent, the few inmates of the mission were forced to provide their own shelters of bark huts and humpies. In May that year forty aborigines were removed from the reserve at Durundur and taken to the fledgling reserve at Barambah, they were accompanied by Harold Meston, Archibald Meston's son, and an additional thirty-three aboriginal people were collected in the Kilkivan region. When they arrived at the reserve they found that conditions were extremely basic, Thompson was still living in a tent, and the new inmates had to live in the open until they could construct rudimentary shelters for themselves.⁸

The first years of the reserve were tenuous indeed, Thompson was forced to operate the reserve with little funding, funding which actually decreased while the population of the reserve increased. The people of the reserve suffered because of the very harsh drought that badly affected most parts of the country and food was supplied by fishing or hunting. At the reserve there were no facilities whatsoever, inmates received a blanket, some basic rations and lived in bark humpies. The rations given to the inmates consisted primarily of some meat, flour and tea.

William John Thompson was officially appointed superintendent of the reserve on 27 April, 1904, his appointment coming not under the 1897 act or even its amended 1901 form, but under the Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act of 1865. The decision to make such an appointment under this act speaks volumes for the official governmental attitude towards Barambah at that time. State government policy appears to have been that the new reserve was to be treated more as an industrial school or reformatory rather than as a reserve for the protection of aborigines, and, in fact, the official name for the reserve was, The Barambah Industrial School.⁹

Aboriginal residents of the reserve could, at that time, enter and leave the reserve at will, there being no government regulations to either force them onto the reserve or to make them work once there, and Thompson was well known among the aboriginal community for his kind-heartedness and genuine endeavours to help the local indigenous people. W.J. Thompson was severely criticised by Archibald Meston for the way in which he ran the reserve, caring less about the functional necessities of the reserve than the spiritual development of those under his care.

In September 1904 Thompson suffered a horse riding accident and was hospitalised. Without a local director the state government recommended to the Ipswich committee that they relinquish control of the reserve, handing over administrative powers to the government.¹⁰ The state government took control of the reserve from March 1905.¹¹

At this time a decision was made to close the aboriginal reserve at Durundur and its inmates were sent to Barambah, 115 inmates being sent by train and another 61 walking from Durundur to Barambah. Albert Bleakley Allan Tronson, the superintendent of Durundur and a former storekeeper of Maryborough, was appointed superintendent of Barambah in March 1905, taking over the position from Robert Morrison. The *Queensland Government Gazette* publishing: 'His Excellency, the Lieutenant Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council has been pleased to direct that Robert Morrison, Superintendent of the reserve for the benefit of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the State, Barambah, Parish of Cherbourg, set apart by proclamation dated 13 April, 1904, be relieved of the duties pertaining to the office named and that Albert Bleakley Allan Tronson, be appointed in his stead.' Tronson's wife, Mary, who was related by marriage to Archibald Meston, was appointed matron.¹²

Tronson was a capable administrator, he instigated the settlement's first taxation system, placing a levy of one shilling per week on all workers employed outside the settlement, the moneys reportedly to be used for the maintenance of the workers' wives and families. During Tronson's tenure as the reserve's superintendent and during the tenure of his successor, Bertram Lipscombe, the Barambah reserve became a pool of labour from which early white settlers and selectors could draw men and women who were then in great demand for their services. This was the era of conversion from squattocratic land use to selector land use, and as thousands of selectors took up their prized holdings they frequently required a steady, readily available and inexpensive labour force to clear the scrub and to act as shepherds, stockmen, station hands, domestics and general servants.

When the Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act had been passed in 1897, a condition of the act was that aborigines could not be taken from the region where they were then residing and transported to an entirely different region. Additionally, there were concerns that the removal of aboriginal people from stations and other areas where they had lived all their lives would be detrimental to the health and well being of those people. Despite this, Archibald Meston and Walter Roth moved large numbers of aboriginal people from their regions of residence to be incarcerated at settlements like Barambah. Some of these people were taken in states of complete terror, like the Jews who were to be forcibly deported to concentration camps less than half a century later, the aboriginal people did not know what was in store for them, in many cases they were to be separated from other members of their families, and some were certainly to die in the harsh conditions then being experienced in the reserves. The state government turned a blind eye to Meston's activities and his flagrant disregard for the stipulations of the act. In 1901 the act was reformed in order to make provision for the forced removal of aboriginal people from their regions of residence to other regions.¹³

Albert Tronson resigned from the position of superintendent in April 1906 following allegations of misconduct. There appears to be little doubt that Tronson was guilty of misappropriation of settlement facilities, his wife, Mary, who also worked as matron to the settlement, had selected land at Cloyna and Tronson soon began to use aboriginal labour to work the holding, feeding the men and their families with settlement rations and using tools that belonged to the settlement. An accountant employed at the Home Secretary's Office, J.M. Costin, was sent to investigate the matter and he concluded that Tronson was guilty of misappropriation. Tronson immediately resigned his position and went to live on his holding at Cloyna.¹⁴

In his report to the Office of the Chief Protector, Costin made some interesting comments allowing us an insight into the conditions that then existed at the settlement. He wrote that he had arrived by rail at Murgon in May that year. During his train journey he had spoken to a number of fellow passengers, one of whom had expressed the belief that Tronson's use of aboriginal labour from the settlement was, 'a perquisite of his position as superintendent.'¹⁵ The following day he travelled to Portions Five and Six, Parish of Cloyna, two portions of land, one of about 160 acres, the other of approximately 170 acres, some eight miles from Murgon, that had been selected by Mary Tronson. Costin was accompanied to the selections by Murgon's first selector, George W. Nutt. En-route to the selections Costin and Nutt met a number of aboriginal workers who were returning to Barambah from the selections where they had been working. One of these workers told Costin that many aboriginal people had been employed at Cloyna by Tronson, they had constructed a house, a barn and a pigsty and had also fallen scrub. At the selections Costin found a number of workers from Barambah, some of whom stated that they had not been paid for more than five months while others claimed that they had received some money. All had received sufficient rations. Costin found that the selections were being carefully managed and worked, he saw about eighty acres of corn with pumpkins planted between the rows, much of the land had been cleared or the trees on other portions had been ringbarked. There was one completed house with another house being constructed. Tronson admitted that he had also selected another 320 acres block on Barambah Creek, immediately opposite the settlement.¹⁶

At the settlement Costin interviewed Tronson's wife, Matron Mary Tronson. Matron Tronson told Costin that she was employed at a salary of £25 per annum and her duties at Barambah included cooking for the sick women, cutting out and making the clothes for the children, attending the women during their confinements and helping the women to raise their children. Robert Morrison was the assistant superintendent at Barambah, he told Costin that his duties consisted of acting for Tronson during his frequent absences, acting as foreman for all works, the supervision of ration distribution and the receipt and care of all the settlement's tools and

equipment. His salary was £75 per annum. Costin found Morrison to be: '... a good and conscientious servant.'¹⁷

Tronson told Costin that he was paid £80 per annum and that settlement life was conducted according to a strict regimen. The settlement bell was rung at 6 o'clock each morning, '... to call the natives from their camps for rations.' At eight o'clock the bell was again rung and the men were ordered out to work.¹⁸

The teacher at the settlement was then Miss Marion Kennett and Costin found that she was '... without doubt doing her best for her charges under many difficulties.' Costin was not able to see the children in attendance at the school but he noted that the cotton, materials, needles and other items of equipment had been supplied by Miss Kennett at her own expense. Costin added: '... to my mind the most important part of the instruction the girls could receive depends upon Miss Kennett's charity to supply materials from a salary of £40 per annum.' Costin reported that Miss Kennett was in charge of a class far larger than that at Deebing Creek yet her salary was £20 less than that being received by the Deebing Creek teacher. He recommended that Miss Kennett's salary be increased to £50.¹⁹

Costin reported that the accommodation for the superintendent and assistant superintendent was modestly comfortable, however, there was no accommodation provided for Miss Kennett who slept in a small room in the house of the assistant superintendent, '... which cannot well be spared,' and had her meals in the school room, '... an arrangement which must be attended with a great deal of discomfort in wet and cold weather.' Costin also recommended that the accommodation provided to the aboriginal people at the settlement be improved. He reported that food consisting of flour was issued daily, beef whenever a bullock was killed, about every ten days, milk for the old and very young and tobacco occasionally when: '... a native is leaving to go to work.' Costin found that many of the aboriginal people complained of not being paid, he also reported that the blankets issued to the Barambah people were of an inferior quality. Men employed at Tronson's selections shooting marsupials complained that while they kept the meat for consumption, the skins had been handed to Tronson who had not paid for them. Tronson did not deny this allegation. Costin reported that his brief time at Barambah prevented him from conducting a thorough investigation of practices there, but added that any successor to Tronson would find: '... many irregularities which, through usage, have assumed the semblance of law.'²⁰

The assistant superintendent at Barambah, Robert Morrison, made specific allegations concerning Tronson's practices, these included the sending of stores away from the settlement, purchasing and killing diseased meats for the aborigines, not paying the workers their wages, selling tobacco belonging to the settlement and exchanging it for animal skins.²¹

Tronson was willing to answer questions into the alleged irregularities at Barambah and his use of aboriginal labour on his wife's selections. He admitted that a number of Barambah workers had begun falling scrub on the selections on 30 October, 1905, with a promise of up to six shillings per week, although no legal engagement contracts had been drawn up.²²

Tronson's letter of resignation was dated 26 April, 1906, he asked that he be granted a month's leave of absence.²³ At the time of his resignation Tronson's wife also resigned as matron, her letter of resignation to Dr Walter Roth, was dated 30 April, 1906. She asked that her resignation be immediately accepted as she expected to '... be leaving at once.'²⁴

Tronson was replaced by Bertram Lipscombe who had been working as a tram inspector with the Metropolitan Transit Commission. Lipscombe had no experience at all of the management of aboriginal missions or reserves and freely admitted so in his application.²⁵

Aboriginal people from many parts of the state were moved to Barambah and later to other settlements established at places such as Taroom (1911), the Hull River (1914), Palm Island (1918), and several other country reserves, including some which passed from the administration of various churches.

By this time the holocaust of the aboriginal people of the Burnett was virtually complete, it was the culmination of years of deceit, bloodshed, war and horror. In 1910, John Mathew wrote:

Of all the aborigines, young and old, known to me personally between 1865 and 1870, only three or four pure blacks and two half castes were alive in 1906. The remnants of the *Kabi* and *Wakka* tribes are now gathered together, along with blacks from more distant parts, at the Barambah aboriginal reserve. Formerly, every station had a number of aboriginal families, who regarded it as specially their home. Now there are no camps on the runs, no organised hunts, no corroborees. A feeble old straggler may occasionally be seen alive, clinging to some loved haunt, but the centre of aboriginal life now is at the government reserve ... The brightest spot at the aboriginal reserve is the school. The children are very tractable and docile. Special features are the quality of their voices and the heartiness of their singing. It is a pity that they, and especially the half castes, could not be completely rescued from the demoralising influences of camp life.

The Australian race is doomed to perish rapidly by contact with European civilisation and vice, and, unless there can be secured practically complete detachment from Europeans, an experiment that ought to be attempted, no power on earth can prevent the extinction. The pure-bred blacks of the *Kabi* and *Wakka* tribes will probably have disappeared within, at most, twenty years.²⁶

The reserves created as a result of the 1897 act were little more than camping grounds where aboriginal people could gather and obtain a little work and rations and where children could receive a rudimentary education. What conditions were like on these early reserves is difficult to accurately ascertain. White administrators tended to glorify their achievements and their reports were somewhat over enthusiastic, claiming that living conditions had dramatically improved for the aboriginal people at the reserves and that their enforced incarceration at the reserves was totally justified by this improvement. The aboriginal population kept little, if any, record of the conditions in which they lived or of the events that shaped their lives, their treatment, quality of life or social structures within the reserves. The administrators also experienced considerable difficulties with the importation of opium, and many of the aboriginal people brought to the reserves were suffering from debilitating diseases such as syphilis and tuberculosis. These problems were a direct result of a number of social causes, lack of money and hygiene, the shortage of food, clothing, shelter, medical facilities and poor education. Living on the fringes of white urban society, the aboriginal people were taken from the slums of white areas and placed into areas that would become, once more, little more than slums. The infirm and the aged were taken from their clans' lands and placed into the 'care' of the reserves, knowing that they would die totally alienated from their own traditional home.

Cherbourg resident, Sam Murray, who arrived at the settlement as a baby, aged two weeks, and who subsequently spent all his life at Cherbourg, has experienced life at the settlement in its many forms, as a child living with foster parents, to a dormitory inmate and a young man forced to go out to work under the system's strict external labour policy.

According to Sam Murray:

My mother's name was Minnie, she didn't have any other name, in those days they gave them one name and they were known by one name. She came from out at Quilpie, at *Norley* station, she worked on the station, apparently her family lived on the station. My father was George South, he worked on the station at that particular time. My mother's father was a white man but I don't know who that was. I was an only child and my mother died in childbirth. I was sent from Quilpie to Brisbane and they sent me from Brisbane up to here, that was in 1926. I was put in the hospital and enquiries were made to find parents who would be willing to take me, so these two old couple took me then, Sam Murray and his wife, that's where I got my name from.

I went to school here, it was good, I enjoyed going to school, with the sports and things, and being with other children, I made a lot of friends. We used to wander the creek, when I was about nine or ten I suppose, we just used to go for walks, we'd walk the creek from here to Murgon and back again, sometimes we'd go out into the bush for a walk.

The people used to have corroborees at the community and there's still the area there, that was the old corroboree ground. There were different tribes here, they were sent here from different places and they used to have a get-together sometimes and different tribes would do their corroborees and everybody would be sitting around. The different tribes had different corroborees, it was always crowded up (with spectators). It was a mixture of themes, mostly there were themes relevant to the different tribes and their original places,

they'd have their own songs, it was all in their own language, there were all different languages here, and just by watching them we could learn what they were on about. What we didn't know the old people used to tell us about. I took part in the corroborees, years ago, when I was small, and when I was a teenager, but finally it sort of just cut out, they died out. The reason for that was I believe that the people in authority, the government, wanted to get us away from that tribal thing, pull us out of that, to bring us into more modern, the white man's way, we were sort of cut off from that part of our tradition. Actually, one of the old superintendents one of the fellows who used to run the community here, they got that way they wouldn't allow the corroborees here, it became like a concert thing in the end, they'd use it as entertainment, people came in, visitors, but apart from that it just cut out because the old fellows died off and everything just sort of went. I can't remember speaking the language, but I understood what the old fellows used to talk about. (The history) was shut off in my time, there were some things they wouldn't discuss, sacred things, they didn't discuss them with young people (and) they were afraid of the people in authority, what they would do, and so they closed up about it. We as children, whenever there were old people sitting around talking, we weren't allowed to hang around, that was the traditional thing, we shouldn't be listening to what they were talking about, this is why we used to wander around and we'd go for walkabout.²⁷

Sam Murray recalls that the various superintendents of the settlement were careful to exert their authority and to show that the white man was in charge: 'They showed that authority on the community and the people had to be careful what they did, what they said, where they went, we couldn't go anywhere off the community, we had to have a permit, if you wanted to go to Murgon you had to get a permit. If you went without a permit they'd get in touch with the police, or if they knew where you were they'd send somebody for you and bring you back, and they'd put you on probation. Sometimes you'd spend a week or so in the cooler, in gaol.'²⁸

The enforced restrictions on the reserves were also to lead to increasing problems with disease and death among the 'protected' aborigines, increasing incidences of drunkenness, venereal disease, measles (especially among the children), whooping cough and many other ailments brought about by the lack of sanitation, confinement in close quarters and poor dietary practices.

In 1901 J.A. Allen wrote to the press:

Kindly allow me space in your valuable paper to call your attention to the Queensland aboriginals who are now confined at the various centres set apart by our government ... May I ask you if this is the proper treatment of these poor unfortunate people? To some it may appear as a step in the right direction to try and preserve the fast diminishing race, and that the government are doing an act of kindness to the blacks and to their preservation. This treatment, in my opinion, of solitary confinement, which is quite the reverse to their mode and style of living, is a direct act to quietly and quickly exterminate the race. Freedom and liberty is the course to adopt, if we wish to show our kind treatment to preserve their existence. Even under these conditions it will be only a few years before they are all abolished.²⁹

Following the establishment of the Barambah aboriginal settlement, in what was then a part of Kilkivan Shire, those remnants of the *Kabi* and *Wakka Wakka* people, and many others from all over the state, who had survived the coming of the white colonists, were taken there. But even from its very inception the settlement was to be the subject of startling controversy and bitter divisions in both the white and aboriginal communities.

The impact of the removal policy on the indigenous people of Queensland was profound. Some historians have claimed that the policy of removal was necessary for the welfare and the very survival of the aboriginal community, others claim that it was a means of discipline and punishment and clearly there were segregationist elements involved in attempts to maintain the 'purity' of ethnic white society.

In 1906 Richard Howard was appointed chief protector, he was to serve in that capacity until 1913. He frequently visited the settlement and was a firm believer in the use of inmates as an external labour force — a philosophy which abandoned Meston's recommendations that the aboriginal people should be completely segregated.



Barambah aboriginal settlement, circa 1907.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 36596.



Barambah aboriginal settlement, circa 1907.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 36594.

In March 1908 a visitor to Barambah (a journalist who wrote under the *nom de plume* of Justitia) wrote his opinion of the work and conditions there. While his report is profoundly paternalistic, it is interesting for its historical perspective of the conditions and problems then facing the aboriginal community living there. The visitor claimed:

The Barambah Mission — old blacks dread it more than death!

There has been a change of managers since our first visit ... In this person we found a gentleman of common sense and uncommon courtesy, who not only gave us painstaking explanations, but also afforded us free access to his methodically kept books ... The manager, in our opinion, is a competent, common-sense, but, 'tape-bound' man, unfortunately placed at the head of an undertaking in which a free hand within wide limits should be permitted...

Why do the old and pure blooded blacks dread Barambah Mission? But they do ... we (can) ... produce these old people ourselves, who will boldly declare their readiness to die by the rifle, or by starvation, rather than face its (to them) terrors in their declining days. Some of these pay a tax towards the mission, yet never claim its sanctuary by their own free will. What can it be which implants this horror in their minds? ... These old people solemnly declare that every old black whom evil fortune betrays to Barambah Mission dies off infallibly and in short order. Whatever else may be imaginary, this fear of the mission is pitifully genuine. When a blackfellow says he is going to die he means 'business,' and to force him to a place where he believes himself to be foredoomed is but to seal that doom inevitably ...

In so far as these people are concerned, we noticed no provision whatsoever towards even the most elementary forms of sanitation at the Barambah Mission ... Imagine, if you can, some hundreds of blacks and half-castes — healthy and unhealthy — having nothing to guide them beyond their own rather free and easy notions of cleanliness, and the disposition of waste matter, permanently encamped on the slope of a ridge, which, at short range is drained directly into the clear and naturally wholesome water of Barambah Creek, which creek is in turn one of the principal arteries of the thickly settled Burnett ... its waters are the main source of supply to scores of families and campers between the site of the Mission and its point of juncture with the Burnett River near Gayndah.

It seems a deliberate tempting of providence.

We go to infinite trouble and expense, towards the suppression of plague and kindred visitations and towards the removal of their cause, and then by our own deliberate act we implant a perfect 'hatchery' of contagion high up on the bank of the main creek like the Barambah; and lest, by any fortuitous accident to nature's machinery we should escape the obvious consequences we make it a depot for our sick blacks, and deny them the very shadow of a semblance of medical attention. According to our notions of the fitness of things, this monstrous omission is the most appalling phase of this State undertaking ... (and) the total neglect of medical supervision at the Barambah Mission ...

When in despair and terror they bolt back to their old haunts as their nature prompts them to do, we bring them back in handcuffs in charge of a constable ... One result of our so-called 'protection' is that the old blacks, the original owners of the soil, descend to their graves in absolute terror.³⁰

There was a general impression, which largely came about as a result of ignorance, poor press and official reporting, that the aboriginal people living at Barambah were lazy and would not work. However, this was certainly not the case. In their defence, G.W. Seymour of Wondai stated in 1908 that contrary to this popular misconception, 'a major portion' of the aboriginal people of Barambah were regularly hired out to farmers in various districts of the South Burnett. They were used for tree felling, scrub clearing, fencing or any kind of general farm duties and would work well for their employers. Seymour claimed, 'I had a gang (12 men) of them last year scrub felling continuously for seven months, which I think is a record. I do not think (anyone else) could get twelve white men to fell as much scrub in the same time ... the aborigines are a blessing to the farmers of this district. They have cleared thousands of acres of scrub that would otherwise be a harbour for wallabies instead of providing wealth. They do not enter into competition with the whites because that class of labour is almost unobtainable out here.' Seymour went on to claim that the aboriginal people's attitude to the settlement was not one of hatred and they always returned there once their work contracts had been terminated. He said that contrary to popular belief that the aboriginal people were a 'menace to the settlers about Murgon,' the four hundred or so aboriginal people at the settlement had never caused any problems for the local white community.³¹

Yet little had changed over the years since white colonisation of the region and, even at the turn of the century when the colony was supposed to be experiencing a heightened appreciation of liberalism, the aboriginal people were still regarded as little more than indolent savages capable only of creating disturbances and problems.

There was also the belief that despite attempts at reconciliation, the aboriginal people would never forget or forgive the cruelty of former years. In 1901 C.J.M. Scallon wrote:

All those who have an intimate acquaintance and knowledge of the blacks ... in pursuit of stock-keeping etc., have been impressed with the total absence of genuine gratitude in the blacks. It is a lamentable truth that kindness produces a diminished respect for the white, and that strict and even harsh treatment will gain for the white man the best services of which (the aboriginal people) are capable. We therefore find them a striking contrast with other blacks of the world.

It seems a fair means of deduction and elucidation to review the first generation of the white man's occupation of the country and the history relating to it and from it to gather the facts that unmerciful and unnecessary butchery and punishment were often inflicted upon them to bring them into subjection. In other words, the dawn of their civilization presents a picture to the blacks handed down from their forefathers till now, of a hunted beast of the field whose very existence was only at the white man's will.

In spite of the improved civilization to the present day, the better welfare and conditions of the blacks, and the now most generally humane treatment by the whites, there stands this hereditary barrier of inappreciation and ingratitude — the remembrance of the blood-red dawn of their civilization. The 'contempt' of the white man in early days of their occupation is now reflected in the 'contempt' of the black for every benefit he receives, so that whatever a white man may do to gain fidelity in his black employees, by kind and just reward, he is balked and baffled in all his endeavours by the traditions of the past — the hereditary hatred of the whites through the butchery of their ancestors.³²

One of the more prolific social commentators and journalists of the Wide Bay and Burnett regions wrote simply under the *nom de plume* of Justitia. To his credit, Justitia, over the many years he wrote of social issues in the area, often gave balanced accounts edged with a cutting wit and clear, if somewhat over-embellished analytical style. However, in his many hundreds of newspaper columns it remains clear that Justitia had little time for aborigines, Chinese, Indian workers or South Sea Island labourers, many thousands of whom were imported into the colony to work firstly on the sugar cane fields and later to be brought inland where they were used by farmers on a wide variety of general duties. In April 1908 Justitia, having read the comments made by G.W. Seymour concerning the aboriginal people at Barambah, was moved to strongly disagree with Seymour, claiming, rather harshly: 'When Mr Seymour says that his 12 niggers during their record spell of seven months' work felled more scrub than would a similar number of white men in the same time, he insults every clean healthy labouring man in Queensland ... Whoever saw or heard of a pure blooded Aboriginee (sic) doing even one week's steady manual labour worthy of the name? to say nothing of seven months! I know what I'm talking about and aver that one good Kanaka would do as much as three of them at such work, and a middling white man would (if willing) do as much and a half as the Kanaka in seven months.'³³

Justitia went on at length to quote some examples of Aboriginal 'lassitude', claiming that he had personal experience of such problems. He added:

This is the sort of animated fester, 12 of whom Mr Seymour has the positive indecency to compare with white men. He says they, (the aboriginal workers) do not enter into competition with whites as that class of labour is unobtainable. Bunkum! Bunkum! There are two able men camped within a stone's throw (of Kingaroy) who have been vainly looking for scrub felling work for the past fortnight and daily walking miles in search. This to my certain knowledge. True, the Blacks have done some work, just by sheer force of numbers. Seat but a dozen old gins in a row in undergrowth or stinking roger (weed), there to mourn the demise of a tribal dog, and while they thus squat on their marrowbones and beat time to the wailing croon with yam sticks they must of necessity beat down a considerable area of it ... So the Blacks look on Barambah as home eh? Well, literally there's no place like it, thank God. It is not difficult to understand Mr Seymour as neighbour and confessed associate, they being superior to whites you know sharing the disruption of this niggers' home on Barambah.

Possibly Mr Seymour will not have the temerity to deny the notorious fact that one white man at least had his scrub selection cleared by Barambah Mission Blacks without one penny of cost to himself. He now lives on it and reaps the benefit. It is obvious that what one has done, a second may do, and this view might explain almost anything coming from Mr Seymour short of his comparing the work of debilitated, filthy and verminous degenerates with that of clean wholesome whites. I here repeat my former assertion that the old pure-blood Blacks fear the Mission worse than death.³⁴

Justitia continued with his profoundly prejudiced harangue, claiming that the aborigines of the Burnett were sometimes (if not often) returned to Barambah in chains. He claimed, in a circuitous way, that the few hundred aborigines at Barambah were dwindling rapidly and that the sooner they dwindled to nothing the better it would be for all, adding that their best inheritance would be a grave, and ending, '... No hurry, they will soon come into their inheritance. Bring out the spades and let them all come. Let them enter upon it without prejudice.'³⁵

A Leafdale resident whose name was recorded as Thomas Messenger echoed many of Justitia's comments, although in a somewhat more balanced way, claiming that white workers would not come to the region for scrub felling as the aboriginal men were willing to do it for ten or fifteen shillings a week but that white men would not work for such wages. Messenger also disagreed with Seymour claiming: '... I know persons who have the Barambah Blacks employed, but they say they are useless unless they are driven and would not employ another "nigger".'³⁶

Clearly the attitude towards the aboriginal people as a work force was mixed, but, obviously, the original concept of complete isolation, as outlined by Archibald Meston, would never be a workable option. Government regulations concerning discipline and the complete confinement of aboriginal inmates at the reserves could never work and it was a policy of reserve superintendents to not enforce the isolation program but to use the aboriginal people as an external work-force whenever that was possible.

Another example of Justitia's profound bigotry may be seen in a report he wrote in 1899, having recently inspected the famous Coolabunia Scrub near Nanango. Justitia took the opportunity to defame not only the aboriginal people, but also every other race, other than those of European stock, writing:

... the climate at Coolabunia is too cold, and I might add, *much too pure*, for the successful cultivation of either sugar, Kanakas, Chinese, Hindus, Javanese, Japs (be the latter male or otherwise), or, in fact, *any* of the heterogeneous coloured host ... It is really refreshing, when, upon rounding a turn in any of the red soil roads of Coolabunia, you are *sure* of meeting some stalwart specimen of the Caucasian race, with axe on shoulder, or as I once saw, carrying the greater portion of a mowing machine on horseback, and who looks you squarely in the face, instead of a slinking string of loitering cannibals, whose boldest glance never reaches above your *shirt*, and led by a web-footed 'buck' ... I saw but two kanakas in the Nanango district, but as they appeared to be ... hard-working ... savages I successfully repressed the rising cry of 'Unclean! Unclean!' There were also a few Indian hawkers about whose stock in trade seemed mainly to consist of a handful of bootlaces, which hung over a dirty white bundle (and appearing more like a bunch of tape worms than anything else).³⁷

As Thomas Blake points out in his thesis, *A Dumping Ground*, Barambah was never simply a reserve where the remnants of the aboriginal nations could spend their last remaining days, in fact the Barambah camp was a widely used labour pool and during a subsequent Royal Commission Bertram Lipscombe freely admitted that although he had 721 aborigines on the settlement's books, many of these were out on labour contracts.³⁸

The advantages to the white settlers of having an easily accessible labour pool were prodigious, and the use of aboriginal labour certainly hastened the procedure of clearing the land and establishing white settlement — something of a paradox. In fact, the aboriginal people had originally fiercely defended their lands and lives and now, as the march of white colonialism moved inexorably on, they were used to further deepen, strengthen and more firmly establish that process of white settlement which they had once so strongly resented and resisted. White settlers were able to draw upon this almost limitless resource with very little cost to themselves, the aboriginal people were used on temporary contracts and were always available which, in itself, had attractions for the white farmers. Under ordinary circumstances white settlers would have to either clear the land themselves or employ labourers on a permanent or at least long term

temporary basis. While employed, these men and women would require wages, lodging, food and other services such as medical care. Utilizing the aboriginal labour force from Barambah effectively negated many of these requirements. Wages, low in the first place, were only paid while the workers were actually employed, while white or imported labourers would have had to be paid per week, month or per annum and paid whether they were being operationally utilised on the farms or not. Additionally, while the aboriginal people were not employed on the farms, they were returned to the settlement where they were fed, clothed, sheltered and given medical care, the selectors did not have to concern themselves with these problems, the government took care of them for the settlers. While sugar planters on the coastal belt were importing South Sea Island labourers, men and women for whom they were legally responsible, and for whom they had to provide annual wages, medical care, food and shelter — whether the workers were employed or not, the selectors of the Burnett were spared this expense by being able to draw upon the aborigines of Barambah whose general welfare and needs were provided by the government. For those early selectors it was an ideal solution to the problems of land clearing and the rapid establishment and development of their farms.

Historical debate concerning the use of aboriginal people as labourers has argued that such a labour system was little more than slavery, but the definition of slavery is difficult to accurately establish. Some historians have claimed that as aboriginal people were paid a modest wage, they were not, in fact, slaves, but formed a part of the proletariat class.³⁹ Yet conditions at Barambah, the enforced methods of labour, the poor rations and even poorer pay all point to a system which bordered on slavery and, in fact, many aboriginal residents claim even today that they never received the wages owed to them. Cherbourg resident Sam Murray, who was a part of the forced labour policy during the 1930s, recalls: 'We did cattle work, working cattle, stockmen. In those days wages were smaller than they are now. They used to pay us wages from the station but we didn't handle that money, it was sent into the office here, the department, and they used to handle the money. They used to give us orders (vouchers) and we used to go to the store room, if we wanted clothes or something like that. It seemed to me that the money was paid to us for working out on the stations, well, I've got my doubts that we ever received the full amount we were paid out there. The government was taking it. The department was taking it, and they were using it to help build the community ... We weren't given any receipts on how much we had left, they'd just say: "You've got nothing left and that's it".'⁴⁰



Barambah aboriginal settlement, 1907.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 36590.



Barambah aboriginal settlement, circa 1907.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 36592.



Barambah aboriginal settlement, circa 1907.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 36593.

Under both supervisors, A. Tronson and his successor, B. Lipscombe, the settlement's labour force grew and was effectively utilised. In fact so popular did the system become that labourers were not always available at call and some landholders were forced to wait their turn for labourers.

By 1909 conditions at Barambah were improving, somewhat, and there were certainly added facilities. At around this time a small hospital was established, this was staffed in a variety of ways, visiting doctors and nursing staff, or, at times, with resident nurses. This hospital was a slab construction situated at the rear of what later became the office of the Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement Department.⁴¹ The hospital was first established in 1910, there were just four beds. Nurses' quarters, as we shall see, were later added. By that time too, a store had been built, this was followed by dormitories, a jail, a bakery and many other additional services.

As a centre for aboriginal administration, the government believed that Barambah was a remarkable success. From its somewhat tremulous establishment in 1901 until 1910 it had proved to be a workable proposition, it had provided homes to hundreds of aboriginal families, it was economical, in terms of self-sufficiency, although it was not entirely self-sufficient, and it provided a readily available labour force for the white community.

In many respects, life at the Barambah settlement continued as normal. Some of the press reports of conditions at Barambah are interesting for they allow us to visualize not only life at the settlement, but also the white population's attitude to the community. This attitude manifested itself in such narratives, they were clearly paternalistic and patronizing, but at least they provide us with a picture of the settlement during those formative years. For example, in March 1912 there was a colourful wedding at Barambah, as the press later, somewhat condescendingly reported: 'At the Barambah Mission on Wednesday last, six couples — aboriginals — were united in the bonds of matrimony. The day was observed at the mission as a gala day. Both brides and bridesmaids were dressed in proper wedding attire, and the Reverend E.J. Taylor was the officiating clergyman. After the wedding, breakfast was served in fine style, and dancing and singing were the order of the day in the school-room. The names of the parties were — Starlight and Alice Walker, Jacob and Lucy Gracemere, James Edwards and Elsie Fitzgerald, Toby Wittaro and Polly, William Chickey and Rosie Campbell and Freddy Becket and Ada Pickles.'⁴²

The school, it seems, was generally reserved for weddings, as is indicated in another report, this by a 'lady correspondent' to the *Maryborough Chronicle* written almost a year previously in May 1911. The tone of the report is interesting for it signifies a degree of surprise, on behalf of the correspondent, that the wedding ceremony was exactly the same as any ordinary white wedding. The correspondent wrote:

The mission is about three miles from Murgon. When we got there, (there) was great excitement. We found there was to be a double wedding. While Mr Sydney was making the arrangements, Miss (Augusta) Lipscombe, who is the superintendent's daughter and also the teacher of the little black children, took us off to the school and showed us the work done there. I was surprised to see it. For cleanliness and carefulness they would put a lot of white children in the shade with their exercises, sewing etc. We were shown a pinafore made by a girl of nine. Well, I could scarcely believe it was hand sewn. Miss Lipscombe had ninety children to teach and she is quite a girl herself. I would like to have seen the kiddies at work but the school was wanted for the wedding so the children were out early.

There was great excitement when the bridal parties were seen coming. Each of the brides was dressed in white muslin with a wreath of orange blossoms and a veil. They looked as neat and tidy as any white bride could look. Each had her bridesmaid, but Mr Sydney asked me if I would like to be bridesmaid as regards signing the certificates. Of course I was delighted to be such, so Miss Illidge was the witness for one and I for the other. It was quite an 'honour'. The bridegrooms each looked well and were attended by their best men. After they were married we showered them with rice and then the photos of the bridal party and the visitors were taken. The next item was the wedding breakfast, the table was nicely laid out with all sorts of good things. The table with the bridal parties sitting, and the superintendent, his wife and daughter, and Miss Illidge. Mr Sydney and I standing behind were then photographed. Cheers were given for the newly married couples etc. The darkies responding by giving cheers for the visitors, then the bridal party gave three cheers for Mr Sydney.⁴³

Between the years 1913 to 1942 the administration of aboriginal welfare in Queensland was the responsibility of J.W. Bleakley who, in direct contrast to his predecessor, William Howard, mirrored Archibald Meston's views that the aboriginal people of the state should be kept carefully segregated from the white population. Bleakley acknowledged that members of the older generation of aboriginal people were still reluctant to live under institutionalised conditions, preferring to remain free wherever possible, but he claimed that with all the means at his disposal he was endeavouring to give the younger generations a new and fresher outlook on life, better education and food, and a modicum of discipline.⁴⁴

During Bleakley's first six years as chief protector, he was responsible for the removal of 1715 aborigines to settlements or missions.⁴⁵ Yet the stated policy of forced removals for humanitarian reasons was evidently not being adhered to. As Thomas Blake points out in his thesis, *A Dumping Ground*, aborigines were frequently removed to Barambah and other settlements and missions because they were old or unemployed or posed a threat to the local white community. Those aboriginal people who were employed were noticeably absent from the forced deportations. Blake also points out that miscegenation was another reason for deportation and both Meston and Bleakley were aware of the perceived necessity to segregate the races, ostensibly in order to keep the aboriginal race pure, but also to maintain the purity of the white race.⁴⁶

Other deportations took place due to the supposed danger some of the deportees were alleged to have been to the white race or to rural industry. For instance, individuals were forcibly removed to Barambah for spearing cattle. Aboriginal prostitutes were deported, so were drunks on the streets of places such as Maryborough or Brisbane, or men who fought in the streets. Drinking alcohol was considered a serious offence and those caught, and their families, were given no alternative but to be deported to Barambah. Wife desertion was another 'crime' for which deportation was the result, usually with the family of the deserter also being sent to the settlement.

The costs of maintaining the settlement were largely off-set by the industry of the aboriginal community living there. Men and women worked at a variety of self-supporting measures, including dairying, pig farming, growing crops and the raising of goats and chickens. Indeed, the settlement has never been a particularly expensive one to run, the residents working to provide a degree of self-sufficiency. The settlement has also been something of a show-case for the Queensland government, its close proximity to Brisbane resulted in increased numbers of official visits and the level of criticism aimed at Barambah has not been as high as other settlements such as Palm Island. Those who refused to work were disciplined by their forced removal to other missions and settlements, sometimes far removed from the South Burnett, Palm Island was one of the disciplinary destinations, as was Mornington Island.

Some of the aboriginal deportees offered no resistance to their forced deportation, while others fiercely resisted. Many escaped into the bush when they became aware that they were about to be deported. Some travelled south into New South Wales and remained on 'walkabout' free from the requirements of the deportation orders. Many of those who were taken to Barambah soon afterwards escaped and returned to their original places of residence. In most instances these people were time and again returned to Barambah where some later committed suicide. The impact of these deportations on the individual aboriginal person was profound. A person's place of residence was more than simply a place to live, the aboriginal people regarded their traditional regions of residence as a part of themselves, they were as one with the land they loved and revered. To have that land taken from them was like having a part of their body and soul removed, deportation went far beyond the physical aspects and delved into the very psyche of aboriginal culture, religion, beliefs and traditions. To the white law makers and those who implemented those laws, the removal of aboriginal people from their traditional places of residence was necessary for a variety of reasons, but to those who were subjected to the deportations, the forced removals were an end to the aboriginal civilization and culture they had known and enjoyed all their lives. In most instances, the instigators of these deportations had little, if any, understanding of the psychological aspects of the deportation policy. Entire aboriginal communities — those who had survived the colony's formative years — were disenfranchised from their cultural heritage, with the removal of important clan members, their daily lives suffered dramatically, social networks disintegrated and the fulcrum of aboriginal society fell apart leaving what many whites described as the 'pathetic remnants of a once proud race.' Meston and others who implemented the policy of deportation were in no way ignorant of the importance of the land to the aboriginal people, but in his efforts to have the aboriginal people centralised in several distinct settlements, he completely ignored the requirement that the people should never be separated from their traditional homelands.⁴⁷



Barambah aboriginal settlement, 1907.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 36595.

Where the gun and whip had once devastated and controlled the aboriginal population of the colony, the state now used the misguided policy of forced removal to instil fear, discipline, uncertainty and grief into the bewildered aboriginal community.

Over the following years the administrative structure of the Barambah settlement grew dramatically. Following the government takeover of the reserve in 1905, staff at the reserve had been comprised of the superintendent, his assistant, a matron, and later a teacher. Yet, as the reserve grew, it soon became apparent that more staff would be required. A storekeeper who also acted as medical attendant was appointed in July 1909, this was Dr S.E. Pointon. The *Queensland Parliamentary Papers* for 1910 revealing: 'The stores for sales to the natives is under the charge of Dr Pointon and was opened in July. It has been a great convenience to the natives and helps to prevent them from going into the township and getting drink.'⁴⁸

Doctor David Junk from Wondai later became the appointed visiting medical officer, his duties were to visit the settlement once each week and to attend to emergency cases whenever necessary.⁴⁹ The second hospital was established at Barambah in 1921, replacing the very much antiquated and rudimentary hospital that had served the settlement for the previous eleven years. Yet this hospital also suffered from a lack of facilities and Dr Junk was careful to point out its shortcomings to the home secretary.⁵⁰

The aboriginal population of Barambah suffered more than most other small communities during the devastating outbreak of Spanish influenza in 1919. From a population of less than 600, 120 were to die that year — some of natural causes, others of syphilis, beri-beri and pneumonia, but 87 reportedly died from influenza. The outbreak began in May that year and soon afterwards the Murgon Shire Council's medical officer ordered the settlement to be quarantined. However, J.W. Bleakley informed the council that it had no authority to order such a move and that Dr David Junk had already arranged a quarantine system. The Office of the Chief Protector of Aborigines in South Brisbane wrote a strongly worded letter to the shire clerk of the Murgon Shire Council pointing out that the council's medical officer had no jurisdiction and that medical control of the settlement came under the auspices of Dr David Junk.⁵¹

On 22 May, 1919, the Office of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals sent a letter to the Murgon Shire Council outlining the strict isolation procedures that had been placed into effect at the settlement. There were eleven rules to be enforced, including the suspension of workers employed off the settlement.⁵²

In June 1919 the press reported:

The Barambah aborigine settlement, where there were 600 blacks congregated has felt the fury of the influenza storm as no other community has felt it in Queensland. Up to yesterday no less than 61 deaths were reported and upwards of 400 affected. Last Friday not long after the outbreak, fifty were dead, showing that the unfortunate inmates must have perished like flies. It is reported that the man engaged making coffins was unable to keep pace with the mortality and that some of the bodies were interred in trenches.

For some inexplicable reason no information can be obtained from the settlement by telephone. On Friday this office rang up, but the reply was that the superintendent was not there and the inquirer was referred to Dr (David) Junk, of Wondai. All that could be obtained from that source was that there were not 100 deaths, nor 60 deaths at that time.

People are wanting to know, while discussing the rumours which such reticence has given birth to, how does the official mind account for the outbreak and how it was that the disease so suddenly swept the settlement? Weeks ago instructions were issued, quarantining the settlement most drastically and these precautions were renewed during the recent visit of the Home Secretary. It is known that the whole of the whites there, including, of course, the staff, were amongst the first to be attacked. At the present time all the provisions which go from Barambah are ferried across the creek in a basket to prevent contact.⁵³

The outbreak at Barambah had certainly been foreseen, and according to a statement later made by the chief protector, J.W. Bleakley, special provisions had been made at the settlement as early as February that year. Bleakley stated that he had given instructions for the settlement to be placed in a state of semi-quarantine, additional hospital accommodation had been provided, a specific system of precautionary sanitation had been put into operation, extra rations, blankets and medical supplies had been stored and, '... a number of the more intelligent natives had been trained to assist in various duties such as cooking and nursing.'⁵⁴ The entire population of the settlement was also inoculated against the disease — although this seems not to have protected the residents of Barambah. A subsequent press report claimed that one of the major problems seems to have been the lack of white staff, half of whom had caught the disease early in the epidemic and were either rendered *hors de combat* or had died. Many people from Murgon voluntarily assisted during the Barambah outbreak, exposing themselves to the infection, these included Church of England Reverend W. Shand and officers of the Salvation Army. Many aboriginal residents also bravely offered their services for nursing duties during the outbreak, a later report claiming that they had, '... proved very loyal and spared no effort in helping succour their comrades.' The victims of the outbreak were given burial rites according to tribal customs.⁵⁵

Infectious diseases were the most common causes of death on the settlement, these included illnesses such as influenza, pneumonia, measles and tuberculosis. The settlement was saved from the ravages of plague which raked other parts of the state during the early part of the century, when outbreaks of both bubonic plague and its far deadlier pneumonic form struck at places such as Brisbane and Maryborough. The government's isolationist policy may well, in this instance at least, have saved the lives of some of the people at the settlement. Other illnesses common among inmates at Barambah included ophthalmia, hookworm, nutritional deficiencies and heart disease.⁵⁶

Hookworm was particularly prevalent among the inmates of Barambah, and was spread rapidly due to the poor quality of water and the appalling state of sanitation. When W.A. Sawyer and A. Ping carried out their investigation of hookworm at Barambah in 1920, they discovered that twenty-five per cent of the population had become infected.⁵⁷

Water for domestic purposes was taken from Barambah Creek, this was carried by hand until 1918 when a modest reticulated system was installed, but even after this date the water received no treatment and came in its natural form from the creek. This water was contaminated in a number of ways, animals upstream would urinate and defecate in it, occasionally animals died in the creek and were left there, and, due to the lack of sanitary facilities at the settlement, the

banks of the creek were, according to the 1920 hookworm report, frequently covered with human excreta. This excreta and the effluent from the inefficient hospital septic system all aided in further polluting the water. Inmates of the settlement in addition to drinking this water would frequently bathe in the creek.⁵⁸ This problem was to plague the community until a more efficient sewerage system was installed in 1937.⁵⁹

Other factors relevant to the spread of disease included the crowded conditions of the dormitories and sometimes of the housing, the lack of warm clothing and bedding, especially during the winter months, and the importation of diseases from external areas, in particular diseases were often brought to the settlement by dancers and sports-people who had attended external functions. Diet was another major factor in the spread of disease, food was never particularly plentiful or nutritious, most of the inmates of the settlement surviving on a basic ration of beef, flour and tea with a little sugar. Vegetables, apart from a small number grown at the settlement, were almost unknown, as were fruits, although there were additional rations of sago, oatmeal and rice. Inmates were encouraged to procure food from other sources, particularly game. Men carried out traditional hunting methods to trap and kill kangaroos, wallabies, possums, lizards and koalas, they also fished in the creek, while women also foraged for bush foods. Yet the resources of the region were seasonal and finite, and as the population of the settlement steadily increased so too did natural food sources decline.⁶⁰ Yet residents of the community were careful to ensure that those who were short of food did not go without. Resident Sam Murray recalls: 'It was a community thing that everybody on the community looked after one another, if somebody was short of something, then the others would supply it.'⁶¹

The quality of the rations distributed to the inmates at Barambah was also frequently suspect. The sugar was standard ration sugar, the rough, dark brown, heavy granules comprised the coarsest of sugar being produced at the refineries. It came to the settlement with heavy black lumps of molasses still attached to it. During a visit Bleakley made to Barambah in 1914 a number of residents had complained bitterly of the quality of the ration sugar, they said that many Barambah residents refused to drink the tea made from it as it made them sick. Bleakley examined the sugar and found that it was: '... not fit for use.' He reported that it was: '... very dark in colour with dirty looking black congealed lumps freely mixed through it.' A small sample was sent to the government store-keeper who, in turn submitted it to the Health Department and the government analyst who advised that there was nothing wrong with the ration. Yet Bleakley reported that due to the strong complaints and the appearance of the sugar, no thorough analysis could have been made. A larger sample was then sent away for analysis and Bleakley recommended that the one and a half tons of ration sugar then at the settlement be returned to the supplier and that a better quality of sugar be issued to the Barambah people.⁶² The meat was also invariably of the poorest quality, the best cuts of the animals being reserved for the white staff and frequently only the bones were left for the inmates who found themselves at the back of the queue. Sometimes the meat was old or came from cattle that were not fit for human consumption. The settlement's superintendent, Albert Tronson, admitted during the investigation carried out in 1905 that he had been in the practice of purchasing meat that was 'lumpy'. Tronson had stated that the meat had been purchased from W.J. Maddison of Wondai, two of the beasts had been killed and Robert Morrison, then assistant superintendent, had stated that they were unfit for human consumption. Maddison had come to the settlement and had: '... ridiculed that the animals were not fit for the blacks, although he admitted that he would not care to eat them himself.'⁶³

The issue of rations, and particularly the meat ration, was always an emotive issue and remains today an issue which is seen as typifying the inequality imposed by the settlement management upon the community. The community's mayor, Cr. Ken Bone, recalls that as a boy: 'We used to get tea and sugar, sago, flour, syrup, everybody would line up with a billy can or whatever to get the syrup ... They used to kill twice a week, just down from the cemetery were the killing yards. People used to take sugar bags or pillow slips or something. You'd go to the window and hold your bag open and they'd push the meat off the shelf and into your bag. But the white officials, they'd come up, and there'd be a long line of people ... (and) they'd go to the front and get the best cuts of meat. The people used to fight to get a position in front of that small window, it wasn't much bigger than a TV screen, and the white people would come up and get the best of whatever there was. It was hard because we used to have to fight for positions. Sometimes they'd run out of meat, sometimes those at the back of the queue got nothing, or just bones.'⁶⁴

Working men received a larger ration of meat than non-working men, apparently as an inducement for those not working to take up some form of employment. In 1908 working men received sixteen ounces of meat per day while non-working men received none.⁶⁵

By 1923 it was becoming increasingly important that the ancient aboriginal ways and customs were preserved. Too many of the older aboriginal people had already died or had been killed without passing on the tribal rites and lores, but the people of Barambah were still attempting to maintain their heritage, to keep alive the remnants of their disintegrating past. They did this in numerous ways. For example, a number of aboriginal dancers travelled to many distant centres showing the traditional aboriginal corroboree as performed for thousands of years by the *Wakka Wakka* people. These were aboriginal dancers from Barambah who were named in contemporary reports as, 'Colin, Myrtle Douglas, Tommy Costello, Bumble, Tommy Croydon, Jack Johnson, Toby Smormors, Charlie Chambers, Paddy Maciber and Jack Ravins.' These people and, of course, many others of the Barambah community, were instrumental in keeping alive the ancient aboriginal rituals and showing them to the public so that the white community could see and appreciate some of the aboriginal culture that was rapidly disappearing. For example, in September 1923 these Barambah residents travelled to Maryborough where they performed a typical corroboree. The press described the event, which took place at the city's show-grounds:



Peter Loder born 1895, reared by A.A. Loder after his parents were killed in North Queensland about 1895, he went to Cherbourg at the age of about 18 years.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 78710.

A large crowd had gathered in the centre of the ring around a roaring bonfire which, fanned by a strong northerly breeze, sprayed the people on the windward side with a constant shower of spluttering sparks. It was an eager, good-natured crowd which, ignoring both smoke and sparks, pressed steadily ever forward, despite appeals to form a wider circle, with the result that the actual space left for the dancing aborigines was somewhat restricted. Nevertheless, the natives themselves took it all in good part and performed their work with fine relish.

The audience waits with keen expectancy for the entry. A low chant, the thud of stamping feet, and the rhythmic beat of wood upon wood breaks the air. The warriors come with spears upraised, boomerangs in hand and other old weapons of the chase or the battle, dressed in full war paint, with weird white markings upon the face, spotted and striped in quaint designs on the breast, the thighs and legs. The two leaders wore full native head-dress of white feathers. Each was girded about the loins with short trunks. It was a stately entry of native majesty and held the interest of the crowd ... the performers went through quite a number of quaint allegorical representations of the hunt and the fight. The first portion was *Preparation for Battle*. Then followed in quick succession the *Mustering of Cattle*, *Tracking and Killing an Alligator*, *Stalking and Killing an Emu*, the *War cry*, *Robbing a Sugar Bag* (bee hive), and *On a Long Journey*. It was all very picturesque and appealing in its novelty, its weirdness, the swaying bodies, the contortions of limbs, the gesticulating, the brandishing of weapons, the lunging and backing, the chanting and clapping and thudding and beating of boomerangs and the working to climaxes.⁶⁶

Two months later, in November 1923, the home secretary, James Stopford, accompanied by J.W. Bleakley, the chief protector of aborigines, the former protector of aborigines, Archibald Meston, and several politicians, visited the Barambah settlement to complete a tour of inspection. Stopford expressed the view that the education of the children, of whom there were some 180 on Barambah at the time, should have been stepped up from the simple basics of reading writing

and arithmetic to more advanced courses in various trades that would eventually suit them for employment in the rural community. There were, at that time, approximately seven hundred aboriginal people living at Barambah (including the children) and a report which appeared after Stopford's visit described these people as being: 'comparatively idle'. Stopford recommended that the settlement be 'reorganised' on an industrial level. The report continued: 'He, (Stopford) found the natives very contented and happy. He heard several requests, mostly of a minor character, and these often consisted of applications to leave the settlement temporarily to visit their old haunts. Chief interest of the natives was the stock, of which there were 400 head.'⁶⁷

Stopford later told the press that he had been impressed with the re-building program which was being carried out at the settlement, the community was being organised along the lines of a village and, 'eighteen native houses' had been built and occupied. These houses, actually cottages, were described as being constructed of wood with galvanised iron roofs, the timber for them was cut at the sawmill which was being operated by residents at Barambah. The houses were being constructed by white workers with aboriginal help. 'This new method of housing the aboriginals had proved entirely satisfactory and during his visit many natives urged upon him to speed up the building of other new houses,' the press reported. Stopford said that he had been impressed with the newly completed and occupied homes, the occupants had created gardens and erected fencing. To encourage this type of industry Stopford awarded three prizes of, £5, £3, and £2 to the occupants of the most clean looking dwellings. Stopford promised that a new state school would be constructed at Barambah as the old one was, 'absolutely inadequate'. Other facilities at the settlement at that time included, as we have seen, a new hospital that was opened in 1921 with accommodation for twenty-four beds which, according to the subsequent report, '... compared favourably with any country hospital in the State.'⁶⁸

The report continued, 'The department had decided ... to give the natives with the largest families houses first, in order to encourage family life. Not a single complaint was made by any native regarding personal treatment ... Mr Stopford mentioned that he was particularly impressed with the happy nature of the children at the settlement and with the absence of all shyness when spoken to by him.'⁶⁹

The sawn timber that was responsible for supplying almost all the materials for the constructions then being carried out at the settlement was originally cut at two saw-pits, one near the cemetery and the other at the site where the sawmill would be later established. The saw-pits were simply large holes dug in the ground over which logs would be suspended, two men, one below in the pit, and another on top, using a cross-cut saw, would shape the logs into usable timber. Some of the early residents of Barambah who worked in these pits included Fred and Jim Charleville, Pompei Hatton, Christmas and Tom Button. A steam-powered sawmill was constructed in 1917 and workers of the mill included Jack Bradley, Jack Brown, Bob McGowan, Richard Hill (senior), Roy Fisher (senior) and Jack Malone. Timber milled there was purchased from the Department of Forestry and included iron bark, blue gum, spotted gum, hoop pine and coastal oak. This timber met most of the local requirements for building and some was exported to other communities.⁷⁰

One of the men who was responsible for carrying out much of the construction work at the settlement was Charlie Collins, the grandfather of present community council clerk, Warren Collins. Charlie Collins was married in the school building in 1923, there being no church at the settlement at that time. He later became well known as a boomerang maker, carving them by hand. He and his wife celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at Cherbourg in December 1973.⁷¹ Charlie Collins died, aged eighty-five years, on 24 December, 1985, he was survived by his wife, Isobel (Tottie) Collins. Mrs Collins died at Cherbourg, aged ninety-two, on 16 January, 1994.⁷²

By 1924 there were around seven hundred residents at Barambah, at that time approximately 250 tons of flour, 50 tons of sugar and three tons of tea were being distributed annually to the people of Barambah.⁷³ That year marked an important change in the administrative control of the settlement when Bertram Lipscombe was replaced by William Porteus Semple.

For several years Lipscombe had been criticised for his alleged incompetence and while he was certainly an able clerk and his office responsibilities were never neglected, he appears to have been somewhat wanting on the administrative side of his duties. Following several investigations into the administrative affairs of the settlement, Lipscombe was, somewhat ignominiously and

with lower pay, transferred to the Police Department as a clerk. William Semple was one of forty applicants for the position created by the transfer of Lipscombe. Other interesting applicants included Robert Henry Curry, superintendent of the aboriginal settlement at Palm Island, Edward George Robinson Foad, a thirty-nine year old man whose address was the hospital for the insane at Ipswich, Walker Arnold Oxland the assistant superintendent at Palm Island and Francis A. De Vere Pinchin, the assistant superintendent at the Taroom aboriginal settlement.⁷⁴

Semple took up his new position at Barambah in March 1924 under a six months' probationary period. He was an immigrant from Scotland with experience in cattle production, including employment as a sub-manager at *Cressbrook* station. The position was advertised in the *Brisbane Courier* on 28 December, 1923. In his letter of application to H. Dignan, the secretary of the State Public Service, dated 7 January, 1924, Semple claimed that he had had a sound education, leaving school at the age of sixteen years. He then entered the employment of a large commercial office and remained in that post for four years until he began work on various farms and stations in Queensland. For more than three years he had been employed as a book-keeper and later as an overseer on *Ambathala* station near Charleville, leaving that position when the station was subsequently sold. He was then employed by J.H.W. Connel and Son of *Cressbrook* station as a sub-manager, a position he held for seven years. Semple stated: 'There I had under my charge one of the largest herds of stud Herefords in Australasia, also a large herd of stud milking Shorthorns.' Semple also had a large number of men under his control and, in addition to his other duties, managed a butchering business and a chilling and ice-making plant. He had left *Cressbrook* when the estate was sub-divided and sold. In 1921 and 1922 he was employed as an overseer with the Rochdale Pastoral Company at *Dajarra* in north west Queensland, but as it was impossible to take his wife and two children with him to that station, he left the position and travelled south to rent a fruit farm at Wellington Point. Semple claimed to have experience in managing aboriginal employees, having had aboriginal people on at least two of the stations on which he had previously worked.⁷⁵

Semple was to rule the small community of Barambah for the following twenty-five years, retiring eventually in September 1949. During that time he proved himself to be a capable — although not talented administrator — and his long period of tenure was plagued by several instances of acrimony with his staff, including heated disputes with the matrons and the medical officer, Doctor David Junk.

Semple was appointed by J.W. Bleakley with instructions to alter the *modus operandi* of the settlement, designing its operations to utilise aboriginal labour within the settlement rather than contracting work to outside employers. Yet this change in policy was never particularly effective, and under Semple's administration the provision of labour to outside employers actually increased quite dramatically from 1924 to 1926 when it began a long slow decline to the early thirties. Other factors influencing the use of aboriginal labour included climatic conditions, especially the several severe droughts experienced by the selectors, weather patterns that substantially reduced the production of items such as butter and maize, and later, the impact of the Great Depression and the growing menace of prickly pear.

The types of work available to aboriginal workers rarely varied from the most menial tasks, clearing timber, carting wood, hoeing fields or chipping weeds. Women were frequently employed as domestics, particularly when their husbands were engaged as labourers. Aboriginal workers were not given the opportunity to learn a trade, nor were they placed in positions requiring supervisory skills. In some instances men were employed by the police as grooms, yards-men or general servants. Women from Barambah were particularly in demand as domestics, not only from the immediate region but at many other centres throughout Queensland. Women employed as domestics in Murgon either lived under contract with their employers or walked each day from the settlement into Murgon. Such women were trained to become domestics at Barambah, and this regimen of training into service was a form of indoctrination, forcing the aboriginal people to accept that for them life could offer nothing better than to be employed by the relatively wealthy and therefore powerful members of the white community.

Aboriginal trackers were also in demand, especially on occasions by the police, but also sometimes by private individuals. Aboriginal trackers have received less than their share of credit in history, their work has been of immense value in the tracking of criminals, in the finding of lost persons and in opening up the vast interior of the bush. There is no doubt that in locating

lost persons the aboriginal trackers have been responsible for the saving of many lives. One of the more well known Cherbourg trackers was Ted Duggan, the press later reported of Duggan:

In November last Ted was brought to Kingaroy by Mr J. Swendson in an effort to locate some valuable personal effects and property that had been stolen from his farm at Hornley. Accompanied by Constable Wagland, and Mr Swendson, he went out to the property, and though the burglary had been committed about a week previously, was not long in giving information which dispelled any dubiousness they may have felt regarding his ability. His reading of tracks around the house was very accurate, and he told how a man had climbed a fence, crossed the paddock to a tank, presumably for a drink, and returned, which was later proved to be correct in every detail. The trail of a man who had been shooting in the scrub was also followed to a conclusion with uncanny skill and the accuracy with which the tracker described the footwear was amazing. One track he picked up, that of a large foot near the house, was regarded by the searchers as a very important clue, and which later assumed added significance when Frederick Lippke confessed to having the goods, unlawfully in his possession... (Ted Duggan) related that he was fifty-three years of age, and had been tracking nearly all his life, during which time he had worked at Clermont, Emerald, Rockhampton, and Tiaro, mostly attached to police stations in these districts. His last job was at Tiaro about June last, when he was employed to recover missing cattle, in which he was successful.

In reply to a query, he maintained that the art of tracking was not wholly instinctive. The aboriginal's mode of living gave them a certain aptitude for this work, but when they discovered they had a flair for it, they had to cultivate and exercise it by constant practice before they could class themselves as trackers with any confidence and success. He added that he had learned to tell whether a stone had recently been turned over, nor need it necessarily have been partly embedded in the ground, and whether it had been done by a hand, boot, or the body of a human being or an animal.

He revealed a genuine sense of humour in referring to a popular belief that black-trackers got down on their hands and knees to read and follow tracks. And in opposition to this belief he stated that when he once picked up the tracks of cattle for instance, and got astride his horse, any person following him would have to maintain a swift canter to keep up with him.

Asked to narrate one of his 'cases' he related how, whilst working for a storekeeper at Emerald, he was commissioned to search for a well-known selector who was reported missing. Starting off about mid-night, he made along the route the selector had last been going, and eventually discovered his tracks where he had ridden through the flood-rail, and attempted to swim his horse across the river. Several who were with the tracker wanted to cross, but he heard a dog howling some distance up-stream. Cantering along about half a mile, he stopped and after searching the bank detected the hoof-marks of a horse on a ledge. Examining this spot more closely he deduced that a horse had endeavoured to climb out of the river at this point, and in rearing to get a foothold had struck the bank hard, bursting the girth, and throwing its rider into the water. Striking a match he covered a short distance and returning said to his companions, 'He fell in here.' They asked how he knew this, and he replied, 'Because the dog has been running up and down here in the one place.' All joined in the search immediately, and a hat and handkerchief belonging to the missing man were found. They then marked the place, and left. Returning at daylight the body was recovered a short distance away, caught in weeds at the bottom of the river.

This visit of Ted Duggan to Kingaroy undoubtedly satisfied the investigators as to his capabilities and incidentally those of his fellows in the art in which they stand supreme over all other races. And the quiet, unassuming, yet modestly confident demeanour of this well-spoken aboriginal indicated that there were other qualities in his race no less distinguished to those of the white 'boss.'⁷⁶

Like most other workers in the menial class, aboriginal workers were variously treated by their employers, some received kind treatment with substantial and adequate food, while others were subjected to extremes of discipline, suffered sub-standard accommodation and were regarded as little more than slaves. Children too were sent from the settlement to work on the farms or in the houses of white employers, some were as young as eleven years of age. Food rations for outside employees also varied and, unlike the contracted South Sea Islanders, on the farms there was no prescribed minimum ration. Some workers received food similar to that being enjoyed by their white employers, while others received basic rations, bread, dripping, stringy meat, some rice or maize. Aboriginal workers generally ate apart from their white employers, and at mealtimes were frequently even segregated from other white employees. Domestic servants were sometimes

treated as members of the family, they ate at the main house and enjoyed the same food, but there was always an invisible division separating them from their employers and their families, they were treated as family members, but with the understanding that they were still only servants. Working hours also varied according to the employer, most farm hands working from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, with breaks for breakfast and lunch, domestics worked similar hours, although they were also frequently required during the evenings, sometimes until quite late at night.

Inmates of the settlement were forced to work under threat of strict disciplinary measures, those not willing to work suffered a number of punishments, including incarceration into the settlement's gaol, a restriction of rations and even physical abuse. This physical abuse, especially in domestic service, sometimes continued on the stations where the people were employed. Additionally, young aboriginal women were sometimes subjected to sexual abuse and the plethora of half caste children to be seen at the settlement was proof of this exploitation.

Earnings from outside employment remained something of a controversial issue. Under the 1901 amendments to the Aboriginals Protection Act, provisions were made for earnings to be paid directly into an account under the control of the settlement. From this account a percentage was deducted for settlement maintenance.⁷⁷ Additionally, circa 1930, as the demand for aboriginal labourers declined, a levy was imposed on inmates' savings. In addition to a tax of twenty per cent of earnings, those with a savings balance of more than £20 were forced to pay an additional five per cent per annum, whether they were employed or not.⁷⁸

The earnings of workers were paid into a trust account administered by settlement management and without the permission of the aboriginal people who owned the money. Additional funds were channelled from this account to meet other settlement expenses. Some of this money was deposited into the Aboriginal Property Protection Account and funds from this account were used to establish a number of features and services at the settlement including the sawmill, hospital, housing and the girls' dormitory. Additionally, interest from the account was not paid to the aboriginal people who owned the money, but was channelled by the government into 'improvements' at the settlement. Settlement management claimed that the practice of taking this interest was to pay for administrative charges.



Aboriginal fringe dwellers at Wondai, date unknown.

Source — Wondai Shire Council archives. File: Native Affairs. 57-1.



Housing at Cherbourg, date unknown.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Residents of Barambah had little concept of how their money was being administered or utilised, large sums were transferred without their consent into funds such as the Home Department Standing Account or invested in Treasury stock. Additionally, the lack of accounting procedures made it relatively simple for the individual misappropriation of money. During an audit of the settlement, carried out by A.G. Dunlop in 1928, Dunlop subsequently reported that: '... The audit disclosed such an unsatisfactory position that I intend having a more detailed examination made.' Dunlop's investigations showed a clear example of misappropriation of money by a clerk at Barambah named C.L. Hogg, who had deliberately falsified documents and destroyed others, including aboriginal account cards, in order to cover his crime. Hogg later admitted to his illicit activities and was suspended from his duties in January 1929. Hogg officially resigned, his letter of resignation to the superintendent at Barambah was dated 22 January, 1929, and was effective from that date.⁷⁹

Account holders were not allowed access to their money but received payments in the form of vouchers which were redeemable at the settlement store. There were many problems associated with this system, it prevented aboriginal people from becoming used to standard cash transactions which they might have employed in nearby Murgon, but it also allowed settlement management to charge higher prices for the commodities sold through the settlement store.

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Chapter Five

Barambah/Cherbourg

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6

Education at Barambah

The first school at Barambah was opened in May 1903, this was a modest affair which probably taught only the very basics of education, some reading and arithmetic. The settlement administration, in various reports, wrote of its successes with considerable enthusiasm, although there is no record of the school's successes or of the quality of its educational program. This school was constructed by W. Thompson, it was built of round timber with branches and leaves for roofing and the floor was of dirt. The first teacher of the school was Miss Harper Tabb (also reported as Taab and Tapp) who later married the settlement overseer, Jack Peterson.¹ Miss Tabb resigned her position before the end of that year and the school closed until July the following year when it reopened with Miss Marion Kennett as its teacher, she received a salary of just £25 per year. At that time there were forty pupils but they were sadly lacking in equipment, with just two dozen slates, the same number of reading books, a blackboard that was broken and very little chalk — all of which was housed in a building that was nothing better than a bush hut of the most rudimentary design.²

Improvements came very slowly. In 1905 the old school building from the settlement at Durundur was moved to Barambah where it was erected as the settlement's second school. This increase in accommodation was a vast improvement on the old building and the numbers of students also increased.

In 1908 Augusta Lipscombe was appointed to the position of head teacher, although it appears that she was not a qualified teacher. In 1910 the Queensland Parliamentary Papers revealed: '(The) school is under the control of Miss A.A. Lipscombe and the progress made by the scholars is very noticeable ... the attendance has considerably increased, the number of the roll now being 88. A pleasant little ceremony occurred at the breaking up of the school on 24th December (1909) when a tree was procured and decorated with toys etc, sent from Brisbane for the children. They were lined up in the playground and marched into school and their eyes opened with astonishment at the sight of the tree in the centre of the room. The teacher, with the assistance of the matron, then gave each child a suitable toy or present which was received with surprise for many had not seen a Christmas tree before.'³

The school was again closed, temporarily, in 1915 when Augusta Lipscombe suffered a bout of typhoid fever and a replacement for her could not be found. It also closed for a while the following year. On 9 August, 1917, the school was inspected by W. Earnshaw, the district inspector. Earnshaw found that the records kept by Augusta Lipscombe were neat and accurate, the discipline was firm and the children were: '... docile and obedient and, considering the conditions — overcrowded and understaffed — good order is maintained. Attention should be given to secure clean habits especially in the use of the handkerchief.'⁴ The report went on to describe the school, stating that no shade trees had been planted at the school grounds, there was no garden, the buildings were bare and cheerless, the table was made of old boards, the school room was badly overcrowded and toilet facilities were insufficient. The children were receiving no physical exercise and the report described the average conditions of the school only as 'fair'. The report ended: 'If the object of the school is to keep the children quiet and out of mischief during the day time, and to train them to be lazy, with as much incidental teaching as one teacher can give 117 children in five different classes in an overcrowded room with less floor space than four square feet to each child, it is a success. But if the aim is to cultivate their intelligence, to give exercise to their self activity, to train them to be industrious and self-reliant with a fair knowledge of the work of class three when leaving, the school is a failure.'⁵

Augusta Lipscombe was head teacher for almost nine years, until she resigned due to ill health, and was replaced by George Holland, who remained at the school for only about six weeks. When

Holland resigned a replacement for him was difficult to find and the school was again closed for six months until John G. Gleghorn (teacher from 1917–1922) was appointed. Gleghorn had come from the aboriginal school at Myora, Dunwich. His letter of application for the position at Barambah was dated 23 April, 1917, in which he informed the Home Secretary's Department that he had had four years' experience at the Myora aboriginal school, during which time he had earned favourable reports from the district inspector of schools. The Home Secretary's Department soon afterwards advised the chief protector that Gleghorn had been appointed to the position with a salary of £150 per annum with an added allowance in lieu of rations and quarters. Gleghorn was advised of his appointment by letter, dated 8 June, 1917, temporary accommodation being provided for him and his family in the house occupied by the assistant superintendent until a separate house could be provided. While his letter of appointment was dated 8 June, his appointment actually began on 1 June, 1917.⁶

Gleghorn's wife, Esther, herself a teacher, was also appointed to the staff. On 24 August, 1917, John Gleghorn wrote to J. Bleakley, the chief protector, to request that his wife be appointed assistant teacher to the school. Gleghorn stated that Esther Gleghorn had extensive experience in teaching and was capable of teaching sewing and music, having had several years' experience at schools in Northumberland, England. Esther Gleghorn was subsequently appointed on trial for three months from 1 October, 1917, with a salary of £50 per annum.⁷

However, Esther Gleghorn's tenure as assistant teacher was beset with problems and illnesses. She was thrown from a sulky and injured in June 1918 and was temporarily unable to continue with her duties. Esther Gleghorn was then granted two weeks' sick leave, later extended to three weeks.⁸ Mrs Gleghorn evidently suffered a great deal of illness, particularly in 1918 during the outbreak of the deadly Spanish influenza epidemic. A letter written by John Gleghorn to the Home Secretary's Department in 1918 reported that following his wife's accident she was absent once more soon afterwards with influenza, returned to her duties, again contracted influenza which confined her to her home for six weeks. Esther resumed duties on 16 September, 1918, but after being a month at school she was again struck down with influenza which put her off work for almost two weeks. John Gleghorn told the Home Secretary's Department: '... I attribute Mrs Gleghorn's frequent attacks of sickness to the epidemic which has prevailed most of the winter, the overcrowding of the school and the building which affords no protection against the cold and high winds which have been so severe this last winter.'⁹

Gleghorn evidently remained dissatisfied with conditions at Barambah. On 9 September, 1918, he wrote to the under secretary at the Education Department in Brisbane to request a transfer from Barambah. He pointed out that when he had been transferred from Myora, he had made the move primarily due to his wife's fragile health. However, he claimed that conditions at Barambah were too harsh, he told the under secretary that the winters were long and severe and that: '... the place is far from sanitary.' He claimed that the conditions upon which he had accepted the appointment had not been fulfilled, especially in relation to accommodation. He stated that he had been promised a new house within two months of his appointment and as soon as possible a new school building. Yet for twelve months he and his wife had been forced to share three rooms and kitchen with the assistant superintendent and his wife and child, the new house had been under construction for nine months and was still not ready to be occupied. He stated that there was no new school under way and that the existing building was only fit for a barn and was: '... condemned by the school inspector as only having accommodation for 56 children and there are an average of 108.' Gleghorn also claimed that because the children were aboriginal, then the danger to health was greater than it would have been had the children been white.¹⁰

Gleghorn's application for a transfer was evidently not accepted, and he resigned by letter on 28 March, 1922, giving one month's notice. The resignation was accepted and became effective as from 1 May, 1922.¹¹

Esther Gleghorn also resigned her position in March 1922, giving one month's notice to terminate her position from 30 April that year. Her resignation was officially accepted on 22 April, 1922, effective from 1 May, 1922.¹²

The primary reason for the difficulty in finding teachers to replace those who had resigned appears to have been nothing more than racial objection. Many teachers, qualified and unqualified, refused to work at settlement schools. (Interestingly, white staff at Barambah refused

to have their children educated at the settlement school. Up until 1932 white children received their education by correspondence until white residents successfully lobbied the state government to set up a special white school at Barambah. This was opened in 1932 and finally closed in 1941 when the numbers of attending children dropped below the accepted level).

Over the following years the numbers of students at the Barambah School steadily increased until by 1918 the students were severely overcrowded. A new school had been promised in 1916 but little at that stage could be done. Some classes were taken under the trees outside and the verandahs of the old building were enclosed to become classrooms, but it was not until 1924 that a new building, the third school at the settlement, was constructed. J.G. Gleghorn was replaced in 1922 by T.L. Williams. Upon his appointment Williams was described in the press as having: '... proved a successful teacher in different parts of the State for upwards of sixteen years and his appointment to the present position was a well deserved one and one that was popular among his many friends in and outside the service. As a cricketer and tennis player he should prove an acquisition to both Murgon and the settlement.'¹³

E.W. Dabelstein succeeded Williams in 1923, Williams' tenure as head teacher had lasted only approximately six months. Also in 1923 Mabel Stewart was appointed assistant teacher.¹⁴

The new school (originally promised to John Gleghorn), constructed in 1924 and opened by the governor in November that year, was already too small by the time it was officially opened. At that time there were 180 students attending the school, but the school building had been designed to accommodate just 150.

Other long serving staff members included Margaret Geddes and Evelyn Pearse. Robert Crawford took control of the school in 1928 and remained its head teacher for more than thirty-five years.¹⁵

Overcrowding at the school remained a perennial problem, and while there were three classes at the school, there were only two classrooms, a third class was split and taught on the verandahs. A new wing was added in 1937, this incorporated a new classroom and an office for the head teacher.¹⁶

The curriculum of the school was restricted and covered subjects such as basic reading, writing and arithmetic. There was an emphasis on domestic science and manual arts and, as Blake discusses in his thesis, the objective of the entire curriculum was to prepare the pupils for settlement life at Barambah and work in the labouring or domestic class.¹⁷

Notes and Sources

Chapter Six

Education at Barambah

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17. For a detailed discussion of this topic see: Blake, pp 132-40.

Progress and Paternalism at Cherbourg

It seems that the only occasions Barambah became of interest to the general public was when it received a visit from persons of importance. Twelve months after Stopford's visit to the settlement in November 1923, the governor, Sir Matthew Nathan, also inspected the community, the press reporting: 'His Excellency, the Governor, Sir Matthew Nathan, arrived here by this morning's train and was met by Mr J.W. Bleakley, chief protector of aboriginals. Mrs George Nathan, sister-in-law of the Governor, and his private secretary, Captain H.W. Saunders, accompanied Sir Matthew. The party motored to the Barambah settlement where they were greeted by twenty-two natives in war paint. A huge arch had been especially erected by the officials of the settlement, assisted by native labour. The Governor passed through a lane-way formed by aboriginals with raised spears. The arch was surmounted with a native ganyah, containing several aboriginals, with a full-blooded lubra smoking a pipe. The native children sang the aboriginal anthem and the white children the national anthem.'¹

By this time Stopford's promise to have a new school erected at the settlement had been carried out, one of the reasons for Nathan's visit was to officially open the new state school. He was taken to the old school building which, by 1924, had been converted to a recreation hall. There he made the first shot on a billiard table and was presented with a basket of flowers by a small girl named Oyah Brown. The governor then went on to the new school and awarded the children a holiday for the day, 'amidst great applause.' The children then sang several songs. The governor inspected the woodwork and cane shops at the school which, it seems, were, 'turning out many useful articles,' before going on to inspect the sawmill and hospital where new nurses' quarters were about to be constructed.

At 11 o'clock that morning the vice regal party was ushered to the new school where the governor stated that it was the third government school he had visited and that the school at Barambah was very much 'ahead' of those at Taroom and Palm Island. The schools at those settlements were merely 'temporary huts.' Sir Matthew commended the work of Mr T.L. Williams, the former headmaster of the school and E.W. Dabelstein, the then headmaster, the press reported:

The general opinion derived from the report of the settlement schools as well as from the missions for aboriginals was favourable, but education should be mainly education of the manual type ... The native girls should be capable of being trained in needle work, and he (the governor) believed also that the native boy could become a fair craftsman. It always seemed to him that in their native state they knew nothing of horses and cattle, but the aboriginal could become a good stockman as aboriginals generally were. Besides their tracking abilities, most of them had a certain class of intelligence which (was) by no means a low one. He did not think much would be derived from any attempt to give aboriginals a literary training except insofar as reading and some knowledge of figures was concerned, which might prevent them being the victims of some unscrupulous persons who would try to get from them their small earnings.²

This school had been constructed by a man named Marloys, he had been assisted by Lawrence Bell (senior) and Bill (Bumper) Hegarty.³

Such visits, and the subsequent reports of them, give us some idea of the work that was being carried out at the settlement, and while these reports are largely paternalistic in nature, they provide us with a rich source of information concerning the settlement, and this is important as there is a paucity of such information, especially in relation to the early years of its establishment.

In July 1925, just eight months after Sir Matthew's visit, the home secretary again inspected the settlement. He brought with him a large entourage including his wife, M.J. Kirwan, the minister for works and his wife and son, W. Bertram speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and his wife, Mr Terricks, M.L.A., W.J. Gall the under secretary to the Home Department, T. Mulcahy, W.H. Ryan, the chief commissioner of police, C.S. Keen, private secretary to the home secretary, J.G. Bolger, private secretary to the minister for works, Miss B. Jackson, the niece of the home secretary and another woman named only as Miss Bleakley who may have been the daughter of J.W. Bleakley, the chief protector of aborigines. The group was met at the Murgon railway station by William Porteus Semple and his wife, the superintendent and matron respectively of Barambah, and taken to Barambah in a small motorcade where they were officially met by Wondai medical practitioner Dr David Junk and his wife, Reverend C.H. Massey and several others. The visiting party was shown over the settlement, they inspected the newly completed girls' dormitory and the nurses' quarters which were then nearing completion. The subsequent report claimed: 'The former building (the girls' dormitory) is an imposing one, being two storeyed and will be able to accommodate 80 beds while an additional sixteen can be placed on the verandahs in the summer. Other buildings inspected included the fumigating room and the work rooms for teaching dressmaking and domestic science. These are more elaborate than those of the Murgon Rural School.'⁴

Stopford and his party, as was becoming the norm, then went on to inspect the school and hospital, and on visiting the sports ground they were greeted with three cheers and Stopford presented the children with a new football and cricket bat. This was followed by a banquet, held in the workroom of the girls' quarters, during which many toasts (mainly of self congratulations) were made. The press reported:

Mr Stopford ... remarked that Queensland was the only State in the Commonwealth that was doing justice to the natives and the investment was a good one and amply repaid the Government for the money expended. Out of all the native settlements, the pride of place fell to Barambah ... On his last visit 18 months ago, he had urged better facilities for nurses and teachers, and these had now been accomplished ... The new superintendent, (Porteus Semple) had, during the short time he had been in charge, demonstrated that he was the right man in the right place. He (Stopford) was pleased to see that harmony now existed between the officials of the settlement, making Barambah one of the star places of the natives of the State. Very few cases of sickness showed how splendidly the aborigines were looked after. If the settlement was built on such sound lines it would be a monument that would last for years to come.⁵

After another round of self-congratulatory toasts, the official party, '... adjourned to watch the sports.'⁶

A subsequent press report provides an idea of the settlement at that time:

The settlement contains 7000 acres of mixed land adjacent to Barambah Creek with the lease of a further 12,000 acres, and mixed farming is carried on by the natives. A sawmill, the manual working of which is done by the aborigines, supplies timber for building purposes. Vegetables are very successfully grown on a large scale, while wheat, oats, etc., are also produced in quantities for fodder for the 600 odd head of cattle on the place. The hospital buildings are very up to date and Matron Kyle Little is in charge with Dr (David) Junk as medical officer.⁷ There are 800 natives in the settlement and on the whole little sickness is experienced. A septic tank ensures hygienic conditions and an ample water supply is available. Commodious nurses' quarters are almost completed. Any unclaimed estates of deceased natives goes to the hospital instead of the State Treasury, so that improvements are constantly being effected. A hookworm laboratory is included in the building. The public school, under the direction of E.W. Dabelstein, has made great progress and there are nearly 200 exceedingly bright and intelligent pupils attending, learning all that is taught at the best rural schools in the State.⁸

While there were similarities between the operations of the settlement, particularly in respect to its use as a labour depot, and the systems of indentured labour so widespread throughout Queensland during its formative years, there were major social problems associated with the aborigines of Barambah that the South Sea Islanders and other indentured labourers did not suffer. Aboriginal labourers from the settlement lived a life of unremitting labour, they were farmed out to

whoever wanted them and they received little or no respite from the long years of work. By comparison, the South Sea Islanders, while many of them were also forced into the system through kidnapping and other odious forms of recruitment, could, by and large, expect to receive a reasonable wage, were cared for under strict governmental guide-lines, were allowed the freedom of a day off on Sundays, could collect their earnings in cash and spend it where and how they pleased. Additionally, at the end of their contracted period, they could return home to the islands and continue with their traditional lifestyles of hunting and farming. The aboriginal people of Barambah had no such respite from their labours, they were displaced, initially, from their traditional homelands, placed to work under contract for meagre wages they seldom saw, they had no set contract at the end of which they could return to their traditional lifestyle, rather, at the end of contractual terms, they were returned to the settlement to be re-contracted to other employers.

In 1925, in order to help ameliorate problems caused by the drought, grazing rights over the neighbouring Cherbourg State Forest were granted to the settlement. Barambah residents at this time were continuing to make an impression on the wider white community by travelling as much as possible into other rural centres where they would carry out performances of aboriginal customs. For example, in September 1926 approximately forty members of the settlement travelled to Kingaroy where they performed to, 'a crowded house.' The tour was arranged by the wife of the settlement's superintendent, Porteus Semple, in order to raise funds for community work at Barambah. They later toured several other centres including Maryborough.⁹

Indeed, corroborees, as a method of raising money for the community and as a typical official greeting at Barambah, were popular events, and these were frequently performed with other types of entertainment. In April 1927 the home secretary, James Stopford, again visited the settlement. The press reporting:

The opportunity to witness aboriginal corroborees is becoming more and more rare, and it is indeed to be regretted that, with the passing of some of the older members of the various native tribes, much of the picturesque customs for which they were world-famed are being lost to us forever. Proficiency in the different tribal activities and accomplishments has perhaps been giving way to the assimilation of what is said to constitute modern civilisation, including the mastering of the English language and the learning of useful trades and arts.

However, that there are natives who are adept at their old dances and songs, and at the same time sufficiently conversant with the public taste in a variety of entertainment, having also the ability to cater for it, was amply demonstrated to a very large Maryborough audience on Tuesday night. As was stated in yesterday's issue the audience was unusually appreciative of the efforts of the Barambah Aboriginal Settlement Concert Party on the occasion of their performance in the Bungalow (theatre), and the heavy tax upon the seating accommodation was an indication of the keen interest manifest in our dusky brothers and sister. Mrs Porteus Semple, as matron of the settlement, her husband, the superintendent, and other officials had spared no pains to make the programme a success, and their efforts were amply rewarded. Prominent features of the entertainment were the selections by the Barambah Native Band, over which Mr W.T. Lawson wielded a controlling baton. Naturally Mr Lawson took over the work of conducting a native band some time ago with many initial difficulties, but he has been able to muster a dozen natives with musical aptness, and has proved that these men are responsive to good tuition. Their performance on Tuesday night was commented upon quite favourably by local bandsmen ...

Three corroborees were given by the party, the stage being fitted with an appropriate bush atmosphere with a typical bark hut set behind a glowing camp fire as the central feature. The corroboree is, of course, really a story, acted by the natives, to the accompaniment of weird chanting and the beating of time with boomerangs, bones, hand clapping, etc ...

The financial result of the effort will go towards fittings for the hall at the Settlement. Not long ago the Home Secretary, Mr J. Stopford, fulfilled his promise to donate a hall from the St Helena Prison to the settlement, and this is now ready for re-erection, and will provide an additional comfort for the natives. They hope to raise sufficient funds to purchase a wireless set, a moving picture outfit, and the wherewithal to ensure more appropriate, but simple, furnishings, for their meetings for worship.¹⁰

Such traditional scenes were quickly dying out, those aboriginal people who had been children and teenagers when white man first came into the region during the 1840s and 1850s, were by

now in their old age. Many of the older residents of Barambah at this time could remember the coming of the white invaders, the Native Police, the huge squatting runs flooded with sheep, *Taabinga*, *Boonara*, *Taromeo*, *Tarong*, *Nanango* and many others in the South Burnett. These old people could talk of the troubles, the deaths, the exclusion from traditional tribal lands, and they could speak of it with first hand knowledge. Yet now they too were dying out, they were the last of the aboriginal generation, the people who saw and witnessed those events of so long before. They had lost relatives during the holocaust of colonial settlement, whole families had simply disappeared under the hooves and guns of the Native Police. It was the final chapter in more than half a century of death and destruction.

In May 1927 a deputation representing church missionaries and scientific bodies, with a specific interest in aboriginal welfare, asked the minister for home and territories (Mr Marr) to appoint a Royal Commission into the current status and conditions of aborigines. The deputation alleged that the aborigines were still dying out as a result of contact with white people. A subsequent report claimed: 'It was asked that the enquiry should include not only those of pure aboriginal descent, but also castes. Mr Marr promised to place their request before the Cabinet. Mr Aubrey Williams, a Sydney journalist ... said he had often heard rumours that when natives became what was considered a nuisance, cyanide was put in their meat and arsenic in their flour ... Mr Williams also said that opium, disease and sickness were all taking (a) deadly toll of the natives.'¹¹

In 1928 the Inland Mission Church was established at Barambah, although these missionaries had then been involved with the settlement for seven years. The first Inland missionary, Miss Simmons, arrived at Barambah in 1921 and soon discovered that many of the people living there had never heard of the Gospel. She afterwards obtained a push-bike in order to get around to meet people and to commute daily from Murgon where she lived. Another missionary, Miss Campbell, later joined Miss Simmons and two aboriginal women, Lily Kina and Tottie Lacey, also joined the small missionary group, Mrs Mary Duncan also became a part of the missionary work in 1926 and Mr L.W. Long travelled to the settlement in 1928 to baptise twenty-eight local Christians. Impressed with the work that had been carried on at the settlement, he then formed the first Inland People's Church at Barambah. The church commenced with just thirty-five members and five deacons were appointed to work in the region. The impact of missionary work at Barambah was quite profound and Barambah residents readily accepted the church's teachings. As Thomas Blake points out in his thesis, one of the reasons why the aboriginal people at the settlement so willingly accepted the presence of the church and its missionaries, despite the church's teachings that encouraged residents to reject their traditional spiritual beliefs, was probably due to the fact that the missionaries allowed the aboriginal people a certain degree of leadership within the church.¹²

In 1929 an open air cathedral was constructed, the rough building was built of bush timbers and hessian. Work began on the more substantial mission building in 1937 and the following year it was officially opened.¹³

Meanwhile, life at Barambah continued as usual, the aboriginal people celebrating their own culture whenever possible, the various aboriginal cultures blending, sometimes curiously, with that of European influences. New Year at Barambah was always a time of great celebrations. For example in 1931 a special show was given by the people of Barambah, white spectators coming to the settlement in their hundreds to witness the event. The evening of 8 January, 1931, started with a picture show which was screened in the settlement hall, later the crowds moved to the school grounds where a circle of: '... brightly burning hollow logs denoted that a native corroboree was shortly to take place.' Seats had been provided for the guests but there were so many people that hundreds were forced to stand during the corroboree. The sign that the performance was to start came with the lighting of two 'giant rockets' which somewhat startled the audience. A subsequent press report claimed: 'Weird ghostly figures were then seen creeping silently in through the circle of giant flaming torches, until the firelight showed up the native forms covered with war paint. To the tune of primitive music by the females of the various tribes, a number of queer native dances were presented by the painted warriors. Their peculiar antics and bursts of native singing were greatly appreciated by the large audience.'

The traditional aboriginal dancing was then mixed, rather peculiarly with entertainment of a distinctly European character. Miss Jessie Tanner, a young aboriginal girl sang, *Beneath thy Window*, and later: '... a number of dusky maidens attired as cricketers ... sang, *Our Barambah Eleven* with great gusto.'

Such scenes clearly demonstrate the patchwork type of integration the aboriginal people of Barambah were then undergoing. Caught between two completely polarized cultures, they struggled to remember and appreciate the old while coming to terms with the new. It must be remembered that the aboriginal people at Barambah at this time were drawn from a wide diversity of regions and nations, each with its own laws, codes of conduct, language, faiths and customs. The integration of such a large diversity of traditional social customs and practices was a difficult one for the aboriginal people to achieve, but they did so, assimilating themselves into a common bond and developing their own common phraseology.¹⁴ Yet as Caroline Tennant Kelly claimed in her report of the settlement in 1935, the breaking down of the traditional cultures and the disintegration of aboriginal society was enhanced by the amalgam of societies contained within the settlement. The elders guarded the old ways and kept them largely secret from the young and uninitiated, and the teachings of the church — brought to the settlement firstly by the missionaries and later by the other religious bodies — further added to the disintegration of these cultures.¹⁵ Caroline Tennant Kelly spent four months completing her research project at Cherbourg in 1934, and confined herself to the examination of aboriginal culture as it then existed at Cherbourg. She came to the understanding that the aborigines of Cherbourg formed what she termed a 'disintegrated society' without any clearly defined social patterns.¹⁶

In 1932 the name of the settlement was changed from Barambah to Cherbourg, by this time its area had increased to 31,469 acres.

In 1933, following the removal of two lepers from the settlement, members of the Wondai Shire Council expressed concern that the community may have posed a health hazard to the people of nearby townships, and suggested that consideration be given, at state government level, to the removal of the settlement far from white settled areas. There was nothing new in this argument and ever since the reserve at Barambah had first been established by W.J. Thompson in 1901, local white residents had expressed concern over the safety and health aspects of having the reserve situated so close to the settled white community. There persisted a perennial fear of aborigines, a fear that had continued since the formative years of squattocratic settlement when the aboriginal people had fought the white invasion of their lands with both cunning and tenacity. Many white people had died at aboriginal hands during this resistance and this aggression had perpetrated the myth that the aboriginal people were ruthless murderers and thieves. Additionally, there were strong concerns over the health aspects, people in the Murgon region believed that the aboriginal reserve on Barambah Creek would contaminate the creek from where water supplies were drawn. Leprosy, venereal disease and other illnesses, while certainly not prevalent at Cherbourg, were unreasonably seen as a constant threat to the white population, and over the years since its first establishment there had been many calls to have the reserve removed to other areas, primarily for racist reasons, the general white population apparently believing that the aborigines of the settlement were afflicted with many highly contagious diseases. In fact their main fear, leprosy, was uncommon at Cherbourg, there were only eight recorded cases, the first in 1908, the second in 1919, four people were infected in 1933 and a further two in 1937. Leprosy cases were not treated at Cherbourg but were transferred to the leprosarium at Peel Island.¹⁷

Ever since its first inception at the turn of the century, there had been a general feeling



Listening to tests, Eddie Gilbert, centre. Cherbourg, January 1933.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 59631.

among the white community of the South Burnett that the settlement at Cherbourg was a danger in a number of ways. Many people believed that it posed a health risk, while others were convinced that a physical danger existed from some of the alleged 'criminal elements' who resided at the settlement. There was also a third misnomer, the belief that the settlement occupied land that would be better suited to agricultural development. While there was little, if any, substance to these common misconceptions, the white community generally conveniently forgot, when pressing for the removal of the settlement, that the aborigines of the region had been largely responsible for the manual work required to clear and establish many of the farms in the district. Without that low cost labour, easily available and easily renewed, the progress of the South Burnett could not have developed so rapidly. Yet these considerations were almost totally ignored by the white community, especially during those times when there were health scares, or when aboriginal crimes were highlighted in the press.

The 1919 outbreak of Spanish influenza had prompted calls for the removal of the settlement, as did the 1926 outbreak of typhoid. When a local Murgon resident had contracted the disease after bathing in Barambah Creek, it was generally believed that the disease had come from the Barambah settlement. The Murgon Shire Council once again requested that the settlement be closed and that its inmates be taken to other reserves — even going so far as to suggest a Pacific island. The council pointed out that the source of the infection was reasonably supposed to be Barambah Creek and as the butter factory drew water from the creek for the manufacture of butter, there was a serious health risk to the community.¹⁸ The claim that the disease had spread from the aboriginal settlement to Murgon was rejected by the government, as was the council's request to have the settlement closed.¹⁹ The Murgon Shire Council wrote to the Home Secretary's Department on 15 November, 1926, seeking assurance that all precautions were being observed at the settlement and that it was not necessary for them to intervene. The department replied on 25 November assuring the council that: '... your council need not take any action in the matter ...'²⁰

The suggestion in 1933 that the settlement be moved in order to prevent the spread of leprosy from Cherbourg to the white community created something of a storm, the commissioner for health, Dr Coffey, said that the health conditions at Cherbourg were: 'fairly good', and that the community at Cherbourg posed no health problems to the outside white communities.



The original cemetery at Cherbourg where many of the community's early residents are buried.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

Coffey pointed out that Cherbourg had a well equipped hospital with up to thirty beds which could, if the need arose, be extended to one hundred beds. The institution was staffed by a matron and a trained nurse and Dr Davidson visited weekly or when the need arose. A report of Coffey's statement continued: 'The health of the place was up to the standard and quite equal to that of a white community with a white population. The settlement had been excellently laid out, the drainage arrangements being a feature.' The home secretary, E.M. Hanlon, added: 'There was no possibility of having the settlement removed.'²¹

The regional press — particularly the *South Burnett Times*, was strongly advocating a removal of the settlement, primarily for perceived health reasons, one correspondent writing:

The 'ridiculing' by the Health Department of the statement that 'Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement is a menace to public health' is what might naturally be expected to follow the launching by Wondai Shire Council of a campaign having for its objective the removal of the settlement to a site climatically — and, in fact, in all other ways — more congenial and beneficial to its occupants and further from populous townships the health of whose citizens is unquestionably menaced by the nearby congregation of such a heterogeneous collection of humans amongst whom must be numbered sufferers from many afflictions and who, in the aggregate, are only too susceptible to any epidemic which may visit the country. The position is further aggravated by the fact that the settlement is situated on the bank of Barambah Creek immediately above the only swimming holes and places suitable for aquatic sports in Murgon-Wondai district.

The department's statement as to the 'fairly good' health conditions at the settlement may be alright from the viewpoint of its officers secure in their metropolitan locations, but local citizens remember ... the outbreak of typhoid, which is mentioned as occurring at the settlement some years ago ... Neither is the health aspect the only argument in favour of the removal of the settlement. The fact that last year's official report of the settlement gives the population of its inmates as 500 half (and other) castes, and 301 full-blooded abos. speaks for itself as to the moral dangers associated with (the) location of such a settlement adjacent to towns and consequently offering a premium to miscegenation with the lowest class of whites ...²²

Hanlon visited the settlement in March 1933. At that time the population of the community totalled 786 persons; beef and dairy cattle were doing well and there were fifty-six acres under cultivation. Despite this obvious prosperity and success, Hanlon was then considering that it could be possible to have the entire population of Cherbourg moved to Rewan, and to convert the settlement into a prison farm. The press reported of the affair:

Although the Home Secretary (Mr E.M. Hanlon) has not yet been advised by the Lands Department of possible sites for establishing a prison farm for first offenders and others, he has wondered, since his visit to the Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement at Barambah, whether that institution would not be suitable for the purpose.

To enable the change to be brought about would mean transferring the hundreds of aborigines and their houses to some other place, and the cost of that change might rule it out. Nevertheless, the extensive area at Cherbourg and the large amount of arable land will probably cause the Minister to go farther into the question.

A suggestion has been made that the Rewan police horse breeding establishment might be utilised instead as a settlement for aborigines, the majority of whom have shown a decided inclination to make a success of cattle breeding at Cherbourg. There are also a great many cattle at Rewan, and, in view of the likelihood of the place being closed down for the breeding of police horses, the Government would have the property on its hands. If the problem of the transport of the aborigines could be solved, it is considered possible that the Home Secretary would favour their transfer to Rewan, but for the moment no action is proposed. The matter will not be considered again until the Minister has had an opportunity to consider any suggestions the Lands Department may make of a suitable site for the proposed prison farm.

Whilst district residents in general cannot be said to be pleased at the present location of the Abo. Settlement, the Minister's statement makes it apparent that there is a possibility of a change for the worse, by substituting for aboriginals 'first offenders and others.' The word 'others' might stand for the whole gamut of gaol-birds — and, anyhow, 'first offenders' are often such only because it is the first time they were caught.²³

By October the settlement had experienced two more cases of leprosy, the patients being escorted immediately to the notorious leprosarium on Peel Island by a local police officer, Constable Lange. The press described the incidences as: 'disquieting,' and although the cases had been described as being curable, pointed out that the recurrence of the disease added additional argument for the removal of the settlement, '... from this closely settled district.' The press also added: '... The Home Secretary in a statement to a Brisbane paper in reference to the previous case, said that the aborigines were kept at the settlement, so there was no danger of the disease spreading. Perhaps not, but those infected individuals may have been among the many aborigines who come and go freely through the local towns, attending shows, sports etc, and the bringing of northern aborigines to this settlement should be stopped immediately.'²⁴

The *South Burnett Times* continued to publish articles calling for the closure of the settlement and claiming that the site was not suitable for an aboriginal reserve. Yet over the following months even this strident voice of criticism was forced to admit that the government was unlikely to make any moves to relocate the aboriginal community.²⁵

By 1934 the settlement was run by a staff which consisted of the superintendent, four white officials and a matron, also white, who was in charge of the girls' dormitory. The inmates of this dormitory were isolated from normal community life. Residents of the settlement continued to receive rations and some were given positions for which they received a small wage. The hospital came under the control of a white matron who was aided by two white nurses and several aboriginal assistants.²⁶

The hospital at the settlement was a cause of some considerable controversy and it was not always staffed by competent or even qualified people. In 1911 a qualified nurse named Mary Elizabeth O'Loughlin was appointed head nurse to the hospital and at first she appeared to be giving excellent service. However, during an official visit to the hospital in 1913 by the chief protector, the hospital was found to be in a disgusting state, the wards were unclean and a number of young and apparently strong people had recently died there. Mary O'Loughlin was also the subject of allegations of indiscretions, charges were made against her that she had been '... fighting with the gins in the camp,' that she was having an 'indiscreet' relationship with an aboriginal man and that she had supplied the inmates with alcohol.²⁷

Mary O'Loughlin was appointed on 4 December, 1911.²⁸ Her appointment was for a six months' probationary period at a salary of £75 per annum with board and lodgings.²⁹

During her probationary period Mary O'Loughlin gave 'complete satisfaction,' to her employer and to the visiting surgeon, Dr David Junk, and in June 1912 it was recommended that she be confirmed in her position with a salary increase to £85, the extra money to be paid because O'Loughlin had three children dependant upon her. Both the appointment and salary increase were approved in July 1912 and another salary increase of £90 per annum followed in January 1913.³⁰

In August 1913 Richard B. Howard, the chief protector, upon returning to Brisbane from Gayndah, paid a surprise visit to Barambah and was horrified at what he found at the settlement hospital. Howard later wrote that the reason for his visit was that for some time he had been concerned about the high death rate at the hospital. In subsequent correspondence on the matter he was to write: 'I have thought the death rate more than unusually heavy.'³¹ Howard stated that at the time of his arrival he found the medical officer vaccinating Barambah residents but on inspecting the hospital he found the wards and the entire interior of the building '... far from clean.' He reported to the under secretary of the Home Department that the hospital appeared to have been in a dirty state for some time, and, upon visiting the quarters of Nurse Mary O'Loughlin, found them to be in the same condition. In the hospital ward he discovered two patients suffering from advanced cases of pneumonia and it appeared that these patients were not receiving the necessary treatment and care. A few hours after Howard's arrival one of these patients died. Howard added: '... as a matter of fact I was impressed with the idea that both the medical officer and the nurse exhibited a blameworthy lack of interest in the welfare of these sick people.' Howard went on to question the death rates at the hospital, claiming that a number of young and relatively healthy people had died there. Howard added: '... To me it appears diligent nursing and attention, both in regard to food and in other ways, is most essential, and I am very reluctant to say such attention does not appear to have been in evidence recently.' Howard claimed

that the comfort and care of the aboriginal people should have taken priority over all other considerations and recommended that the services of another doctor be secured, at a lower scale of payment and with more frequent visits. He also recommended that Mary O'Loughlin be advised that her services would no longer be required.³²

Mary O'Loughlin was dismissed from her post on 29 August, 1913, her services to be terminated from 30 September that year.³³

The dismissal notice evidently came as something of a surprise to Mary O'Loughlin, she replied to the chief protector on 3 September, 1913, demanding an explanation for her dismissal. She stated that her dismissal had been an unjust action, particularly as her letter of dismissal had given no reasons for her dismissal, only stating that her work was unsatisfactory. In subsequent correspondence Mary O'Loughlin pleaded to have the notice of dismissal withdrawn and that she be allowed to resign, she wrote: 'I beg of you to do me a favour ... to have that dreadful dismissal withdrawn and to allow me to resign. Where could I get another position if it was known that I was dismissed from the Blacks?'³⁴ O'Loughlin was later allowed to resign from her post.³⁵

Subsequent documents concerning Mary O'Loughlin's dismissal revealed that: '... scandalous rumours and reports were current among the natives concerning her, on four or five occasions she rode through the bush to Wondai township and *Barambah* cattle station ... with only a half caste man for company.' The enquiry found that her manner with the aboriginal people was: '... over familiar, and on one occasion she was heard by an official to say, in a joking way, to an old male aboriginal before the others: "I can see your bunga, Gambo", bunga is a native name for penis.' The enquiry also found that many Barambah people refused to go to the nurse for attention because of the remarks she sometimes made.³⁶

The difficulties of nursing at the hospital under various administrations were perennial, as Blake points out in his thesis, from 1920 to 1938 the hospital came under the administration of seven different matrons and nine assistant nurses.³⁷

Other buildings in the settlement included a boys' dormitory and a separate dormitory for unmarried mothers and their children. The people at the settlement lived in wooden cottages, there were approximately forty of these in 1934, those who were not fortunate enough to have such a cottage lived in gnyah camps arranged freely according to clan associations.³⁸



The hospital at Barambah, Easter 1932.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 40811.

Notes and Sources
Chapter Seven
Progress and Paternalism at Cherbourg

1. M/C. 25 November, 1924, p 6.
2. Ibid.
3. *Barambah Cherbourg*, p 6.
4. M/C. 13 July, 1925, p 4.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Junk used to ride to Cherbourg from Wondai on, '... an old grey horse.' See: *Barambah Cherbourg*, p 8.
8. M/C. 6 October, 1925, p 8.
9. M/C. 25 September, 1926, p 6.
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11. M/C. 4 May, 1927, p 9.
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8

Life in the Cherbourg Dormitories

The dormitories at Barambah, one for women, one for girls and another for boys, were inhospitable places with wire meshed windows and locked at night. Into these dormitories were placed a variety of inmates, women who had been deserted by their husbands, orphans, and children who were in need of discipline. The dormitories contained their own kitchens and dining rooms.

Dormitory life was one of the first institutions to be established at Barambah, children who were perceived as being neglected were segregated from the main camp and placed into small rudimentary huts where they were cared for by two or three women. In 1909 another building was constructed as a single girls' dormitory and this was followed in 1910 by a dormitory for boys.¹ Life in these institutions was particularly harsh, during the early years of their existence the inmates received no beds or bedding and were forced to sleep on the floor, they did their own cooking on wood fires out of doors and were made to provide both their own firewood and water which had to be carried up to the dormitories from the nearby creek. The dormitories were run with a military-like precision and attention to detail and discipline, the matron and sub-matron daily inspecting the quarters for cleanliness. The girls received training as domestic servants — usually in the homes of the white staff at the settlement, an arrangement that was particularly agreeable to the white community.

Over the following years the system was so successful for the administrators of the settlement that it was expanded. Bleakley was a sound believer in the dormitory system and he increased it to include not only young boys and girls but also women and their children.²

Sam Murray was brought up in the boy's dormitory. He recalls:

When my foster parents died, I was put in the boys' dormitory. My foster mother died when I was about four, her name was Bella, and my father died a few years later. I must have been about nine or ten when he died ... There were always children of different ages in the dormitories, we grew up like a family, and even now there's a few blokes who have been reared up in the dormitory with me, the old fellows here, we still look at one another as family because we've all been treated the same way. It was strict, it was controlled by the superintendent. The food was pretty good, we had plenty of food, there was a mixture, at that time they had a vegetable garden. We weren't allowed out of the dormitories, anywhere we went, we went under supervision. We used to clean the yards up, the boys used to scrub the floors of the wards where they were camped, it had to be done before school. The school wasn't far from the dormitory, we'd go over to the girls' dormitory where they had an inspection ... we were inspected every morning before school. There was a big yard there, (at the girls' dormitory) and even the children off the community, they had to go there before they went to school, all the children would muster there. They had a matron to check up on the children, inspect us. If you had any nits in your head, the first thing they'd do was to take you over to one side, call a guy with the clippers, he didn't trim your hair he took the whole lot off, it used to be embarrassing. That taught us to look after our health, it was a part of our hygiene system. Some of them would look ridiculous with bald heads and we'd have some fun throwing off at one another, we used to tell them what their heads looked like, what shape it was.

In the dormitories we had beds and mattresses, sheets and pillows. They had a couple of girls, teenage girls from the girls' dormitory, who did the washing.

The boys' dormitory was where the children's shelter is now, as a matter of fact that building, I used to live in that same building, that was the boys' dormitory. The girls' dormitory was down where the rehabilitation centre now is, it was a two storey building, a

wooden building. The unmarried dormitory was in between, there's a block of flats there now. The school at that time was down from where the rehabilitation centre now is, at the site of the old gaol.³

In 1925 Bleakley was responsible for the construction of a large girls' home at the settlement. While this was still a strict form of segregation and disciplinary control, there were advantages. The new home was substantially larger than the old girls' dormitory, there were adequate cooking facilities and sleeping accommodation, a pantry, dining room, dressing rooms, an office and even a sewing room. The cost of the new facility was approximately £2000.⁴ The new building, the largest then on the settlement, was officially opened by the home secretary, James Stopford, on 2 October, 1925. The building was named: 'The Stopford Home for Aboriginal Girls'.⁵

On arrival at Barambah for the official opening, Stopford and his entourage were welcomed by: '... the populace who appeared in elaborate if scanty apparel.' A brass band played welcoming music and: '... five swarthy braves formed a striking tableau with raised spears and boomerangs.' The official group was met by Charlie Moreton, described as a 'full blooded aboriginal.' Moreton told the parliamentary representatives that he and the other aborigines at the settlement were grateful for what was being done at the settlement, and how the 'sympathetic treatment of them by the chief (William Porteus Semple) was appreciated.' Moreton added: 'We are learning civilization now, as we didn't learn it years ago. Now there's a lot of things we need, and a lot of improvements. Mr Stopford we want to ask you for a lot of things.'⁶

After the inspection of the settlement, the visitors, in what appears to have been a time-honoured custom, were given an 'excellent luncheon,' the meal, which, 'would have done credit to a first class hotel,' was served by, '... native girls in a manner that clearly indicated their adaptability to good and clean surroundings.'

After the luncheon, Stopford announced that he was going to have a large building removed from St Helena prison and transported to Barambah which the residents of the settlement could use as a recreation hall. Stopford added that: 'With wireless and pictures, their lot would be happier.' After the luncheon the home secretary officially opened the girls' hostel. The hostel was a two storeyed building with approximately one hundred beds. After further inspections the guests were given a 'sumptuous tea' in the girls' home and later a corroboree was staged by the light of camp fires. The report of the event ended: 'The weird and fantastic dances, the not unusual chanting of the natives and their picturesque attire and war paint combined to cast an enchanting spell over the white visitors, and it was only with great reluctance that their departure was taken amidst mutual good wishes and cheers.'⁷



Dormitory at Cherbourg, January 1933.

Source - John Oxley Library print number 59630.



Children at Cherbourg, circa 1937.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 45748.

While Stopford and his parliamentary colleagues had enjoyed a considerably extravagant meal for the opening of the new facility, the girls in the dormitory and those inmates of other dormitories were certainly not so fortunate. Food in these institutions was of the most basic nature. Stopford and his associates had enjoyed such luxuries as jellied crab, roast duck, roast chicken, salads, trifles and even devilled almonds, the inmates of the dormitories were usually served with somewhat more prosaic helpings of cold porridge, stale bread, watery stew or gruel and unsweetened tea. The bedding was inadequate, there were never enough of the thin blankets, and in winter the inmates sometimes slept together for warmth.⁸

Children who lived within the dormitory system were sometimes ordered to suck and swallow soap as punishment for telling lies or for other minor infractions of dormitory rules. The soap was so harsh that it frequently caused blisters to form on the tongues of the children and prevented them from eating.⁹

Under this system of paternalism and patronage, the dormitory mentality continued to expand. Over the following years the numbers of residents living in dormitories increased dramatically.¹⁰

For those living in the dormitories life was ordered, strict and profoundly institutionalised. As we have seen, inmates of the dormitories were kept strictly segregated from other residents of the settlement, passes had to be issued to those who wished to visit relatives on the reserve but these were day passes only and no night passes were allowed. The young girls felt the impact of this segregationist policy more than the other inmates, they were monitored for immoral behaviour and social relationships with the opposite sex were carefully scrutinised and controlled. At night the sleeping quarters were locked and aboriginal guards patrolled the barbed wire perimeter of the girls' dormitory.

Corrective procedures for rule infringements were severe and centred around the use of corporal punishment. The matrons frequently carried a cane, especially during tours of inspection or when inmates were examined for cleanliness. Any lapses in standard protocols were usually punished by several strokes of the cane. Other inmates were awarded deprivation of food as punishment, some were confined to their quarters, and there was also a much feared gaol, constructed at the rear of the girls' dormitory, where miscreants, even young children, were incarcerated for varying periods depending on their 'crimes'.

In a report on the dormitories, written by newly appointed Acting Matron D.M. Crawford to William Porteus Semple in 1934, Crawford claimed that there were insufficient clothes and the storerooms contained only few rations. She added: '... The pantry at the girls' dormitory was found in need of a good cleaning, especially where the vegetables had been stored, as one bag on which rotting turnips were lying was alive with grubs and the floorboards had begun to rot ... the gauze covered cupboard in the kitchen was also in a dirty condition being infected with cockroaches ... dead cockroaches having to be scraped out between the wire gauze and the woodwork ... The single men's quarters were very dirty and four girls who were under punishment were sent up each day to help ... until everything was again in a clean condition ... several of the schoolgirls reported to me that they were menstruating and I found that no provision was made for these girls in that respect, it being the accepted thing that they went to school in this condition with no protection apart from their bloomers. On this being reported to Mr Semple he furnished a supply of sanitary cloths, the girls made bags and four cloths are issued to the girls who wash and boil them and return them in the bag when they are finished with them.'¹¹

Matron Crawford also reported that in the girls' dormitory she found two or three beds had been pushed together with seven or eight girls sleeping on these beds covered with one or two blankets and the mattresses from other beds, there was also a drastic shortage of pillows. The shortage of blankets was reflected in the boys' dormitory where, on cold nights, the boys slept two to a bed. Eating and cooking utensils were very short and in order to supplement the existing pots, cooking was carried out in kerosene tins cut to size.¹²

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eight

Life in the Cherbourg Dormitories

1. QPP 1910 Vol 3, p 976.
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3. Author interview with Sam Murray, recorded at Cherbourg, Sunday 2 June, 1996.
4. QPP 1926, Vol 1, p 1023, see also, Barambah expenditure, 4 June, 1930, QSA HOM J778 30/5156.
5. QPP 1926, Vol 1, p 1018.
6. M/C. 6 October, 1925, p 8.
7. Ibid.
8. D.M. Crawford to Superintendent, Cherbourg Settlement, 31 October, 1934, QSA A/31710.
9. For further details of this practice (and also a sample of the soap used) see: QSA A31710 04548 and *Report on Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement* by C.D. O'Brien, acting public service inspector, dated 9 February, 1934, QSA A31710.
10. QPP 1928, Vol 1, p 941 and (1929) 1: p 1219.
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9

Growth at Cherbourg and Attempts at Assimilation

A percentage of the aboriginal people at Cherbourg worked at the settlement and were paid by the government, others, as we have seen, worked in Murgon or at homesteads where they were largely employed as servants or station hands. Those working at the settlement were employed in a number of ways, manufacturing aboriginal curios, in the sawmill, tending stock, fencing, growing vegetables and making general improvements to the community.

During the years of the Great Depression the aboriginal population of most Queensland settlements increased quite dramatically, although at Barambah, while there was certainly an increase in resident numbers, this increase seems to have been not quite as large. While no figures are available from the years 1920 to 1929, the population of Barambah for the year ending 1919 was approximately 496. From 1930 to 1934 there were approximately 826 people living there and this had increased to 936 from 1935 to 1939. The reason for this increase was, of course, the lack of work, and aborigines from widely diversified areas converged on Barambah where they could obtain both rations and work.

The population statistics of Cherbourg, revealed in the annual reports of the Aboriginal Department, carefully segregated full blood aborigines from those who were termed as 'half-castes'. In order to prevent the rise in the numbers of these aborigines of mixed blood, new legislation prescribed penalties for sexual offences against female aborigines and mixed blood aborigines by all persons other than aborigines. The annual report for 1935 stated that there were '... 343 full-bloods and 507 half castes' living at Cherbourg.¹

Life in the reserve at that time continued to be one of confinement and the suppression of freedom. The people of the settlement were kept relatively busy with their various tasks, in the fields, working in the mill, dormitories, hospital, kitchens or at a variety of other areas but if they wished to leave the reserve they first had to obtain the permission of the superintendent, W. Porteus Semple. Those who absconded were subjected to punishment under law and Semple was a strong believer in the strict letter of the law, appearing in the courts to either defend the absconders or to point out to the magistrates that the offender was of the recalcitrant type and needed punishing. For example two aboriginal men, Cedric Watcho and Leo Willeby, independently absconded in January 1938. Watcho was discovered camping on a nearby property and Willeby, who had attempted to travel to Mitchell to find work, was brought back under police escort ten days later. He told the court that he was employed at the Cherbourg sawmill but as the pay was very poor he had elected to find work elsewhere. Both men were admonished during the subsequent Murgon court hearing and placed into the custody of the settlement, but the police magistrate, F.G. Illidge, could easily have sent them to Boggo Road Gaol.²

Cherbourg resident Sam Murray clearly remembers William Semple and life at the settlement during Semple's tenure:

Semple settled a lot of differences, tribal differences. Years later, when I grew up, I used to work for his wife, they had a property and I worked for them. I got on pretty well with them, he was a different person there than what he was here. I suppose he had to show his authority here but down there I was treated as a (normal) working person.

There was a certain amount of (tribal differences), when I was small the tribes used to get up where the school (now) is, they used to settle their differences up there, it was all open space then. Well Semple used to get between them, it's a wonder he didn't get speared or something, especially by some of those northern fellows, they were a bit rough, they'd go off pretty quick ... Up where the school is now, that was the northern tribe, and up on the

hill behind where the old people's home is now (Ny-Ku Byun) there was a different tribe. They had their own little spots. They worked together and they intermarried and more or less came together when they started building houses. Before the houses were built they lived in gunyas, some of them were old tin huts, they weren't made, there were no posts in the ground, they'd just put forked sticks with a bit of iron ... some used bark from the gum trees, they'd just peel the bark off. There was hunting and fishing, mostly on the weekends and those that weren't working, they'd go hunting.³



Cherbourg cricket club, circa 1938.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 33408.

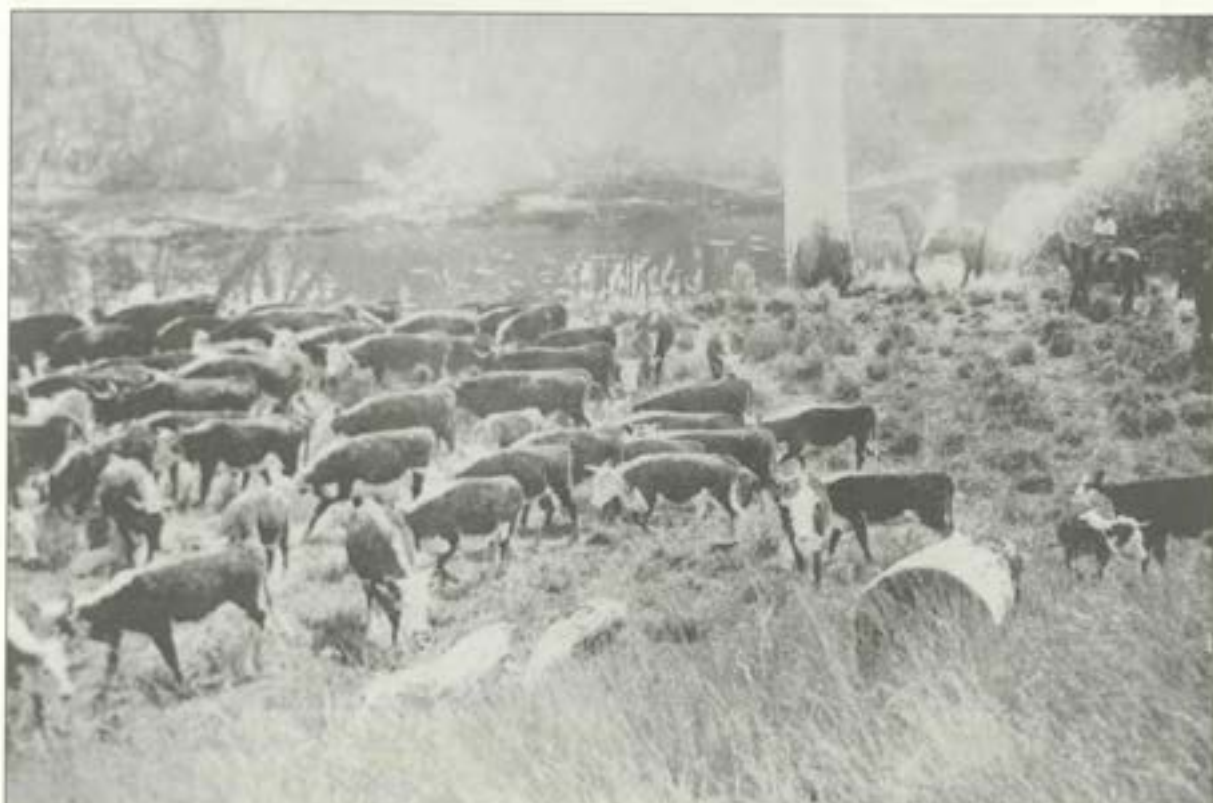
In 1939 the *Aboriginals' Preservation and Protection Act* replaced the antiquated 1897 act with a number of important additional stipulations. Welfare policies were upgraded and modernised, the management of reserves was outlined in detail and regulated legal systems were placed in force. Aboriginal councils were brought into being, these were to be comprised of duly elected members, but their decisions could be overturned by the director. Aboriginal people could not leave the reserves without permission and they could be forced into working for thirty-two hours each week.

During the Second World War the numbers of aboriginal people living on the settlement actually decreased, primarily as there was an abundance of outside work available. Since then the population of the settlement has steadily increased, from approximately 876 in 1946, to 1249 in 1964, although these figures cannot be relied upon as there were, of course, varying death and birth rates, out-migrations and in-migrations from and to the settlement and sometimes inefficient official census counts that included people who were no longer permanently living there.

Some people living at the settlement found work harvesting peanuts by hand during the Second World War. At that time there was an acute shortage of manpower and aboriginal people from settlements in the north and other regions were brought to the South Burnett under a gang system, organised by the Peanut Marketing Board, to work in the fields for £1 per day. At that time it was considered a good wage and many of the people who carried out the work were able to provide their families with extra comforts for the following winter, especially warmer clothing and bedding.⁴

In 1945, in order to help alleviate the shortage of water, which was creating problems with cattle production, a boring plant was purchased and water was obtained in various paddocks that had once been considered as useless as they were too dry. Four bores were sunk and fitted with

engines, pumps, tanks and troughs. A training farm had been established in January that year, this was comprised of 703 acres. The concept was to use the land for mixed farming and to train those who showed any aptitude for such work.⁵



Mustering cattle at Cherbourg circa 1946.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 107416.



Baling hay, aboriginal training farm, Cherbourg, circa 1952.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 78715.



Cherbourg sawmill, circa 1946.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 107415.



Cherbourg sawmill buildings, circa 1947.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 107403.



Manual training class, Cherbourg circa 1946.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 107433.



Domestic science class, Marlene Wilholt, extreme right, Grace Franks, spooning mixture. Cherbourg circa 1946.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 107434.

The training programme was, reportedly, an immediate success and rural endeavours were growing dramatically. The first Cherbourg annual show was held at Cherbourg in September 1945. The show comprised of ring events and the usual displays of vegetables, flowers, fancy work, culinary arts and other displays.

During 1946 a modern dairy was constructed and an extensive programme of fencing had been carried out. The trees on three hundred acres of land had been ringbarked and cleared and within six months the settlement was expecting a supply of electricity that would greatly enhance not only the personal lives of Cherbourg residents, but would also revolutionise the dairy industry at the settlement and many other aspects of rural production.⁶

On Friday 23 April, 1948, a new recreation hall was opened at Cherbourg by the minister for health and home affairs, Mr A. Jones, who stated at the time that he was astonished when he had first seen the hall, more particularly because it had been constructed not with government funding but using funds and labour provided by the people of Cherbourg. Following the official opening a concert was held in the hall, the local press reported that this featured: '... songs, sketches, dances, pianoforte duet, vocal duets and the Leaf Band orchestra. Jack O'Chin was in his usual good form with songs and numerous items.'⁷



The war memorial at Cherbourg commemorates those who served and died during the various wars.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

In June 1951 an honour board was unveiled in the hall, this board was dedicated to the men of Cherbourg who had gone to fight in the two world wars. It contained the names of the twenty-nine men who had fought in the First World War and nineteen men who fought in the Second World War. Of those who had enlisted for the Great War, one man was killed in action and in the Second World War four had died. One more person from Cherbourg was later killed in Korea.⁸

In 1958 a new hospital was built at Cherbourg, this had originally been constructed as a T.B. hospital to accommodate patients from all over southern Queensland, but with improving health standards such a hospital was finally deemed unnecessary and the complex was converted to a general hospital. The construction of such a hospital had been a contentious issue in the region. Dr B. Monz of Murgon, for example, had strongly claimed that such a hospital was unnecessary, stating that the existing medical facilities were quite adequate to treat cases of T.B. and that an expansion was required in general facilities rather than the construction of a new T.B. hospital.⁹ A committee was appointed to meet with Monz and to investigate the issue, the committee later stated that fifteen extra beds were required in the general section of the hospital, two new beds in the maternity section, a new labour ward and a new operating theatre. Deputy chairman of



Secondary school children at Cherbourg, circa 1958.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 78805.

the hospitals board, Mr H.W. Cheers, told the press that the number of T.B. patients was causing over crowding in the Cherbourg General Hospital.¹⁰

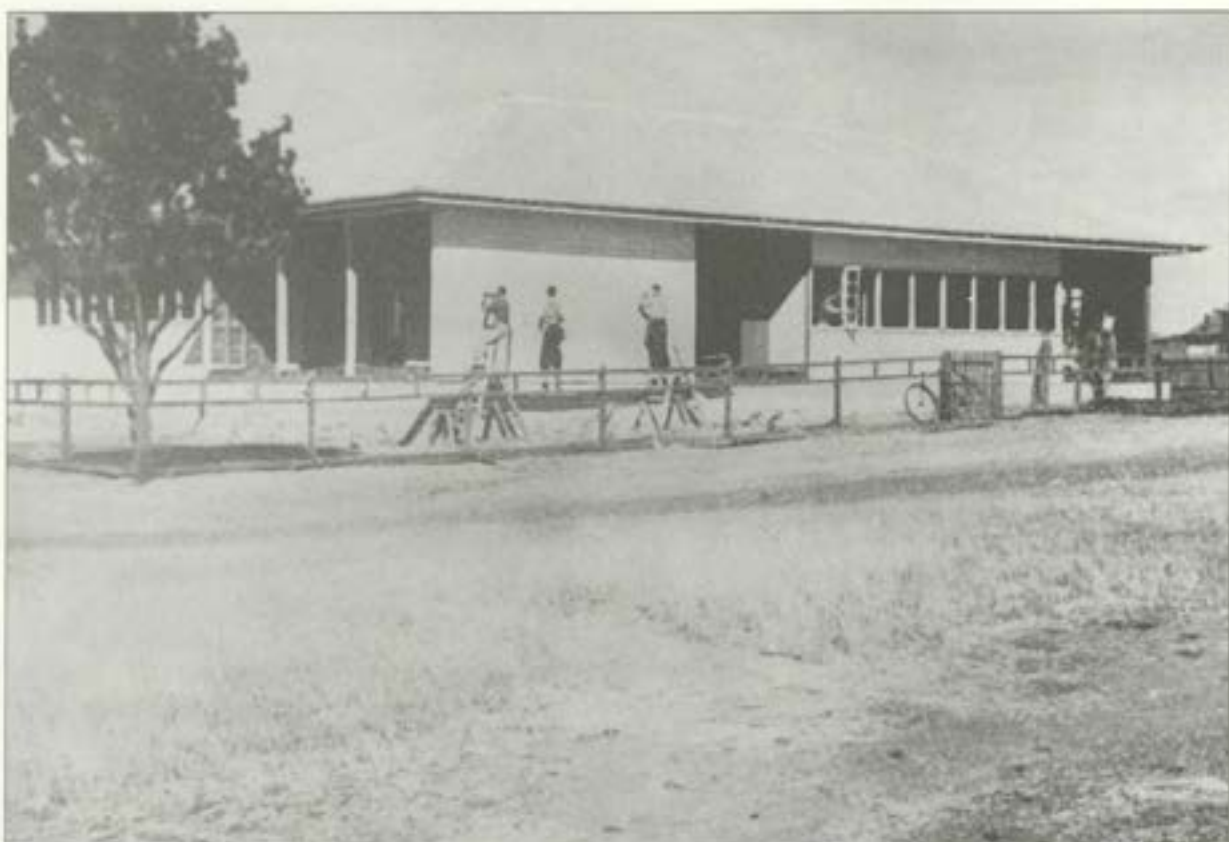
Tenders for the original T.B. hospital were called in 1955 and the contract for its construction was awarded to a Brisbane contractor, Mr M.J. O'Leary, with a tender price of £105,086/-. The contract included provision for the inclusion of the T.B. ward, nurses' quarters, a laundry with a hot water tank and stand and other equipment, a kitchen block with refrigeration and cooking facilities, fencing, sewerage and storm water drainage. Architect for the project was F.L. Cullen.¹¹ Progress on the hospital was, however, slow, but by 1958 it was nearing completion. By March that year all that remained of the project was to complete some minor sewerage work and provide beds and lockers. The press then described it as: '... one of the most up to date of its type in the Commonwealth.'¹²

The new hospital was opened by the federal health minister on Friday 11 April, 1958. It was an auspicious occasion at Cherbourg, the opening took place from a dais erected at the front of the hospital and members of the official party approached the dais through a guard of honour of Cherbourg scouts, cubs and marching girls. Following the opening, the official party was taken on a tour of the complex followed by: '... a sumptuous afternoon tea on the lawn near the staff quarters.'¹³

One of the longest serving members of this hospital was Matron Cornelia Lillian Rynne, who retired from that position in April 1967. Upon her retirement the press claimed:

April Fool's Day has a very dear place in the heart of Matron Conn Rynne of the Cherbourg Hospital, it was April 1, 1936, that Matron Rynne came to Cherbourg as Sister Rynne, and eighteen months later she was promoted to matron, a position she has held for twenty-nine and a half years ... She remembers that shortly after her appointment she applied for leave to do her child welfare training but the authorities didn't think she would be at Cherbourg long enough to warrant the expense.

The woman who remembers the hospital laundry as a 10 gallon boiler in the middle of the hospital back-yard and three round tubs under the house has seen many changes at Cherbourg. The laundry is now fully automatic with washing machines and drying room. Matron Rynne remembered that the hospital refrigeration in her early days was one household ice box, and if the aboriginal ice-man, who went to Murgon for the ice, paused on his way home for a game of cards, all she got was a wet ice-bag. Today the hospital has a walk-in cold room plus four modern refrigerators. The large modern hospital which is now Matron Rynne's domain was taken over last October (1966) by the South Burnett Hospitals Board.¹⁴



Maternal and child welfare clinic, Cherbourg, circa 1953.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 78733.



Child welfare, Cherbourg circa 1959.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 78840.



The aboriginal general and TB hospital, Cherbourg, circa 1959.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 78799.



Cherbourg Hospital, circa 1970.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 74706.

Matron Rynne was born at Roma in 1908, the eldest child in a family of four children. She was educated at St Columba's Convent at Dalby and began her nursing training at the Dalby Hospital. As a doubly-certified sister she nursed at Charleville, Dalby, and Maryborough before taking up her appointment as a sister at Cherbourg. Matron Rynne was awarded an M.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June 1968, following her retirement she lived at Castra, the retirement home at Murgon. She died in 1988 and was buried on 5 September that year at the Murgon lawn cemetery.¹⁵

Other medical facilities at the settlement included maternal and child welfare centre and a dentist's surgery.¹⁶

In 1974 patients at the Cherbourg Hospital complained that they were not receiving adequate treatment, the cases followed the death of a baby boy named Densil Dewner, aged eighteen months, who had died at the hospital following an attack of gastro-enteritis. At that time at least twenty-seven children had been admitted to the hospital, although all the others were expected to live. The children all appeared to have received sound treatment at the hospital, but another patient, Joseph Landers, had also been taken to the hospital with a broken arm and rather than having the arm placed into plaster, the hospital staff had merely put it into a sling. The child's grandmother and guardian, Mrs Maggie Landers, later told the press in Brisbane that when she had first taken Joseph to the hospital the bone had been protruding from the skin and the child had remained at the hospital for two months. However, when he was discharged, he kept crying with the pain and despite pain killing tablets dispensed from the hospital the child had remained in acute discomfort. He was later sent to Brisbane for treatment. Another case involved a man named Noel Harrison of Murgon who, because he was of aboriginal descent, was admitted to the Cherbourg Hospital following a slight stroke. He was carried into the hospital on 2 May, 1957, and allegedly not examined or given any treatment from that time until he was discharged on 9 May. Legal officer for the Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, Charles Renouf, later stated that he met Harrison in the street following his discharge and claimed that he was partially paralysed down one side. Harrison later went to Brisbane for treatment. Health Department officers refuted these allegations, claiming that full and reasonable care had been supplied to the patients.¹⁷

The allegations created a storm in both Cherbourg and Murgon, the hospital superintendent, Dr J.B. Rowsell, was highly regarded at Cherbourg, yet the allegations had forced him to threaten to resign and many Cherbourg residents signed a petition calling for him to reverse his decision. Demonstrators waving placards appeared outside the home of Charles Renouf, they chanted: 'Rowsell for Cherbourg' and the Cherbourg Community Council banned Renouf from the settlement. In Brisbane the Aboriginal Legal Service stated that they deplored the 'brow-beating' of Mr Renouf and claimed that as they had received other cases of maltreatment at the hospital, there was clearly, '... something wrong at the hospital.' The chairman of the Murgon Shire Council, Cr. G.W. Roberts, told the press that there was nothing wrong at the hospital and he pointed out that the hospital was one of the most modern in the state.¹⁸

The chairman of the Cherbourg council wrote to the editor of the *Sunday Mail* in 1974 stating: 'A petition and 321 signatures has been forwarded to the Premier. We take exception to Mr Renouf's remarks. We say they are incorrect. We desire to place on record by this petition the



Matron Cornelia Lillian Rynne, one of the longest serving matrons of the Cherbourg Hospital.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

high esteem in which the nursing staff and in particular the Medical Superintendent is held by the people of Cherbourg.¹⁹ Former Matron Cornelia L. Rynne, also stated that she had worked with the medical superintendent for eleven years and that he was on call twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. Never once during her tenure as matron had the doctor ever refused to make a special visit to see a sick patient. Matron Rynne refuted allegations that other hospitals would not accept an aboriginal patient or that the compound fracture of the child's arm had not received treatment, she stated that had the arm received a compound fracture the patient would have been immediately transferred to Brisbane.²⁰

By the 1960s conditions at Cherbourg had improved quite dramatically, men were paid the award wages as prescribed under the *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act* and most of the women who were then employed as domestics were also receiving the basic rate of £3/15/- per week. These were largely employed either at the hospital or in the dormitories. Today there are in excess of 1800 people living at the settlement.

A new school, the third such institution at the settlement, was constructed by the State Works Department in 1966 and officially opened on 19 November that year. As we have seen, the longest serving head teacher at Cherbourg was Robert Crawford who commenced his duties in 1928 and retired in 1964.²¹ In March 1964 when Crawford retired a report of his time at the settlement claimed:

A man, who came to Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement in November, 1928, with the intention of staying three years, will retire on Friday after 35 years as head teacher of Cherbourg School.

He is Robert Trevor Crawford, who has seen about 1900 children pass through his school since he took over on November 1, 1928. Mr Crawford is now teaching the grand-children of his first pupils.

Mr Crawford and his wife have given 55 years, between them, to the education of aboriginal children. Mrs Crawford retired last Friday after 20 years of teaching at Cherbourg. She started the domestic science section of the school, at which she taught until 1949, when she transferred to the primary section.

Mr Crawford said this week that what kept him at Cherbourg longer than his proposed three years was the challenge that presented itself with the education of the aboriginal children. He said that education at Cherbourg had been making and would continue to make, great strides. The scholarship examination was introduced in 1956 and many children are attending the Murgon High School ... Mr Crawford, who joined the Queensland Education Department in April, 1914, will have completed 50 years of service next month ...

When he came to Cherbourg the school was under the control of the Department of Health and Home Affairs. Cherbourg School was transferred to the control of the Education Department 19 months ago.²²

The attitude of white residents at the nearby town of Murgon towards the Cherbourg community has, over the years, been mixed. There is little doubt that there has been a certain amount of racist stereotyping, by both the aboriginal and white communities, and also a considerable misunderstanding of the aboriginal use of alcohol. While only a small proportion of aboriginal people from Cherbourg regularly drank in Murgon and even fewer drank to excess, this led to the erroneous assumption that all aboriginal residents at Cherbourg were used to drinking to excess. Yet there has been little consideration that the town of Murgon has greatly benefited from the economic proximity of Cherbourg, residents of the community frequently purchasing their requirements in the town, food, alcohol, clothes, stationery, building products, office equipment and many other items. The town has also benefited from the introduction of added services for both the aboriginal and white communities.

The inaugural Cherbourg Community Council elections were held on 26 May, 1966 and four members were elected to this first council. Jack O'Chin, (Imperial Service Medal) was elected first chairman. The council was originally comprised of four members but this was increased to five members in 1973. This council operates in much the same way as any other local government authority, it is responsible for council policy, the welfare of the community's inhabitants, and the provision of by-laws.²³



Steer riding at the Cherbourg annual show, circa 1959.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 107374.



Boy Scouts, Cherbourg, circa 1958. Left: Gordon Daylight, middle: J. Grey, right: Morris Micklow.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 78796.



Students at Cherbourg Primary School, teacher Mr McCarthy, circa 1952.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 718623.



Primary school manual training class, circa 1959.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 65921.



Debutantes at the Cherbourg annual ball, 1951.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 76170.

In December 1969 a potter, Carl McConnell, was appointed to the settlement, McConnell had been trained in the art at the Chicago Art Institute and the Queensland Institute of Technology. It was envisaged that he would in turn train men and women from Cherbourg in pottery, which would ultimately provide the settlement with another avenue of income. McConnell was known world-wide for his works, he had taught pottery and sculpture at the Queensland Institute of Technology for seven years and his works were being displayed in galleries and art collections in many countries.²⁴ A new potter, Con Vandermaat, was appointed to Cherbourg in 1977. Vandermaat had trained at a pottery factory in Holland and believed that the output of the Cherbourg pottery factory could be substantially increased through the use of moulds and by implementing a system that promoted a distinct style of Cherbourg pottery.²⁵

By the mid 1970s, when Gerard Guthrie completed his thesis fieldwork on the settlement, he reported that the services at Cherbourg included, in addition to the administration office, a post office, the farm and training farm, a bakery — then under construction — a butcher's shop and a general store. There were numerous industries including a boomerang factory, a joinery and trade training workshop, the pottery shop, a prefabricated housing factory and the sawmill. A courthouse operated at the settlement, there was also a jail and a police station. Associations included a branch of the Q.C.W.A., and girl guides, there was a community hall and a showground. The welfare of the residents was administered through institutions such as the boys' home, a child welfare clinic, several churches including the Australian Inland Mission, the Church of England and the Catholic Church. Other institutions included the Cherbourg Primary School, a home training centre, the men's home, a pre-school centre and the hospital.²⁶

For many years Cherbourg has been an important regional centre in the production of milk and meat produce. By 1973 Cherbourg boasted a milking herd of 75 A.I.S. cows, a 300 head piggery and 850 beef cattle. Cream was supplied to the butter factory at Murgon. In 1971–72 cream sales were valued at \$5791, 8582 bales of lucerne were stored and 2450 bushels of grain were harvested. The joinery, sawmill and carpentry shops were kept particularly busy. That year eighteen completed fabricated homes were sent to other aboriginal centres from Cape York to the

New South Wales border. In 1971-72 the sawmill processed almost 50,000 super feet of hardwood, 33,776 super feet of pine and more than 46,000 super feet of slash pine and oak. At the same time a curio section and the three-kiln pottery were supplying goods for sale in Brisbane.²⁷

In November 1973 the curio section of the Cherbourg marketing system was described as being a 'gold mine' for the community, the items made by the people employed there were in great demand, especially from overseas visitors. There were many other avenues for training and employment, painting, plumbing, the building and maintenance of roads, drivers of the large mechanical fleet which consisted of tractors, a crane, trucks, utilities and other lighter vehicles, all these were serviced at the community garage. Cabinet making and joinery were other skills being acquired by young men at the community. The settlement was a thriving, busy enterprise. During 1973 the local shop turned over \$105,000 and a new butcher's store had recently opened, production at the training farm was increasing and additional areas of previously heavily timbered lands were being cleared for agricultural use.²⁸

Some of the early Catholic figures resident in Cherbourg included Father O'Halloran, Father Lee and Father Stratford, who held mass in the community hall. The Catholic Church was constructed in 1962 and opened in May that year. This church was built by Jack Carroll with the help of Colin Hegarty, Keith Gadd, David Simpson and Levey Chambers (junior). Catholic school-children generally attended the Murgon Convent, and a Catholic high school, Rosary College, operated in Murgon from 1942 until 1970.²⁹

The Church of England has had a presence in Cherbourg since 1919, the first service was held at the settlement on 2 February, 1919, and was presided over by Vicar R.W. Shand. Services were conducted in the community hall near the show-grounds and the church was built in 1939, being dedicated and opened by the Right Reverend Bishop H. Dixon on 19 February that year.³⁰

As we have seen, the Australian Inland Mission Peoples Church commenced operations at the settlement in 1928. In addition to the missionaries already mentioned, among the early missionaries to Barambah were Miss Cavanagh and Mrs Rainwood. Many Cherbourg residents have themselves become lay preachers and deacons of the mission, studying at the Singleton Bible College. The mission has always been deeply involved in community affairs and youth activities.³¹



Cherbourg sawmill, Robert Dalton and Harry Emmerson, circa 1970.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 34410



Donald Malone, woodwork at the aboriginal training farm, Cherbourg, 1970.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 34402



Aboriginal training farm, circa 1970. Left to right: Bowman Hill, Ernie Williams, Harold Chapman, Victor Bond, Lenny Malone.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 34401.

In 1976 a supermarket was opened at Cherbourg, the building was constructed using timber sawn at the Cherbourg sawmill. Sections were prepared at the pre-fabricated workshop and the entire building was constructed using local labour. The shop, which was situated adjacent to the butcher's store, employed fourteen local people.³²

Housing in the settlement was, for many years, segregated into two distinct areas, houses for white people — the supervisor and his staff — being located at the lower end of the settlement closer to Barambah Creek, with houses for aboriginal residents being located on the high ground on the other side of the main street, Barambah Avenue. While this kind of spatial dualism seemed to be acceptable to both aboriginal and white communities, and there were no distinct rules preventing the aboriginal people from going into the white residential area, such a transgression of accepted custom was generally frowned upon by the white community living there. The people of Cherbourg have long had their own local police and court system, although this system has, on several occasions, come under severe criticism. Aboriginal police were installed at various settlements from as early as the 1920s, and the system of aboriginal police control was formalised in 1945. However, it was sometimes a thankless task, the aboriginal police recruits were drafted from within the aboriginal community itself and these recruits often found that they were at variance with their own families and friends. The turnover of such police officers was extremely high. These officers were appointed by government officials, they were generally poorly trained and their powers of arrest were severely limited. They were also severely underpaid, in comparison with white police officers, for the tasks they performed.³³ The police had the authority to enforce settlement rules, including entry permits and the control of alcohol. Originally referred to as trackers, some of the men who have served in this capacity include Jimmy the Tracker, Peter Stanley, Johnno McGrath, Norman Brown, George Munroe, Snowy Fraser, Cecil Garvey, George Rigby and Fred Beckett. Aboriginal sergeants of police have included Levey Chambers

(senior) Jack Davidson, Harry Johnson and Godfrey Daylight. In 1969, upon recommendations made by the Aboriginal Advisory Council, white police officers were stationed at the settlement. In 1979 there was a white sergeant and constable stationed there.³⁴

The court at Cherbourg operated in the same manner as any Australian court. In 1979 there were four aborigines appointed as justices of the peace, these administered the courts and were responsible for conducting court hearings.³⁵

The quality of housing at the settlement has varied greatly over the years. As we have seen, originally the residents lived in gunyahs with some cottages being later constructed, although the publication *Barambah Cherbourg* stated that these were, '... mainly of the slab type with earthen floors ... One such building was used as a distribution point for rations.'³⁶ As Guthrie outlined in his thesis, at the time of his investigation there were four distinct types of houses at Cherbourg, the first, and certainly the best, were those occupied by the white community, these were of a more solid construction and contained many modern conveniences. The second type of housing were small shacks. These were overcrowded, as were almost all the other types of aboriginal residences, they had no ceilings, no floor coverings, shutters rather than windows and the roofs were of corrugated iron. These homes were particularly cold in winter and hot in summer. The third type of housing at the settlement were somewhat better residences in a conventional style, but these too were poorly constructed. The fourth style of home, and there was only one of these when Guthrie completed his investigation, was a modern pre-fabricated Housing Commission style of home that was occupied by the chairman of the community council. Houses at the settlement today vary in style and comfort from weatherboard homes through to besser-block and modern comfortable constructions made specifically to suit individual family needs. These are being constructed by white builders with the aid of aboriginal helpers and apprentices.³⁷

In 1976 when Brisbane journalist Peter Hall visited the settlement he found a community that demonstrated a remarkable example of modernity coupled with several social problems including those of apathy and alcohol. Hall reported that life, on the surface, appeared to be very good at Cherbourg and that the facilities were excellent. Residents enjoyed many facilities and services that were not available to those living outside Cherbourg, free water and sewerage services, reduced rates for electricity, the hospital even had X-ray equipment, a service which was lacking at the Murgon Hospital and Murgon residents requiring X-ray examination had to travel to Cherbourg. Homes were rented at between \$12 and \$6 per week, depending upon family income, there was an aggressive building program in place, the new supermarket was under construction and meat, produced at Cherbourg and killed at the Murgon abattoir, was available far cheaper than in Murgon butchers' shops. On the down-side, however, the social problems at the community still existed, particularly those of alcohol abuse and apathy — despite programmes instituted by the community council to encourage less alcohol consumption and the establishment of community businesses.³⁸

Throughout the 1970s farming pursuits increased and improved. In 1979 when the 75th anniversary of the settlement was celebrated, the resultant publication written by Cherbourg superintendent Harry Michel claimed:

The area of Cherbourg overall is 15,112 hectares. This comprises 3,112 hectares of freehold land and 12,000 hectares of Forestry Department leasehold. Included in the 3,112 hectares is 315 hectares maintained as an Aboriginal training farm.

This portion of land was purchased from Mr Frohloff in 1944. The farming enterprise comprises a dairy herd of A.I.S. cattle (120), an intensive piggery, using Large White and Landrace breeds, an area of 160 hectares under cultivation (land fronting Barambah Creek utilized for irrigation purposes), and it provides fodder and grain crops for local feed requirements.

The dairy in 1944 was Jersey cattle producing cream for butter production. In 1964, the herd was changed to the A.I.S. breed. This was done not only to increase volume of milk production, but also for vealer production. It was anticipated at this time that supply of cream to the South Burnett Dairy would eventually cease and in its place would be whole milk. This took place in 1973. The quality of the herd continues to improve with the acquisition of leading sires. Whole milk is collected daily from the dairy by bulk tanker.

The piggery commenced in conjunction with the dairy in 1944, utilizing skim milk. In 1975, a modern slatted floor piggery replaced the old styes. Pigs produced are killed for local

consumption through the local butcher shop and surplus are disposed of to either the Darling Downs Co-operative Bacon Association or through local markets.

Fodder and grain grown for local feed requirements include winter cereals (rye grass, oats, barley), summer (lucerne, sorghums) and also various fodder crops. There is also an orchard of 100 orange trees established.

All modern farm machinery and irrigation plant is used throughout and is operated by Aboriginal workmen.

It is worthy of note that Mr Arthur Wessling (now retired) was Farm Overseer for 32 years. Others who have contributed are Paddy Ardock (dairy), Frank Fisher, Hugh Kirk, John Gee Gee, Henry Willis, Percy Meredith, Alf Combo, Frank Roma, Jack McGrath.

The pastoral industry utilizes 14,797 hectares of land. Depastured on the country are some 300 head of predominantly Shorthorn cattle. All cattle produced are for local consumption and sold through the local butcher shop. Approximately 20 head are killed per month.

The stock enterprise provides employment for local Aboriginal workmen and the head stockman, who is a staff appointee, is Mr Cyril Bligh, a locally trained Aborigine.

Over the years, there has been considerable pasture improvement and upgrading of the herd and much of this development is attributed to the late Mr J.E. Bailey, manager, the Department of Primary Industries and a development committee, whose chairman was Mr Dick Wilson, Kingaroy.

Mention stock, and people such as Frank Johnstone, Herb McKinlay (McKinlays Camp), Albert Smith, Ernie Pope, Tom Stuckey, Ginger Slattery, Joe Hegarty (Snr.), and many others are talked about.³⁹

One of the superintendents of Cherbourg was George Sturges, he began his service with the Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs as a farm overseer at Palm Island and was promoted to acting-superintendent and then to superintendent. From Palm Island he was transferred to Cherbourg and for the following thirteen years, until 1966, he remained at Cherbourg as its superintendent. He retired from the department, aged sixty-five years, in 1970.⁴⁰

James Edgar Bailey was the manager at Cherbourg from 1966 until his sudden death in July 1976. His period of tenure realised a number of projects including the introduction of aboriginal pottery workshops and a prefabricated housing workshop, he was also instrumental in introducing kindergarten education in aboriginal communities and was interested in pasture improvement and the production of cattle and pigs. His successor, Harry Michel, subsequently recorded: 'In 1971 he, (James Bailey) went away on long service leave to Tasmania, he and his wife. I was (left) in charge, and all the pigs died ... from Q fever, and of course that was the end of the piggeries, we had to burn the whole lot down, and when he came back, they progressed onto building a new piggery, and while that was operating it was one of the best piggeries in the South Burnett, it was built under the guidance of the D.P.I.⁴¹ Sam Murray recalls: 'Jim Bailey, he was all right, I got on pretty well with him. He came here when I was working with the cattle, he was a fair man, he treated us right, he helped us, he started to help us, he helped us out personally, he was the one that recommended me for the first car that I bought.'⁴²

Harry John Michel was an integral part of the era of final white administration of Cherbourg. He began his career there on 7 March, 1956, working firstly as a storekeeper under the Department of Health and Home Affairs, a department he had first joined in 1952. Prior to joining the department he had operated a retail store at Coolabunia. When Harry Michel first arrived at the community he worked in the Cherbourg store, a building situated close to the superintendent's office, across the road from the present council complex in Barambah Avenue. At that time there was a staff of one European and four aboriginal people working at the store.

Harry Michel became welfare officer in 1958 and in 1960 was given the job of senior clerk in the administrative office, a post which later became administration officer. From that appointment Harry Michel was appointed assistant manager in May 1976.⁴³ Upon the death of James Bailey in July 1976, Harry Michel became acting manager, although his appointment as manager was not confirmed by the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement until September, 1978.⁴⁴

Harry Michel, like Bailey before him, did much for the Cherbourg community, he helped to establish sporting facilities, was instrumental in starting the cubs at Cherbourg and aided in developing the artifacts retail outlet. He retired in 1980 and now lives in Murgon.⁴⁵

Sam Murray recalls: 'When he (Harry Michel) came in, the atmosphere changed, the association with the superintendent, it changed. He was the sort of fellow who'd talk to anybody. He and Jim Bailey built up a relationship between themselves and the community. Bailey would come out and muster with us.'⁴⁶

In 1982 the Cherbourg Community Council asked the education minister, Bill Gunn, to give priority to the establishment of a college of technical and further education at Cherbourg.⁴⁷ Approval and funding for the construction of new council chambers for Cherbourg came in 1985, the grant being provided through the Community Employment Programme.⁴⁸

An important change in the status of Cherbourg came in 1986 when the Cherbourg administration was transferred from a reserve under the control of the state to a trust that was to be administered by the Cherbourg Community Council. While the community technically came under the administrative sphere of the Murgon Shire Council, in reality the change in status now meant that the Cherbourg Community Council itself became a local authority and was responsible for all local government functions within Cherbourg.⁴⁹ At that time Cherbourg was already fully controlled by the people of the community under a state government deed of trust, the deed having been officially handed to the council by the premier, Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen in August the previous year.⁵⁰

Notes and Sources

Chapter Nine

Growth at Cherbourg and Attempts at Assimilation

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2. SBT. 28 January, 1938, p 6.
3. Author interview with Sam Murray, recorded at Cherbourg, Sunday 2 June, 1996.
4. SBT. 14 May, 1942, p 3.
5. SBT. 1 November, 1945, p 1.
6. SBT. 31 October, 1945, p 5.
7. SBT. 6 May, 1948, p 3.
8. SBT. 21 June, 1951, p 5.
9. For details of Dr Monz's case in this regard see: K/H. 4 June, 1953, p 6.
10. K/H. 2 July, 1953, p 1.
11. SBT. 27 October, 1955, p 5.
12. SBT. 6 March, 1958, p 8.
13. SBT. 17 April, 1958, p 1.
14. SBT. 5 April, 1967, p 3.
15. Funeral address of Cornelia Rynne, given by the Reverend V. McNamara, Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.
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19. *Ibid.*
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21. *Barambah Cherbourg*, p 6.
22. SBT. 12 March, 1964, p 1.
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25. SBT. 12 January, 1977, p 7.
26. Guthrie, p 28.
27. QCL. 3 April, 1973, p 11.

28. SBT. 7 November, 1973, p 2.
29. *Barambah Cherbourg*, p 16.
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31. *Ibid.*
32. SBT. 12 January, 1977, p 3.
33. C/M. 11 July, 1995, p 13.
34. *Barambah Cherbourg, 1904–1979*, Cherbourg Anniversary Organising Committee, 1979, p 13 JOL. 35. *Barambah Cherbourg*, p 13.
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38. *Telegraph*, 26 and 17 August, 1976.
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42. Author interview with Sam Murray, recorded at Cherbourg, Sunday 2 June, 1996.
43. Letter of appointment from the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, dated 6 May, 1976, private collection, Harry Michel.
44. Letter to Harry Michel from the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement, dated 14 September, 1978, private collection, Harry Michel.
45. Author interview with Harry Michel, recorded at Murgon 1 June, 1996.
46. Author interview with Sam Murray, recorded at Cherbourg, Sunday 2 June, 1996.
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49. SBT. 7 January, 1987, p 3.
50. SBT. 4 February, 1987, p 1.

The Cherbourg Emu Farm

Emu farming in Australia is certainly a major capital enterprise worth many millions of dollars to farmers. The concept of emu farming seems to have come from South Africa where the farming of ostriches is also a highly lucrative industry worth in excess of \$25 million per annum.¹ Half a century ago farmers destroyed emus on their properties because they were eating crops, but there has now been a complete reversal of attitude. Emu farming in Australia seems to have been pioneered by Dr Hans Kaegi who, assisted by another Swiss farmer, set up an emu farm at Kalannie in Western Australia. The venture failed after three years, for a number of reasons, but the Western Australian government saw the potential and set up an experimental farm at Wiluna. This farm was handed over to the *Ngangganawili* aboriginal community in 1981 and is now the oldest surviving emu farm in Australia.²

Serious proposals to begin a similar emu farm at Cherbourg arose in 1987 and by the end of the year the Cherbourg Community Council had made a bid to incorporate such a farm at Cherbourg. The possible advantages were enormous, the farm itself was considered a financially viable project, the birds being used for their feathers, skin, meat, oil and eggs. The eggs are used for cooking and for their shells which can be decoratively carved. However, the tourist potential for such a farm was also strong. Jim Glover, of Murgon, gave an outline of the farm at Wiluna which he had helped to manage and also advised the Cherbourg council on the potential project.³

In September 1988 the creation of the emu farm was given the approval of the Queensland government. The project submission outlined plans for a fully fenced emu farm carrying up to three thousand birds, this would include breeding pens and various other buildings and be spread over an area of approximately one hundred hectares. The cabinet approval provided for funding of \$300,000, half from the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and half from the Queensland Aboriginal Welfare Fund.⁴

Over the following months the project moved rapidly ahead. Jim Glover was appointed manager of the new company, Cherbourg Emu Farm Pty. Ltd., permission had been granted for the capture of three hundred wild emus and the first seven emus had been moved onto the farm by April 1989. The farm was opened that month by state premier, Mike Ahern.⁵

There are two companies controlling the project, Cherbourg Emu Farm Pty. Ltd. and Barambah Emus Pty. Ltd. The Cherbourg Community Council owns all shares in Cherbourg Emu Farm Pty. Ltd. and also owns all shares, directly and indirectly, in Barambah Emus Pty. Ltd.⁶

Managing director of the farm was Peter McMahon, and it was envisaged that the farm at Cherbourg, the first such farm in the state, would be the source of breeding stock for other farms that might later come into existence in Australia.⁷

In 1994 the Cherbourg Aboriginal Community Council and the University of Queensland Gatton College became joint recipients in a grant worth \$272,500 to set up the world's first specialist emu tannery at Cherbourg. The three year grant from the Australian Research Council was an enormous boost to an industry which is seen as having a marketing potential in the millions. At the time of the grant work had already commenced on the construction of the tannery and the emu abattoir at Cherbourg.⁸

Prior to the grant, the emu farm at Cherbourg could only sell emu meat and oil, and was unable to meet the high demand for emu leather which is soft, pliable and one of the more expensive leathers on the market. Senior lecturer in animal production at the University of Queensland

Gatton College, Dr John Dingle, said that the grant would give local people employment and training and would provide funds for research into leather production and processing.⁹

In February 1995 farm manager Cecil Brown said that the farm had earned \$400,000 for the previous year and that the profits were being ploughed back into the business in order to expand production. Apart from the abattoir and tannery there were also plans to create a tourist facility where visitors could experience the taste of emu meat.¹⁰ Brown's farm report of April 1995 stated that at that time there were 1155 birds at the farm, including 60 farm bred adults, 279 wild adults, 45 yearlings and 771 farm bred chicks. The abattoir site had been cleared and work was progressing on the construction of the facility. Small numbers of birds were being killed at Gatton College and it was anticipated that the kills would continue once per month until the Cherbourg abattoir was opened.¹¹ The first manager of the emu abattoir was Ron Mason, a Murgon farmer and rugby league coach with Russell Coleman in charge of the tannery.

By September 1996 plans for the facility and production of the abattoir were moving rapidly ahead. At that time the abattoir was in production and it was anticipated that by the end of the financial year some 20,000 birds would be processed through the abattoir with emu steaks becoming readily available in the restaurants of Brisbane. Plans were also well under way for the construction of the Big Emu, a twenty-five metres high fibreglass walk-through structure with an elevator in its neck. The bird would be crouched on three large eggs which would house a restaurant, a souvenir shop and cultural workshop. The tourist complex will be constructed amid landscaped gardens on the top of Cherbourg's highest hill overlooking the Bjelke-Petersen Dam.¹²

In March 1997 news was released that the emu farm had been granted an export licence. Up until that time meat from the abattoir had been sold primarily to the local market and the coastal restaurant trade, but with growing interest being shown in emu meat world-wide, especially by overseas restaurateurs, the industry was gearing up to tap into markets in Japan, China, the United States and France.¹³

Notes and Sources

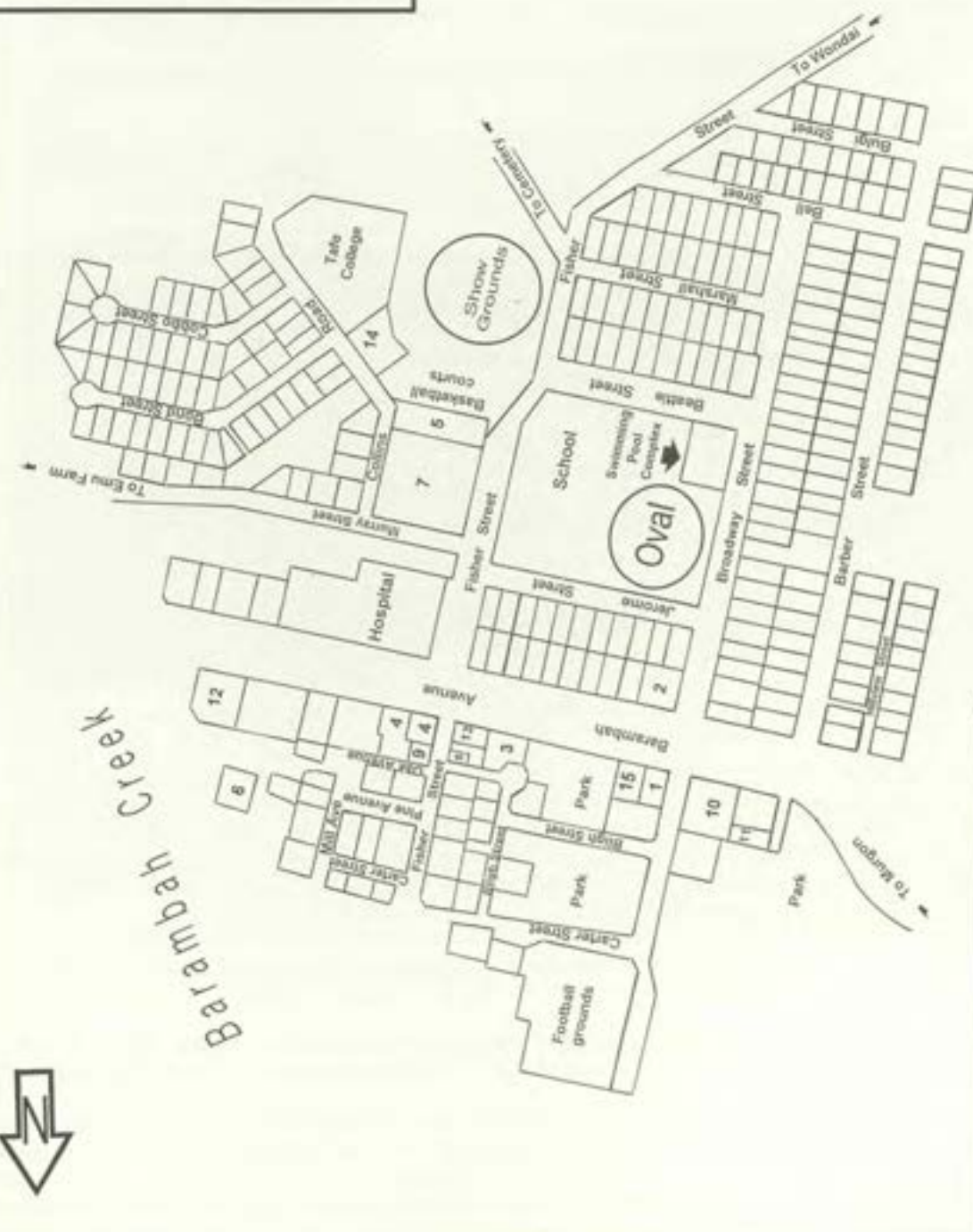
Chapter Ten

The Cherbourg Emu Farm

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LEGEND

- 1 Canteen
- 2 Respite
- 3 Council offices
- 4 Council store & works office
- 5 Gundooc daycare
- 6 Jail
- 7 Ny-Ku-Byun hostel for the aged
- 8 Police station
- 9 Post office
- 10 Pottery centre
- 11 Q.C.W.A.
- 12 Rehabilitation centre
- 13 Retail store
- 14 Student hostel
- 15 Welfare hall



TOWNSHIP OF CHERBOURG

11

Continued Progress At Cherbourg



The Cherbourg community today.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

During the more recent history of Cherbourg there have been many improvements and additions to the community's facilities. The aged person's home, the Ny-Ku Byun hostel in Fisher Street, was opened in April 1991 with Marjorie Carroll as its manager. The hostel is a cleverly designed building featuring rooms with private facilities, fans, televisions, sinks, furnishings and refrigerators, the dining room has a log fire burning in winter, the gardens were well designed and include a gazebo.¹

Other facilities included the construction of a community swimming pool, tenders for the pool were called by the council in 1992, the tenders closing by 7 April that year.²

The redevelopment of the Cherbourg Hospital was completed in February 1993, the work costing approximately \$300,000, it was officially opened that month by the health minister, Ken Hayward.³

By 1992 it was becoming increasingly obvious that a new bridge was required over Barambah Creek, the old bridge being subject to flooding during the wet season. Consulting engineers Edmiston and Taylor prepared an initial engineering assessment in 1992, their report recommended a higher bridge with new approach roads that would eliminate Dudley's Floodway on the Cherbourg side of the bridge and cut across the dairy farm access road. The council approved the construction of the bridge in 1994 and the Queensland Department of Transport administered the funding for its construction. The new proposed bridge would be eighty metres long, 11.5 metres wide and would include a walkway/bikeway.⁴

Funding for the new bridge over Barambah Creek was made available in 1995. The bridge, constructed that year by the Department of Transport at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million, was built just upstream from the original bridge. Named the 'Frank Fisher Bridge', in honour of one of Cherbourg's more prominent personalities, the bridge was officially opened on 8 June, 1996.⁵

Business activities at Cherbourg are varied, including, as we have already seen, the profitable dairy which, by 1994, was producing an average daily production of approximately one thousand litres of milk which returned a monthly milk cheque of about \$11,000. Beef cattle production was also profitable, returning \$23,000 in the 92/93 financial year rising remarkably to more than \$60,000 by April 1994 with expected sales of another \$24,000 before the end of that financial year. The joinery at Cherbourg was something of a financial problem, having lost \$40,000 in the 1992/93 financial year but the following year was set to break even. At that time the joinery was manufacturing all the coffins for the community. Also an area of concern for the council was the curio shop which was languishing, mainly due to the fact that aboriginal artists could make more money selling their products off Cherbourg at prices far better than the council could afford to pay.

Additionally, there were exciting plans to incorporate grape production into the community's endeavours, the wine industry was then beginning to grow on the South Burnett and community leaders at Cherbourg saw this as another way of increasing the region's profits. Other ventures included fish farming and a glazing shop.⁶



The new motel complex at Cherbourg nears completion, June 1997.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

A motel, the Nancy Chambers Hostel/Motel, Cherbourg's first motel, is currently under construction adjacent to the Nurunderi College of T.A.F.E. Nancy Chambers was a long term resident of Cherbourg, she was removed to Cherbourg from Winton during the 1920s and later worked in the girls' dormitory. Other projects currently on the drawing board include the Big Emu, the centre which, as we have seen, will incorporate as its first stage three enormous emu eggs.

The Cherbourg T.A.F.E. Centre, the Nurunderi College of T.A.F.E., was completed in January 1993 and opened to students in April that year. The T.A.F.E. is open to all students but aboriginal and islander students receive priority for course places.⁷ In October 1996 the college won the Nagi Binanga Award as the best provider of indigenous programs for Queensland, the award being presented at the Hilton Hotel in Brisbane by the industrial relations minister, Santo Santoro.⁸

In January 1997 the Cherbourg Community Council purchased a property known as *Rocklawn* situated adjacent to Kinbombi Creek. The property is to be used as a base for a Brahman and Charbray cattle stud in an effort to strengthen its economic base, and also to be utilised for training purposes.⁹



The Cherbourg T.A.F.E. centre.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.



Cherbourg residents now enjoy modern housing.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.



An example of the style and quality of the homes now being constructed at Cherbourg.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eleven

Continued Progress At Cherbourg

1. SBT. 6 March, 1991, p 4. For operations of this hostel see: hostel reports to council, all of which are incorporated into the Cherbourg Community Council minutes.
2. Plans and designs, Edmiston and Taylor, Consulting Engineers, letter dated 24 March, 1992, Cherbourg Community Council.
3. SBT. 19 February, 1993, p 5.
4. Engineer's monthly report, 8 April, 1994, Cherbourg Community Council.
5. T/C. 12 July, 1995, and author interview with Cherbourg Community Council officers, 19 September 1995.
6. Enterprise manager's report to council, 11 April, 1994, Cherbourg Community Council.
7. SBT. 15 January, 1993, p 10.
8. SBT. 4 October, 1996, p 3.
9. SBT. 7 February, 1997, p 4.

12

Some Prominent Personalities of Cherbourg

There have been many important personalities who have worked or lived at Cherbourg, artists, dancers, singers, politicians, sportsmen and women, whose work has been an inspiration not only to the aboriginal community, but also to the wider community generally.

Jack O'Chin

Among Cherbourg's more prominent personalities was Andrew (Jack) O'Chin. Jack O'Chin was something of a local legend, he was born at Clermont and educated at Cherbourg. During the 1930s he was regarded as one of the best rugby league fullbacks in the state. He started playing football in earnest at the age of sixteen years and remained with the game for the following thirty years.

Jack O'Chin was the first aboriginal person to represent the state at a national level when he represented Queensland at a national conference on aboriginal welfare that was opened by the prime minister, Sir John Gorton, in Melbourne, in 1968. O'Chin was the first chairman of the Cherbourg Aboriginal Community Council and also the first chairman of the Aboriginal Advisory Council when it was set up in 1966 to advise the state government on aboriginal affairs. He was the first warden appointed under the Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act and was a foundation member of the Relics Advisory Committee. In 1969 Jack O'Chin was appointed to the Captain Cook Bicentenary Committee.

At Cherbourg, Jack O'Chin was involved in the scouting movement and became a scout-master in the 1950s. He was involved in the economic welfare of the community, he managed the curio shop and helped to develop the pottery training programme, he was also heavily involved in social and welfare programmes, he and his wife, Nellie, were the managers of the boys' home at Cherbourg.

In August 1978 Jack O'Chin died suddenly at his Cherbourg home, following a stroke which occurred three days before his 61st birthday.¹

Leslie Charles Stewart

Leslie Charles Stewart was born in 1925 at Camooweal, the son of an aboriginal woman and a white man, he was the second youngest in a family of twelve. When he was five years of age his mother, an older sister and younger brother, were transferred to the aboriginal reserve at Palm Island where he remained for several years. When he was a teenager he travelled to Cherbourg in order to attend the rural school and to learn a trade. At that time he lived with well known Cherbourg residents Tottie and Charlie Collins. He was trained as a joiner and cabinet-maker and, at one stage in his career, worked at making hundreds of coffins.²

Les Stewart was a member of the first community council when it was formed in 1966 and became chairman of the council in 1969. At various times he served a total of twenty-five years on the council and did not seek re-election in March 1994.³ Mr Stewart received a bravery award in 1968 for disarming a man armed with a .303 rifle, he was also a recipient of the M.B.E. which was awarded in 1975. His wife, Barbara (nee Edwards), whom he married in 1957, died in 1981.⁴

In addition to his many achievements Leslie Stewart was also awarded an Advance Australia Foundation Award in 1993 for his commitment to aboriginal affairs.⁵ Leslie Stewart retired in 1994 and died of a heart attack, aged seventy years, on 13 February, 1996. He was buried at Cherbourg on the 19th of that month.⁶

Alan Douglas

Another council chairman was Alan Douglas who was born at Cherbourg and became chairman of the council in September 1985.⁷

Alan Douglas was educated at Cherbourg and subsequently went to work on a property named *Glencoe*, near Brigooda. He and another group of men were later sent on contract to another station near Charters Towers where he worked as a stockman. His experiences as a stockman included working at Winton and Longreach and droving between Boulia and Winton. Returning to Cherbourg, he began contract timber cutting and in 1969 he was invited to join the Queensland Police and underwent training, finally being promoted to the rank of senior sergeant. He was with the police force for ten years.⁸ Alan Douglas was voted to the council in March 1985 and was elected chairman in September that year. Councillor Douglas was heavily involved in other community affairs, including the Cherbourg Children's Shelter, the Police Youth Club and the aged persons' home.⁹ Following his retirement from council he became involved in the Wunjubair Goolerra (Which Way Old Man) bush skills program for Cherbourg teenagers in conjunction with the Cherbourg police, he had also involved himself with the Jinda Committee at the Murgon High School and a Sunshine Coast foundation which was created to nurture art at Cherbourg. Highly regarded throughout the district, especially at council level, Alan Douglas died at Cherbourg on Tuesday 7 January, 1997, he was survived by a daughter and three sons.¹⁰

Ken Bone

Ken Bone, the current mayor of Cherbourg, was born at Cherbourg on 27 December, 1946, the son of Alice Bone and Bowman Johnson, both his parents were also born at Cherbourg. Ken Bone was educated at Cherbourg and he remembers that discipline at the school was strict. His childhood at Cherbourg was typical of so many other children on the community, he would frequently walk into Murgon, following the banks of the creek, and for a while he lived with his grandmother in a small hut with an earthen floor near the brickworks at Wondai. After leaving school he worked as a stockman on Cherbourg, the date was late 1960 and he was paid £2/4/- per fortnight. He has worked at a number of professions and has been in charge of the welfare association at Cherbourg since 1988. He spent six years as the community social welfare agent and has also filled the role of community undertaker.

Ken Bone was elected mayor of Cherbourg in 1993, the first time a mayor was elected by the people rather than by the council, having previously served on the council from 1990. Highly regarded by the community for his many community support roles and his sound administration at council level, Ken Bone was re-elected mayor of the Cherbourg Community Council in March 1997.¹¹

Warren Collins

Warren Collins, the current council clerk of the Cherbourg Community Council, was born at the Royal Brisbane Hospital in 1959, the son of Dudley and Eva Collins, both Cherbourg residents. His father was born at Cherbourg in 1921 while his mother was sent to the settlement as a young girl from Charleville. His grandmother, Isobel (Tottie) was also sent to the settlement, arriving in 1910 from Hughenden, his grandfather, Charlie Collins, arriving circa 1920. Both were to become well known characters within the Cherbourg community. Warren's father, after completing his education at Cherbourg, later went to work as a stockman on cattle stations in western Queensland before returning to work at Cherbourg, finding employment with the Cherbourg Community Council.

Warren Collins was educated at Cherbourg and at the Murgon High School. After leaving school he continued his studies in 1975 at the agricultural college in Emerald where he spent two years before moving onto a cattle station in 1977. He worked on this station as a jackeroo for six months before moving to Brisbane. He finally returned to Cherbourg in 1978 where he worked initially on the dairy farm and other agricultural situations. In 1979 he began working for the Forestry Department at Gallangowan, a position he retained for six months before returning to Cherbourg to work in the retail store, later taking a position as a clerk in the office of the Department of Community Services. He subsequently became a liaison officer for that department. Having gained experience in administration in 1984, Warren Collins applied for a position with the Cherbourg Community Council and was accepted as the council's project officer. Over the

following years the council and its civic responsibilities grew dramatically, and Warren Collins undertook a full time, four years' course in local government administration through the University of Southern Queensland. While undertaking this course he was temporarily replaced by Gary Hooper who was appointed as council clerk. Upon completing his university course Warren Collins returned to Cherbourg and was Hooper's understudy for approximately six months. Warren Collins then took over the position of council clerk. A deputy clerk, Ross Higgins, was appointed in April 1995.¹²

Some Performance Artists, Writers and Sporting Personalities of Cherbourg

There have been many Cherbourg residents who have become well known for a variety of professional reasons, the more recent of which is well known Australian singer Maroochy Barambah (formerly Yvette Isaccs). Maroochy Barambah was born at Cherbourg and spent her early years living within the dormitory system. While at Cherbourg she became involved in the choir of the Aboriginal Inland Mission. At the age of thirteen she was fostered out to a family in Melbourne where she finished school and enrolled with a scholarship at the Melba Conservatorium of Music. She formed her own jazz group and subsequently became the lead singer of a rock band called *Qwokka*. In 1982 as a statement of pride in her aboriginality she changed her name to Maroochy Barambah. In 1989 she was the first aboriginal woman to perform on the Australian operatic stage in *Black River*, an opera which deals with the issue of black deaths in custody. In 1990 Maroochy Barambah played the lead role in another aboriginal musical, *Bran Nue Dae* and in 1991 she was awarded the inaugural aboriginal performing arts fellowship from the Aboriginal Arts Committee.¹³

Another Cherbourg singer who became famous in operatic circles was Harold Blair. Like Maroochy Barambah, Blair was also trained at the Melba Conservatorium where he met Dorothy Eden who was to become his wife. He travelled to the United States of America where he studied under the well known baritone Todd Duncan. Returning to Australia in 1951, he starred in the A.B.C. Jubilee Concert Tour. Over the following twenty years he travelled in Europe, and acted in melodramas and on television. The A.B.C. subsequently produced a documentary film on his life which was broadcast in 1995. The theatre at the Nurunderi T.A.F.E. College at Cherbourg was also named in his honour that year.¹⁴

On the sporting scene Elley Bennett was a famous Cherbourg boxer, Eddie Gilbert a well known cricketer, Frank Fisher, after whom Fisher's Bridge is named, achieved fame in the rugby league field, and, of course, few people have not heard of that legendary boxer, Jerry Jerome.

In 1920 the now defunct *Nanango News* published:

Jerry Jerome's name is famous throughout Australia by his prowess in the athletic world, especially in the boxing area, where he won fame as one of the leading exponents of the fistic art. Jerry is better known as a boxer, but previous to entering the hempen square he was known in the West as one of the best all-round athletes Australia has produced. He was an artist in the saddle, and the wildest brumby that was ever yarded was a lady's hack to Jerry ... He was also a crack shot, and a duck on the wing was an easy target for him with a rifle. As a runner and high jumper, the redoubtable Jerry won a high reputation ... At the age of 38, when most athletes are amongst the has beens, Jerry was induced to have a try at the manly art, and he quickly leapt into fame and popularity as a boxing phenomenon, whose unorthodox methods and geniality was the delight of boxing enthusiasts. For the short time he reigned in the boxing world, Jerry was one of the greatest draws for fight promoters, and it was always a packed house that attended to see the agile aboriginal in action. As a boxer, Jerry was of the whirlwind type, with little science but plenty of vim, and he was very disconcerting to his more scientific opponents. He had a terrific lightning-like punch with which he secured several knock-outs, when opposed to the best boxers on the continent. Jerry had the backing of the Queensland Aboriginal Department ... After a time the business management of his affairs was taken in hand by the Department, and from the first round of contests in which he took part, the Department rescued £1000 of about £3000; the rest he squandered. From the second round, in which Jerry made about £1000, the Department banked £500, so that when he retired from the ring he had about £1500 to his credit. The Department provided a home for him and his wife ... on Fraser Island, off Maryborough, and secured an appointment in the Forestry Department. But work

was not in Jerry's line. Prior to his coming to Barambah, he was living at Urangan. Out of the money saved by the Department from Jerry's boxing, they have built a house for him at the Barambah settlement, where he will in future reside. Jerry is the ... pride, and the uncrowned king of his fellow aborigines.¹⁵

Despite the paternalistic reporting, the above article is accurate in many respects. Jerome was the undoubted king of boxing at that time and he was greatly revered not only by the aboriginal people but also by white boxing enthusiasts. Some of his fights were legendary, including the fight when he won the Australian middleweight title from Arthur Cripps at Brisbane in 1913. Jerome continued to live at Cherbourg until his death on 27 September, 1943. At that time the *South Burnett Times* printed:

At the time of his death Jerome was a white haired, bushy-whiskered toothless old man of seventy. Approximately twenty first-class fights netted Jerome something in the vicinity of £5000. Among those he fought were such famous old ringsters as Dave Smith, Ted Whiting, Black Paddy, Arthur Cripps, Jules Joubert, Eddie McGoorty and Pat Bradley. Reckless handling of his share of the purse resulted in the Chief Protector of Aborigines taking over control of his interests. His biggest purse was £575 for his fight with Dave Smith at the Sydney Stadium under the direction of Snowy Baker. Snowy Baker once said: "If old Jerome would ever keep as fit as he is capable of being made he would be the greatest middleweight fighter in the world".

Jerome married an aboriginal wife and had innumerable children (he never really knew how many) and so many aboriginal lads attached to travelling boxing shows claimed to be his sons that it kept the old fellow puzzled. With his money all gone he spent his last years coaching promising aboriginal boxers and refereeing their bouts. With his death passes an outstanding figure in Australia's ring history.¹⁶

Another man who became something of a legend at Cherbourg was Jeffrey 'Mitta' Dynevor. Mitta was a southpaw boxer during the 1950s and 1960s and was the first aboriginal man to win a Commonwealth Games boxing gold medal when he defeated Samuel Abbey in the 1962 games at Perth. Mitta had qualified by winning the first bout, defeating New Guinea fighter Joe Satonga with a technical knock out in the semi final, and then defeating Abbey on points. At Cherbourg news of his win created considerable excitement, even the picture show was stopped to announce that Mitta had won his gold medal.¹⁷

Cherbourg writers and poets include Cecil Fisher whose first book of poems, *Unity Now* was published in 1991, his second book, *Flag of Unity* was published in 1993.¹⁸ Jackie Huggins, the author of *Aunty Rita* is another of the community's successful authors and has achieved considerable public acclaim.¹⁹

Notes and Sources

Chapter Twelve

Some Prominent Personalities of Cherbourg

1. SBT. 30 August, 1978, p 3.
2. SBT. 12 January, 1983, p 12.
3. SBT. 8 March, 1994, p 2.
4. SBT. 12 January, 1983, p 12 and 27 February, 1996, p 9.
5. SBT. 11 February, 1994, p 7.
6. Cherbourg Community Council cemetery book, p 35; SBT. 27 February, 1996, p 9 and T/C. 16 February, 1996, p 15.
7. SBT. 2 October, 1985, p 1.
8. SBT. 23 August, 1991, p 8.
9. SBT. 9 October, 1985, p 21.
10. SBT. 10 January, 1997, p 1 and 3.
11. Author interview with Ken Bone, recorded at Cherbourg, 1 June, 1996.

12. Author interview with Warren Collins, conducted at Cherbourg, 23 May, 1996.
13. T/C. 23 November, 1996 and Horton, David, (Ed) *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994, p 662.
14. SBT. 31 March, 1995, p 2.
15. N/N. 2 July, 1920.
16. SBT. 4 November, 1943, p 6.
17. SBT. 17 May, 1994, p 30.
18. SBT. 8 February, 1994, p 9.
19. T/C. 1 February, 1997, p 25.

13

Cherbourg Conclusion

Since Cherbourg was first established at the turn of the century, firstly as a reserve where the remnants of the decimated aboriginal nations could receive 'protection', and later as a labour pool, the settlement has contributed enormously to the general wealth and progress of the South Burnett generally, and the town of Murgon in particular. Murgon, when Cherbourg was first formed, did not even exist, and it was not until the rail line came through in 1903 that non-indigenous development of the area began. As white settlement progressed, those early selectors rarely acknowledged the benefits of having the Cherbourg community so close at hand, yet shopkeepers were eager to sell their wares to Cherbourg residents, Cherbourg people worked the land, planted the crops of their white employers, harvested, milked the cows and loaded the cream cans into the trains. As greater contact between the two peoples became more prevalent, so too did local trade in Murgon dramatically increase. Additionally, Murgon experienced benefits through the incorporation of facilities brought about because of the added population made possible by the residents of Cherbourg, schools, medical care, and many other public utilities.

Over the years the people of Cherbourg have strongly supported the people of Murgon, both financially and socially. In November 1974, for example, an ambulance was donated by the people of Cherbourg to the Murgon Q.A.T.B. This ambulance had been purchased from funds supplied by the people at Cherbourg, each of them agreeing to donate ten cents each week from their pay and pensions towards the cost of the vehicle. The scheme began on 17 April, 1968, and culminated with the presentation of the ambulance in November 1974. The cost of the ambulance was \$2,800. During the occasional outbreaks of hostility towards Cherbourg, white residents of the South Burnett sometimes conveniently forget that the people of Cherbourg have actively and financially supported the whole community, both white and aboriginal.¹

While there have been problems, particularly racial differences, and while those differences seem unlikely to be completely erased, the two communities now work together for the general advancement of firstly, each individual centre, and secondly for the area generally, and a close harmony had been forged between the local authorities of the Murgon Shire Council and the Cherbourg Community Council.

Yet at what cost to the aboriginal community?

The destruction of the ancient tribal system was completed years ago, and by the time the original Barambah settlement was first formed at the turn of the century only the remnants of the once proud and healthy aboriginal nations trickled into the reserve, undernourished, ill-treated, suffering from a variety of diseases, many of which were infections brought by the white population. They were emaciated, hungry, dejected and humiliated. Could any such gathering of humanity ever regain any form of cultural heritage and pride?

As we have seen earlier in this history, Caroline Tennant Kelly, in her carefully researched report on life at Cherbourg in 1934, claimed that in its most pristine and basic form the people of the settlement no longer retained that essence of their cultural heritage and that they lived in a disintegrated society.²

We have seen the patterns that led to this condition, the decimation of the aboriginal nations through the squattocratic usage of land and the destructive influences of the Native Police, the removalist policy of the government, bringing together the remnants of those nations, the systems of forced incarceration, reliance upon food rations, primitive punishments, the dormitory system, a system of European education that completely ignored aboriginal history and culture, the

fracturing of family ties and the deliberate breaking down of traditional spiritual beliefs and values. Yet while it is true that many of the old traditions and beliefs were destroyed, the people of Barambah were in the process of forging a new traditionalism, one created despite the process of hegemonic dominance. In her 1935 account of life at Cherbourg, Caroline Tennant Kelly reported that she had found a total of twenty-eight tribal groups living at the settlement, and there were certainly others, primarily from the northern regions, as historian Peter Koepping claimed in 1976.³ What many of the early historians and anthropologists failed to realise was that while the traditionalism of the individual nations was being largely destroyed, the people of Cherbourg were in the process forging another 'togetherness' and identity — that of the 'People of Barambah'. While the settlement of Cherbourg covered a large area, and had been added to in 1925 with the acquisition of a special lease over a further 12,700 acres, and while the residents roamed and lived freely over this vast area, the intrinsic family bonds remained as strongly forged as ever. Each of the inmates retained close family ties, despite the fact that some of them might be living in settlement cottages while others were 'camped' at remote places throughout the settlement or largely confined to dormitories. Then, as now, everyone at the settlement knew each other, who they were, where they lived, what clan affiliations they had, where they had come from and how long they and their families had been at the reserve. Many of the traditional functions of aboriginal society had either died out or, like some of the ancient ceremonies that incorporated witchcraft or sorcery, had been actively stamped out by the settlement's administration. Yet the traditional corroboree had survived, for a while at least, and while individual dances and tales woven through these ceremonies had also largely died, as Thomas Blake points out in his thesis, the people of Cherbourg formed new dances and songs that were indigenous only to Cherbourg and celebrated life and events at the settlement.⁴

Yet the old ways were vanishing. During the 1960s and 1970s when modern dances were coming into vogue, a troupe of young aboriginal dancers gave performances of modern dancing, these included young boys such as Jackie Anderson, Angus Rabbit (junior) and Freddy Douglas who performed at the Mount Gravatt drive-in shopping centre in order to raise money for cancer research. At that time Cherbourg elders including Charlie Collins remarked that only about forty of the 1100 residents of Cherbourg knew the traditional corroborees. 'We either catch them young or we never catch them,' Mr Collins told the press.⁵

Yet there were other activities that helped to forge a 'one-ness' among the residents of the settlement, including social gatherings, sports and a variety of cultural activities, all of which brought together the various factions of widely diverse cultures. Adversity also served to forge a deeper sense of 'family' and 'togetherness', those who were raised or lived within the confines of the dormitory system found in later life that the relationships that had been formed with other inmates of the dormitories were both deep and lasting, in the way that ordinary family relationships grow and prosper. Former dormitory inmates at Cherbourg frequently refer to other inmates as their brothers and sisters, and inmates of the dormitories even evolved their own form of basic language. Despite the long years of institutionalisation and the repressive measures deliberately formed to crush traditional cultures, there is strong evidence to suggest that the people of Cherbourg today have retained their own individuality and forged a distinctive identity with links to the past, both pre and post Barambah. Over the years of its development Cherbourg has been home to a group of people from widely diversified backgrounds who have struggled to retain some form of individual expression and to resist the long process of subjugation. If the early white administrators believed that through stern methods of subjugation and discipline they would destroy aboriginal spiritual traditionalism, then they were only partially successful, for while the reserve system certainly destroyed much of that ancient culture, another culture and heritage, that of the 'Barambah people', came strongly into existence.

Notes and Sources
Chapter Thirteen
Cherbourg Conclusion

1. SBT. 20 November, 1974, p 10.
2. Tennant Kelly, p 472.
3. Tennant Kelly, p 462, Peter Koepping, *Occasional Papers in Anthropology, Number 6*, Ed P. Lauer, St Lucia: Anthropology Museum, 1976.
4. Blake, p 331.
5. Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

14

The Establishment and Development of the Nanango/Blackbutt Regions



The original Taromeo station homestead, later destroyed by fire.

Source — Taromeo station archives.

Taromeo Station

The first station in the Nanango/Blackbutt region, and what was almost certainly the first on the South Burnett, was *Taromeo*, taken up circa 1842 by Simon Scott, although there appear to be no surviving documents to prove the precise date of settlement at *Taromeo*. On 5 July, 1847, Scott applied to the New South Wales government for a squatter's licence that would cover an area of approximately two hundred square miles. His letter stated:

Simpson Esqr.

Commissioner for Crown Lands,

Sir,

I beg to make application for a squatting Licence for the following unoccupied land in your District, viz.

A place on Cooyar Creek (called by the Natives) Tooringar, about sixteen miles down the creek from Mr D. Archer's station on the same creek...

Also a small creek (called Tandary) which falls into the Cooyar Creek some miles below Tooringar.

According to the best of my opinion, these two places would carry about eight thousand sheep.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Yours Most Obt. Servant,

Simon Scott.¹

According to the listing in 'Leases of Crown Land Beyond the Settled Districts,' published in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* of 20 June, 1849, the lease number for *Taromeo* was 37 with the entry being:

Scott, Simon.

Name Run: Tandary.

Estimated area: 64,000 acres.

Estimated grazing capacity: 300 cattle, 8000 sheep.

Bounded on the north by a scrub dividing this run from Mr Balfour's station of *Colinton*; on the south by a scrub dividing this run from D. Archer and Co's station of *Cooyar*; on the east by the Blackbutt Range; and on the west by the Boyne Range and a large scrub.

According to the headstone on his grave at *Taromeo* station, Simon Scott was a native of Langholm, Dumfriesshire, Scotland. He was born in 1816, the second son of Walter and Elizabeth Scott.

Simon Scott and his brother (also named Walter) were relatively new arrivals to Australia, having been in the colony since 1839. Walter Scott sailed aboard the ship *Abberton*, which left London on 15 April, 1839, arriving at Sydney on 20 August that year, and it appears likely that although there is no listing for Simon being aboard the vessel, the two brothers probably arrived together. Simon lived initially in the Castlereagh region where he worked on a property known as *Biambil* (later *Biamble*) which was owned by a friend, James Walker. In 1841 Simon and a group of other men drove a vast flock of sheep from Castlereagh to *Cressbrook* station in the Moreton Bay district before Simon pushed farther into the unsettled regions to claim *Taromeo* circa 1842. Upon returning to *Biamble* he married Christina Swanson, a native of Thurso, Caithness, Scotland, in 1842, their son, Walter, was born in January 1844 and their daughter Janet (also known as Jessie), was born in November the following year. In March 1847 Simon and his family returned north, driving another large flock of sheep from Berumbang, in the district of Bligh, to *Colinton*. Travelling with drays and bullock wagons, the journey took them eighty days to travel a total of 560 miles, beginning in March and ending their journey in May, three weeks were spent resting at Morongah Creek, making a total of one hundred and one days for the entire journey.²



Simon Scott, founder of *Taromeo* station.

Source — *Taromeo* station archives.

The *Taromeo* holding was known by a variety of names, including *Tanddary*, *Tandary*, *Toromio* and *Toromeo*.³

After the arrival of his family, Scott began constructing a more suitable homestead and later expanded the holding, purchasing large numbers of sheep. Scott, like other squatters who were to rapidly take up land in the district, experienced enormous difficulties in obtaining shepherds to tend his flocks, the dangers of the bush, the heat, isolation and aggressive indigenes, all combined to make the prospect of working in the area less than attractive. J.E. Murphy claimed that relations with the local indigenous people on *Taromeo* were relatively good, but that spearing of sheep certainly occurred and that these occurrences led to reprisals.⁴

The main station homestead was constructed in 1850, Christina Scott, who had been ill for four years, died on Christmas Day 1851 at Jimmy's Gully while travelling between *Colinton* and *Cressbrook*, on her way to Limestone (Ipswich) and was buried in the station cemetery, she was just twenty-seven years of age. While the cemetery was actually first used by the Scotts in the 1850s, it was only officially proclaimed in the *Government Gazette* on 9 February, 1878.⁵

Simon Scott married Marian Gillin on 13 March, 1854, Marian was the eldest daughter of William Gillin, the man who is reputed to have built *Taromeo* station homestead in 1850.⁶

However, Simon Scott was not to enjoy the fruits of his endeavours, he died, aged forty-two years, on 4 July, 1858, after being thrown from a horse, and the station was left to his children, Walter and Jessie. Simon Scott's brother, Walter, who had married Elizabeth Gillin, Marian Gillin's sister, managed the station for Simon's son until Walter junior came of age.⁷

Yet, over the following years, they were to experience all the trials and difficulties which beset many of the other squatters of the region, especially problems of sheep production, including the ravages of scab and catarrh. At this time the cost of production far outweighed the returns of the price of meat, and so sheep were primarily raised for their fleece, the animals later being boiled down, either on the various stations or at specific boiling down works. The hides, tallow and wool were transported by bullock dray to Ipswich.

The station later became one of the vital links in the route from Brisbane to Nanango, the coaches stopping there overnight where the horses were rested or changed. Women passengers would sleep in the homestead while male passengers were housed in barracks.⁸

Over a period of many years Walter Scott, Simon's son, transformed *Taromeo* from sheep to cattle production and the fortunes of the family increased dramatically. The livestock were generally driven up through the notorious Brisbane Valley route to be sold at Enoggera.

Life on the early Burnett stations was arduous in the extreme, station owners such as the Scotts at *Taromeo* were forced to endure lengthy periods of isolation, monotonous food, and many other irritations. Stores were brought, usually once or twice a year, by bullock dray from Limestone, the drays struggling for weeks over the difficult and treacherous tracks of the Brisbane Valley route. Mail was infrequent, there were no coaches or trains in those formative years, very little in the way of medical care, and during the wet seasons the stations were sometimes completely isolated.

Graves at the original *Taromeo* cemetery include those of Simon Scott, and his wife, Christina Swanson, who died after, '... a long and painful illness, December 25th, 1851, aged 27 years and nine months.' Simon Scott's second wife is buried at the station, her headstone reading: 'Marian, widow of the late Simon Scott of *Taromeo* station, died at *Wowan*, 19th September, 1925, aged 93 years.' The *Wowan* block was a part of *Taromeo* station, the homestead at *Wowan* can still be seen close to the roadside near *Taromeo*. The graves at *Taromeo* are all enclosed within the stone-walled cemetery and there are nineteen people known to have been buried inside this cemetery.⁹

There are certainly other unmarked graves at *Taromeo*, Chinese or German shepherds and other workers and itinerants. Close to the stone-walled cemetery are four graves, a few markers can still be seen, among these unmarked graves is that of Alec (also reported as Alex) Graham, buried outside the stone-walled cemetery, who was killed along the Old Coach Road in 1899. The accident occurred one evening as Graham was driving a parcel van. He came upon a tree that had fallen across the road, his horse went beneath the tree and pinned Graham to his seat. The following morning his father, Richard Graham, found the injured man and removed the tree, but upon doing so Alec Graham immediately died.¹⁰ Another of the graves outside the cemetery is that of a stonemason named Williams, the man who did the stonework for the stone-walled cemetery, constructed the Stone House at Moore and also the storeroom at *Taromeo*, the stones coming from Cooyar Creek.¹¹ The other two graves are believed to be those of two station stockmen.¹²

Before his death, Simon Scott had applied to purchase the freehold of the homestead block of *Taromeo*, a parcel of land 320 acres in size. The request was approved just weeks after his death, on 19 July, 1858, and was registered in the name of his son, Walter, the purchase price was £320.



The walled cemetery at Taromeo station, with the grave of Simon Scott framed through the gateway.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.



The store-room at Taromeo station which now houses the station's museum.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

In November 1871, at the age of twenty-seven, Walter Scott, Simon's son, was elected to the Legislative Assembly as member for the Burnett, he was to remain in parliament until November 1878. He married Mary Catherine Martin on 1 September, 1875, and the couple had five children. On 12 March, 1878, the lease over *Taromeo* was acquired by the Queensland National Pastoral Company. Walter Scott died at *Taromeo* on 7 October, 1890, aged forty-six years. His widow remained as manager of the property until 31 October, 1897, and was highly esteemed in the region, she donated land for the Nanango Presbyterian Church and ran a receiving office at *Taromeo*. Her brother-in-law was appointed manager for the Queensland National Bank on 1 November, 1897.

Walter Scott, Simon's son, was reputed to have been closely involved with the local indigenous people, he could speak their language and frequently went on hunting trips with them. In 1889 he gave up a large area of the station for closer settlement. This land was surveyed into blocks of 160 acres and became the genesis of Blackbutt. The site where Cooyar now stands was later resumed. Mrs Scott retired in 1897 and moved to Brisbane, at that time James Stevens became manager until 1914.¹³

The original *Taromeo* homestead fell into disuse and was severely attacked by white ants, it burned down circa 1948, but other owners of the holding have included James Marrington, and B.G. Palmes. On 1 September, 1978, the station was purchased by Talbot Holdings Pty. Ltd. a company owned by Max Talbot and his wife, Jackie, it is currently being managed by Lloyd Edwards who has been in that position for the past twelve years. Today there are still some of the original buildings remaining at the station, including the stone storehouse. The stone-walled cemetery is today one of the more important tourist attractions of the region and Lloyd Edwards frequently conducts free tours for coaches and school children to the site where the first settlers of *Taromeo* are buried. The original stockmen's quarters and the men's barracks where male coach travellers were housed for the night have long since disappeared.¹⁴

Tarong Station

Following close on the footsteps of Simon Scott in 1842, John James Malcolm Borthwick and William Elliot Oliver travelled via the Brisbane Valley from Borthwick's property *Buaraba*, between the sites of present day Gatton and Esk, and stayed with Scott at *Taromeo*. This was the time of the land hunger and these pastoralists were also seeking large tracts of country on which to depasture tens of thousands of sheep. Scott advised them on the likelihood of squattages in the surrounding country and W.E. Oliver established *Nanango* station, a holding of approximately 195 square miles, while Borthwick continued on to soon afterwards take up the *Tarong* holding, a vast territory comprising four runs, *Tarong*, *Kunioon*, *Tureen* and *Neumgna*.



Tarong station.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society.

Nanango was also comprised of four blocks, *Coolabunia*, *Booie*, *Broadwater* and *Nanango* itself, less than two miles from the site of the present town and about one mile from Barker Creek. *Coolabunia* is said to be the aboriginal name for 'Koala Sleeping' or 'Land of the Sleeping Bear', and was a favourite camp-site for the indigenous people as they travelled to the bunya nut harvest.

Borthwick applied for his four runs in 1849 and the lease was approved on 1 January, 1852.¹⁵

As with other stations, the aboriginal people resented the establishment of these holdings, the vast flocks of sheep that quickly followed reduced the natural herbage thus driving off the wildlife. The aboriginal people, quite rationally, assumed that as the wildlife was diminishing, then its replacement, the sheep, were fair game, and they frequently resorted to spearing the animals. In *Wilderness to Wealth*, J.E. Murphy recorded that according to the son of J.J.M. Borthwick, who learned details from his father, the aborigines were so ferocious that details of their attacks on Chinese shepherds were kept strictly secret. To have publicly admitted that such killings were commonplace would have created even greater difficulties in obtaining shepherds for the isolated station.¹⁶ Shepherds' huts were placed at strategic but isolated positions, at *Tarong*, there was one at the junction of Barker and Saddletree Creek, another at the Potholes on Middle Creek, a third on the bank of Coomba Gully and one near the present site of the *Tarong* power station. Details of aboriginal attacks are scarce, and elements of white retaliation are ever rarer, attacks on Chinese and German shepherds were relatively frequent and the punitive raids mounted after these attacks were violent and deadly. Few wrote of those events and so details have, over the years, been lost.

Aboriginal aggression took place on both *Tarong* and *Nanango*, as was commonplace on almost all of the early pastoral runs of the South Burnett. Tens of thousands of sheep were depastured on the properties the resultant products being sent primarily to Ipswich.

Author Jean Bull wrote in 1959 that in one of the creeks on the property lies a waterhole allegedly filled with the skeletons of aborigines who had been killed during a battle between the whites and the indigenous people. This is the waterhole at Coomba Falls. Bull's article claims that Borthwick and some of his shepherds were attacked one day and found themselves trapped at a rocky overhang at the falls. They managed to hold off their attackers for several hours, using furious gun-fire. The aboriginal people, standing on the rim of the overhang were allegedly easily killed and fell down into the creek below.¹⁷

Borthwick, like almost all his contemporaries, employed stockmen and shepherds from all walks of life, ticket-of-leave convicts, German immigrants and Chinese. In July 1849 Henry Gilbert, one of his workers, absconded from his contracted employment and Borthwick, following the standard practice of the day, placed an advertisement on the front page of the *Moreton Bay Courier* which claimed:

CAUTION.

ABSCONDED from my service, on the 6th instant, after robbing the hut, at which he was placed as Watchman, of a carbine and rations:

HENRY GILBERT; age — 29; per ship *York*; place of birth — Ipswich, Suffolk; hair — brown; eyes — grey; complexion — ruddy; scar across right cheek; height — 5 feet 4 inches.

He is supposed to have left the station in company with a man called Billy Pitt, the fiddler.

All persons are hereby cautioned against harbouring or employing the said Henry Gilbert.

J. Borthwick.

Tarong, July 6th, 1849.¹⁸

Borthwick was reportedly the first man to send a shipment of wool direct to north Brisbane via a new route in 1849, the *Moreton Bay Courier* claiming: 'This week the first wool teams arrived from the Burnett River via *Toromio* (sic) and direct into North Brisbane. They consisted of three drays, each laden with ten bales of wool, the property of Mr Borthwick. The road is reported to be a very good one, better in fact than the old road from the Burnett into Ipswich, and not longer.

The journey occupied ten days, and the distance is calculated at 120 miles. We are informed that the route might be still further shortened by cutting through a narrow belt of brush, which could be done for a very small sum. We have heard the names of several of the Burnett settlers who intend to forward their clips this season by the new road.¹⁹

The various runs applied for by Borthwick, which included *Kunioon*, 25,000 acres, *Neumigna*, 19,200 acres, *Tureen*, 17,920 acres, and *Tarong*, 27,400 acres, were finally approved by the Crown Lands Office in Sydney in March 1850, advice of the acceptance appearing in the *Moreton Bay Courier* on 8 July that year.²⁰

Borthwick continued with his *Tarong* holding until 1857 when, according to the Runs Register, a transfer of the leases was made to James Henderson. Borthwick later went to Scotland, where he married, and never returned to Australia. In 1862 the Runs Register shows that the holding was purchased by George Clapperton, the man who had managed the station for Borthwick and also for Henderson.²¹



George Clapperton.

Source — Dawn Clapperton.

Clapperton was an interesting man, one of the earliest colonists of the South Burnett who was to become one of the region's leading citizens. He worked at W.E. Oliver's *Nanango* and C.R. Haly's *Taabinga* prior to taking over the ownership of *Tarong*. He was born at Fochabers, Scotland, on 2 December, 1825, the son of James and Barbara Clapperton (nee Paterson), his father's occupation is listed as 'merchant'.²²

Clapperton was indentured to William Robert Gordon, a solicitor of Baniff and matriculated on 2 January, 1844.²³

Clapperton's decision to travel to Australia appears to have been made due to his poor health. Initially, it seems, he was destined to go to the West Indies and a letter from his employer, W.R. Gordon, dated from Baniff on 18 March, 1847, reveals that: '... George Clapperton was a good many years in my office and I found him everything that I can desire as a clerk. He goes to the West Indies because a warm climate has been recommended as essential to the re-establishment of his health.'²⁴

What decided Clapperton to come to Australia is not known. He arrived in 1847

aboard the barque *Agincourt*, which had left London during the afternoon of 17 June that year. Clapperton kept a meticulous diary of his journey to Australia which gives us a fascinating insight into this important period of his life. He recorded that the journey down the Thames was characterised by: '... noise, smoke and bustle,' and that the *Agincourt* had come perilously close to a turning brig which occasioned a slight collision causing minor damage and: '... a few angry words between the ships as they distanced one another.'²⁵

Like many other vessels about to embark on the long voyage to Australia, the *Agincourt* anchored off Gravesend for the night and Clapperton took advantage of this delay to take a boat to Gravesend where he purchased: '... sundry articles requisite for the passage, plates, knife and fork etc.' Clapperton continued: 'The Captain came aboard in the evening, having left us at the Docks ... Cow, sheep and pigs having found their quarters in different divisions and under the long boat, and the hen coops in the poop, being stocked from end to end with poultry of various descriptions.'²⁶

There were only thirty-nine passengers aboard the vessel and Clapperton was travelling second class in the 'Intermediate' accommodation with four other passengers. Clapperton wrote, with some amusement, that one of the 'steerage' class passengers, a Mr Banbridge, was: '... an old cove suspected to have some former day had a passage to Sydney free of costs.'²⁷

The progress of the *Agincourt* was fairly unremarkable and Clapperton recorded in his journal only details of other vessels they met and the weather conditions they experienced. During the night of 12 July, 1847, strong winds brought down some of the masts and sails, and Clapperton wrote: 'About 1 o'clock this morning a heavier flap than usual of the sails against the masts, seconded by some awkward tumble of the ship at the moment, snapped the midmast of the ship by the foot of the main topmast, bringing it and all above it, the top-gallant and the royal masts down with a thunder from their lofty stations, as well as about four feet off the top of the mizzen topmast.' Despite this, the masts were effectively repaired and did not unduly delay the vessel which arrived at Sydney on 2 October, 1847.²⁸

Upon his arrival in the colony, Clapperton worked initially in the wool stores of Sydney prior to travelling north to work at *Nanango* station, later taking the position of book-keeper at *Taabinga* and subsequently that of manager of *Tarong*. As we have seen, due to ill health, Borthwick returned to Scotland and never returned to Australia. The Register of Runs shows a transfer of the lease to James Henderson in 1857 and the subsequent acquisition of the holding to Clapperton in 1862 — Clapperton evidently raising the necessary funding through various family members including his brother, Thomas, in Scotland.²⁹

Clapperton managed to diversify his operations at *Tarong*, although his flocks would certainly have suffered from the impact of catarrh and scab, yet he maintained the flocks while building up his herds of cattle. He planted maize which was sown among the already growing barley crop. Cattle and sheep provided the meat ration for the holding, Clapperton too, during his tenure as station owner, experienced difficulties in obtaining stockmen and shepherds, and rations for the station were also brought over the difficult Brisbane Valley track.



The front verandah of *Tarong* station homestead which overlooks the rich, dark soil flats.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews

Times were difficult for both Clapperton and his workers, they suffered from isolation and were subjected to living under primitive conditions. Clapperton, like most of his contemporaries, experienced difficulties in retaining shepherds, some became disillusioned with life in the 'wilderness', others complained of poor wages, monotonous food, isolation, and the dangers of aboriginal attack. Some deaths appear to have been blamed on aboriginal attack when, in fact, this was almost certainly not the case. An example was that of Daniel Vohland, one of Clapperton's shepherds, who, in 1864, went suddenly missing. A magisterial enquiry into the case was held at *Tarong* on 19 July, 1864. Hearing the case was Charles Robert Haly of *Taabinga* who was also a justice of the peace.

George Clapperton testified:

I am proprietor of *Tarong* station. On Tuesday evening, the fifth of July instant, I received a message from one of my shepherds who was staying at a gonyah by himself that he had found near his gonyah the remains of a human being. Next morning, accompanied by my brother, Charles, and Henry Ivers, a German, I proceeded to the place. We found the bones about 200 yards from the gonyah near the bank of the creek, where the grass had lately been burned off. The skull, the bones of one arm and the shirt were lying about 12 feet from the other bones of the body. The bones were lying in the top of the bank a few feet from a cattle track, which runs along the creek. There had evidently been no attempt made to conceal the remains. Farther than that, the grass about there had been long and thick blady grass. There was a belt and pouch lying on top of the bones. This was identified as having belonged to a man named Daniel Vohland, who had been a shepherd in my employment for some time and who had been supposed to have absconded, or to have been killed by the Blacks in February last. The boots of the deceased were also identified by Ivers as belonging to Vohland. Daniel Vohland had been in my employment since the 18th August, 1862, with the exception of last shearing season at *Taabinga*, when he went to shear there on my permission. In February last, he was living at this sheep station along with another German named Daniel Bischoff. Vohland was engaged to serve me for two years. Latterly, he got dissatisfied on the score of wages and threatened to abscond. I saw Vohland at his station on the 11th or 12th February last. He said that he would 'bolt' if I did not raise his wages or send a man to take his place in a day or two. I told him if he did I should take out a warrant for him and have him apprehended. He was in a great passion. He was of a very hasty temper, excitable and passionate.

On the following Monday afternoon, I asked my brother, Charles, to ride out to his station and see whether Vohland had bolted, as he threatened. Charles came back after sundown and said Vohland had gone and that Bischoff has told him that his mare had returned to the station with the saddle and bridle on. Vohland used to keep his mare and foal at the station.

The same evening, believing Vohland had absconded, that he had met with some accident and that he would be back for his mare, I rode out, got the mare and brought her to the head station. Next morning, I went to *Taabinga* to take out a warrant for Vohland's apprehension. I waited there the greater part of the day and returned without obtaining a warrant. Mr Haly, being absent from the head station, I returned to the station where Bischoff and Vohland had been shepherding. Bischoff told me he was afraid the Blacks had killed Vohland, as some 'Dawson Blacks' had been about the station. Vohland had been threatening to shoot them if they would not shepherd for him. He said Vohland had given the Blacks some tobacco and money to mind his sheep and they refused. Vohland was threatening to shoot them.

Thinking it possible he might have been killed by the Blacks, I searched up the creek above the station for some distance towards where the Blacks had been camped. I did not myself search much about the gonyah. Next day or the day after, I sent several men out to this station to dress the feet of the sheep. They were there for some time.

On the Sunday, a number of the Germans from the head station went to search about the creek near the gonyah. There is a deep water hole in the creek immediately under where the remains were found. A steep bank where the remains were found was in the open ground on the top of the bank close by the foot of a large tree.

I examined the contents of the pouch at the time. They consisted of about half a fig of broad leaf tobacco, a pipe and tailor's thimble, a tinder box, the remains of a box of matches which the burning of the grass had destroyed and some pieces of paper folded up, apparently an account.

From the circumstances of the tobacco and pipe, tinder box being in the pouch, I do not think Vohland has been killed by the Blacks.³⁰

Clapperton was instrumental in the establishment of the township of Nanango, he convinced Jacob Goode, the proprietor of Goode's Inn, the first building at the later site of Nanango, that there was a real necessity for the construction of a set of stockyards at the inn where travelling stock could be held at a specific reception point. On 24 February, 1858, Clapperton wrote in his diary: 'I returned via Goode's ... and spoke with him about getting up a set of stockyards for the use of travelling sheep and cattle and as a point of receipt and delivery for stock. Came home and wrote out the heading to a subscription list for the purpose of making the express and strong desire to have Nanango township laid out.'³¹

George Clapperton's name is synonymous with the establishment of the Nanango region, his importance as a powerful squatter is evidenced by the fact that the region was sometimes referred to as 'Clapperdom'. George Clapperton seems to have also had his share of critics, one of whom in 1862 wrote: 'Clapperdom, as this region now goes by the name of, is indeed a queer place. Every squatter, they say, has twice as much country as he is paying for. Each looks as important as spurs, boots, and swaggering can make a man, and it is a caution to notice how two or three of them take full charge of our bodies and souls.'³²

The original *Tarong* station leases were due to expire in 1867 and so Clapperton applied for a renewal, this was granted under the terms of the 1863 Pastoral Leases Act and under the terms of the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 the original leases could be surrendered for new leases of twenty-one years, commencing on 1 July, 1869. However, in 1865 Clapperton secured the homestead block of 640 acres as freehold by exercise of pre-emptive right.³³

Clapperton eventually owned *Nanango* and *Tarong*, and a share in *Barambah* station. He was subsequently appointed as a magistrate and at the age of forty-four years he married Annie Kendall, a young girl of just fifteen years. Annie was the daughter of Robert and Mary Kendall, the marriage took place at St Mary's Church Ipswich on 11 August, 1870.³⁴ The couple had two children, the first, a daughter named Barbara Mary, was born in September 1871 but died in April the following year. The couple's surviving child was Thomas Alexander, born on 6 April, 1873, at Spring Hill when Annie was eighteen years of age.³⁵

In his book, *Wilderness to Wealth*, J.E. Murphy claims that Clapperton was killed by accident in December 1875, and indeed, word of mouth accounts passed down through family generations indicate that Clapperton may have been kicked by a horse in the cattle yards, an event that led to his death shortly afterwards. However, according to the *Brisbane Courier* of that date Clapperton died as a result of an 'apoplectic fit', this cause of death is also listed on Clapperton's death certificate. The first news was released in Brisbane on 20 December when the press reported: 'We ... heard last night that Mr Clapperton of *Tarong* station, whilst engaged in branding a bale of wool, dropped down in a fit and never spoke again, but expired shortly afterwards. Cause of death at present unknown.'³⁶

Further news was released on 25 December that year, the press reporting: 'An event which has occasioned a wide feeling of regret



Annie Clapperton.

Source — Dawn Clapperton.

throughout the district has occurred at *Tarong* in the sudden decease of Mr George Clapperton of the above station (also proprietor of *Barambah* and *Nanango*) who died from apoplexy at about midday on Wednesday the 15th instant. Mr Clapperton was one of the oldest residents in this district and being very largely interested in station property hereabouts for so long a time, his sudden death is much deplored by many who have been connected with him in business for years. The number of people who attended the funeral which took place at *Tarong* on the 16th instant testified to the respect and regard in which the deceased gentleman was held. He has left a widow and one child to lament their loss.³⁷

Upon Clapperton's death, his wife, Annie, took over the administration of the holdings, a formidable task as Clapperton had died intestate and it was a requirement of the law that considerable sureties be signed up to ensure the 'faithful administration' of the estate. These sureties were signed over by at least two wealthy individuals, Michael Quinlan of Brisbane and Walter Scott of *Taromeo*.³⁸

It appears that George Clapperton's brother, Thomas, then living at Fochabers in Scotland, had considerable financial interests in George Clapperton's stations and upon George's death in 1875 he wrote a letter to Annie Clapperton stating that he expected the debt to be paid. On 27 July, 1876, Thomas Clapperton wrote:

My dear Sister,

I am very sorry that my first letter to you should be one of condolence, in your loss of a kind, good husband, I lost a loving and affectionate brother. The announcement of his death was indeed a shock to us all, for my own part I cannot tell what I feel or think about it — his poor dear son, my namesake, has indeed lost a good and kind father. It will be for you now to take care of Tommy who, if he is spared poor little man, will one day be a very rich man, and bring him up so that his riches may be his own and his neighbours good. As for his Uncle Alex I think he is right in resorting to come home, now that he has lost both brothers he will doubtless feel very lonely in Australia and will naturally be anxious to see once more his native land and those friends of his early days who are still left. — You will of course see that he gets what money is due to him, I understand it has been mostly left in George's hands. — Knowing, as of course you do, that I too have a large claim on George's estate you will excuse my entering on it here. It was George's intention I know to have paid me up very soon — that is had he got the Station sold as he intended. I do not wish to inconvenience you in any way but I will expect to be paid as soon as you conveniently can. Meantime it would be well, in case anything should happen to either you or me, for me to have such a document as would show the amount. Your solicitor could make out such a document as would make the matter a simple debt, without complications, it must of course include principle and interest to its date. Mr A. Pearey tells me *Barambah* has been sold for £45,000 that the Bank's claim is £25,000 and other liabilities from £7,000 to £8,000 — So that you may not be able to pay me now — but he was to pay me a cut of the last season's wool which was all to sell after George's death and which must amount to a good sum. I will be very glad to learn from yourself how you are to carry on, who has been appointed Guardian for dear little Tommy and who Curator for the Estate, in short everything connected with yourself and it. — That George left no will surprises me very much, he who was so careful, methodical and correct in all his transactions; any scrap in his own handwriting would be as good as a will, and I know that it was all along his intention to do something for his sisters — and probably too for old Fochabers, at least for the Chapel he and I were little chaps in. Write to me soon and tell me all about yourself and the stations for I will feel I have an interest in *Tarong* and *Nanango* and tell me too about my dear little God-son — and be very good to him for the sake of him who is away. Jane, one of my sisters, will probably write to you in a few days or at latest the next mail. Meantime they and my wife join me in sympathising with you and in wishing you and yours every blessing; — give my love to Alex and his wife and to Tommy.³⁹

In fact Clapperton *had* made out a will, although it was unwitnessed and was evidently not a legal document. In this will he stipulated that *Tarong*, *Nanango* and *Barambah* stations should be sold, that all his debts be cleared, and the beneficiaries be Annie Clapperton and their son Thomas. The will was signed by Clapperton on 2 August, 1875, just four months before his death.

In addition to the debt owed to Thomas Clapperton, Annie was responsible for many other debts, although Thomas's claim on the estate was certainly the largest and amounted to £7954/0/5d.

There were many other claimants, among whom were:

James Clapperton	£575 14 5d
Charles Clapperton	£1100 12 11d
Union Bank	£2288 3 4d
Bank of New South Wales	£1553 2 9d
Scott and Henderson	£1430 0 7d
D.B. Morehead and Co.	£140 16 8d
Quinlan and Co.	£117 18 5d
A. Pearey	£271 3 9d
J. Pearey	£324 0 9d
Plus fourteen others:	£414 0 6d ⁴⁰

The administration of the estate was handed over to Annie Clapperton on 2 August, 1876, and she is reported to have sold her holdings in *Barambah* that year.⁴¹

Annie disposed of *Nanango* in 1879, although both *Tarong* and *Nanango* had been placed on the market two years earlier in 1877. (*Nanango* was also offered for sale in May 1875, seven months before George Clapperton's death.)⁴² In August 1877 *The Australasian* published the following advertisement offering both stations for sale, the advertisement is interesting for it gives us a clear description of both holdings at that time:

Due notice of which will be given. Queensland. *Tarong* and *Nanango* stations, Burnett District (unsettled), together with 5000 cattle (more or less), 20,000 sheep (more or less), and 6394 acres purchased land.

B.D. Morehead and Co. have received instructions from Mrs Clapperton (as executrix) to sell by public auction, at their rooms, Mary Street, Brisbane, in August, 1877, due notice of which will be given.

The above stations (either jointly or separately), together with stock, purchased land, horses, and all belongings.

Tarong

Adjoins *Taabinga*, *Cooyar*, and *Nanango* stations, and comprises an area of 259 square miles of country, chiefly thickly-grassed apple-tree flats and fine open ridges, all sound and healthy, and abundantly and permanently watered by numerous creeks.

Improvements.

The whole of the run is divided by substantial fencing into four large and six smaller paddocks, also a cultivation paddock of 16 acres, half of which is laid down in lucerne. At the head station is an eight-roomed cottage, with detached kitchen, overseer's cottage, six huts in good repair, blacksmith's forge, large shingled hayshed, circular saw-bench, worked by horse-power, substantial stores and stabling, and a large garden, lately laid out with the choicest fruit trees. There is, further, at the head-station, every convenience for working a large herd of cattle, and also for shearing and washing sheep. On different parts of the run are two strong tailing-yards.

The cattle number about 5000, more or less, and are very quiet and well-bred, being chiefly descended from pure-bred Durham cows and bulls...

No store cattle have ever been sold.

Horses — There are upwards of 200 valuable horses, of which about 60 are draft, got by Omar Pasha and Scotch Jock, and are very quiet and easily broken.

The purchased land consists of 5760 acres, on 640 acres of which the head station improvements stand.

Nanango

Adjoining *Tarong*, contains 189 square miles of country similar in character to *Tarong*, and is also splendidly watered and well improved.

The improvements at the head station consist of a comfortable cottage, with detached kitchen, fine garden, stores, huts, and all necessary outbuildings, one large and two smaller paddocks, securely fenced with two rails, a small cultivation paddock, and a large stockyard in good repair, capable of working any number of cattle. On the run are all necessary yards and huts for working the sheep, also (distant about six miles from the head station) a small yard for branding cattle.

The sheep, which number about 20,000 (more or less), are very superior, being chiefly descended from Jondaryan-bred ewes and rams bred by P.N. Bayley, Esq., of New South Wales. Particulars of their ages and sexes can be had on application to the agents.

The wool (branded GC over *Tarong*) has always commanded a high price in the London market.

The purchased land comprised 634 acres, on which the headstation is erected,

There are about 50 horses.

The above runs are for absolute sale, for the purpose of winding up the estate, and the agents can with confidence recommend them to intending purchasers, they are well improved, and admirably situated for commanding the best fat stock market in Queensland, being within easy distance of Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba, and Gympie. Concerning the quality of the stock, it is sufficient to say that they were bred under the direct management of the late Mr Clapperton.

Full particulars can be had on application to B.D. Morehead.

Note: Owing to there being a minor in the above estates, certain arrangements have to be made to enable the executrix to transfer the freehold, and same not having been completed the sale had to be postponed.⁴³

Tarong was not, of course, sold, and with her second husband, William Albert Wilson, whom she married on 25 February, 1878, and her son, Thomas Alexander Clapperton, Annie Clapperton remained at *Tarong* until her retirement. Thomas Clapperton, upon reaching maturity, became a partner in the business with his mother and stepfather, the company name being Wilson and Clapperton. Their holdings were substantially reduced after forced resumptions, 29½ square miles of *Kunioon* run, 35 square miles of *Neumgna* and thirty square miles of *Tarong* in May 1878.⁴⁴



Thomas Clapperton.

Source — Dawn Clapperton.

Annie's second husband, William Albert Wilson, played a leading role in the development of *Tarong* station, his grand-daughter, Elizabeth-Anne Abell, later wrote: 'William Albert Wilson was born in Barnsley, England, in 1855 and came to Australia with his parents in 1858. His father was the Reverend Benjamin Gilmore Wilson and his mother, Mary Jane, both from Northern Ireland. B.G. Wilson laid the foundations of the Baptist Church community in Brisbane and various areas of Queensland. William Albert Wilson was one of the first pupils to attend the Brisbane Grammar School in 1869. On 10 May, 1886, he qualified as a surveyor.'⁴⁵

Annie and her second husband, W.A. Wilson, lived at *Tarong* until their retirement on 16 September, 1898, when they went to live at Sandgate, and Thomas Alexander Clapperton took over the property.⁴⁶ Annie Clapperton died on 10 February, 1927.⁴⁷

Over the following years the land area of the *Tarong* holding was substantially reduced through successive resumptions including the 1901 resumption, this was situated on the

upper regions of Tanduringie and Meandu Creeks, Monheim and Copper Creeks. This resumption was known as the Quarter Resumption and was thrown open for selection in 1903.⁴⁸

Thomas Clapperton later re-purchased large areas of these selections and ran them in association with his remaining leased holdings. However, in 1906 the lease on another of the remaining areas of *Tarong* ran out and two years later forty-nine square miles of land north and west of Maidenwell were opened up for selection. In 1911 almost fifty square miles were opened up in the Pimpimbudgee and Wengenville regions.⁴⁹



Tarong station cemetery, the largest grave is that of George Clapperton.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

Despite these resumptions *Tarong* managed to continue as a working and financial proposition primarily with the land that was owned under freehold title. Thomas Clapperton diversified the business in 1922 when he embraced the booming timber industry, he sold enormous stands of hoop and bunya pine from one of his blocks on the Bunya Mountains and later constructed a sawmill on the site.⁵⁰

Thomas Clapperton carried on the management of *Tarong* until his death, aged seventy-eight years, in 1950. According to his death certificate he died at St Aubyn's Hospital on 18 June, 1950, of hemiplegia, cerebral thrombosis and arteriosclerosis, his attending physician was the highly respected South Burnett medical practitioner Dr Jean Stobo. Thomas Clapperton was subsequently cremated at the Mount Thompson crematorium in Brisbane.⁵¹ His wife was Caroline (nee Capel) whom he had married on 26 July, 1899, and upon Thomas's death Caroline became his sole beneficiary.⁵² Caroline was the daughter of English immigrants and was born at Brisbane in 1879. She was very community spirited and did much to aid local functions, opening up *Tarong* each year for large and memorable Christmas parties. Caroline Clapperton died, aged almost ninety-five years, in 1974.⁵³

Nanango Station

While Borthwick was struggling to establish his holding at *Tarong*, at *Nanango* station, W.E. Oliver was experiencing a large amount of difficulties with the aboriginal people. At one stage an attempt was made to kill Oliver and some of his men, the indigenous people allegedly burying spears, pointing upwards, in a favourite waterhole where Oliver and his men were known to frequently dive. The attempt was foiled following the advice of an old aboriginal man, called

Nanango, or King Nanango — after whom the location was reputedly named, who told Oliver of the presence of the spears. Oliver was said to have been so incensed that he met with a number of aboriginal people at what later became known as Oliver's Look-out, and there he killed several of them.⁵⁴ Some details of this event were later recorded by one of Nanango's earlier settlers, a man named James Raper. An account of Raper's reminiscences, printed in the *Nanango News* in 1938 claimed: 'The old homestead house had an enormous chimney and blacks used to climb down the chimney, steal food and escape the same way. These thefts puzzled the owners for a while until the cat was left out of the bag by King Nanango (a friendly aboriginal man). They caught the culprits by sprinkling flour on the floor of the chimney and checking up those natives that had traces of white on their feet ... Oliver's Look-out received its name through the help of this old black. Situated about three miles from Nanango is a rocky hillock and here the tribe decided to wait for ... Oliver. The (aboriginal) males numbered about 100, and although they had superiority in numbers they were mortally frightened of firearms. King Nanango managed to get word to the ... whites that a murder was intended, and they went armed with revolvers and rifles. The attack was made, about 20 natives were killed and the white men escaped unhurt.'⁵⁵

Nanango station was sold to Bryce Thompson Barker during the 1850s, the *Moreton Bay Courier* of 16 August, 1851, published that W.E. Oliver had transferred ownership of *Nanango*, 16,000 acres, *Booie*, 16,000 acres and *Coolabunia*, also 16,000 acres to R.B. and D. Barker (sic).⁵⁶ An announcement in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* for Tuesday 8 July, 1851, also stated that the property had been transferred to R.B. and D. Barker.⁵⁷

Barker was later joined by his brother Robert L. Barker. Barker Creek is named after these two men. George Clapperton purchased the station in 1862 and constructed a solid homestead.

One of the men to work for Clapperton was J.G. O'Sullivan, who became manager of *Nanango* station. O'Sullivan was born at Park House, Park Street Sydney in 1828. He became manager at *Mount Stanley* station before taking over as manager at *Nanango*, where he remained for seventeen years, the press later claimed of him: 'He afterwards left and came to Brisbane and lived a private life with his family. He was acknowledged to be a first class medical man on the stations and has ridden over sixty miles to set a broken leg. He was a splendid whip and horseman and a very fine all round athlete. When he was over seventy years of age he has been known to lift four chairs piled one on top of the other off the floor with one hand and hold them straight out from the shoulder. He was an accomplished musician in his day.' O'Sullivan died in May 1913.⁵⁸

Another man in the *Nanango* region who was known to have medical skills was named O'Connor, but among the first qualified medical practitioners to work and practice in the South Burnett was a Doctor Walthardt, who was himself suffering from consumption. (For details on this man and on medical facilities in the region at that time see Chapter 111). A Doctor McMullen was servicing the region during the late 1860s and early 1870s, this doctor was apparently stationed primarily at *Tarong*, then owned by George Clapperton and his wife Annie. The doctor is recorded in station journals as visiting sick and injured people all over the South Burnett and beyond, even as far as Maryborough.⁵⁹

In 1875 *Nanango* station was offered for sale, the sale advertisement described it as carrying three thousand head of cattle, six thousand sheep and fifty horses.⁶⁰

The station was sold in 1879 to James Millis, who, suffering the standard problems with his sheep of catarrh, burr and spear grass, transformed the property from sheep to cattle raising. Millis expanded on the original homestead and it was finally destroyed by fire in 1940.⁶¹ Millis also expanded his station by purchasing a further five thousand acres of freehold land.

One woman who played an important role in the history of *Nanango* station was Mrs W. Millis, the wife of William Millis and mother of James Millis. A report of this woman written at the time of her death in 1923 claimed that Mrs Millis was:

... the daughter of James Tysoe of Armidale, New South Wales, and was a native of the Tableland town. In Armidale she met and married William Millis who predeceased her about forty years. Her husband was then owner of *Guyra* station, the town of *Guyra* now being situated on part of the old homestead. After her husband's death she continued to manage *Guyra* station for seven years, her only son, James Millis then being manager of *Colinton*

station. Early in the 1880s (sic) the late Mrs Millis visited her son at *Colinton*, and with him came across to inspect *Nanango* station which she ultimately purchased and returned to New South Wales. In 1884 she sold *Guyra* station, and with her daughter, (now Mrs W. Selby) returned to *Nanango*, later, in February 1885, entering into a store-keeping business with Mr W. Selby, the firm being known as Selby and Co. She retained her interest in the business for 20 years. She was an indefatigable worker in any matters pertaining to the advancement of church matters generally, and was one of the prime movers in the establishment of the local hospital. In cases of sickness she was at the beck and call of all who needed her in this wide district, no matter the hour of the day or night ... After 20 years of residence here, however, ill health caused her to move closer to the coast, and at *Tewantin* she purchased another store-keeping business. Here again she was successful and after several years she removed to *Brisbane*, where eye trouble reduced her to almost a state of blindness, and about two years ago (1921) she returned to *Nanango* station to live with her son, failing gradually all the time until death claimed her in a peaceful passing.⁶²

As with all other vast stations in the South Burnett, *Nanango* was opened up for selection under the Closer Settlement Act, which included blocks that became available in the *Broadmere* region in 1889, followed by *Booie* circa 1904. In 1907 *Broadwater* was opened up for settlement leaving only the freehold section of the property, this was sold to the Dominion Milling Company. A split from the station had also been previously made, the original 640 acres *Nanango* homestead station block being sold to a man named Chappel. Chappel divided the block into two farms and sold them, the homestead section being purchased by A.W. Caffery.⁶³



James Raper. Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society

James Raper, the man who played such a significant role in early settlement of the *Nanango* district, was certainly widely known for his exploits. In 1938 a report of his adventures claimed:

Fifty years of pioneer work in the *Nanango* district has been experienced by Mr James Raper. He has watched the march of time as the natives have slowly died out, all the brumbies become broken to harness, and the large stations become subdivided. At the age of nine he

woke one morning to find a white man, a complete stranger, hanging by his neck to the rafter of a hut in which he was camping with his father. He had been murdered and left there by blacks.

Mr James Raper, who is now residing in the Nanango township, was born in Ipswich in 1864. His father was engaged as a bullock driver carting anything from wood to provisions between Ipswich and Brisbane. When old enough to sit on the waggon in safety, James used to accompany his father everywhere. All attempts to get him to school were of no avail, for he would run away immediately his parents left. When 13 years of age he went to *Tarong* station...

Cobb and Co. were running coaches between Ipswich and Brisbane when Mr Raper was born, and later extended their services to Nanango and Esk. One driver would bring the coach from Nanango to Ipswich, where another, Tom Chuter, would take the reins from there to Brisbane.

Mr Raper's father did not confine himself to trading between Brisbane and Ipswich, but on one occasion took James, then aged 9, out beyond Hughenden. Blacks were always attracted by a fire, so they lit one about five miles from where they were camped, and put up for the night in a slab hut. During the night James thought he could hear the sound of blacks outside, but his father told him he was dreaming. When they awoke they found the body of a strange white man hanging from the rafter of the veranda of the hut. He had been murdered by blacks and hung up as a grim gesture of the blacks' feelings towards whites in general.

Shortly after he was employed at *Tarong* station, at the age of 14, Mr Raper had the unpleasant experience of being held up by a blackfellow who took his tobacco and matches. He was on his way back from Nanango at the time, late one afternoon, when ... King Billy, the monarch of a local tribe of natives about 100 strong, stepped out from the undergrowth and demanded his possessions. He was armed with spears, nulla nullas, and boomerangs, and for a time it seemed to the youth that he was fated to be speared. Happily for him he had some tobacco and matches with him, and the native was absorbed in these prizes when a teamster came along the track. At the crack of the whip the aborigine took to his heels, and ran away into the bush. The boy hurried home and recounted his experiences to the only other man at the station, a bushman named Moffat. Just before dusk the whole of King Billy's tribe arrived at the station and camped about 100 yards from the men's huts. One of the gins came up to the house and walked into the kitchen. Moffat hunted her out and she evidently told the old chief what had happened, because the whole tribe went into a corroboree. The two white men locked the house up and took it in turns to watch. Raper was told to shout if he heard or saw anything during his watch. Early in the night he heard the sound of footsteps outside, and shouted, at which Moffat roused and fired a shot out of the window. Looking out of the door they beheld the whole of the tribe in flight and footsteps showed that they had been within a few feet of the house when the shot was fired. The entire tribe then left that district and was not heard of again.⁶⁴

Attacks against the white population were frequent and deadly. In August 1849 the *Moreton Bay Courier* reported:

We regret to have heard a confirmation of the many rumours that had reached us respecting the recent depredations of the natives in the Burnett district. Two more men have fallen victims to the treachery of the blacks, having been murdered on the stations where they were employed. The names of the unfortunate men have not reached us. After committing various acts of plunder and violence, the natives had retired towards Wide Bay, between which place and the Burnett they appeared determined to keep up a guerilla warfare. A dray, with provisions from Maryborough for the Burnett, had recently to be accompanied by an armed escort. It is to be hoped that the Government will accede to the request of the unprotected settlers in this vicinity, and grant them the assistance of a body of Native Police in defending their lives and their property.

There appears to be a fair prospect of postal communication being soon established between Brisbane and the Burnett. Captain O'Connell, Commissioner of Crown Lands, has been exerting himself to effect that necessary object, and, as we hear, with success. It is now said that the post-office will be fixed at or near Mr Goode's house, the 'Burnett Inn.'

We are informed that immediate measures are to be taken for opening the road between North Brisbane and the Burnett, it being considered desirable that the route shall be in use before the next season's clip is ready to be transmitted to the place of shipment.⁶⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fourteen

The Establishment and Development of the Nanango/Blackbutt Regions

1. Nanango Shire Council archives.
2. For details of this journey see: *Journal of Stages from District Bligh to Moreton Bay Performed by Simon Scott, 1847*, this document was originally held by Mrs G.R. Eastman (great-granddaughter of Simon Scott) of Mount Isa, a copy of which is held at the Nanango Shire Council archives. The journal has also been reproduced in J.E. Murphy's *Wilderness to Wealth*, (hereinafter referred to as WW.), pp 22-24.
3. *Taromeo Station, 150 years Celebration*, p 2, Nanango Shire Historical Society and SBT. 2 October, 1992, p 15.
4. WW. p 25.
5. QGG 9 February, 1878, Number 20, Vol 22 p 301.
6. *Taromeo Station*, p 3.
7. Ibid.
8. SBT. 2 October, 1992, p 15.
9. Author inspection of headstones, *Taromeo cemetery*, 5 June, 1997.
10. SBT. 9 January, 1991, p 26 and author interview with Lloyd Edwards, conducted at *Taromeo station*, 5 June, 1997. See also letter to Nanango Shire Council from Merv Ewart, dated 7 June, 1994, in which Mr Ewart points out that Graham was not driving a mail coach as has been previously recorded. This letter may be found in Merv Ewart file, Nanango Shire Council archives.
11. SBT. 27 February, 1991, p 23.
12. Author interview with Lloyd Edwards, conducted at *Taromeo station*, 5 June, 1997.
13. QCL. 27 August, 1959, p 23.
14. *Taromeo Station*, pp 4-7; SBT. 27 February, 1991, p 23 and author interview with Lloyd Edwards, conducted at *Taromeo station*, 5 June, 1997.
15. *Register of Runs leased under Order-in-Council in the Pastoral Districts of Wide Bay and Burnett circa 1852-58*, pp 6-9, QSA CLO/N8.
16. WW. p 30.
17. QCL. 8 October, 1959, p 11. See also, Humphrys, Ray, *Bonyi Bonyi, Life and Legends of the Bunya Mountains*, p 23, col 1.
18. MBC. 14 July, 1849, p 3.
19. MBC. 10 November, 1849, p 2.
20. *Register of Runs*, QSA CLO/N7-8, and MBC. 8 July, 1850, p 1.
21. *Register of Runs, Wide Bay and Burnett*, pp 6-9, and pp 53-55, 151, QSA CLO/N8.
22. Extract of entry in Old Parochial Register, Parish of Bellie, County of Elgin, and death certificate number 1783, Clapperton family collection.
23. Biographical listing, Clapperton family collection.
24. W.R. Gordon to Robert Grifen, 18 March, 1847, Clapperton family collection, *Tarong archives*.
25. Clapperton's journal, *Tarong station archives*.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Various letters, Clapperton family collection.
30. SBT. 24 January, 1990, p 15.
31. Clapperton's diaries, 24 February, 1858, *Tarong station archives*.
32. M/C. 22 May, 1862, p 2.
33. *Tarong Pastoral Holding*, by Paul Wilson, Queensland State Archivist, Clapperton family collection.
34. Certificate of Marriage, Clapperton family collection.
35. Birth certificate of Thomas Clapperton, Clapperton family collection.

36. B/C. 20 December, 1875, p 3.
37. B/C. 25 December, 1875, p 7.
38. Ecclesiastical file 1308, Brisbane Registry, Supreme Court of Queensland, QSA File 1308, SCT/P38, roll Z 82.
39. Thomas Clapperton to Annie Clapperton, dated 27 July, 1876, Clapperton family collection.
40. Letter to the author from Elizabeth-Anne Abell, dated 4 June, 1997.
41. Letter dated 18 January, 1977, to Clapperton family from Supreme Court Registry, Clapperton family collection.
42. For details of the station at that time see: B/C. 10 May, 1875, p 4.
43. *The Australasian* 28 July, 1877. Both stations had also been advertised as being for sale in B/C. 20 June, 1877, p 4, this advertisement claimed that the station was to be auctioned at Brisbane on 18 July, 1877, however, the date of the sale was changed because there was a minor (Thomas) involved in the estate and it took longer to transfer deeds of the freehold.
44. QGG 4 May, 1878, pp 1033, 1037 and letter to the author from Elizabeth-Anne Abell, dated 4 June, 1997.
45. Letter to the author from Elizabeth-Anne Abell, dated 4 June, 1997.
46. W.A. (Bill) Clapperton to Mr C. McKee, dated 16 September, 1991, Clapperton family collection and letter to the author from Elizabeth-Anne Abell, dated 4 June, 1997.
47. Author interview with Elizabeth-Anne Abell, conducted on 30 April, 1997 and grave inscription.
48. QCL. 8 October, 1959, p 11 and *In the Shade of the Bunyas*, p 8.
49. *In the Shade of the Bunyas*, p 8.
50. *Ibid*, p 9.
51. Death certificate of Thomas Clapperton, Clapperton family collection.
52. Marriage certificate of Thomas and Caroline Clapperton, and last will and testament of Thomas Clapperton, Clapperton family collection.
53. SBT. 15 May, 1974, p 29.
54. QCL. 3 December, 1959, p 10.
55. N/N. 24 February, 1938, p 3. During a meeting of the Nanango Chamber of Commerce, held in March 1951, Mr J.C. Fleming suggested that a monument be erected to the memory of King Nanango in appreciation of his work in saving Oliver and his party. For further details see: *Nanango Advocate* (hereinafter referred to as N/A.), 29 March, 1951, p 1.
56. MBC. 16 August, 1851, p 4.
57. NSWGG 8 July, 1851, p 1075.
58. For a dated but unsourced copy of O'Sullivan's obituary see: Miscellaneous file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
59. For some details on the various journeys of Dr McMullen, who was occasionally accompanied by a Miss McMullen, see: *Tarong* station diary, 1869-73, *Tarong* station archives.
60. For details of this offer which describes the station, its out-stations and stockyards etc, see: B/C. 10 May, 1875, p 4.
61. N/N. 12 September, 1940, p 5.
62. N/N. 16 February, 1923.
63. QCL. 3 December, 1959, p 10.
64. N/N. 24 February, 1938, p 3 and K/H. 4 March, 1938, p 8.
65. MBC. 4 August, 1849, pp 2-3.

15

Goode's Inn and Early Settlement at Nanango



Goode's Inn, later the Burnett Inn.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives

The site where Goode's Inn was later established was known to the local aboriginal people as Nooganida (sometimes referred to as Noogoonida and Noogoondida), and was the name of the lagoon situated at the rear of the present state school residence. The name of Nanango is said to be another version of this aboriginal title, meaning round hole, or water hole.

Jacob Goode was born in London in 1816, the son of Thomas Goode who was employed at the London general post office. His mother's name was Mary. Jacob married Mary Ingledeu at Sydney when he was twenty-one years of age.¹

Jacob Goode was reportedly a prospector travelling towards the North Burnett when his horses became in need of rest and he requested permission from W.E. Oliver to camp on the station. The year was 1848. However, while Goode may well have been prospecting at that time he was certainly an experienced hotelier and had previously leased the Brisbane Hotel in South Brisbane. On 2 January, 1847, the year before he set out to establish his hotel at Nanango. Goode advertised in the *Moreton Bay Courier*:

The Undersigned having leased those premises, known as the 'Brisbane Hotel', begs respectfully to inform Gentlemen arriving from the Interior, Sydney, and the Public generally, that he has re-opened the same, with a well-assorted stock of choice Wines, Spirits, Ales, and Porter, (bottled and draught), Champagne, Cordials, &c. No expense having been spared in cleansing and enlarging the premises, to suit the increasing wants of the Settlers, occasioned by the great influx of Sheep-owners from the Southern and other

Districts, so none will be spared in furnishing the Table, and providing the best accommodation, which all those honouring this Hotel with their support will acknowledge as second to none in the District.

Attention, civility, and moderate charges, it is hoped, will procure for this Hotel a fair share of support from the Squatting interest, as well as from the residents of Brisbane.²

In June 1847 Jacob Goode was granted a night licence to keep his hotel in Brisbane open for longer hours, allowing him to remain open until midnight.³

Goode was still in possession of the Brisbane Hotel in December that year when he advised the public that his 'Boarding House' was quiet, retired and healthy, his culinary department was of the best quality and that: '... J.G. respectfully draws the attention of the Working Classes to his Long Room, (20 feet long by 15 feet wide) which is kept for their especial accommodation and will always be found clean and comfortable.'⁴

In April 1848 Goode was evidently still living in Brisbane for his name appears on the electoral roll published that month. Also that month he was granted a continuation of his publican's licence.⁵ By July that year Goode was winding up his business in Brisbane, on the 29th of that month he advertised in the *Moreton Bay Courier* that all people who owed him money should pay the debts to G.S. Le Breton of North Brisbane.⁶ In fact Goode had transferred his licence for the Brisbane Hotel to Thomas Grenier, Grenier advertising the transfer in August 1848.⁷

Later that year Goode was on the move. Realising that the region of *Nanango* station was an ideal location on which to establish a hotel, Goode, apparently with Oliver's permission, constructed a rough shanty and started selling refreshments to the occasional travellers as they passed through to the various stations then being established in the region.

In August 1849 the *Moreton Bay Courier* — then the only newspaper being published in the colony, announced that Goode had been appointed the agent for the newspaper on the Burnett.⁸ In his publication, *Wilderness to Wealth*, J.E. Murphy records that Goode's application for a publican's licence did not go before the magistrates until 29 April, 1851, a myth perpetuated in many subsequent publications and papers. However, in fact, Goode's application for his publican's licence went before the licensing court at Gayndah a year previously, on Tuesday 16 April, 1850, by which time his inn had become well known throughout the area that was later to become south east Queensland. The press reported of the licensing: 'On Tuesday 16th April the annual licensing meeting for granting publican's general licences was held at Gayndah. The magistrates were Captain (Maurice) O'Connell, commissioner for crown lands, and Messrs Wilkin, Reid, Humphreys and Herbert. The court was opened at 1 o'clock ... Jacob Goode of Noogoonida ... was the first called and the Bench, being perfectly satisfied with his accommodations both for man and horse, were unanimous in granting his application.'⁹

Goode's hotel was a busy place, teamsters en-route from Brisbane or the Downs to Gayndah would frequently stop there, sometimes for a few weeks at a time. The inn was the centre of 'civilization' in the region, Goode operated the mails and the inn was a resting place for the horse-mail as it came through. Shepherds — Chinese, English, German or Indian could regularly be found at the inn, so too were the squatters themselves often there, enjoying the shade of Goode's verandah.

While Goode certainly had an excellent business, he must have been somewhat annoyed at the competition he experienced from sly grog sellers who were prevalent throughout the region at that time. Bullock drivers would frequently bring barrels of spirituous liquors from Ipswich or Maryborough and sell the contents to the station hands, stockmen and shepherds. For example, in May, 1850, the press claimed: 'A dray and team of bullocks, with loading, were seized at Mr Borthwick's (*Tarong*) station, on Saturday, the 13th inst., for selling grog. The whole has been removed to Gayndah, and Mackay, the driver, who is also owner, was taken into custody. It is believed that the celebrated Flying Shepherd had grog on the same dray, but he escaped a few hours before the police (who showed great activity and judgment) arrived there. This is the same dray that the constables from Ipswich searched at Mr Ivory's station. Nearly all the men on Mr Borthwick's station were drunk and fighting. Such cases have been a frequent occurrence in these parts, and several parties have suffered seriously through the illicit sale of grog at their stations. The inconvenience and annoyance, as well as loss, on this last occasion, to Mr Borthwick,

have been great, he having just commenced boiling operations. There are several of these grog vendors, who keep the liquor planted in the bush, and carry a keg on their horses or shoulders to the nearest station. Could these scoundrels be brought up under the Vagrant Act?¹⁰

Goode was especially busy during the race meetings which were held initially in the vicinity of the hotel. For the races held on the 26th and 27th of December 1850, for example, a witness claimed: 'Mr Goode, of the Burnett Inn, having obtained the sanction of the Bench, was on the course with a plentiful supply of everything the heart could wish for.'¹¹ The races were later transferred to another site, the press reporting: 'The race-course is situated on the *Tarong Run* within two hundred yards of the Barambah Creek, about midway between *Taabinga* and *Nanango*.' The same report enthused that the leading supporters of the race meetings were C.R. Haly and George Clapperton, adding: 'The *Taabinga* horses especially have been bred so carefully for many years both from imported Arab and English stock that they are second to none in the colony.'¹²

Jacob Goode died at Bulimba, aged forty-two years, on 12 December, 1858. The occupation of publican was evidently not the best choice as far as his health was concerned for his death certificate reveals that his death had been caused through: 'excessive drinking'. Goode was buried by Thomas Petrie, the son of explorer Andrew Petrie, on 13 December, 1858, at the Church of England burial ground Brisbane.¹³

Upon the death of Goode, in 1859 the inn was sold to John Bright, an advertisement in the *Moreton Bay Courier* dated 16 January, 1859, revealed: 'The representatives of the late Jacob Goode, in returning thanks for the patronage bestowed on the Burnett Inn, beg to inform their friends that owing to ill health he was obliged to place the hotel in the hands of Mr John Bright, who was known as the head waiter of McAdams' Hotel,' (Brisbane).¹⁴

John Bright was aided by Amos Walters (also reported as Walker) and his wife Selina, Bright also acted as the region's undertaker and continued with the operation of the general store that Goode had set up at the inn.



John and Mary Bright, of the Burnett Inn.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society.

The exact sequence of events concerning the setting up of the inn and Bright's subsequent purchase are best described in a narrative written by James H. Bright, the grandson of Mary and John Bright, in May 1950. In this narrative James Bright was relating the memories of his grandmother, Mary Bright, and the information is entirely sourced to her. James Bright wrote:

He (Jacob Goode) left Ipswich, then Limestone, with some drovers who were on their way to Gayndah to take over some bullocks which were to be taken to Ipswich. On their way to Ipswich from Gayndah they decided to spell the bullocks for a week on the flats in Nanango. Jacob Goode passed the remark that it would be a great spot for a half-way house. On arrival in Ipswich he began to make preparations for men and equipment to travel to Nanango and start operations by getting timber together for a building. This building, the first to be built, consisted of two bedrooms, a kitchen and dining-room in one, with a large wooden open fireplace. This building was completed in about twelve months, and then a start was made with the second building which consisted of a storeroom, living quarters, bar, and six bedrooms. These buildings were roofed with hardwood shingles. By the time the second building was completed, Jacob Goode took a trip to Ipswich. In the course of conversation with John Bright who was then managing a hotel in Ipswich, he persuaded John Bright to take the trip to Nanango with him with a view to buying the hotel, which he eventually did. Jacob Goode stayed on and finished the building which he had started. In the meantime, John Bright was busy building a temporary residence for his family in Burnett Lane, Brisbane. They lived in Brisbane for about six years, during which period he made several visits to Nanango and in 1857 he shifted the family to Nanango. He also took a carpenter (Mr Lovett) to Nanango to build a better class building which was called the office rooms and was used for catering for the richer class of people, the tariff being double to that in the older building which was called the taprooms. As the years went on, he saw the necessity of establishing an oven for baking bread. He brought brick makers from Ipswich and after many thousand bricks were made he brought the King Brothers (August and Harry) two German brick layers, to build the baker's oven and many other brick chimneys. John Bright's wife (Mary Bright) baked all the bread for many years for the town supply. It was about the year 1900 that the first bakery was established in Nanango by Mr C. Butt who engaged Mr Mowatt as his first baker.¹⁵



Relaxing on the verandah of the Burnett Inn. Date unknown.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

The inn was certainly sometimes a somewhat violent place and Bright occasionally came into conflict with the law, for example, on 26 September, 1859, he was brought before the magistrates at the local police court on a charge of assault. The complainant was a female servant named Ann Bailey who was working at the inn. According to Bailey's testimony, she had been standing at the tap room door watching two men fighting in the bar and when Bright had ordered her to leave the room she had refused. With the assistance of an ostler, Bright then reportedly pushed her away — possibly with some violence — although Bright's wife claimed that there had been no such assault and the case was dismissed by magistrates C.R. Haly and B. Barker. At the same sittings, however, the local constables brought charges against Bright for not having a lamp burning at the inn as was required by law. Constable Gill and Constable D. Fitzgerald both swore on oath that the light had not been burning on the evening of 19 September and Bright was fined ten shillings.¹⁶

On 10 October, only two weeks later, Bright was again before the magistrates. Ann Bailey had summoned him for non payment of wages, and in this instance she won the case, being awarded payment of more than £12. There was evidently some enmity between Bright and one of the district police officers, Constable Gill, for during the same court sessions Bright charged Gill with: '... having made use of a most disgusting expression injurious to the moral character of his wife.' The case could not be proceeded with as it was a civil matter but Gill, having been reprimanded by the Bench, immediately tendered his resignation from the police force and asked for a character reference. One of the magistrates, C.R. Haly from *Taabinga* station, replied that: '... the less he said about his character the better.'¹⁷

Bright was again before the magistrates on 2 December that year, however, this time he appeared as the complainant in two cases, both involving the non-payment of moneys for board and rations. At the same sittings W. Williams, the lock-up keeper at Nanango, was appointed to the position of district constable in the place of Constable Gill, and J. Kennedy was sworn in as an ordinary constable.¹⁸

Occasionally the constables too were brought before the Bench. For example, in December 1862 Constable Edward Connington charged his colleague, Constable Finucane, with drunkenness, however, the magistrate, George Clapperton, found there was no charge to answer and the case was dropped, yet the event demonstrated that at times the police did not work harmoniously together and, in fact, Connington was also brought before the Bench on the same charge on at least three occasions.¹⁹

Surveyor W.M. Davidson arrived in the region in 1861 and commenced to survey the township, at that time the small settlement was comprised of Bright's Burnett Inn, several small dwellings, a slab gaol (the second building in Nanango) and a court-house, the third Nanango building which had been constructed in 1859. The first lands sale took place on 10 February, 1862, the press soon afterwards claiming: 'The first Land Sale for this new township took place on the 10th instant when nearly all the lots offered were sold. For the suburban allotments the bidding was very spirited, each lot realising much more than the upset price. The total amount realised was £373/6d.'²⁰ George Clapperton was the major buyer, acquiring ten town blocks for a total price of £40. Other purchasers included, S.A. Bright, Fanny Bright, Mary Bright, W.J. Bright, J. Bright, F. Bush, F. Fuller, J. Williams and many others.²¹ The land sale was conducted by W. Smith, the C.P.S. officer and also land agent. Smith died in office on 19 March, 1862.

The Burnett Inn was eventually demolished in 1911, parts of the building were purchased to form the construction of other private buildings and a large number of coins were discovered beneath the floorboards.²²

James H. Bright, grandson of Mary and John Bright, later wrote: 'After the death of John Bright's wife, the property became the property of Walter Bright, eldest son of John Bright. He decided that as there was no further use for the buildings, he would demolish them and sell the material which consisted of a lot of valuable cedar pit-sawn slabs. Walter Bright and his two eldest sons (Jack and Jim) found £5 and £1 notes to the value of £102, which were planted in the cracks between the slabs. These cracks were covered with zinc strips at almost every joint, and a note of some value was found. All notes were from the Q.N. Bank. Many sovereigns and half sovereigns were also found, also four penny pieces. Jim Bright also unearthed a nugget of gold in an old box of junk. It weighed a little over an ounce and was sold to the local storekeeper for £3/18/.'²³

The second hotel at Nanango was the Star Hotel, owned by Richard Laherty and constructed in late 1869, it was licensed in 1871. The partners Phillips and Samuel constructed a store next to the Star Hotel in Nanango in 1872, although Phillips later sold out to his partner and the store was sold to Joseph Gillespie in the 1880s. Other early businessmen included William Selby and Saul Mendelsohn.

Saul Mendelsohn was one of the Nanango's foremost settlers and businessmen who did much for the early community. He is reputed to have been related to Moses Mendelssohn (1792–1786), the great Jewish philosopher whose grandson was Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn, (1809–1847) the famous German composer. (Although there is some disparity with the spelling of the surname). Indeed, Saul Mendelsohn himself composed music and songs — although few of these now survive. Among his surviving compositions of bush songs are: *The Drover's Song*, *Ladies of Brisbane*, and *Salt Junk*.²⁴

Saul Mendelsohn was born in Prussia during the 1840s, possibly circa 1843 or 1844, his father was a lawyer who was the subject of embezzlement that left him without means. His sons were to have completed university degrees but due to the family's financial difficulties they did not receive this higher education. Saul Mendelsohn emigrated to Australia and went firstly to northern Queensland to supply miners with goods. He later opened a store at Esk before opening another store at Nanango. He was one of the first members of the Baramba Divisional Board, the fore-runner of the Nanango Shire Council, when it came into existence in 1879, (his name, along with all other first board members, was gazetted in February 1880). Saul Mendelsohn died of carcinoma of the stomach, aged fifty-three years, at the Brisbane General Hospital on 19 March, 1897, and was interred at the Toowong cemetery.²⁵

The Nanango original cemetery was the Burnett cemetery, sometimes referred to as the old Nanango cemetery, near Sandy Creek. This was first used as a cemetery probably in the 1850s, although the first recorded burial there was on 19 March, 1862. The last burials at the cemetery were in 1876 and the new Nanango cemetery was opened the following year. During the history of the original cemetery there were thirty-three recorded burials, although there were almost certainly many more. Bright himself died, aged forty-two years, on 30 July, 1869, and was buried in the Burnett cemetery the following day, his body later being transferred to the Nanango cemetery.²⁶ Another man with an interesting cemetery entry was: 'S. Chabert, alias Jack the Conjurer.' The new Nanango cemetery came into existence in 1876 and remained in the hands of a trust until 1912 when it was taken over by the council from the cemetery trustees.²⁷



Saul Mendelsohn.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifteen

Goode's Inn and Early Settlement at Nanango

1. Death certificate of Jacob Goode, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
2. MBC. 2 January, 1847, p 1.
3. MBC. 26 June, 1847, p 2.
4. MBC. 4 December, 1847, p 3.
5. MBC. 22 April, 1848, p 3.
6. MBC. 29 July, 1848, p 1.
7. MBC. 5 August, 1848, p 1.
8. MBC. 11 August, 1849, p 2.
9. MBC. 4 May, 1850, p 2.
10. *Ibid.*
11. MBC. 18 January, 1851, p 2.
12. MBC. 9 January, 1866, p 3.
13. Certificate of Death, Nanango Shire Council Historical Society.
14. MBC. 16 January, 1859, p 4.
15. Letter from James Bright to J. Tardent, dated 1 May, 1950, Pioneers file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
16. MBC. 5 October, 1859, p 2.
17. MBC. 22 October, 1859, p 2.
18. MBC. 8 December, 1859, p 3.
19. MBC. 9 December, 1862, p 3.
20. M/C. 20 February, 1862, p 2.
21. For a complete listing see: M/C. 20 February, 1862, p 2.
22. N/N. 20 December, 1912.
23. Letter from James Bright to J. Tardent, dated 1 May, 1950, Pioneers file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
24. Copies of these songs and other details, including books of press cuttings compiled between circa 1890 and 1905 may be located in The Hurd Collection, John Oxley Library, Brisbane. See also: Saul Mendelsohn file, Nanango Shire Council archives.
25. Extract from death entry. For comprehensive details of this family see: Saul Mendelsohn file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
26. Registrar General's Office, Brisbane, letter to Nanango Shire Council dated 27 February, 1973, File: Burnett Cemetery, Nanango Shire Council archives. See also SBT. 28 August, 1985, p 4.
27. For details of this event see: QSA COL/054 letter 12/6400, dated 11 June, 1912, and: Cemetery Research file, Nanango Shire Council archives. For a listing of people buried in the old cemetery see: Burnett Cemetery file, Nanango Shire Council archives.

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Immigrants and Early Settlement of the Nanango District

The colony of Queensland was now very much in its fledgling state, what it desperately needed was a vast influx of immigrants, men and women who would require housing, spend money, boost the economy and provide the work-force to enable the colony to grow. These new people were to be the lifeblood of Queensland, they would select land, clear the scrubs, plant new crops and increase the wealth of the region.

A Presbyterian minister named Reverend John Dunmore Lang was one of the colony's most ardent proponents of large scale immigration. Lang believed that the new colony of Queensland could, in fact, be three separate colonies which he proposed should be called Cooksland, Capricornia and Carpentaria. To these new colonies Lang wished to bring thousands of Protestant settlers, the emphasis being on the Protestant religion. Lang was deeply anti-Catholic and believed that there had already been too many Irish Catholics allowed to emigrate to Australia, supplementing the many Irish Catholic prisoners who had been brought here during the convict era. Lang formed the Cooksland Colonisation Company, an organisation that arranged for the recruiting and passage of many immigrant ships to Australia, including the *Fortitude*, which arrived at Moreton Bay in January 1849. Many of the *Fortitude's* passengers were destined to find work on the rapidly expanding regions of the Burnett settlement during those difficult formative years. A total of three such vessels arrived at Moreton Bay, but these were merely the vanguard to many hundreds of immigrant ships that were to arrive regularly at ports such as Gladstone, Rockhampton, Maryborough and Brisbane.

The immigration question was closely geared to the questions of separation from New South Wales and the re-introduction of convict transportation. Many of the squatters believed that in order to economically open up the land it was necessary to have an inexpensive, readily available, renewable and hard working labour force. The re-introduction of convict transportations to the colony could provide just that type of labour, thus these squatters were petitioning for separation from New South Wales so that new legislation could be drawn up allowing for such convict immigration. Other squatters believed that separation would be to the good of the colony for a variety of reasons, it would help, among other things, to combat high prices of commodities. Lang's immigrants, at the forefront of Protestant immigration into the colony, were instrumental in formulating strong public agitation against the re-introduction of convict transportation. The separation issue was one that was to bitterly divide the colony. Many residents in what was later to become Queensland did not wish to be disassociated from Sydney which, they believed, was the colony's only centre capable of handling the exportation of produce from the northern areas. Others believed that if a separate colony was to be established then its capital should be in the north, preferably Port Curtis with its natural port capable of taking shipping of any size.

Despite the long and acrimonious debate, separation came into effect in 1859. The colony's first governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, was sworn in on 10 December that year, Bowen stating that the name of Queensland was the idea of Queen Victoria herself. The new colony began with two houses of parliament, a Legislative Council that was appointed by Bowen, and the Legislative Assembly comprised of elected members. This assembly gathered for the first time on 22 May, 1860, and was comprised of twenty-six elected members from sixteen electoral districts.

This was an exciting time for a new colony to be created. In Queensland there was a vast tract of rich land just waiting to be exploited, but added to this were a number of vital factors. New inventions such as the steamship, and the telegraph would aid enormously in communication and transportation, the building of railways would open up the interior to the traffic of goods and people. The new colonial government of Queensland realised that while the coffers of the colony were sadly

lacking, the land was there for the taking and it was this land, coupled with a vast influx of immigrants that would bring wealth and prosperity to the colony. The government quickly introduced the Land Act of 1860 which provided for leases of fourteen years to those settlers who could stock their runs. The primary purpose of this act was to provide for very rapid land acquisition. It was a policy that worked, virtually doubling the settled land area during the following five or six years.

For immigrants destined for the South Burnett, those arriving at the ports of Maryborough and Brisbane played the most significant role in the populating of that region. For example, between the years 1862 and 1901, almost 21,000 immigrants arrived at Maryborough, many of these settled in the Wide Bay, but a large number of them, attracted by the rich pastoral lands of the South Burnett, travelled by dray, by horse or wagon, sometimes by coach or on foot, to take up small holdings where Kilkivan, Wondai, Murgon, Kingaroy, Goomeri and Nanango would become established.

At first these new arrivals were only a trickle, during the 1850s large numbers of immigrants simply did not arrive at the ports, and it took many years before the various immigration societies geared themselves up and in collusion with the colonial government managed to attract immigrants in greater numbers. Immigrants arrived primarily from Britain, but there were many other countries whose nationals were eager to join in the adventure of life in a new land, people from Germany, France, the United States of America, Spain, Portugal and many others, bringing a rich polyglot of languages and a wide diversity of cultures, and customs to begin what later became the multi-cultural diversity of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Over the years immigrants have come to Australia under a wide range of systems. Up until 1861 immigrants were mainly introduced under the Remission Regulations or at the expense of the government. However, after that time immigrants came under quite different rules, the immigrants paying back their passage money to their guarantors and employers. Once this had been done they would then be eligible for land grants to the value of £18. After two years in the colony a further land grant of £12 would be awarded, and any two children of the immigrant couples aged between four and fourteen years would also receive a land order.¹

Among the very early residents of the Nanango district was Archibald Lee. According to a history published in the *Nanango News* in 1933, Archibald Lee, the police magistrate at Nanango, was a representative on almost every important board in the district. Lee originally owned a sheep station at Wallumbilla, the station was held in partnership with John Deuchar, after whom Lee's second son, Joseph Deuchar Lee, was named.²

Archibald Lee was later transferred from Nanango to Barcaldine, one of his sons, F.W. Lee, who was born at Nanango in 1879, subsequently recalled: 'My father was appointed police magistrate and land commissioner at Nanango in 1872 ... When (he) was transferred to Barcaldine he was presented with a very handsome address by the residents of the town and district on his departure from Nanango and a very high tribute was paid to my mother, also as a token of the esteem and respect in which they were both held.'³

Travel for these early settlers was by way of coach, horse or on foot, the 1933 report claiming:

Ned McDonald drove the mail coach from Fern Vale to Esk and thence northwards. Later Mr A. (Alex) McCallum took over the reins. Old Mr Tom Tudor drove the coach over this route for Mr McDonald 60 years ago.

The coach traversed the road between Ipswich and Esk two years before Mr Tudor set out on the road to Goode's Inn. Prior to this Mr Tudor travelled with Mr Ernest Faven's party exploring in other States and eight months were spent with Mr G.J. Jopp mapping in the west.

'We had more rain in those days than we get now,' said Mr Tudor, 'and we were often held up by flooded rivers and creeks. I was taking a party to the Brisbane Exhibition on one occasion when we encountered a flooded creek between Stone House and Colinton. The waters were tearing down Wallaby Creek and the coach and all concerned were washed into the torrent. A lad named Wagner, who, I understand, was an orphan boy, was drowned. His body was recovered by the police and buried at Colinton station. Three of my four horses were drowned and other property lost. Yes, floods were a worry in those old coaching days — flooding waters and bogs.'

Mr Tudor remembers a day when the coach was upset on the Blackbutt Range, a man's leg being broken. The fact that the accident cost him £50 as compensation to the injured man had fixed it in his mind. 'That was a dear trip over a slippery road,' said he.

The coach was never held up by thieves or bushrangers, although on many trips valuable mail and other property were carried.⁴

The Stone House mentioned in this report was the staging post at Moore that once served as an overnight stop for mail coaches using the old Esk road between Nanango and Esk. It was constructed of rough stones by brothers Robert and Charles Williams circa 1869, the stones being gathered and hewn from the surrounding countryside and sealed together with mud. For a while the house also had a liquor licence but this was later dispensed with following a drunken altercation during which the landlord was attacked by a man wielding an axe. Several men were wounded during the fracas. While liquor was no longer served, the house continued to act as a staging post where travellers and mail carriers could rest and obtain refreshments. At the turn of the century the house passed to a nephew, Tom Williams, and the surrounding land was used for cattle fattening. The house was later sold to J.J. Grant.⁵

Another settler to the region was S.C. (Syd) Lewis who, many years later, recalled that where the township of Nanango subsequently came into being was once: '... only a few cattlepads and beyond the saleyards, Scott's Tannery.' Mr Lewis stated that near the saleyards was a recognised aboriginal encampment, although at times the indigenous people would build their ginyahs closer to the centre of the settlement: '... only to be chased out by the police.' He added that one of these aboriginal men had been named, Nosey: '... so named because he had no nose, that part of him having been burnt off in his infancy. Nosey also had a very small mouth, and when opened to its fullest was no larger than half a crown. One night a large number of blacks congregated at the corner of Drayton and Fitzroy Streets, on the allotment now occupied by the National Bank, and gave a corroboree there.'⁶

The main commercial centre of Nanango during its formative years was situated approximately where the post office to the railway station were later constructed. Mr William Cross with his wife were two of the town's first residents, Cross later stated: 'Just about the spot where the Drayton Street railway gates are, stood the Star Hotel, and close to (the) Star was Mendelsohn's store. The Burnett Inn was at the back of the State School where the large Bunya pine trees are growing, close to Nicholls Bros. Pig and Calf Saleyards. At that time the Church of England was the church school hall and the police station and all the public offices of the town were opposite the Post Office.'⁷

Mrs Cross, (nee Ridley) was born in Nanango in 1866, the third child of John Ridley and his wife who lived in Henry Street Nanango. William Cross was born at Limestone (Ipswich) in 1864, the only son of John Cross and his wife. The couple was married in 1890 in the old St George Catholic Church, later the site of the Nanango railway station, the officiating priest was Father Lonergan, who used to frequently visit Nanango to perform Mass.⁸

Nanango was first gazetted as a place for holding Courts of Petty Sessions in 1857 and the first reference to the Nanango court-house in Queensland Government Returns of Expenditure was in 1860-1861 when a sum of £23 was expended. In January 1864 work commenced on additions to the court-house and by the end of that year a total of £233/9/- had been spent on the building with an additional £27/14/- on furniture.⁹

The first sitting of the Nanango Police Court took place on Monday 18 April, 1859, the judges on the bench were William O'Grady Haly and R.B. Barker. The case was Rolland vs Mortimer and Anderson and involved a demand from a German worker named Rolland for wages amounting to £45/14/0d. The defendants claimed that the German worker was not of sound mind, they stated that he had been in the habit of carrying a bandicoot and calling it his child and on several occasions had brought pieces of dead sheep to Mortimer and asked that they be sent home to Germany, he had, according to Mortimer, also destroyed his clothing, some blankets and sheepskins. The magistrates dismissed the case.¹⁰

Christmas time in the Nanango region must have been one of considerable merriment, even for the police officers of early Nanango, one of whom, Constable Edward Connington (also given in charge sheets as Conington), was found drunk on duty at the Christmas races, the press reporting

in 1863: 'Constable Connington of Nanango is said to have been "dissipated beyond extremes" during the Christmas holidays. Two charges were laid against him in the Police Court, but George Clapperton, the magistrate, dismissed the case, considering all parties excusable at this festive season.'¹¹ Drunkenness on duty was apparently a chronic problem for Connington. According to the Court of Petty Sessions Cause List dated 13 January, 1863, Connington was brought before the bench charged with being drunk, the charge read: 'In neglect of duty in his office as Lock-up keeper at Nanango on the night of 27th December, 1862, on having been drunk when in charge of a prisoner confined in the Lock-up.' Connington pleaded guilty and was fined £3.¹² According to the: 'List of prisoners confined to the watch house Nanango for 31st December, 1862,' Connington had also been: 'Drunk between 3 and 4 p.m. on the 28th of December, 1862.' He admitted the charges and was suspended for one week.¹³

A new court-house was constructed at Nanango in 1912 and the old court-house was taken over as the land agent's office, the old shingle roof being replaced with iron. The original materials, which included both shingles and battens, were sold in May 1913.¹⁴

The construction of public buildings in Nanango was considered something of a priority and many public officials and other people of historical significance soon started to make their homes in the township.

One of the first clerks of petty sessions to preside in Nanango was a Mr Cummings. He had his residence at a place later known as the Chinaman's Waterhole where he, with his wife and two sons, Richard and Frank Cummings, lived for many years. Prior to Cummings, Charles Sinclair was C.P.S. at Nanango, another C.P.S. to serve in the region was W.C.N. Bussell.

Court cases in Nanango followed a trend similar to other small regional centres, the cases brought before the Bench usually confined to petty crimes, but there was a noticeable difference in the punishments, especially if the crimes directly affected the landholders who were, in most cases, justices of the peace.

For example, when William Fox was brought before George Clapperton on 23 September, 1862, charged with being drunk and disorderly, after having assaulted two men at the Burnett Inn, he was found guilty and fined just ten shillings, yet when a man named Gorden was brought before Clapperton on 1 December, 1863 charged with absconding from service, he was fined £10.¹⁵

One of the more well known identities of the Nanango district during its formative years was Pat McCallum, who was the paternal grandfather of present shire mayor, Cr. Reginald McCallum. Pat was seventeen years of age when he arrived at Nanango in 1858. He came to the district via Ipswich, with pack horses, and, as grandson Reginald McCallum explains: 'My grandfather went up the Brisbane River and came over the site of what is now Flagstone and then into this open country that had been selected as *Nanango* station in 1842. He camped on a piece of land out there looking over a large flat, and my grandfather thought that he would love someday to own that area. He came on into Nanango where he took up some blocks of land, surveyed house-blocks, and in 1868 a part of *Nanango* station was subdivided and he eventually acquired 640 acres which he called *Glen Elgin*, and that is the place where I still live.'¹⁶



Patrick McCallum, elected to the original Baramba Divisional Board, 1879, chairman of the Nanango Shire Council, 1902 to 1903.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.



McCallum's coach outside the Burnett Inn circa 1912.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

Prior to taking up his block, *Glen Elgin*, however, Pat McCallum decided to go into business and initially established a horse team run from Nanango to Ipswich, taking his teams down to Ipswich every fortnight. The teams would carry wool, tallow, and other station produce, returning with items in demand in the Nanango district, goods such as barbed wire, tools and some foods. Another man who was also carrying out a similar business at that time was John Smith, an early selector at Nanango, whose teams ran via Kilcoy to Brisbane.

Pat's property, *Glen Elgin* was used for a variety of purposes, Pat McCallum was eventually operating a number of coach routes and, at different times, seven mail runs, as Reginald McCallum recalls: 'He got married (to Mary McLean), and he had seven sons and one daughter, and as soon as a son was old enough to read an address, they were put on the mail runs. They started a passenger coach run between here and Ipswich and Pat had the first one of those, but the railway line eventually crept up to about Fernvale, and Pat sold the coach run. When the rail line reached Esk Pat re-bought the coach run and called it McCallum's Coach-line, and he held that coach run until the rail line reached Yarraman and that was the end of the coach run. He also had a coach run from here to Gayndah and another from Nanango to Jondaryan. As the boys became old enough to handle a coach they went onto the coach runs and the younger sons went onto the mail runs.'¹⁷

The McCallum family was certainly highly regarded in the district, despite the fact that one of the family members once faced an interesting (and probably unnecessary) court case. The case brought before the Bench at Nanango was that of Alexander McCallum while carrying the mails between Gayndah and Nanango, who faced two charges in 1862, these were: 'Negligently losing one letter, the property of the Postmaster General,' and: 'Wilfully secreting one letter, the property of the Postmaster General.'

Alexander McCallum was one of the area's foremost coach drivers and operators, who drove a regular coach service from Nanango to Esk. During the height of the McCallum business operations the family was reported as having up to three hundred horses working on the coach service, many were pastured near Nanango and others located at various relay stations. Alex McCallum married Florence Corbett, the daughter of Nanango butcher Dan Corbett, and the couple constructed a large home in Brisbane Street Nanango.¹⁸

The sequence of events concerning the somewhat embarrassing loss of the mails began on 31 October, 1861, when Charles Mason, the superintendent of *Barambah* station, gave Alex McCallum a letter to be taken to Gayndah where it was to be posted to Charles Hardie Buzacott, the editor and owner of the *Maryborough Chronicle*. The letter contained a one pound note, payment for a newspaper subscription. When Mason did not receive a reply to his letter or the change of the one pound note which he had requested be made in postage stamps, he believed that the letter had gone mysteriously missing.

Events would probably have rested there, however, several months later Amos Walters, then living at the Burnett Inn, was clearing out a room in a building which was a part of the inn's complex when he discovered a canvas bag containing letters and newspapers. Walters later testified: 'I reported the fact to Mr Bright, the proprietor of the public house, in consequence of what I said he took them to Mr (William) Williams, the postmaster.' Walters could neither read or write but at the subsequent trial of Alexander McCallum he identified one of the letters as having a smudge mark on it, this was the letter sent by Mason to Maryborough.



Alex McCallum, mail contractor.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

John Bright stated: '... the mailmen are in the habit of putting things of theirs in that room when they do not give them to be locked up in the proper saddle-room which is under lock and key.'

McCallum was found guilty of losing the letter and fined £15, the more serious charge of wilfully secreting a letter was dropped. Apart from William Williams other early postal officers included Mr E. Smith and a Mr Scott.¹⁹

A newspaper article based upon Pat McCallum's farm, *Glen Elgin*, published in 1913 stated: '(*Glen Elgin*) contains about 800 acres, most of which is freehold. Mr McCallum has resided in the district for 55 years, 27 of which he has been resident on *Glen Elgin*, it being one of the first properties taken up. Very little of the fine flats to be seen here have been put to the plough, the property having been used solely for grazing purposes, Mr McCallum has been engaged in mail contracting for most of the time he has been resident in the district, and even to the present day is still engaged in the business. Mrs McCallum has been a boon to the district folk insofar that she is recognised as one who is never found wanting when her services are sought in time of sickness.'²⁰

There is little doubt that Pat McCallum played a significant role in the early development of the Nanango district, in addition to his valuable coach and mail runs which provided much needed services to the public, Pat McCallum also served on the first Baramba Divisional Board when it was formed in 1879 and later served a lengthy period as shire chairman. When Pat McCallum died in July 1919 the press gave him considerable coverage, one reporter writing:

The death occurred at *Glen Elgin* on Tuesday afternoon, of Mr Patrick McCallum, the oldest male resident of the district. The deceased gentleman, who was 78 years of age on May 12th, was born at Botany, New South Wales ... and he being a young active man, and fond of horses, soon found congenial employment as stockman, shepherd, and other station work on the properties of which Nanango was the centre. He started in the mail business about 58 years ago, being on the line between Taroom and Goode's Inn, Nanango. This run took about four days each way, the distance being about 250 miles. The Brisbane mail in those days was made up at Nanango for Taroom and other western places. Mr McCallum's first contract

on his own account was between Nanango and Gayndah, which he held for over 30 years. He also ran the mail at different times to Ipswich, Esk, Jondaryan, and Gympie. He transferred the active part of the work to his sons about 15 years ago. Mr McCallum found time to do his share of public work, and ... was a member of the Nanango local government body, being one of the first members, and having gone through the Chair. Mr McCallum was the oldest mail contractor in Australia, and at the time of his death held two contracts in the Nanango district. On two occasions, over 30 years ago, he was stuck up by the bushranger, the Wild Scotchman (sic) once at the very gate of Nanango. To those who knew him well, Pat McCallum was a lovable personality. It was seldom indeed that anything was permitted to ruffle the serenity of his soul, and he was prepared to listen with toleration to any side of the question that was advanced.²¹

Pat McCallum was recognised as having carried the official proclamation declaring the naming of the colony of Queensland in 1859. He was elected to the Baramba Divisional Board in 1879, and remained on the council until 1903, serving as chairman. As we have seen, Pat had seven sons, all of whom worked on the various runs, one of these sons, Archie, settled at *Bull Camp* in 1909. *Bull Camp* was so named because in winter the bulls on the station would congregate in that region. *Glen Elgin* was used for breeding horses for the coach runs and also as a cattle fattening property.²²

Glen Elgin was eventually inherited by Pat McCallum's youngest son, Stuart Beach McCallum, the father of Reginald McCallum. Beach McCallum worked as a driver on the mail runs and also as a relief driver for the coaches and carried out the last horse mail run from the Nanango post office. He operated *Glen Elgin* as a cattle property and acquired many other portions of land until the holding totalled approximately four thousand acres. His wife's name was Ethel Ann Scott, whose father, J.W. Scott, had a tannery at Bundaberg, however, the business folded and the family, which included six children, came south aboard a horse-drawn buckboard and sulky, carrying all their personal possessions, to eventually camp at a site on the Barambah Road at Broadwater on the last day of 1899, arriving at Nanango on the first day of 1900. Ethel's father then selected land which he called *The Heights*, where he set up another tannery and a dairy. Beach and his future wife met at a bush dance and they were married on 22 February, 1922, at *Eurekaville*, owned by Ethel's father, a farm about four miles from Nanango which Ethel's father had selected after selling *The Heights*. Beach and Ethel had two children, a girl named Connie, and, their son Reginald.²³

Beach McCallum was also prominent for his participation in the local shows. He died suddenly at his home in Alfred Street in June 1964, his wife having predeceased him three years earlier.²⁴

Glen Elgin is now owned by Reginald McCallum and his wife, Edna, and is still operated as a cattle property. Reginald McCallum was educated at the Grindstone School but admits that this education did not amount to much and he completed his education by teaching himself. He recently stated: 'When there was work to be done at home, well you didn't bother going to school and that's why I only went to school for about five years, I was an awful scholar and when I left school I could just write my name. I did a lot of camping, especially just after I left school, during the war years, ringbarking on my father's property, I used to do a lot of droving, and I'd read every chance I had, but I had to have a dictionary with me to understand what the words meant. The Grindstone School is a Boy Scout hut now.'²⁵

Reginald took over the *Glen Elgin* property when his father retired to Nanango in 1951 and it then operated as a dairy for eight years until its re-conversion to cattle production.²⁶

Richard Laherty built the Star Hotel at Nanango during the 1860s, which was later purchased by Michael Jeremiah Collins. When the railway was brought into Nanango the property was resumed by the government and the ground became part of the railway yard. The ground on which the first Catholic Church was built was also resumed and is the site where the railway station was constructed.

The first race-course was situated nine miles from Nanango on the steamer lagoon flat. The property formed part of George Clapperton's station, *Tarong*. A subsequent report claimed:

The flat has long since been selected, and is one of the principal lucerne centres in the district. The last race meeting held on the old course is historical on account of the great race between Mr George Clapperton's horse, *Merser of Tarong*, and Mr Haly's mare, *Minnie of Taabinga*. The distance was three miles and the race was neck and neck, finally being won by *Merser* by a head. *Merser* was ridden by the late Alex McCallum, senior, and *Minnie* by W. Boody. Evidently, feelings ran high between the two stations, and it is said that Mr Clapperton never allowed a race meeting to be held there again. Race courses were then formed and Nanango has at present one of the finest race-courses outside the metropolitan area. There are 40 horse stalls, jockeys and weighing-in rooms, stewards' rooms, and grandstand.²⁷

One of the first stores in Nanango was reported to have been owned by a man named Mason who also ran a branch store at the Seven Mile goldfield.²⁸

In 1864 religious services and education in Nanango were very much in their rudimentary stages. In May that year a correspondent for the *Moreton Bay Courier* wrote:

Within the last fortnight we have been visited by both the Reverends E. O'Donohue and Mr W. Wilson, Baptist Minister, both of your town; (Brisbane) they held divine service to their different denominations and must both have been satisfied with the numbers and attention of their congregations.

It is certainly a gratifying fact to find located among the scattered and widely-spread inhabitants of this district a gentleman who, for the sake of promoting the education of youth, is willing to set aside the various distinctions of opinion that exist amongst the dissenters of the Protestant Church, and all other denominations, so that the youthful mind should receive some enlightenment. Such appears to be the case with Mr Wilson, whose endeavours have been unceasing not only in this township, but on some of the large stations in the district in impressing on the adult population the necessity of establishing Sunday Schools.

It is a lamentable fact that most of the children in this township have not the opportunity of being enabled even to learn the simple rudiments of education, — and though I do not strictly believe that Sunday Schools alone to children have any lasting benefit, — that have no idea even the alphabet — yet I hail with pleasure the promptness and interest displayed by those who have taken in hand the establishment of a Sunday School under the auspices of Mr Wilson, believing that it will be the first step in progressing towards the formation of a daily school.

We have not certainly a sufficient number of children to induce a schoolmaster or mistress to obtain a sufficient income by keeping a school alone, nor are we in a position to apply to the government for the establishment of a National school; but yet we have it in our power, if assisted by our neighbouring squatters, to do something towards the promotion of education. In the first instance I would suggest the advisability of raising a small amount by subscription for the erection of a building suitable for a school-room; without this is at once done I am afraid that Mr Wilson's Proposition of the Sunday School will not be able to be fully carried out. The knowledge that a school of some kind does exist may be an inducement to many at a distance to be anxious that their children should be able to attend it, and very shortly lead to the establishment of both a daily and Sunday School.

Surely when it is known to the townspeople of Nanango that on the station of Messrs Jones, at *Boonara*, the working hands have most liberally assisted in the establishment of both a daily and Sunday School, and though only a short time open they are proceeding in a most satisfactory manner, they will use an exertion at least to place themselves on the balance of their immediate neighbours in showing that they are equally anxious for the progress and advancement of their juvenile population.

The inducement offered by us to a medical man to be a locator has at last produced a Dr. Wallhard, who, from a trip around the district, has seen sufficient grounds to make him for at least one year to be ... a resident with us.²⁹

The Nanango State School, listed as number 77 on the register of schools, came about following civic agitation in 1865. It was gazetted from 1 January, 1866, and instruction commenced on 12 February that year, the first teacher being James Ryder, there were thirty-four students enrolled. Prior to its opening a correspondent for the *Moreton Bay Courier* reported: 'Our school, schoolmaster's house and adjunct are now finished — they are built somewhat in the chalet or

Swiss style and are a great improvement to the town, we need not say we hope they will work wonders among our youthful population who were growing up in utter heathenism before their erection.³⁰ For the school's centenary in 1966 a massive 42 lbs cake was baked, the icing featuring a replica of the school badge.³¹ The school was later moved to become part of Berlin's Museum.³²



First Nanango State School prior to new building, built 1866.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society.



Nanango State School 1894. Head teacher, Thomas Kirby, assistant teacher, Mary McKeone.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society.

The Lands Office at Nanango was built circa 1864 by a man named Pride. Many of the original buildings in Nanango were constructed of yellow-wood, bluegum, and pine, and the boards were pit sawn. Peter Voght and Jim Page were the first men to start pit-sawing in the district. Their operations reportedly consisted of two sawpits.

Wild horses were to be found in large numbers during the region's early days. A later report claimed that this was because, '... An old man named Paddy Lenehan started horse breeding in the range country between Nanango and the head of the Brisbane River, adjoining the property now owned by Mulcahy Brothers. He eventually lost most of his horses, and thus laid the foundation of a colony of brumbies.'³³

One of the major problems facing those early pastoralists was the methods to be used in getting their stock to market. As we have earlier seen in this history, during the region's formative years most of the stock was bred for its wool, hide, and tallow, but as the population of the colony increased then it became evident that more and more stock would have to be sent to the various meat-works for processing. This posed a serious problem for stations which found themselves en-route to the meat-works at Maryborough, Toowoomba and Brisbane, thousands of animals were driven to the markets and meat-works across the grasslands of other pastoralists who could do nothing, by law, as these transient animals devoured their fodder in passing. A lament published in 1884 stated:

The question of stock travelling throughout the colony is one which the Government must ere long pay attention to, so as to devise some means for preventing squatters and settlers having their runs temporarily destroyed by hordes of grass pirates, while, at the same time, making allowance for *bona fide* travelling stock to market. Anyone who has been on the Darling Downs in a fine season will hear praises from one end to the other about the stock-carrying capabilities of the individual runs included there, but the visitor to those parts who will reflect a little must surely see the greed of the Downs squatters in packing their runs during a fine season, and never letting thoughts of droughts and the severity of winter enter their calculations. In the years after the drought of 1876 many graziers who had the wise foresight to keep the number of stock on runs to what those runs would carry by selling stores, were literally ruined by the hordes of fodder-robbers sent out by the avaricious Downs lairds. The same thing is occurring at the present time throughout Queensland. Those who had thought themselves well out of the drought are having their hopes dashed aside by the numerous passages of large herds or flocks through their pastures. To show that we in the Wide Bay and Burnett district are not sending forth a baseless complaint, we will enumerate some, and only some, of the stock which have been driven through the districts by long circuitous routes, to the loss of the land holders and to the detriment of the fat cattle which have to be driven to market over these now grassless tracts. There are 8000 sheep from *Cecil Plains* now close on *Kilkivan*, and 6000 sheep from *Fassifern* are having a pleasant walk over on another road in that vicinity. 12,000 sheep from *Westbrook* are now sweetly depasturing this side of *Musket Flat*. *Eaton Vale* station has two mobs of 12,000 and 8000 sheep respectively either on or just passed across *Boonara* run. The Falkiner Brothers, of *Toowoomba*, have a quiet little mob of 3000 sheep nibbling the grass right and left on *Glengarloom* and runs adjoining. Mr Hogarth, of the Downs and boiling down fame, is the boss shepherd of 9000 sheep from the Downs, the Wide Bay and Burnett districts. *Bon Accord* station belies its name by sending an unwelcome contingent of 12,000 sheep to arrive ere long on the Upper Burnett. During the last three months 70,000 sheep have gone through *Boonara* run, and the genial owner has to grin and bear it. The laws relating to travelling stock are embraced and appear disjointedly in five separate Acts, and any person who wishes to know the law relating to distances to be travelled per diem by stock will find a passing allusion to the same in the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1869, and only there. But even this is not of much service, as it only refers to the unsettled districts, a term which, however, might be fittingly applied to our own in the present state of affairs. Fresh legislation in the matter is urgently needed.³⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixteen

Immigrants and Early Settlement of the Nanango District

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21. M/C. 21 July, 1919, p 3.
22. SBT. 30 July, 1980, p 3.
23. Author interview with Reginald McCallum, conducted at the Nanango Shire Council, 26 May, 1997.
24. SBT. 11 June, 1964, p 15.
25. Author interview with Reginald McCallum, conducted at the Nanango Shire Council, 26 May, 1997.
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27. M/C. 15 January, 1924, p 7.
28. Ibid.
29. MBC. 17 May, 1864, p 9.
30. MBC. 28 May, 1866, p 4. For a listing of the pupils and a detailed history of this school see: *Nanango State School 125th Anniversary* publication, published by the 125 Anniversary Committee of the Nanango State School, 1991.
31. N/N. 6 March, 1931, and SBT. 9 March, 1966, p 7.
32. Listings of teachers for this school and further details may be found in file: State Schools, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
33. M/C. 15 January, 1924, p 7.
34. M/C. 3 July, 1884, p 2.

Further Development in Nanango and District

As the country was slowly opened up for settlement, particularly in the area we now know as Coolabunia, it became increasingly obvious that the land around the Nanango region was highly prized. There were several reasons for the steady growth of Nanango, the development of its surrounding lands, firstly by the squattocracy for grazing and later by selectors for agriculture, but the sudden rise of the mining industry following the discovery of gold during the 1860s also had a role to play on the region's development. Yet while grazing and gold were certainly important to the early economy of the region, the most steady and substantial growth is clearly attributed to a program of agriculture and investments in such produce as maize and pigs and the dairy industry. An 1887 report of settlement gives us an idea of the demand for such land, and also of some of the problems the new selectors were facing, both physically and financially:

On Wednesday, January 12th, at the Land Court, held at Nanango, no less than 45,000 acres were taken up in grazing farms. 32,000 acres of the above being on *Taabinga*, and the remaining 13,000 acres at *Boobyjan*. Three homesteads were also taken up at *Tarong*, comprising 470 acres. As there was competition for four of the grazing farms, the usual form of ballot was gone through ... It will be seen that grazing farms are in good demand, while on the other hand, agricultural areas are not being taken up. This may be owing to the existing Land Act, which renders it a matter of great difficulty and outlay to convert them into freeholds, and thereby prevents a most useful and desirable class of settlers from becoming holders of such land. Certainly, in the district of Nanango the land suitable for agricultural purposes, although very good where it exists, (being chocolate soil with a good depth), is patchy. Under the present act, a man taking out say 640 acres agricultural freehold, has to pay 4d. per acre per annum, and at the end of 10 years, 25s. minus the rental already paid. This latter is a concession made under the Amendment Act lately passed, as heretofore under the previous Act, the whole amount had to be finally paid irrespective of the 4d. or 5d. per acres already paid as rental during that period. Another thing which is not comprehended, and which appears rather absurd; is the extra price that has been put on the land near Nanango within the last two years. Before it was only 10s. per acre, and 10s. to be spent in improvements. Now it is 25s., with this difference, that the only improvement required is a ring fence. This is rather an extraordinary policy, as the cream of the country to a great extent has already been selected. The only cases where agricultural farms have been applied for, are when existing selectors have required certain patches to round off or otherwise, add to their present area.¹

By 1898 it was evident that the township of Nanango was looking prosperous and that its growth rate was more than satisfying. By July 1898 the new hospital had been completed and was: '... in charge of that competent gentleman, Dr Mourice, (also reported as Morris) late of Tenterfield.' (For details on the establishment of this hospital see Chapter 111). There were several new buildings being constructed including a new police barracks which the press lamented, was an urgent requirement. Contractor for the police barracks was well known Nanango businessman, builder and saw-miller John Heiner. Tenders for the new police station were called on 16 June, 1898.²

By 1900 land in the South Burnett was being selected at a tremendous rate, surveying parties working long hours in an attempt to keep up with the constant demand. In March that year Mrs Maud Wheeler, on travelling from Maryborough through Kilkivan to Nanango wrote:

The country along the line to Kilkivan looks fairly good, and is well grassed in spite of the lack of rain. Every station has piles of logs all ready to go down to Maryborough, most of the logs are just barely up to the regulation diameter. The train goes on until we reach

Kilkivan, and the long, hot journey is over for one day. The tiny township lies in a basin with hills all round it; the air is fresh and sweet, and a delightful breeze is blowing. There are two hotels and some little stores, and the usual blacksmith's shop. From Kilkivan most of the maize and wheat grown in the Nanango district is railed to Maryborough. There are fifty-seven miles to be travelled, most of them fairly level, but just about Kilkivan there are some steep pinches. Next morning we start off at about 7. Mr Cameron, land commissioner, shares the box with the driver and myself ... Just about Kilkivan the country is hilly, but there must be a way of getting in by making a detour and avoiding some of the hills. Except just about there, the line presents no engineering difficulties — right from Nanango the country is level. There is a good deal of traffic on the road, and we pass several teamsters making for Kilkivan.³

Writing of the Coolabunia region Mrs Wheeler claimed:

Early in the morning we were off again in the buggy for Coala-Bunia, a true scrub settlement hewn out of the heart of the forest by men with hearts as tough as their forest trees and as big as the pumpkins they sow amongst their maize. The land is mostly scrub land, with belts of open forest, where wheat could be grown. Any quantity of maize is produced, in spite of the disadvantages under which the settlers labour. Some idea of the cost of carriage may be gathered from the fact that it costs 3s per bag to put the maize on the railway. This is about 9d. per bushel merely for taking it to Kilkivan, without considering railage and other charges. It will be seen that a very large crop is essential to the prosperity of the settlers, and when the rain does not come, and there is even a partial failure of crops, the settler is in a bad way, heavily loaded with a crushing cartage. The settlers are of all nations, chiefly, English, Danish, Swedish, and Scandinavians, with a few Germans, no Chinamen, which perhaps accounts for the fact that fruit and vegetables cannot be bought ... if a man has money, he can, by a little judicious dummieing, obtain selections and hold them until it suits him to sell. He need make no improvements; he need not put a fence round it. This kind of thing is bitterly resented by the farmers, who say that many of the selections obtained in this way are held for purely speculative purposes. And even if it were not so, they argue that 160 acres is about as much as any man can manage, and of that, with good seasons, he can make a fair living. The system is wrong, and though the Government may directly obtain more revenue, yet indirectly the gain would be greater by putting the true selectors on the land ... The land is being taken up faster than it can be surveyed. Most of it is scrub land, although it demands labour to clear it.⁴

Many of the selectors taking up land in the South Burnett during the turn of the century did so without realising that one of the most severe droughts in the history of the colony was about to devastate the countryside. An early report of the drought, written in January 1901 claimed:

I have conversed with men who have been in the Nanango district for more than a quarter of a century, and they assure me that in all that time they have never known such a severe drought. As I have already said, the early maize crop has been a failure in a great many instances, and unless we get a downpour soon the late planting will not be attempted. The ground is so hard and dry that work on the roads and fencing on the stations has had to be abandoned for the present, and how the stock contrive to exist in the face of such a scarcity of feed is a mystery.

One curious effect of the dry weather is that wallabies, and other bush animals, driven in from their usual haunts by the scarcity of grass and herbage, and rendered desperate by hunger, are attacking whatever corn and other green crops have escaped the drought, and their depredations are a source of great loss to the farmers. Famine has made them fearless and cunning and all precautions taken against them appear to be ineffective. Paling fences have kept them at bay as a usual thing, but they are not found sufficient to cope with them now, and nothing less than a good high marsupial wire fence seems to be of any use. As very few farmers are in a position either to pale in or wire in their lands, there is an additional and most severe drawback added to the long list of their troubles. The philosopher who said 'Go on the land, young man.' may have been good at giving advice, but he wasn't fool enough to try it himself.⁵

By now the small community of Nanango and district was beginning the real march of progress. For many years, ever since the rail line had been completed to Kilkivan in 1886, the people of Nanango had been lobbying strongly for the establishment of a line to their township. The

establishment of such a line would bring enormous wealth to the region by opening up markets at Maryborough and allowing for the easy, swift and economical transportation of produce to places such as Brisbane and Sydney. It had been a long and difficult battle involving people from all walks of life, the ordinary selectors, townspeople, politicians and high profile residents such as pastoralist James Millis who played a significant role in the establishment of the rail line to Nanango. The time was certainly ripe for such a rail extension, selectors were flooding into the country and as the possibility of the establishment of such a rail link strongly grew, so too were the selectors eager to take up the rich lands surrounding the town. A press report written soon before the decision to establish the rail line gives some indication of the state of settlement at that time:

The amount of settlement going on in the suburbs of Nanango city — such favourite spots as Coolabunia, Stuart River, Kunioon, Barker Creek, Booie, and Cooyar, is surprising when the almost hopeless task of getting produce to market is taken into account. The outside places are growing so fast, and the forest is falling so rapidly before the axe of the pioneer settler, that persons who visited or rode over these localities a year or two ago, are unable to realise for a time, the change that meets their view. A very pleasing and very convincing proof of the growth of population in the districts is the establishment of Provisional Schools to afford the coming generation of Queenslanders a fair chance in the battle of life ... A new provisional school has just been completed at Kunioon, at a cost of about £100 and the work has been done in excellent style by Mr Fred Scott, builder. The tenders have just been sent in for a school at Wooroolin, where young Australia has been running wild to a considerable extent for want of such an establishment, and where it will certainly do much good. The other outlying schools, or some of them, will ere long require further enlargement.⁶

By March 1901 the Nanango correspondent to the *Maryborough Chronicle* lamented that while the country moved towards the federation of the first parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, there seemed to be no candidates worthy of election, and that there was a general antipathy towards the entire new constitution. He wrote: 'Although the time for the federal election is close at hand, I must say that the apathy displayed by the majority of the people one meets is astounding. One could have thought that the creation of the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia would have created keen and widespread interest, but instead of that it seems to be regarded with positive indifference. I have often seen a Divisional Board election arouse the voters much more than does the calling into being of the Parliament that is to decide the destiny of United Australia.'⁷ The correspondent went on to claim that the politicians who were attempting to have themselves voted to this parliament were all: 'unfit and suffering from a miserable mediocrity.'⁸

Yet despite this gloomy view, at this time too came the news that the town common lands which had recently been surveyed and mapped by the government were to be opened up for selection. As the press jubilantly claimed: 'This will be very satisfactory news to a good many persons in the district who are anxious to acquire a piece of land near the township.' The blocks of land were surveyed in 40 and 160 acre areas, being a convenient size for selectors interested in small scale farming. Many of the blocks were to be made available as homestead selections, and, as the press claimed: '... would lead to the settlement on the land of the best class of men.' The report continued: 'Many were hoping that the land would be thrown open as homesteads, but for some time past (on account of the active demand here for land, the homestead system had been abolished by the Government) we were not expecting such a gratifying change in the policy of the Lands Department. It will lead, among other things, to an increase of population around the town, and as there is some good land for orchards and farming purposes, it will help things along a bit on the right road.'⁹

Another report, dated at the end of the same month, substantiated these views, adding:

The influx of settlers to the Nanango district still continues, and it looks as if the tide of immigration from other districts and the sister states is about to set in steadily. It is becoming quite a common thing to see families, with all their belongings on a couple of drays, coming to Nanango on the look-out for farms and homes. They manage to find a vacant spot, and squeeze in somewhere, I suppose, although it must be a pretty tight squeeze at times, seeing the eager rush there is for land. This week a family of ten healthy and lusty young pioneers — the eldest being only thirteen years — arrived amongst us, and

I believe will settle down in the neighbourhood of Tabinga (sic) Village. This is not an isolated case either, as the population all round is steadily, and not too slowly, increasing. If we are to have many families of the dimensions just mentioned coming to settle in the district, it looks as if the time is near when the Government can safely dispense with the services of the oily tongued romancers known as immigration lecturers in Britain, where many a farmer is induced by flowery and glowing pictures of the prosperity and happiness existing among settlers in Australia to face hardships and conditions for which he is totally unprepared.¹⁰

There was considerable hostility towards land speculators, people who could afford to buy at current rates and simply retain ownership of the land until it had appreciated considerably in value. Most people on the South Burnett and all intending selectors were agitated over this practice, believing that the land should be made available only to bona-fide settlers who were willing to live and work on the land they purchased.¹¹

For example, in the Nanango Lands Court in November 1901, two blocks of land were opened for selection and a total of 173 applicants rushed to purchase the land. Critics claimed that it was almost impossible for genuine selectors to obtain this type of land as the entire South Burnett was suffering an invasion of speculators. The Queensland land regulations were, in theory, very liberal, but in fact there was nothing to prevent this type of speculation, despite the fact that the government wished nothing more than to attract small selectors to take up land in the state.¹²

Farm production levels at this time were absolutely critical, even the slightest drop in production could send a farmer bankrupt and, as we have seen, the lands were being opened up for selection during a particularly devastating drought. Under ordinary circumstances farmers should have been expecting to harvest some forty bushels of corn to the acre, however, an example of the difficulties some of the farmers were experiencing may be seen from the returns of one farmer at Barker Creek who had selected: '... first rate forest land,' and who, on his fifty acres, had cropped just three bags of corn in three years.¹³ At this time the water problem was becoming particularly serious, some of the waterholes the local people of the Nanango region had been depending upon had run completely dry and others were perilously close to becoming dry. Stock had to be driven from five to ten miles to water each day and this was a considerable drain on the farmers' time as well as being detrimental to the condition of the cattle and horses. The Stuart River contained just a few stagnant waterholes.¹⁴

Irrespective of these depressing times the land sales continued to be well attended. At the November Land Court in Nanango in 1902 when the *Taabinga*, *Booie* and parts of the *Mondure* lands were thrown open for selection, the sale was extremely well attended, the press reporting:

The Court House presented quite a busy scene for three or four days, and an assemblage of country farmers, together with a fair sprinkling of visitors from other districts on the look-out for land, was to be seen hanging round the enclosure and sitting under the verandah the greater part of each day till the drawing for the various lots was completed. There was a large amount of competition for all the good areas, the number of applicants who tried their luck for different blocks ranging from half a dozen to up to nearly thirty, and there were only three or four portions for which there was only the one applicant. It is an undeniable fact that a good few of the applicants were mere speculators, but still there were enough bona fide agriculturists to take up and improve every block thrown open had they been able to get one.¹⁵

By the following year, as increased agitation continued to have the rail extended from Kilkivan to Nanango, there was heightened interest in creating new business opportunities in the Nanango region. A dairy factory was proposed and on 28 December, 1903, a meeting of interested persons was called at the Commercial Hotel to discuss ways in which a local flour mill might be established. Early resident of the Nanango district, James Millis, chairman of the Nanango Shire Council, chaired the meeting and received reports from Mr C. Grey who had previously been appointed to canvas the district to gauge interest in the venture and to secure promises of shares in the proposed company. Grey said that a large number of shares had been apportioned and that the remainder would be taken up without too much difficulty.

In 1906, despite considerable disappointment from the people of the Nanango district, the *Tarong* lease, where some of the most attractive lands in the South Burnett were located, was extended for a further ten years, the press claiming: '... Widespread indignation is expressed in these parts at the shamelessly partial action of the Government in extending the *Tarong* lease for a further term of ten years.'¹⁶



Land ballot circa 1909. (Lands Office — current library site).

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

By this time the long drought was breaking and the future for small selectors seemed slightly more promising. The land was now becoming rich and green, land prices were comparatively low — for those lucky enough to be successful at the Land Courts — but there were many other problems those early selectors had to face, including Nogoora burr, Bathurst burr, nutgrass, bull head, thistles, lantana, stinking roger and the omnipresent prickly pear. These weeds tended to choke the selections making clearing operations both time-consuming and costly. Once the selectors had planted their crops of corn, pumpkin and potatoes they had to contend with severe frosts and floods, on many occasions frosts would destroy thousands of pumpkins and farmers were forced to feed them to their pigs. The selectors also had to fight off hordes of animal pests. A correspondent to the *Maryborough Chronicle* later wrote: 'In the earlier years of settlement the white cockatoo was a terrible nuisance, and we well remember how the echoes of Coolabunia were daily awakened at dawn by the exploding guns of irate farmers in all directions ... The wallaby and bandicoot are gentlemen not so easily got rid of, and where wire netting cannot be afforded, their nocturnal attentions are intensely harassing. They root up the corn after it has been planted.'¹⁷

Following the expiry of the lease over *Nanango* station the run was opened up for selection at the Nanango Lands Office on Monday and Tuesday, 25 and 26 December, 1907. There was considerable interest in the land, the lands office receiving approximately four applications for each of the 130 farms then being sold. The press enthusiastically reported:

The majority of the applicants were thoroughly practical farmers, many being from the Southern States, while a considerable number were men already settled on the land in Gatton, Laidley, and other noted Queensland farming centres, who were anxious to secure some of the fine blocks that were open to competition. They were very complimentary in their references to the high quality of the land in and around Nanango, which was

somewhat of a revelation to many of them. They unhesitatingly declared it to be far superior in every way to the lands they had seen at *Taabinga* and *Tarong*, and among the applicants were some who had been successful in getting land at *Taabinga*, but who were quite prepared to forfeit their payments if they were successful in drawing blocks on the *Nanango* holding. The land was divided into 130 farms, and there were no less than 373 applicants for these areas. For por. 180 (won by Mr T. Keith) there were 35 applicants, and for some of the other favourite portions there were a good many balloters. Out of the 130 blocks thrown open, only three remained unsold at the termination of the sittings of the Land Court, and it is probable that they will be taken up at the first opportunity. The large number of priority applications lodged, which require personal residence to fulfil the conditions, was proof, not only of the excellence of the soil, but of the bona fides of the selectors, and the pity is that there was not nearly enough land open to go round. The total sum to be paid for the land selected is over £30,000.¹⁸

This land rush was having a profound impact on the development of the town and new buildings were rapidly being constructed. The Coronation Hotel, situated where the swimming pool was later constructed, was certainly one of the more impressive privately owned buildings in rural Queensland at that time. It was built by Mr J. Bonding, the architect was F.H. Faircloth of Bundaberg, and it was constructed for John Jones. A press report of 1912 stated: 'It is a fine two storey hotel up to date in every respect, of solid construction, spacious verandahs and balconies. It has the most up to date bar out of Brisbane.'¹⁹ The hotel had approximately thirty rooms and came complete with a cellar for cooling the beer. The fittings were largely of silky oak, including the counters in the bar, and the ceilings were decorated pressed metal. One of the most impressive external features of the hotel was: 'A bell shaped turret surmounted by a flagpole ... This turret is covered with Pabco roofing and coloured terra cotta.'²⁰ Upon the death of John Jones in 1922, the hotel was dismantled, piece by piece, each piece being carefully numbered and catalogued, and transported by train to Chinchilla where the building was re-erected. However, it was later destroyed by fire.²¹

Other hotels in the town included the Fitzroy Hotel, constructed by W.A. Lewis, a local tinsmith and plumber in 1906, the Royal Hotel in Henry Street, constructed in 1902 and destroyed by fire in 1922, and the Commercial Hotel, constructed in 1893 and destroyed by fire in 1940.²²



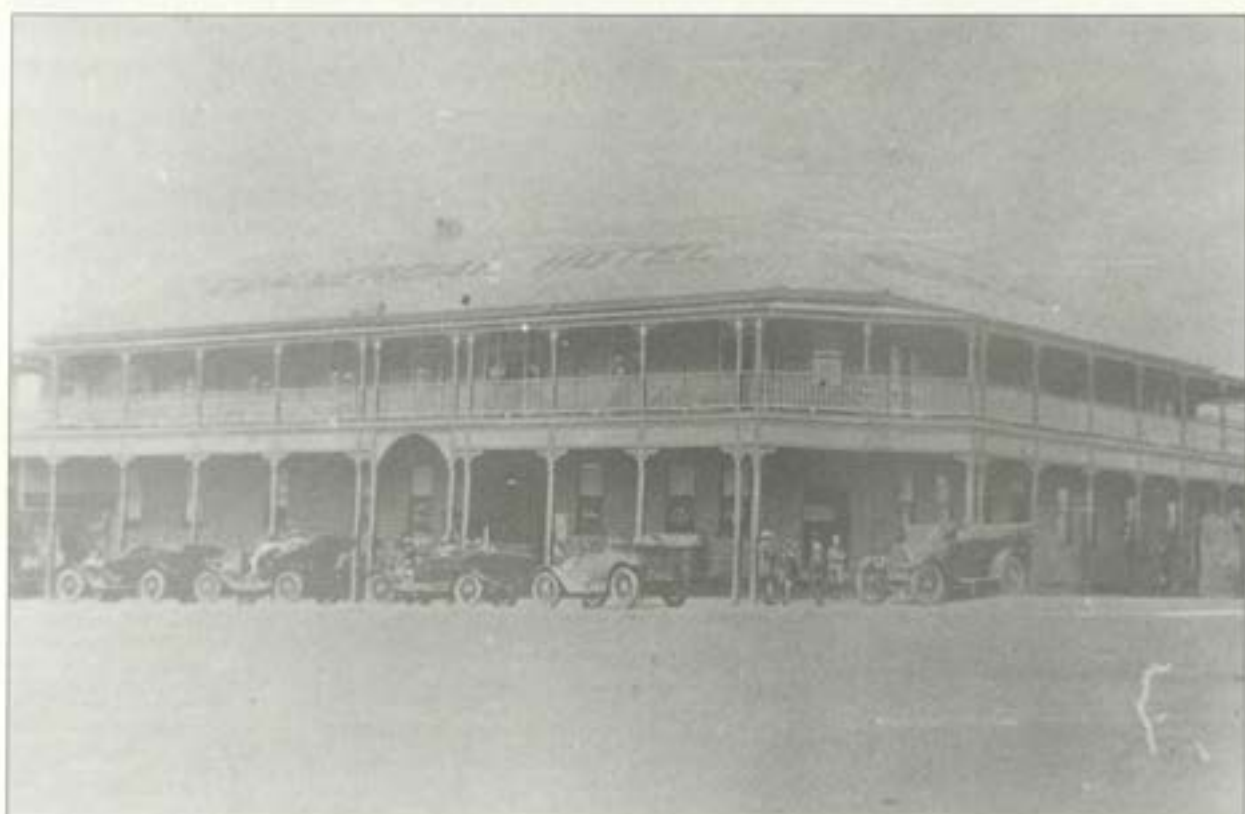
Coronation Hotel at the south eastern corner of Alfred and Henry Streets, Nanango. Proprietor J. Jones, building completed 1912 and removed 1922.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives, Neil Collins' collection.



Fitzroy Hotel, Nanango. W. Lewis, owner/builder in sulky wearing a white coat.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives, Neil Collins' collection.



Commercial Hotel, Nanango. Constructed in 1893 and destroyed by fire in 1940.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

Notes and Sources
Chapter Seventeen

Further Development in Nanango and District

1. M/C. 18 January, 1887, p 3.
2. M/C. 2 August, 1898, p 3. For details of specifications, including plans of the buildings, see: Nanango Police Station file, Nanango Shire Council archives.
3. M/C. 19 March, 1900, p 3.
4. *Ibid.*
5. M/C. 8 January, 1901, p 3.
6. M/C. 4 September, 1900, p 3.
7. M/C. 5 March, 1901, p 5.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. M/C. 30 April, 1901, p 3.
11. M/C. 16 October, 1901, p 3.
12. M/C. 20 November, 1901, P 3.
13. M/C. 10 June, 1902, p 2.
14. M/C. 8 July, 1902, p 4.
15. M/C. 19 November, 1902, p 3.
16. M/C. 21 May, 1906, p 4.
17. M/C. 11 June, 1906, p 3.
18. M/C. 3 December, 1907, p 3.
19. N/N. 25 May, 1912.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Hotels file, Nanango Shire Historical Society and file: Coronation Hotel, Nanango Shire Council archives.
22. For licensing details of these hotels see: Hotels file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.

18

Some Early Selectors of the Nanango Region

Some of the then more well known selectors of the region included James Logan of *Hillside*, almost seven miles from Nanango. Logan was born in Scotland and had come to Australia circa 1863, landing in Victoria. He later travelled to South Australia where he was married. Logan and his family arrived in the Nanango region circa 1898 to select *Hillside*, a 156 acre forest farm which included almost one hundred acres of flat land suitable for cultivation.

Thomas Jones leased *Lily Vale*, a 360 acre farm that he had selected circa 1889 — this was a well known selection capable of producing up to forty-four bags of wheat from just four acres. *Lily Vale* was located twelve miles from Nanango and ten miles from Kingaroy. Jones was born in Sheffield and came to Australia when he was just nine years of age. In 1890, at the age of twenty-three years, he married Lily Davis at Nanango, an immigrant from London. Archibald Lee, Nanango's chief magistrate, performed the ceremony.

James Nord operated *Scandia* farm, described as: '363 acre deep chocolate soil situated at the top of the Kunioon Range on Taabinga Road, 2 miles from Kunioon School.' Nord was born in Sweden and came to Australia circa 1898. He worked in the mining industry for ten years and later took up dairying on the north coast of New South Wales for about nine years. However, due to his wife's health he and his family later moved to the South Burnett and took up the *Scandia* selection where Nord constructed a large home with verandahs. He also purchase another selection at Boobie. He was married to Miss S. Backstrom, also from Sweden.

Samuel Brown owned *Southfield*, also a forest farm of 320 acres situated on Meandu Creek. This farm boasted permanent water, even during the terrible drought of 1901/02. Brown was operating as a general farm, dairying thirty cows and also stocking a number of pigs. He had been born in Nottinghamshire, arriving in Australia circa 1888. He selected *Southfield* twenty years later. He was married to Miss Moorcroft of Staffordshire in 1900. The press later reported: 'One of Mr Brown's first public jobs was the erection of the foot-bridge that spans Nanango Creek between Mr Manchin and Mrs Bright. He was working with Mr Parsons, of Barker Creek; also on the bridge on the Stewart (sic) River, near Mr Tancred's, 12 or 13 years ago. The P.O. bridge, Nanango, was also constructed by him 9 or 10 years ago, with the assistance of Mr James Taylor; also Barker Creek bridge on Coolabunia road. With Mr John Hart (of Blackbutt) as a partner or assistant, they formed the first street (Drayton Street) in Nanango some 15 years ago. The street was ploughed with a team of bullocks, and formed and gravelled. A year or so after they cleared the road (a mere track overgrown with bushes on each side at that time) between Nanango Saleyards and Coolabunia School.'¹

Few of these early selectors had an easy time establishing their properties, the difficulties of becoming established were legendary, one selector claiming, somewhat philosophically in 1905: 'Truly the pioneer farmer's life is a happy one. After months and months of laborious work he sees the results of his labours destroyed in a few days by adverse climatic conditions or by pests. Some time ago a local farmer had a wheat crop beaten right out by a hail storm of a few minutes' duration ... and he was depending on that small harvest to settle his store account. The cry of: "Go to the land young man" is all very well for those who stay in the cities. They know all about it, of course, and will tell you that all that is required to ensure success is pluck, resolution and energy. Those who have tried it know that a man may use up all his energy — may work hard day and night for years, and then will often find himself poorer. Oh yes, go on the land young man by all means ... but be sure to take a good supply of ready cash with you or you may shortly be hungry. If you haven't the cash, take a coffin with you, it may save your neighbours some trouble.'²

With the arrival of the rail line, firstly to Kingaroy and later to Nanango, the entire region began to feel the influences of great prosperity. The government's policy of opening land to closer settlement saw the division of many of the region's major stations, *Tarong, Nanango, Barambah*, and others. Selectors in their thousands started to arrive and small communities sprang up where once there was only bush. Some of these settlements were tiny hamlets such as those at Grindstone and Bull Camp. A 1913 report of these two centres claimed: 'Should you have an axe to grind our advice is not to take it to Grindstone, a new and progressive settlement ... the general crops thereabouts ... give convincing evidence of its all around capabilities. In a pleasantly situated valley one of the first things to catch the eye is the school, very capably presided over by Miss O'Keefe, (a Maryborough lady) who has in her charge about 30 rosy-cheeked, robust and healthy looking youngsters. This alone will give a fair idea of the number of settlers around, and the whole place at a casual view conveys an impression of quiet and contented farming prosperity.'³ Approximately seven miles beyond Grindstone lay the quiet rural settlement of Bull Camp. This area was regarded as being perfect for dairying, the same 1913 report claiming of it: 'There is said to be little if any frost about Bull Camp and we found a night camped in our buggy there incomparably milder than at Nanango. A cream van runs twice weekly to the (Nanango) factory, and up to the present serves the purpose of carrying the mails of the settlers to and fro. Bull Camp should be one of the very healthiest places on earth ... Once again the school-house is a conspicuous object ... occupying a commanding site ... The teacher, a Maryborough lady, Miss Glover, who amiably presides over the educational destinies of some 18 ... (children).'⁴

The women and men who were now taking up the small selections and struggling to make a living often under difficult circumstances, laid the groundwork for the continued growth of future generations. These were the people to whom the Nanango district owed its future, for without them the township could never have grown beyond a small rural village.

One of the more prominent selectors was James Birch who first selected land at Booie circa 1875 and later moved his operations to another selection in the Grindstone vicinity, approximately four and half miles from Nanango. Carrying on dairying for a number of years he subsequently leased 340 acres to David Moreland, a man described in 1913 as having a '... large experience in that industry.'⁵

Immediately opposite the Birch property was *Eurekaville*, 160 acres of land selected by Mr J.W. Scott, Reginald McCallum's maternal grandfather, who had constructed a comfortable homestead and many outbuildings. The press later reported: 'The homestead is picturesquely situated on an elevation from where miles of the surrounding countryside can be viewed, and adjoining it is an orchard in which the owner has experimented with a large variety of fruit trees.' Scott was evidently one of the region's more affluent farmers, carrying on a diversified operation including pig and dairy production, lucerne, fruit and sheep. His farm was well equipped with machinery and his outbuildings included: '... a well fitted workshop containing a forge and everything necessary in the way of tools, the apiary containing about 14 hives, the butcher's shop, the killing yard (Mr Scott kills all his own beef), the stables and last but not least the comfortable home surrounded by a well-laid out and well-kept garden. It contains every convenience and there is to be found here a luxury that many town houses do not possess — hot and cold water connected with the bathroom.'⁶

Close by was another small farm of just forty acres owned by a Mr Lent, who had taken up the selection around 1912. Within a year he had cleared thirty acres and grown his first crop of corn. His neighbours were D. Lanigan and M. Roach of the selection known as *Kremlin*, a dairy and pig farm of one thousand acres. Alf Nutley was the owner of *Wattle Grove*, a 160 acres selection farming pigs and dairy cattle. Water was a problem on this selection and Nutley had been forced to hand sink two wells, one of fifty feet and the other of seventy-two feet before finding any water. Nutley was a successful exhibitor in both the Brisbane and local shows.⁷

At Bull Camp Mr C.E. Perrett owned a farm called *Woodlands*, seven hundred acres with some rich flats suitable for cultivation. Perrett was growing oats, corn and lucerne, raising beef cattle and dairying, taking cream from about thirty-five head to the butter factory at Nanango.⁸

Close to *Glen Elgin* owned by Pat McCallum, was the property known as *Marble Valley*. This holding was owned by Mr J. Green who also owned another property called *Lindale*, the two

combined being approximately 1300 acres, 314 acres being leased the remaining being freehold. Green had been resident in the district since circa 1903 and had spent most of that time dairying, later moving more heavily into agriculture.

Lynwood selection, a property of some 320 acres, was owned by Mr A.J. Gibbs, resident of the region since circa 1909. Gibbs came from Echuca in Victoria and had also farmed in New Zealand. At *Lynwood* he was involved in dairying. Adjoining this property was a selection known as *Springvale*, owned by Mr A.G. Ham, 670 acres of grazing and dairying land. Within a mile of this property was *Stoneybrook*, another dairy farm owned by a Mr Hodgson, who had been resident of the district since circa 1909. Directly opposite was *Hill View* owned by Mr H.J. Hams who grew lucerne and corn. Close by was *Wandalla*, 215 acres belonging to Mr John Hams senior. Closer towards Nanango along the Runnymede road was *Melbadale*. This 200 acres block of rich scrub land, three and a half miles from Nanango had originally been selected by Sid Hunter but had later changed hands to Harold James Woods. Woods, who came from Western Australia, was a firm believer in mixed farming and, in addition to this, his property held a large store of ironbark timber ready for milling.⁹

Opposite *Melbadale* was *Illawarra*, a property owned by Mr W.L. Short who came from the south coast of New South Wales. The selection had originally been taken up by Carl Raabe, but was subsequently taken over by Short in about 1910. The land was comprised of 281 acres of well grassed paddocks, well watered, producing corn and other crops. Short was also involved in dairying and pig production. Also along the Runnymede road were the properties of Mr Lewis Green called *Omega* and *Toolijooa*. These too were dairying properties. Green had come to the Nanango district from Kiama, New South Wales. Arriving in Queensland in 1901 he later (circa 1903) caught a train to Esk where he had missed the coach and was forced to walk from Esk to the Stone House at Moore. He rested there for the night before continuing the following day to Nanango — all the while carrying his baggage. Green was later a director on the butter factory board and served a term on the shire council.¹⁰ Adjoining this property and also fronting the Runnymede road was *Iona*, a farm belonging to Lawrence Walsh who had taken up the selection circa 1903.¹¹ Walsh was born in Nanango in 1881 and lived in the region all his life. He was one of the original cream suppliers to the Nanango Dairy Association and was once a director of that association. He was a member of the Nanango Hospital Board and was well known in the region for his work with the Nanango Catholic Church. He died in April 1973, aged ninety-one years.¹²

Close to Walsh's *Iona* and virtually hidden in thick forest land was *Coffeetown*, owned by Andrew Walsh who had selected his farm circa 1907, the *Nanango News* of July 1913 stated: '... Here are to be seen some fine specimens of ironbark and spotted gum trees, possessing high marketable values, and these, when clearing operations have started, should prove a good asset.' In addition to this property Andrew Walsh also owned 160 acres of freehold land on Wheelbarrow Creek and 390 acres of land on Barker Creek. The *Coffeetown* property had originally been selected by a Victorian man named Whales, the price being ten shillings per acre. Whales had later forfeited the land.¹³

Nearby was *Clover Hill*, 480 acres of good forest land owned by Thomas Caslin. In addition to constructing a fine residence, Caslin had gone into dairy farming. The property was well grassed and watered as it fronted Wheelbarrow Creek. Caslin had selected the property circa 1912. A short distance from here, along the Manumbar road was the property known as *Kia Ora*, then owned by Mrs J.K. Thompson. Mrs Thompson and her son, W.H. Thompson, had come to the Nanango district from the Darling Downs in about 1907. The farm was 160 acres in size and the Thompsons were engaged in mixed farming. Additionally W.H. Thompson owned a number of draught horses and a wagon and, when things were quiet on their selection, he would engage in hauling logs for the timber mills.¹⁴

Watsonville was owned by John Watson and was used exclusively for grazing purposes, although the owner was also growing fruit trees and experimenting with wheat. Along the road to Broadwater was the selection known as *Wawoon*, owned by John Macfarlane. This 130 acres property was originally used for cotton growing but with the failure of that industry the owner had planted cereals and vegetables. John Macfarlane had suffered a serious illness before coming to Nanango where he hoped to find better health.¹⁵

Situated at the junction of the Manumbar and Barambah road was the 124 acres property of Fred Howlett known as *Lindisfern*. Howlett had come to Nanango from the Gippsland Lake country. This selection had been taken up circa 1910 and had a frontage to Barker Creek. Howlett was growing wheat, maize and lucerne and ran about twenty dairy cows, mainly of the Jersey variety. Opposite this holding was *Newholm*, a property owned by Carl Raabe who had come to Nanango circa 1905, taking up *Newholm* in 1911. Carl Raabe was born at Hehssen, Germany, and came to Queensland with his parents in 1863 when he was fifteen years of age. Working firstly as a gardener in Brisbane he also was under the employ of Thomas Blacket Stephens, M.L.A. One of Carl Raabe's tasks while thus employed was to act as a courier, taking messages to the governor and other ministers. When he was eighteen years of age Raabe was apprenticed to J. Harrison, reportedly one of the first blacksmiths in the colony. A depression in 1865 saw Raabe strike out on his own and he went to Walloon where he set up his own blacksmith's business. Raabe later took up land in the Nanango district where he and his wife resided until their retirement in 1921. Carl Raabe died in July 1941.¹⁶

Close to Carl Raabe's property was a selection that had been taken up by a man named J.G. Naumann, the press described him as: '... a sturdy type of farmer that any district might be proud of. He arrived here about eight or nine years ago (circa 1904) with barely £10, but had a strong arm and stout heart, and having overcome the initial difficulties he now has his farm improved sufficiently to make a fair thing out of it. Needless to say Mr Naumann is not a believer in the eight-hour principle.'¹⁷

Fairvale was owned by Charles Otto, who took up the selection circa 1911, going into the dairy industry with about twenty cows. Otto owned another property at Coolabunia. Close by was the selection known as *Rhineheim*, owned by Mr and Mrs V. Weyer. This couple went in for dairying and vegetable growing and Mrs Weyer could be regularly seen at the markets in Nanango selling her produce. Another property close by was owned by a man named Sonnenburg, and a short distance along the road was another selection owned by J. Raabe and leased to the Sandy Ridges school-teacher, Mr J.A.L. Sides. This land was used exclusively for grazing purposes.¹⁸

The school at Sandy Ridges was described in 1913 as:

Although opened a little more than 3 years ago, the State School at Sandy Ridges today presents an illustration of the value of methods there carried out in training the young idea and is a credit to the present pedagogue, Mr J.A.L. Sides, who has been stationed there for the past 20 months ... The grounds approaching the building have been tastefully laid out in flower and vegetable plots, all labelled and illustrated with the plant which has been sown and other information which is useful to the scholars. The soil in the garden is of an inferior quality, and this fact has, strange to say, proved helpful, as it allows the instructor to illustrate the value of manures and phosphates ... Marsupials have proved a source of annoyance in the past, but a proof-fence now surrounds it. There is quite a variety of plants ... a splendid assortment of flowers, arrowroot, corn, barley, cowpeas (about 10 varieties), Rhodes grass, chevalier barley, sheeps' burnett (a splendid sheep fodder), various kinds of vegetables, and a number of fruit trees and vines. The school is well-built, roomy, and healthily-situated, and boasts of an average attendance of 16. In Mr Sides, the teacher, the district has a trainer for their children with whom they may well feel pleased. He is as popular with the parents, as with his scholars.¹⁹

Greenshaw Hill, also in this region, was the property of John Ewart, who had occupied the land from about 1908. This was a block of 320 acres fronting Barker Creek. Prior to coming to Nanango Ewart had held properties in both the Laidley and Fassifern districts. He had come originally from the county of Northumberland in England. Close to this land was *Wansbeck*, the property of Mr R.H. Robinson, who specialised in lucerne and corn, pig production and dairying. Mr Robinson had come to Nanango in about 1908 from the Gatton region. *Araleun* was another property situated about a mile from *Wansbeck* and owned by Arthur Cripps. This was a farm of 480 acres, also involved in dairying, it was heavily timbered when it was taken over by Cripps and a large amount of clearing had to be completed before any kind of farming could be achieved.²⁰

Mona was owned by William Kissack who took possession of the land circa 1911 but due to ill health was unable to clear much of the selection. *Lilyvale* was another selection close by, this was a farm of 640 ares occupied by a man named Reithmuller and used mainly for grazing purposes,

although some dairying was also carried on there. *The Grange* was occupied by J.T. Mulcahy, while half a mile along the Barambah road was a property belonging to C.C. James and Sons. This farm had been planted with fruit, ornamental trees surrounded the residence and the owners were dairy farming. It was a large property spanning both sides of the road and totalling approximately 3500 acres. 500 head of beef cattle were stocked and 110 milking cows. The family took possession of the property circa 1904, and, as the farm was about seventeen miles from Nanango over rough and sometimes inaccessible roads, it was often difficult to get their produce to market.²¹

Mitton Vale was owned by John Pearey, he took up his holding circa 1890. *Glenmore* was a property owned by Mr R. Sexton and totalled 1480 acres. It was one of the earlier selections, having been taken up circa 1881. Like many of the other selections in this region the farm was used mainly for grazing purposes, although it had suffered from the ravages of ticks and red-water which killed many animals. The residence was described as: '... picturesquely situated on a slope which fronts that sheet of water from which the Broadwater district takes its name. It is surrounded by an orchard and there is to be seen splendid specimens of citrus trees which were laden with a crop of very large oranges'.²² *Daisydell* was a selection owned by Mr H.J. Grove and fronted onto Barker Creek. Mr E. Sonnenburg also owned a property in this region, Wheelbarrow Creek ran through the holding and Sonnenburg was the secretary of the Broadwater branch of the Queensland Farmers' Union.²³

Broadwater was a property of approximately four hundred acres owned by M.W. Hughes who grew corn, lucerne and vegetables. Hughes, who successfully showed his produce in Brisbane, was also involved in dairying. Adjoining this property was the large holding known as *Broadmere*, owned by John Archibald Lee. This farm, some 3300 acres in size, featured an attractive swamp area that teemed with wild fowl. Lee took possession of the property circa 1911 and used it for grazing and pig breeding purposes, Lee was especially well know for his brood mares. John Archibald Lee was an important member of Nanango society, he and his family were among the region's earliest settlers. When Lee died on 27 October, 1928, the *Nanango News* published:

It is with very great regret that we have to announce the death on Saturday morning, last, at 13.30 a.m. in the Kingaroy General Hospital, after an illness of about a couple of months, of Mr J.A. Lee, *Broadmere*, Nanango. The deceased was the eldest son of the late Mr Archibald Lee, who was for many years Police Magistrate at Nanango, and later at Barcardine and St George. The late Mr Lee was born at *Wallumbilla* station, Maranoa district, and came to Nanango district 56 years ago; he was educated at the Nanango State School and King's School Sydney, and, as a lad, entered the service of the Q.N. Bank in Brisbane. He was a member of the Nanango Shire Council for about 28 years, and acted for 10 years as Chairman, resigning that position on 14th July, last, on account of ill health. The late Mr Lee was associated with many movements for the good of his old town — Nanango — and was a staunch supporter of the district. He was an active member of the Nanango War Council, and first became a member of the Nanango Shire Council in 1899, and with the exception of a break of three years — 1902, 1903, and 1904 — had been a member of that Council up to the period of his resignation. He was a member of the local Hospital committee at one time, also a member of the Show Society committee, the Repatriation committee, and local Racing Club committee. He was prominent in sport, being a good cricketer, with a 'very free bat'. The first meeting for establishing a School of Arts by the purchase of the old school was called by him and his interest in it never flagged, although he was destined to never see the completion and opening of the remodelled building. He was always willing to give his time to open public functions and by his demise the district has become bereft of a useful citizen. At his home *Broadmere*, 12 miles from Nanango, he followed grazing, farming and dairying pursuits successfully, and was known far and wide as a very active man, and it came as a shock, to those who knew him, to hear that he was laid low in the Kingaroy Hospital with heart trouble, eventually succumbing to that complaint on the morning of October, 27, 1928, in spite of the medical skill and careful nursing bestowed on him. During the last 8 or 10 days of his life it became painfully apparent to his relatives and friends that the 'sleep that knows no awakening, nor dawn of morn' was fast approaching, and that one of Nature's gentlemen was about to pass into the Great Beyond to be mourned for by many who realised his worth. He leaves a widow ... one brother, Mr Bertram S. Lee, was killed in action in France during the Great War ...²⁴



John Archibald Lee.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

At south Nanango there were many similar selections taken up during those early years. *Willowburn* was owned by Mr E. Bryant, it was heavily covered with wattle when first selected but soon cleared and planted to corn and other crops.²⁵

Cross Hills was owned by Thomas McCauley and his family, also heavily covered with scrub when first selected and later transformed into: 'a regular oasis'. Herman Steinhardt owned the property known as *Summer Lea*. This 160 acres property had originally been selected by Mr E. Black who sold it to the Steinhardt family. Pigs and potatoes, and later dairying were the primary concerns of this property but Mrs Steinhardt was also heavily into the production of poultry. Close by was another selection leased by J.K. McIvor, an employee of the Nanango butter factory who, nonetheless, found time to run the property as a dairy farm and to experiment with the growing of several fruits including persimmons. Adjoining this selection was *Buckland*, owned by Frederick Tessman who donated two acres of his land in order to have a local school built nearby. In appreciation of this act the Department of Public Instruction named the school *Buckland*.²⁶ Tessman was reputed to have been the first selector in that region when the land

was very densely covered with pine trees. A winding track from this property through heavy scrub led to another property known as *Pine Top*, this was owned by Louis Bietzel, 163 acres, most of which had been cleared by the owner who had taken up the property circa 1908. Bietzel had found a ready market for the thousands of pine logs he had harvested from his property, later planting the cleared land to corn. He also invested in fruit trees and honey production. Adjoining this selection was *Hill View*, a property owned by Henry Luhrs, producing corn and market garden vegetables. A neighbour was William Edgar (Bill) Foley who had purchased the property known as *Fair View* from Mr C.B. Berlin circa 1913. This selection was later described in the following manner: 'From here a splendid view of the surrounding country presents itself and makes a picture seen by us at sunset that many artists would travel far to paint.' In addition to the standard forms of farming the owner was experimenting with growing pineapples. Bill Foley was born in Canada in 1861 and he travelled to Australia by sailing ship in 1878. His wife, Mary Ann Gardiner, was an Irish woman, born in County Tyrone in 1862, she came to Australia when she was sixteen years of age. The couple was married at Parramatta in 1884. While living in Sydney Bill Foley worked as a stonemason, later moving into farming at Parramatta, Bowral and Eureka. They selected their land at Hazeldean, South Nanango in 1913, the couple had nine children, one child died at the age of five weeks, another at eight years. Bill Foley died in 1925 and his wife, Mary, died in 1933, both are buried in the Nanango cemetery.²⁷

F. Ballin owned a holding close by, Ballin came from Marburg in the Rosewood district and had taken possession of his property at Nanango circa 1911. *Sunny Farm* was owned by W.B. Carter who had purchased it from a Mr Kurth circa 1911.²⁸

H.R. Lewington was the owner of *Olive Farm*, where he grew, in addition to the standard crops, Japanese plums and almonds. A bachelor, Mr Lewington was reputed to have kept an open house for guests and was said to have been an excellent cook. In order to keep pests away from his crops he had fenced his entire property with marsupial-proof fencing. Water was obtained by putting down a bore to 93 feet. A press report of this farmer, written in 1913 stated: 'Mr Lewington is one who takes a keen interest in all things appertaining to the welfare of the district, and besides holding many other honorary offices, is a councillor of the local shire.'²⁹ Close to this holding was

a property called *The Wattles* owned by Harold Davis, this was heavy scrub country which the owner was clearing by hand. One of the more prepossessing farms of the district was said to have been *Hazeldean*. John Kidd had selected the property in 1906 and upon his death the land has passed to his widow, Mrs E. Kidd who, with the help of her sons, continued to run the farm. This was 750 acres of heavy scrub much of which had been cleared and planted to corn, lucerne, oats, arrowroot and mangel-wurzel — a coarse variety of common beet that was sometimes cultivated as cattle fodder. The family also ran a dairy herd and kept pigs. W.F. Berlin owned *Marlbry*, and another block called *Sunnyside* was owned by Alf Black, 170 acres of mainly grazing land. Fred Sutcliffe owned *Sutcliffe's Farm* at Meandu Creek, 250 acres of forest lands cleared and planted to Rhodes, paspalum and prairie grasses. This property was adjoined to *Walter's Farm*, owned by George W. Walters and his wife, 440 acres which he had taken over in 1913 and ran as a dairy and mixed farm.³⁰

Waratail had originally been selected by Alf Black but later sold to Mr R.E. Lewis who had come to the Nanango district circa 1896. He took possession of *Waratail* in 1909. In addition to grazing, dairying and extensive pig raising, Lewis was also experimenting with bananas and had managed to grow an extensive crop. The Lewis family was reported as having been particularly generous to visitors, one such visitor claimed in 1913: 'The hospitality meted out to us at this homestead was of the best, and the dainty dishes, in the matter of preparing of which Mrs Lewis is an expert, were delicious, and for the most part of Danish origin.'³¹

Bartley was 580 acres owned by Mr L. Nutbourne and named after his birthplace in Southampton, England. This farm, seven miles from Nanango, had been purchased circa 1901 from Mr S. Browne, the original selector. *Southfield* was owned by S. Browne and fronted onto Meandu Creek. This was selected by Browne circa 1900.³²

One of the more successful farming ventures in the Nanango region must surely have been that of J.E. Goodger's property, *The Heights*. A description of the property written during the time it was owned by Goodger stated:

It is situated on one of the highest points to be found adjacent to the town, from which it is but a couple of miles. The holding contains 80 acres though the same owner owns another 80 acres adjoining. A lovely panoramic view of the district for miles around is to be obtained from the balcony of the new residence which Mr Goodger has recently had erected. This gentleman has been resident in the district some 14 years, and when he first arrived from the Goulburn Valley (Victoria) district, purchased a farm from Mr Chas. Gray, (sic) selected adjoining properties, and thereby laid the foundation stone to success which through his thrift, hard effort and enterprise he has eventually attained. Though practically in his prime, Mr Goodger, by his excellent management of the various properties which he acquired, some 12 months ago was enabled to retire from active work and purchased the property under review, from Mr W. Berlin. Since entering into possession, he, with the assistance of his sons, Vernie and Mainard, has made various improvements and it can now be classed as practically a model mixed farm. Outbuildings which include, vehicle and harness sheds, barn, feed-room, dairy (furnished with a melotte separator), milking and shelter sheds for cattle (the latter 100ft x 3ft, which afford protection to the stock in both summer and winter), pig-sties, substantial yards, and the new residence as before mentioned; adjoining all buildings, which are covered with iron are tanks of about 2000 gals. capacity, having troughs attached, and should a drought come about and the watercourse which twines through the rich black soil flats below the homestead become dry, stock would still have a supply of water for some considerable time ... The property is replete with every convenience and up-to-date machinery. A well kept kitchen-garden adjoins the home, and a tennis court has been formed which is to be asphalted, and when this is completed we doubt not that the townsfolk will often avail themselves of the kind hospitality which is always meted out to visitors by Mr and Mrs Goodger and which is a feature of a visit of this property, for the purpose of indulging in a game of the healthy pastime on a perfect court.³³

Long time residents of the Nanango region were Harold Foley and his wife, although their marriage was to have a tragic end. Mrs Foley was born at Beenleigh in 1901 and had come to the Nanango district with her parents, Mr and Mrs James Thompson, when they had selected land in the region. She married Harold Foley circa 1931, the wedding taking place in the Nanango Methodist Church, of which Mrs Foley was a loyal supporter.

Tragedy came to the family in May 1951 while Mr and Mrs Foley were enjoying a holiday at Pialba, Hervey Bay. On Saturday morning, 12 May, 1951, the couple was fishing from a dinghy about five hundred yards from the shore when Mrs Foley overbalanced and fell into the water. Harold Foley immediately dived in to save his wife, but unfortunately he was a poor swimmer, he too got into difficulties, and only managed to save himself by scrambling back into the boat. He recovered quickly and rowed to where his wife had fallen in, but before he could reach her she sank and did not resurface. Her body was recovered the following day, washed up on rocks about half a mile from the accident. She was buried at Nanango on the following Monday afternoon.³⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eighteen

Some Early Selectors of the Nanango Region

1. M/C. 26 November 1908, p 4.
2. M/C. 7 April, 1905, p 3.
3. M/C. 18 July, 1913, p 3.
4. *Ibid.*
5. N/N. 27 June, 1913, p 2.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. For further details on the experiences of Lewis Green see file: Green Family, Nanango Shire Council archives.
11. N/N. 27 June, 1913, p 2.
12. SBT. 26 April, 1973, p 28.
13. N/N. 4 July, 1913.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. For further details on the life of Carl Raabe, see: K/H. 31 July, 1941, p 2.
17. N/N. 4 July, 1913.
18. *Ibid.*
19. N/N. 10 October, 1913.
20. N/N. 4 July, 1913.
21. N/N. 11 July, 1913.
22. *Ibid.*
23. N/N. 10 October, 1913.
24. N/N. 2 November, 1928, see also: John Archibald Lee file, Nanango Shire Council archives.
25. N/N. 5 September, 1913.
26. For a brief history of this school see: SBT. 3 August, 1993, and scrap-book, 14 May, 1993, to 10 September, 1993, Nanango Shire Council archives.
27. SBT. 5 June, 1985, p 17.
28. N/N. 12 September, 1913.
29. N/N. 19 September, 1913.
30. *Ibid.*
31. N/N. 26 September, 1913.
32. *Ibid.*
33. N/N. 3 October, 1913.
34. N/A. 17 May, 1951.

19

Advancement Within the Township of Nanango

Maize was certainly the most important crop of those early selectors, who generally sold their produce to the store-keeper William Selby in Nanango. Like almost all other small rural regions, the closest store-keeper was an indispensable feature of early selector farming, most selectors relied on these store-keepers for credit until the crops could be harvested. At times Selby was owed many thousands of pounds by various selectors, the loss of a crop from hail, flood or pests, could mean further indebtedness for the man on the land but Selby apparently continued to support them through those difficult times.

Selby was an interesting character. He was born in Yorkshire and came to Australia with his parents when he was four or five months of age. When he grew older he worked with his father, a storekeeper at Inverell, and later with a firm in Sydney. During the mid 1860s he moved to Nanango to begin a business when the town was very much in its infancy. The store was originally established in George Street and was later moved to Symes Corner where the Commonwealth Bank was subsequently built. The store was sold to H.A. Clancy in 1913. Selby's store was one of the most important features of early Nanango and the entire South Burnett, settlers came from all over the region to procure their provisions there. Selby's business flourished to such an extent that he was able to make numerous financial investments, including a large investment in the local newspaper, the *Nanango News*, of which he was, at one time, the chairman of the board of directors. Selby was active in the promotion and development of the district, he was one of the leading instigators in having the rail service brought to Nanango. In 1897 he canvassed the town to obtain subscriptions so that a general hospital could be built, and once this was done he served for many years on its committee. Selby was an enthusiastic golfer — long before the game achieved its current popularity, and was one of the first members of the Nanango golf club. He was also an industrious member of the School of Arts Committee, the Nanango Show Society, the Nanango Progress Association and the Nanango Masonic Lodge which he joined in 1902. William Selby died, aged seventy-two years, on Sunday 25 August, 1935, and was buried at the Nanango cemetery, his wife having predeceased him two years earlier.¹

While it was a huge disappointment to the people of Nanango that the rail line should stop at Kingaroy, the advantages of having a relatively close link to the line played a significant role in the progress of Nanango itself. As we have seen, the rail line to Kingaroy and its subsequent extension, coupled with a solid state government policy of resumption of lands and closer settlement, meant a vast influx of selectors to the rich pastoral regions of the South Burnett. With the lands at places such as Hazeldean, Tarong, Taabinga, Coolabunia, Booie, Elgin Vale, Manumbar, Neumgna and other regions being selected on a large scale, the financial opportunities for Nanango expanded tremendously. New buildings within the township sprang up, businesses were opened, sawmills, theatres, hotels and many others.

One of the more well known real-estate speculators during this time of rapid expansion was John McKeone. McKeone had come from Roscommon, Ireland, in about 1863 aboard the sailing vessel *Chatsworth*. He had worked firstly for a year or two at *Colinton* and later took up employment with George Clapperton at *Nanango* station, where he worked as a sheep overseer. He subsequently moved into the township of Nanango. He married in about 1873 and lived in a house in Fitzroy Street. During the real estate expansion within the town McKeone was clever enough to purchase a large amount of land in Fitzroy Street, the *Nanango News* in 1913 reported: 'He secured the whole of the land on the west side of the street for £15/15 shillings and a large block on the other side of the street for £8. In fact he secured nearly the whole of the land on both sides of the street for £43.'²



Drayton Street, Nanango, circa 1910. The Palace Hotel on the left was destroyed by fire in 1913.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

McKeone died, after an illness of only a few days, at half past one on the morning of Wednesday 19 March, 1913. He left an aged widow, also in frail health. Upon his death the press claimed: '... during his lifetime (he) was a courteous, kindly disposed, retiring and considerate gentleman, and secured a warm place in the hearts of very many persons who knew his true worth.'¹³

J.L. Tardent, an early Nanango resident was another source of interesting historical information regarding the formative days of the town. He later recalled: 'Percy Manley's barber shop and billiard saloon was a popular rendezvous for we teenagers and for the older men from town, sawmill and the bush. Some older prominent townsmen were shaved daily by Percy and each had his own shaving mug and brush, neatly labelled and kept in a glass case on the wall. I recall that John Darley, Solicitors Moreton and Levinge and Selby Senior were among Percy's regular clients. Stan Garland was next to Percy Manley's and was a great place for a snack or a meal and for meeting one's friends, especially at weekends. In 1912 at the time of the Greco-Turkish war, Stan, a good Australian but still a patriotic Greek, adorned his cafe walls with imposing posters and the Greek royal family and battleships.'¹⁴

One visitor to Nanango in 1910 remarked:

The two fine sawmills in the immediate proximity must not be passed quite unnoticed, as their fine equipment and up-to-date management point with no uncertain finger to a confidence in the future that personally we are equally certain will be justified by results. Situated on the flat quite close to the town is the new mill of Watt, Muller & Co., Ltd., an enterprising firm, which even now turns out from 30,000 to 50,000 ft. of sawn timber per week, and who have quite an acre of the adjoining country stacked with miles of sawn stuff 10ft. high. Then again, about a mile from the township on the site of the once boomed 'Golden King' (which, by the way, proved a non-golden pauper), the fine gold-saving machinery, which we once saw started by a Minister of the day, with a great flourish of trumpets, has been converted and is utilised as a first-class sawmilling plant, with a weekly output equal to, if not greater than, that of its friendly rival in progress on the flat. This mill is being run by the 'Corporation Sawmilling Co., Ltd.'

As to the various businesses in the town, there are now but few trades, professions or occupations that do not find a representative, and many of those whom we know as 'prentice boys' in the old days have now opened out and made promising starts on their own accounts.

Prominent among these latter we may make mention of Mr J.P. McKeone, who has opened a thriving general store, and is selling everything from boots to glassware in a good situation not far from his old station at the evergreen Selby's. Close to him is Mr T. Elford's new butchering establishment, and of it we can say that if cleanliness, civility and generally excellent management count for anything, Mr Elford will not be far behind in the race for supremacy. Mr T.F. Reid's saddlery shop is also a new and inviting feature in the main street, and, as all who have given his 'own make' of goods can bear witness, his workmanship is altogether undeniable. There are a dozen other new ventures equally worthy of notice in Nanango ...

Although we are accustomed to see remarkable alterations in all parts of the Nanango district between trip and trip, we must confess that we were by no means prepared for the veritable transformation which has taken place in the course of the past two or three years in the country surrounding the town, and the proceeds of which will spell success or failure to the contemplated extension of line from Kingaroy to Nanango. That the first, and not the last, is assured we are personally satisfied, even if little more settlement takes place than already exists. Even quite close to the town on the range, where naught but a howling scrub was to be seen on our last visit, there are now numbers of new dwellings and acres of corn smile down upon the essentially pretty place beneath. Taking a southerly direction at the back of the race-course, farm now succeeds farm, right up to and beyond the little bush church at Hazeldean. The work already done on most of them, in the shape of clearing, cropping, fencing and building, is really surprising for the short time since settlement took place.⁵

Shortly afterwards, indeed within days of this report, the first sod of the railway line from Kingaroy to Nanango was turned at Kingaroy by the railways minister, Walter Trueman Paget, at noon on Friday 10 June, 1910. It was the beginning of even further prosperity for Nanango and resumptions could not keep pace with the demand for land.⁶ Paget told the one hundred or so people who enjoyed a luncheon after the sod-turning ceremony that surveyors were then at work at *Boondooma* cutting up parcels of land and that a further 30,000 acres from *Tarong* and 45,000 acres from *Taabinga* would soon be made available for settlement.⁷ The luncheon following the ceremony was very much an 'invitation only' affair, one press commentator lamenting: 'The banquet which followed in Carroll's Hall (Kingaroy) for which our Nanango city fathers are responsible, was a decidedly aristocratic function. Only invited guests of the patrician order were admitted to the guzzle, plebians (sic) being rigidly excluded. Over a hundred distinguished guests, including priests from the sanctuary and chiefs from the Parliament engaged in the vulgar occupation of tearing food at the expense of the Nanango Shire Council. The air of gentility which pervaded the banquet hall inside contrasted markedly with the ruck who hung around the outside to snuff up the scent of what they were not permitted to taste.'⁸

Soon afterwards the promised holdings from *Tarong* and *Taabinga* were opened up for selection. Thomas Alexander Clapperton of *Tarong* claimed £41,174 as compensation for the resumption of his lease, however, the Lands Court in November 1910 awarded him just £8700/12/6. Arthur Youngman of *Taabinga*, received slightly more than £12,000.⁹

There were quite a number of large and important businesses then in operation at Nanango especially the sawmills and butter factory, however, there was another industry that gave employment to Nanango people, and this was the Pembroke Brothers' Brickworks situated in Butt's paddock about a mile to the north of the township. This business was started circa 1912 and at first experienced numerous difficulties, however, by 1913, approximately a year after it had commenced operations, the factory was reported to have been in successful operation, six people were then employed there and they were manufacturing 10,000 bricks each week. One of the partners, J. Pembroke, had previously worked in the Silverspur region, near Stanthorpe. The plant at Butt's paddock was said to have consisted of a series of knives for mixing the clay, this apparatus was driven by a horse working a beam, the clay later turned out onto a table ready to be placed into the moulds. A report of the operations written in October 1913 stated: 'From here the newly made bricks are taken to long, somewhat primitively built sheds, capable of holding 50,000 bricks. Here the drying process takes place, the sheds being covered with iron and open to allow ventilation. From these sheds the bricks are taken and stacked in the kiln where the burning takes place and then the product is ready for use.' One of the orders the brothers were then supplying was for the construction of Dan Carroll's hotel at Kingaroy, one of the first buildings to be constructed of bricks in that town.¹⁰ By 1933 the output of the brickworks appears

to have increased and the layout of the works and its manufacturing processes were remarkably similar to that of 1912. Bricks from the works had been used in some prestigious constructions, including the Catholic Church at Nanango and many business premises in Murgon and Kingaroy.¹¹ W.C.L. Propsch is also a name synonymous with the manufacture of bricks at Nanango, during the 1940s Propsch was manufacturing high quality pressed bricks in the town and in 1947 two modern kilns were constructed.¹²



The Nanango brickworks.

Source — *Wilderness to Wealth.*



John Darley.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

Many of the town's early settlers lived to see in the next century, among them were some of Nanango's more prominent people. John Darley, described in 1913 as: 'The Father of Nanango,' the press claiming, '... None have worked harder for its (Nanango's) prosperity.'¹³

Another local identity was Michael Collins, a hotel owner, J.P. McKeone, a successful store owner, other businesses operating at that time included V.A. Manchin, a tailor specialising in both ladies' and gentlemen's clothes, the Nanango Livery Stables, R.S. Hill, a draper and tailor, Alex McCallum's Royal Mail Coach Service that ran from Nanango to Yarraman where passengers could catch the train to Brisbane. Magee Brothers of Drayton Street were selling quality blankets, among other similar items, plumbing was supplied by A.U. Hickin, and a popular family butcher was Daniel Corbett, who was advertising that the business had been established in 1877, this was situated in Alfred Street.¹⁴

Daniel Corbett was born in County Clare, Ireland, and came to Queensland in 1864, arriving at Brisbane aboard the immigrant

ship *Earl Russell* on 12 August that year. The ship had sailed from London and Plymouth with 365 immigrants.¹⁵ Daniel Corbett began working at *Mount Brisbane* station and later at *Barambah*, *Tarong* and *Nanango* stations, becoming manager of *Nanango* when it was under the ownership of George Clapperton. On 1 April, 1872, he married Mary Downing, the marriage was the first celebrated in the Catholic Church near the site of the old Railway station. He died, aged seventy years, on 20 October, 1915.¹⁶ Daniel Corbett's wife, Mary, came to Australia from Kent with her father, Mr B. Downing, when she was just three years of age. She later became well known in the Nanango region, the press subsequently claiming: '... and many persons, especially in the early days, were indebted to her for her kindly and welcome advice. She was of an exceedingly kind and charitable nature and had been an indefatigable worker in the Weavers' Club from its inception.' Mary Corbett died, aged sixty-eight years, on 15 February, 1921.¹⁷

T. Greer was a baker, confectioner and fruiterer in Drayton Street.¹⁸ William Hamilton was an auctioneer and produce merchant and former host of the Commercial Hotel.¹⁹ Hamilton was certainly one of the region's more vigorous settlers. He was born in Armidale and arrived at Nanango in 1890. He purchased the Star Hotel where the railway station was later built and about three years later became the owner of the block of land where he constructed the Commercial Hotel. In about 1905 he sold his interests in the hotel and took up grazing on the old Yarraman Road at a property known as *Stockdale*. Hamilton was reputed to have been the first man to hold a pig sale in Kingaroy shortly before the railway line was extended to Nanango. Hamilton started his auctioneering business in Nanango in about 1910 and retired from that business circa 1930 when he took up residence with his daughter, Mrs Magee, in Brisbane. He was a member of the hospital, show and race committees and was a trustee of the show-grounds and the race-course. His wife died in 1925 after an illness of just six weeks, and Hamilton himself died, aged eighty years and nine months, at the home of his daughter in Brisbane, on Saturday 25 September, 1937.²⁰



Drayton Street, Nanango, looking west, circa 1916.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

The first motor cycle and side car ever to be seen in Nanango was reportedly brought to the town by Ernest Hannaford, one of the region's well known businessmen and photographers. Hannaford was born at Quirindi, New South Wales, in 1880, the fifth son of Mr and Mrs W. Hannaford of Walgett. He arrived in Queensland in 1907 where he initially worked at Boland's store in Cairns. After working at other centres such as Port Douglas and Mossman he opened a small photographic studio at Mossman in 1912. Two years later, on 18 November, 1914, he

married Honoria O'Donoghue at Port Douglas. In July 1918 he and his wife arrived at Nanango where he continued with his profession of photographer, it was at this time that he brought the first motor cycle and side car to the district — an event that created something of a sensation as there were few modes of motor transport in Nanango at that time. In addition to reportedly being one of the state's best billiard players he was also an early president of the Nanango Race Club and held interests in mining in the Nanango region. He installed and for many years operated the first X-ray machine at the Nanango Hospital. He died, aged ninety-two years, at the Nanango Hospital in April 1973.²¹

The Royal Bank of Queensland was first started in 1886. On 11 August the previous year thirteen businessmen and graziers had met in the board room of the Brisbane Stock Exchange to discuss the establishment of a bank. The business title of the bank was selected from a list of seven proposed names. A prospectus was released with a listing of a provisional committee made up of about fifty well known businessmen, and the bank commenced business in Brisbane on 2 February, 1886, with its head office at the corner of Elizabeth and Creek Streets. From its very inception the Royal Bank's more profitable business came from Southern Queensland.²²

Banking institutions at Nanango have played an important role in the town's business prospects and also in the rural sector. The Royal Bank of Queensland opened a branch at Nanango on 23 January, 1900. Its first manager was William McLeod. McLeod was succeeded by J.W. Green who served from 1902 to 1903. Successive managers have included E.E. Walker until 1904 when the branch was taken over by W. Moffat.

The Bank of North Queensland was first opened for business at Townsville on 2 July, 1888. It closed temporarily on 15 May, 1893, and reopened on 19 July that year. The Royal Bank merged with the Bank of North Queensland on 31 January, 1917, to form the Bank of Queensland Ltd. This institution merged with the National Bank of Australasia Ltd. in 1922. Modern brick offices were constructed at the corner of Drayton and Fitzroy Streets Nanango in 1940.²³

The Commercial Bank of Australia was another of the town's first banking establishments, it was opened in July 1909.

The Nanango Show Society has functioned at Nanango since 1900, the first meeting of the society being held at the divisional board offices in July that year. The first show was held in 1901.

In 1924 a press report described Nanango as having: '... numerous hotels, and some fine banks and stores. A picture show in Tara's Hall adds a little pleasure, and many social evenings are always "on the go". Mr John Darley, I believe, is often called: "The Father of Nanango", he should bow to the compliment. Scott Brothers have a large store and every kind of business is represented ...'²⁴

Construction in Nanango progressed steadily through 1901. The first two storey building in the township was the Post Office Hotel, owned by Michael Jeremiah Collins, 'an old resident of the district' which was opened in June that year.²⁵ Collins had been the second proprietor of the Star Hotel, originally constructed by Richard Laherty in 1869. The Star must have been a considerable eyesore as the press later described it as: '... that quaint old hostelry ... which would be a great and genuine attraction if it could be transported bodily to some of the European capitals and exhibited in a museum as a specimen of Australian bush architecture.' The new Post Office Hotel, described as: '... the finger-post on the path of progress for the guidance of future builders-up of this coming city,' was erected in Drayton Street with a frontage to Henry Street, and was constructed in the shape of an extended L. Upon its opening the press claimed: 'It (the hotel) is a most conspicuous object in our main thoroughfare and has been well designed and very neatly finished. Besides a drawing room for the commoners on the ground floor and a coffee room for the toffs upstairs, there are a goodly number of bedrooms beside two bath-rooms, two parlours, sitting rooms etc. This hotel has not come before it was wanted for there has been a marked lack of accommodation for years past in the town for visitors.'²⁶

The opening of the Post Office Hotel was accompanied by a free meal and a free dance which, it seems, was well patronised by Nanango residents, a local commentator wryly claiming: '... Anything in the eating or drinking line that is free in Nanango seems to catch on quite easily.'²⁷

The hotel was seriously damaged by fire in November 1964 but rapid action on behalf of the volunteer fire brigade managed to save the building.²⁸ However, the hotel was totally destroyed by fire in April 1968, it was, at the time, licensed to Mrs R.J. Williamson, the family dog perished in the blaze but Mrs Williamson and her children were unharmed.²⁹

The original owner of this hotel, Michael Jeremiah Collins, was one of the most well known businessmen of Nanango, a man with a highly colourful career who played an important part in the establishment of the town and district. Born on 21 August, 1842, Collins was a native of County Cork in Ireland, who landed in Australia in 1864 aboard the sailing vessel *Earl Russell*. In 1920, when Collins was seventy-six years of age, and following a long illness that had almost claimed his life, the *Nanango News* published a biographical article on him. As this article is, itself, an important perspective of early Nanango and of one of the region's important characters, it is reproduced in part below:



Michael Jeremiah Collins 1846-1920.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

After working for a few months in Brisbane, Mr Collins tramped it to *Colinton* station, arriving there in March of 1865. The owner of the station was Mr George Edward Forbes, and he gave the new chum a chance to learn to shear. He worked there until the following year, coming on to Nanango, and shortly afterwards obtaining a stand at *Cooyar* station, owned in those days by Mr J.F. McDougall, who also owned *Rosalie* station and all the country between *Rosalie* and *Cooyar* and *Nanango*, including *Din Din* and other properties on the Yarraman road. In those days, sheep were bred extensively throughout the whole district. Cattle were at a discount, there being practically no market beyond the boiling down works carried on at Ipswich. The late Mr McKeone accompanied him back from *Cooyar*, he also having been employed shearing there. Ipswich was the nearest town for replenishing stores and knocking down cheques, and was the scene of many a wild orgy at the end of each shearing season. In 1867, Mr Collins was engaged at *Nanango* Station, then owned by Mr George Clapperton, with Mr J.G. O'Sullivan as manager. At various other times, he followed the same occupation at most of the stations in the district. At other times, he went droving, and on one occasion accompanied Mr R.P. Davis with a mob of horses, that had been brought from New South Wales, to Gympie, afterwards going on to Rockhampton, via Maryborough, Gin Gin, Gladstone, Mount Larcombe, and through Archers' cattle station. From here he went to work at *Collaroy* station, 45 miles from Broadsound, where the blacks were known to be treacherously and notoriously bad. There had never been a year that three or four men on the stations (the shepherds) had not been killed by them, and while he was at the station an Irish shepherd and two Chinamen were murdered. Mr Collins says that he still has vivid recollections of men coming to the men's hut from the Ravenswood diggings with their feet bleeding as a result of making long stages in their hurry to get to the station to avoid the blacks. After finishing a season of shearing at *Oxford Downs*, the men went into Nebo in the hope of cashing their cheques. But there was no bank, and the business people and the hotel would only give them I.O.U.s for their change. Mr Collins subsequently went further North, and worked at *Lake Elphinstone*, *Peak Downs*, and *Westwood*, walking to the latter place from Rockhampton, a distance of about 230 miles, in about a week. After visiting Toowoomba to see some relatives, Mr Collins again turned up in Nanango in March of 1869, and Mr Clapperton engaged him to take a mob of horses to Rockhampton. After spending some further time in the North, Mr Collins received word that his brother had been killed at *Tryconnell Downs* station (owned by Mr James Moore one of the family well known in the district), and he went over there. Here, he suffered a severe affliction of the eyes. His sight was nearly gone, and he had to give up work. He sought medical advice in Brisbane, but was fortunately persuaded to consult a specialist (Dr Bowker) in Sydney, and he was under treatment with that gentleman for three years and two weeks, from August,

1874. Happily, he was able to do a little at the trade that he had learned in Ireland, and his sight was almost completely restored when he sailed for Townsville in September, 1877, to accept a position as a wheelwright at £4 a week. Early next year, he came back here.

When Mr Collins came back to Nanango in 1878, he found that the little township had made some progress, and his description of the place is worth publishing in full. In consequence of the long haulage by road, the cost of living was high, and the necessities of life were even dearer than they are in those profiteering days. For instance, flour cost £5 for a 200lb bag, bread was 1s. a loaf, dark ration sugar 7d. per lb., tea 4s. per lb., and soap 2s a bar. 'Needless to say,' remarked Mr Collins, 'a bath was a luxury in those days.' The redeeming feature about the cost of living, was the low value placed on beef. Although the population was limited, there were two butchers in the town (Messrs Dan. Corbett and Pat Toohey), and being at variance, the public got the benefit of beef at 1½d. to 3d. per lb. for the best cuts. In those days, there were not many buildings. The old building recently demolished by Mr T.G. McNamara, at the corner of Drayton and Henry streets, was the Land Office, the Land Agent being Mr A. Lee. The Post Office was included in the same building. The present Land Office served as a Court House, a log lockup previously having served the purpose, and (it was) ... from this that Tommy Don (sic) broke away when in custody on a charge of horse stealing. In Fitzoy Street, there were but two cottages — one occupied by Mr John McKeone, and demolished several years ago to make room for a general store ... What is now regularly spoken of as the old Star Hotel, stood on the ground in the vicinity of the station master's residence, the work of erecting which being undertaken by Richard Laherty, under Contractor Lovett. All the timber in those days was split, but that for the rafters, battens, and floorings was usually pit-sawn, the principal worker in that connection being our old friend Peter Voght, although John Heiner and the subject of this article did their share of the work at times ...

On the death of Mr R. Laherty, Mr Collins bought Mr T. McNamara's half interest in the Star Hotel for £273 10s., his partner in the business being Mr J. Laherty. The hotel was run under this proprietorship for about two years, and then the licence was transferred to Mr Richard Graham. In August, 1891, the Star passed into the hands of Mr W. Hamilton, who subsequently built the Commercial Hotel, which was the first storey of the present building. Mr W. Selby at this time built his house and afterwards the store on the corner. Other buildings began to go up, and it was seen that Nanango had some future before it. Previously, Mr Selby's store was in George Street.

Mr Collins took unto himself a life partner in March of 1894, and he and Mrs Collins were mine host and hostess at the Star until 1901, when they struck trouble. The Police Magistrate refused to renew the licence, but the difficulty was overcome by the licensee agreeing to build the Post Office Hotel, and this was occupied without a break for 19 years, Mr J.P. McKeone becoming the new licensee last year.

Mr Collins first purchase of country land was 160 acres of his well known farm at the 3 mile Barambah road, which cost him £1 per acre on very long Government terms. Subsequently, he acquired an adjoining area of 200 acres, and since then he has obtained the titles of many other properties throughout the district. Some idea of his freehold estate may be gathered from the fact that his payment of rates to the Nanango Shire Council this year was in the regions of £100. In 1880, Mr Collins made his first purchase of town property, securing (for £15) the half-acre on which now stands Mr Andrew Neilson's drapery establishment and other businesses. He had great faith in the future of the town, and the buildings erected on his land in the town alone — including the Post Office Hotel, Tara's Hall, and Miss Clair's boarding house — are valued at some thousands of pounds.³⁰

Collins died in 1920 and his wife, Mary, died in 1944.³¹

The Peter Voght mentioned in the above report was also one of the region's earliest settlers. He had arrived at Moreton Bay on 11 January, 1863 after a voyage of four months aboard the immigrant ship *Flying Cloud*. The ship had sailed from Gravesend and Plymouth in October 1862 with 394 steerage and intermediate passengers, her skipper was Captain Keen.³² Upon arriving at the colony Peter Voght was, at first, attracted to the newly forming cotton industry and for a while he worked in the cotton fields, but after the cold British climates to which he was accustomed he found the cotton fields too hot and he travelled to *Cressbrook* station, later moving to the Nanango district when the community was comprised of little more than Goode's Inn and a scattering of slab constructions. There were then three or four slab and bark dwellings at the Chinaman's Waterhole. A report of his activities later claimed: 'Peter was engaged to saw timber

for the first general store ... with his mate, Jim Page, Peter pit-sawed the timber, mostly blue gum ... Peter was here during the gold boom. Indeed he claims to have found the first specimens in the range 1½ miles to the east of the town in 1864, (the site of the later Hooper's Luck claim). He did some lease pegging too, but like many others came out of the deal a couple of hundred pounds to the bad. A good deal of gold was got on the surface when the reefs were cut, but like the Seven Mile alluvial field further out, the quest petered out after three or four years' work.³³

Another of the region's foremost settlers, and one who was deeply involved in the timber industry was John Heiner. (For details of Heiner's career see Chapter 95) In addition to owning a sawmill in the region Heiner was also responsible for many of the town's early constructions, including the police station. Tenders were called for the police station on 16 June, 1898, the officer in charge was then Constable McGuire.³⁴ Heiner won the contract on 15 August, 1898, the Department of Public Works advising the commissioner for police in Brisbane on that date.³⁵

The police station during the town's formative years also served as the C.P.S. office and court house. It was described as: '... a rustic looking building, being composed of logs each cut into squares of 10 inches. A Nanango policeman named Hanniker based at this station died suddenly on the verandah of the Burnett Inn and was buried in the old cemetery at the foot of Hospital Hill.'³⁶



Peter Voght, 23 February, 1925, reportedly one of the first men to begin pit-sawing in the Nanango district.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Nineteen

Advancement Within the Township of Nanango

1. N/N. 29 August, 1935.
2. N/N. 21 March, 1913, p 2.
3. *Ibid.*
4. SBT. 10 October, 1973, p 8.
5. M/C. 8 June, 1910, p 6.
6. M/C. 13 June, 1910.
7. M/C. 11 June, 1910, p 8.
8. M/C. 25 June, 1910, p 6.
9. M/C. 30 November, 1910, p 3.
10. N/N. 3 October, 1913.
11. N/N. 26 May, 1933, p 2.
12. WW. p 99.
13. M/C. 18 July, 1913, p 3.
14. N/N. 3 October, 1913.
15. MBC. 13 August, 1864, p 4.
16. Pioneers file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
17. *Ibid.*
18. N/N. 3 October, 1913.

19. M/C. 18 July, 1913, p 3.
20. N/N. 30 September, 1937, p 1.
21. SBT. 2 May, 1973, p 22.
22. N.A.B. Group Archives.
23. SBT. 10 October, 1973 and N.A.B. Group Archives.
24. M/C. 15 January, 1924, p 7.
25. M/C. 13 June, 1901, p 3.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. N/A. 12 November, 1964, p 1.
29. N/A. 18 April, 1968, p 1.
30. N/N. 23 July, 1920, p 2.
31. K/H. 25 May, 1944.
32. MBC. 13 January, 1863, p 2.
33. Pioneers file, Nanango Historical Society, report dated 20 September, 1918, and N/N. 8 February, 1924. Note: This latter report gives the arrival of Peter Voght at Moreton Bay as 13 January, 1863, although according to the list of shipping arrivals published in MBC. of 13 January, 1863, the ship actually arrived at Moreton Bay on 11 January that year.
34. NSW GG 1857, p 2283.
35. Letter dated 15 August, 1898, Police file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
36. M/C. 15 January, 1924, p 7.

Nanango and District Goldfields

During the 1860s the Queensland economy was in a severely depressed state, thousands were out of work and the Queensland government was desperately in need of a fillip in order to rise above the depressing times. This was a new colony, formed in 1859, and in desperate need of people, immigrants who would bring with them their wealth, their manpower, and the need to build homes, railways, towns and cities. The government was well aware that the wealth of the new colony lay in the country, produce such as wool, timber and agriculture that would bring the colony fresh few finances and in order to procure these resources, railways had to be constructed so that the rural wealth could be brought to market. However, during the 1860s the advanced prices of wool fell dramatically, the colony experienced a severe drought, and many of the newly arriving immigrants, promised so much before they left their homelands, found themselves without work.

It was long believed that somewhere in the south-east of the colony a gold deposit of substantial proportions was waiting to be found. The indications had been there for a considerable period, many men had discovered small traces of gold at various locations, but no large concentrations of the precious metal had been seen. For example, a prospector writing in November 1862 claimed: 'About six years back I met a Chinaman shepherd at the Seven Mile Creek, *Mondure* who informed me that he had obtained several very fair prospects of gold in that locality. Certainly, the surface indications there strengthen my belief that this statement was correct. I have prospected at ... Yabber Creek in the bunya range and on the fall of the waters of the Mary River, (and have) obtained good indications from the surface ...'¹

There is no doubt that the entire South Burnett was a rich treasure trove of minerals just waiting to be discovered, a geologist's report, written by Doctor March, Ph.D., formerly of Edinburgh University, later outlining some of these deposits. March claimed that in addition to gold deposits there was a variety of rich minerals, he claimed:

... iron ore of the richest quality is to be found in the neighbourhood of Nanango, magnetic iron-ore in Ban Ban, and haematite from Burrandowan and Mondure, and chromic iron-ore and titanite iron ore (the latter in large beds) in Nanango. Cinnabar, of which no specimen has been sent for exhibition, is found in Kilkivan and various other parts of the Burnett. Meerscham and magnesia limestone — suitable for lithographic stones — beautiful crystals of shale, all colours, are abundant in Proston, Boondooma, Nanango, Cooyar, and other places. Agates, onyxes, large crystals of smokey quartz, semi-opals, and garnets, jade-stone, blood-stone, soap-stone, and other precious stones are to be found at Mondure, dividing range between Taabinga and Tarong, Barambah Creek, Nanango, Boondooma Creek and Nanango Old Diggings. Individual diamonds have been found in the dividing range between Manumbar and the head of the Brisbane, and at Mondure. Amethysts and small sapphires have been found at Dykehead and Nanango Old Diggings; ...

The authority of several experienced and practical men attests that the Burnett district is richer in minerals than any known area of like extent in the world ... It wants but labour and capital to develop those vast resources. The treasures undoubtedly exist, and the time has come to unlock them and give their advantages to the commercial and industrial world.²

In 1866 two of the largest banks, Agra and Masterman's Bank of London and the new Bank of Queensland, closed down, it was devastating for the Queensland economy, public works ceased and construction on the Ipswich to Darling Downs railway ended. Dismissed railway workers rioted in the streets of Brisbane and there was even talk of burning down Parliament House.

Artillery positions were hastily set up in front of Government House and rioting men roared through the streets of Brisbane breaking into shops and stealing food.

In order to stimulate interest in gold prospecting, and thus give these and other workers some form of hope, the government had offered a series of rewards to anyone who could find a suitable goldfield, one that would give work to no less than three thousand men for a period of six months. Many of the unemployed men were already travelling the country, moving from station to station looking for work as shepherds, shearers, drovers, cooks, handymen, or anything that would pay at least food and board. Upon the announcement of the reward, many more left the city and went into the country in search of gold. The first discovery of gold in the Nanango region was said to have been made in 1865 by James Nash, the site of the discovery being *Glen Elgin*. However this was supposed to have been only a brief showing of colour.

The first significant find at Nanango is widely attributed to a Victorian named Robert Perry³ who had allegedly been working as a ringer on *Nanango* station. When this man discovered colour at what later became known as the Seven Mile Diggings, he returned to Bright's Burnett Inn and came into contact with well known businessman Zachariah Skyring who was in Nanango to purchase a large flock of sheep. The two men reportedly spent some time drinking together and carefully, the Victorian digger finally told Skyring about his discovery. They reportedly went outside where the digger showed Skyring two bags of alluvial gold, each containing about a pound of the precious metal. The following day the Victorian digger led Skyring to the gold diggings. He took a pick, pan and shovel from beneath a bush, washed out a shovelful of dirt from the creek-bank, and showed Skyring a few pennyweight of gold. All that day they worked at the site, and, as Skyring knew little about gold-mining, the two men agreed that Skyring should return to Brisbane to raise capital for the venture. According to published accounts, Skyring took the gold firstly to the premier, Robert George Wyndam Herbert who then accompanied Skyring to the office of the governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen. The following morning, having secured the claim, Skyring reportedly sold his gold to the well known dealers and jewellers Flavelle Brothers in Queen Street and returned to Nanango with a prospecting party. Yet details of the exact sequence of events are vague. Skyring wished to form a company in order to work the claim but the public was sceptical.

In September, 1866, while parties of men were working the claim and while the exact location was still being kept somewhat secret, the press published two letters, one from a man named W. Taylor, the second from Skyring himself. The letters demonstrate that the precise location was being kept secret and that the claim was by no means a rich one. Taylor wrote to the editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier*, stating:

I expect by this time you as well as the public of Brisbane are anxious to hear some news about the parties out prospecting for gold, under the leadership of Messrs Perry and Skyring. In the first place, I may inform you that Mr Perry is sinking about one mile from the Burnett township, and up to yesterday had met with no success. Mr Skyring, with myself, visited him yesterday, when he requested us to write to the Press to warn the people of Brisbane to be cautious, and whatever they do, not to rush the place, for the holes they have sunk have turned out complete shicers.

Now, Sir, I think the public ought to know the circumstances which led Perry's party to visit this locale, and I have Perry's own words for it. A Mr Mason, a storekeeper on the Burnett, met Perry's party on the road, showed him certain specimens found in a certain locality; but how strange that not one single individual, except Mrs Mason, could find the gold. It appears from the information that I can glean from the inhabitants of the Burnett, that two Germans found this celebrated reef, and promised to guide Perry's party thither, but in a very few hours afterwards they could not be found. After looking about the township for some time it was proved that they were *non est*. I may also state that some of our party in connection with Perry's have tried this reef, and not one speck of gold could be found. I have made every enquiry in the Burnett, but no person has found gold but Mr Mason and his wife and the two Germans.

I put the question to Mr Clapperton, Justice of the Peace, if he thought that Mr Mason really did get the gold there? He said there was a doubt about it.

As we have held a conference with Perry's party we have resolved that the people of Brisbane shall be warned not to come to this place, for if they do they will meet with bitter disappointment. What is more glaring still, Perry distinctly says the quartz shown him by

Mason and the quartz found on the reef do not correspond. Now it appears to me very much like a storekeepers' rush.

With regard to Mr Skyring's party, we have met with little or no success; we can get a little very fine gold, but up to the present nothing to pay; we cannot work in the bed of the creek, for there is too much water.

From private information received, I hear that there are persons on the road to these diggings. Now, Sir, I hope you will give this letter publicity, and warn the people not to come, for if it does not turn out better than it has done, we shall soon be back to Brisbane.

W. Taylor.⁴

In the same edition Skyring pointed out:

I have today seen Mr Perry and his mates, for the second time this week; he has been sinking on what is called here Mason's Reef, but I must say there is no faith here (in Nanango) in the place shown by Mr Mason. I have had some conversation with all the old residents of this town on the above subject, and find that on a Sunday some time ago a complete rush of men, women, and children took place to what is called Mason's Reef, situated in the centre of a dense scrub N.E. by E. of the township about a mile, but no one ever, that I can find, got any gold at that place but Mrs Mason, her husband, a storekeeper, and two German travelling pedlars, who have made the Burnett a sort of depot for the past two years.

I have been twice over the place with Mr Perry, but could not reconcile the facts and report of that place. Perry has sunk two holes, one about twenty-seven feet, the other about eleven feet. He did not get a bit of gold. I have this day seen a letter to one of Perry's mates, in which I find that Mr Mason, of the Burnett, has left at the *Guardian* Office specimens of gold for exhibition. I have Mr Perry's request to state to you his opinion of Mason's Reef in the following words: 'It is a humbug, a storekeeper's and pedlar's rush.' Now, Sir, as far as the success of my party may be interesting to you and the public up to this date, it is nothing, and I should not have written now had it not been that a false rush was likely to take place as above alluded to. I am, &c.,

Z. Skyring.⁵

Skyring later stated that he had left Brisbane on 4 September, 1866, arriving at Cooya (sic) Creek ten days later. He stated that there was about three feet of water in the creek, more than had been there during his prior visit and the area was therefore unworkable. He said that he and his party had sunk seven holes on the ridges and bottomed on soft granite, finding a little gold but not sufficient to prove that the field was workable. They then abandoned the field at Cooya Creek on 26 September, later adding: 'Having this day met with Mr Perry and his prospecting party near *Taromeo* on their return from Mount Stanley, and ascertained that they intended to prospect west of the Cooya Creek, but were short of provisions, I gave them 100 lbs of flour, some sugar, coffee, candles, tobacco and other little articles of supply ... In conclusion I may say that we have traced gold from ten miles north west of Cooya Creek down to Kilcoy Creek, here we stayed three days and a half prospecting and bottoming a hole ... It was insufficient to pay.'⁶

Evidently the discovery of gold at Nanango did not inflame the colony into a state of complete excitement and even the press was sceptical and did not publish wild exaggerations of the discovery, indeed, over the following few months the *Brisbane Courier* published little of what was happening at Nanango. In January 1867 the Colonial Secretary's Office issued notice of a £3000 reward for the discovery of a significant Queensland goldfield, the field had to be capable of sustaining a population of at least three thousand people for a period of six months.⁷ The reward was later adjusted up to £5000, but with the exception of the Talgai reefs at Pratten, near Warwick, and some goldfields farther north at places such as Bowen and Townsville, there was no significant goldfield in the state. In February 1867 the press claimed: 'In the south we have little to chronicle ... Talgai and Calliope are provokingly dull ... how much longer this problem is to remain unsolved we know not, but if the example of Bowen and Townsville does not shame Brisbane into doing something, the temptation will be strong for us to throw away the pen, organise a pick and shovel brigade and get the question settled. The Government has increased its gross total of its promised bounties for discoveries of goldfields to £5000 which amount is subdivided into smaller sums to be paid according to the importance of the goldfields found.'⁸

When news of the Nanango find became known the gold sold to Flavelle Brothers was displayed in their shop window with a sign proclaiming that it was: 'From the Nanango Goldfield'. Some contemporary reports claim that almost immediately, the colony of Queensland came alive with gold fever and hundreds of men flocked to Nanango, and there was certainly a small rush, although it was never to prove to be the significant goldfield so much in demand by the Queensland government.

James Nash was, reportedly, one of these diggers. Nash, of course, subsequently went on to discover the fabulously rich goldfield at Gympie. A later report claiming that Nash, '... found gold on the site later known as "Hooper's Luck". It has suffered from or rejoiced in various forms of nomenclature, and some know the place as the "Golden King" and others as "Grey's Luck".'⁹

The Seven Mile diggings near Nanango proved to be a difficult and shallow find, although there was certainly a considerable quantity of gold taken from the field. After most of the white prospectors had abandoned the field it was largely taken over by Chinese diggers who were reportedly quite successful in their endeavours because they had, 'wonderful powers of endurance.'¹⁰

The Seven Mile site was comprised of several distinct areas. The diggings were situated on the south of the road to Brisbane and were approximately seven miles from the township on the Brisbane side of the range. Colour of gold could be found in almost all the gullies of the diggings.

There were three primary locations for the recovery of gold at that time, Callaghan's Gully, Yarraman Creek, and Shepherd's Gully.¹¹

A visitor to the diggings in 1867 stated that there were over two hundred men working there at that time and that they were apparently doing quite well. He said the gold was coarser than on some other diggings, adding, however: 'Some specimens were extremely good, one piece weighing very nearly a pennyweight and another half a pennyweight. I was surprised to see so much progress in the way of settlement, there being a store and butcher shop etc.'¹²

An official report written to the minister for lands and works on 12 June 1867 stated:

There are now about 200 men working on the diggings, and, as far as I could learn they are, on an average, getting enough gold to pay them fair wages.

There is no deep sinking as yet, the working being confined to the beds and banks of the gullies which were all running on the occasion of my visit so much so as to somewhat inconvenience the diggers, but ordinarily they would be dry.

The gold found is all very fine ... I did not obtain sufficient information to enable me to give you even an approximate statement of the amount of gold actually obtained; but Mr Mason (one of the discoverers of the field) who is now keeping a store there, informed me that he had good reason to believe that much was hoarded by the diggers who wished to prevent a rush; for myself I do not think that any party has been extraordinarily successful.

A difference exists among the diggers as to their wish to have the field proclaimed, some being for, and others against its proclamation. There have been no disputes hitherto and they seem orderly and well behaved.

The Nanango Constables make a patrol there once or twice a week.

But there are only two constables stationed there, only one of whom is mounted — hardly sufficient I think to prevent disorder considering the large increase in the population.¹³

Most of the names of the miners who worked these diggings have now been lost, although there were a few diggers who went to the rush, drifted away to other speculative ventures and later, almost as whimsically, drifted back again. One of these was a man named Jack Cairns. Cairns arrived at the Seven Mile diggings with his father shortly after the rush began. At that time there were approximately five hundred diggers on the field. However, like so many of his contemporaries, Cairns and his father found nothing of any real value and when the Gympie rush commenced in October 1867 they too hurried off to dig for gold at that site. Leaving Gympie, Jack Cairns went to the Clermont field where he reportedly: 'made and lost a fortune,' and when he was in his early twenties he and six other men purchased a camel team at Townsville and

proceeded inland in search of gold. They travelled as far as the Ashburton ranges in the Northern Territory and by the time they returned two of their number had died. Cairns served in the Boer War and later in the Great War of 1914-18, being invalided home in 1917. By 1932, at the age of seventy years, he had returned to the Seven Mile diggings. An account of the diggings at that time claimed: 'Altogether there are seven men at the Seven Mile, but no doubt they are all in the same boat and are just managing to make a living. Peter Rossiter, better known as Seven Mile Peter, is another of the original miners who was at the Seven Mile when gold was first discovered and he is still there ... And so they work, day after day, week after week, always living in hopes of making a fortune.'¹⁴

Evidence of the scarcity of gold at the Seven Mile Diggings lies in the fact that no township of any substance ever sprang up there. With most other goldfields where significant amounts of gold were being retrieved the sites soon became a bustle of building activity. At Kilkivan, for example, in 1868, when gold was discovered at Fat Hen Creek, the first township of Kilkivan quickly sprang up, later being moved to another site closer to the site of the present town. Yet, at the Seven Mile, no township was constructed by those early miners, they relied on tents and bark shanties, temporary structures, easy and inexpensive to set in place and just as easily



Peter Rossiter, a prospector at the Seven Mile Diggings, was commonly known as 'Seven Mile Peter'. In addition to prospecting he grew vegetables which he sold locally. He died in January 1934.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives, Neil Collins' collection.



Seven Mile Diggings, early 1930s.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society

abandoned. In June 1867, Robert Perry, the man who had discovered the claim, wrote a depressing letter to the Brisbane press outlining the work that had taken place at the Seven Mile and stating with considerable conviction that it was not a major goldfield and was unlikely to ever become one. Perry wrote:

As there has been so much said of late about the above-mentioned diggings (if so I may call them) kindly allow me in turn to offer a few remarks.

In the first place, a rumour is current here that the authorities are about proclaiming it a diggings. Now I should like to know what for, it cannot be for what gold there has as yet been found, nor can it be for employing any great number of diggers. True there has been a tolerable round number here, say about a 100 men, I think is the most that there ever have been on the ground, and out of the number I do not think that any one man can say that, from the commencement, he has earned 10s. per week and rations. Here I allude to the best paid, not saying anything about others that have not made 'tucker,' and others that have been compelled to run away without being able to pay for even that.

Then again we hear that application has been made for the reward. Now, I and my mate prospected this place months before anything particular was found, and reported the same both privately and publicly. It was for that purpose that myself and party was sent out, and was outfitted by parties in Brisbane, and which same promised to assist me through with my undertaking; but I am sorry to say failed to do so after starting. In my report I stated that I had found gold in about sixteen different creeks and gullies, yet claiming a reward for such a place was the last of my thoughts.

It is all very well for interested individuals such as storekeepers to fossick about and find a little gold and then claim the reward, this puts a face upon it, and leads simple individuals to believe that something must be doing, as the reward has been claimed. This brings new comers, and with them a little money to purchase tools and provisions with; and should they have none with them, they must set in to get a little to subsist upon — and little it is, just enough to pay the storekeeper. Who, then, reaps the benefit of these false rushes, and who suffers for it? The same that always has to pay the piper — 'the poor man;' — he that has in all probability to sacrifice something that he holds most dear to try and raise a few shillings to get away with; and after tramping his shoes off his feet, finds, to his astonishment, that he cannot earn scarcely anything more than tucker, if he can that.

Now, the first fourteen ounces of gold that went from here was about the middle of March last; and I can guarantee that that amount was all that was found by about seven men from the middle of November, 1866, to the latter end of February, 1867; and then there were about ten men working from about the beginning of March till the time it was sent down. This large quantity did not give each man 7s. per week for his labour.

We have also heard that parties have been spreading reports that men can earn 14s. per day, others that men earn £3 per week, and some more. Do they allude to one day, or to one week in particular? If so, I cannot contradict it, but should they mean that men average this, I say it is false. It is true that some parties did passable for a week or so on one little gully (one of the sixteen that I reported), that was afterwards opened by a Brisbane man named Callaghan, when it was said that he got about 16 dwts. in about two days with his dish alone. This I deny, both in time and quantity. This gully is at present in full work, but the remuneration for the labour is very tame, so much so that I think it will soon, like the diggings at large, shortly die a natural death.¹⁵

Another visitor to the diggings in June 1867 stated that the field was only supplying wages, some men were getting little more than one shilling a day for their work while others were earning up to around four shillings per day. The author wrote that the field was a difficult one and he blamed the press, particularly the *Queensland Times*, for publishing rosy reports on the diggings when in fact the site was very poor. He said that one man had purchased around fifteen ounces of gold from a variety of diggers and after taking the gold to Ipswich the press had claimed that the man had found the gold himself, thus giving a false impression of the value of the goldfield.¹⁶ Another report of 13 July claimed that there had been a few small rushes to various sites on the diggings but these too had proved almost worthless, and that press reports of a nugget weighing three pounds were completely false. Storekeepers from Nanango and Toowoomba had arrived at the diggings and while some of them were able to sell their stock, many others were unable to do so as the number of diggers on the goldfield was actually decreasing.¹⁷

Robert Perry, the man who had originally discovered the goldfield, was also coming under attack, some people claiming that he had misrepresented the value of the field in order to later claim the government reward. Perry strongly denied these allegations, later stating: 'Many people in Brisbane and its vicinity have been led to attribute the exaggerated reports of the richness of this goldfield solely to myself. Though it is quite true that my party were the first to discover the gold in that neighbourhood, the reports were got up by a storekeeper, who spread the most absurd statements about the quantity of gold found, especially in the towns of Dalby and Toowoomba, through which many men left good homes only to be disappointed. Mr Scott, of Taroom, will bear me out in this statement, as he was on the ground with me weeks before any one else came there; and I must say that during the time I was prospecting there he stuck to me well and helped me in every way, and to him I must return my sincere thanks. This storekeeper professed to be my principal supporter, but he turned out to be one of those men who think only of themselves, and did not afford me any assistance, although he represented himself to do so to everyone. I wish to say these few words in order to vindicate myself with the public, as I and my party were the originators of the goldfield.'¹⁸

The scrub paddock region was another important gold area in the Nanango region. This was situated approximately twenty-three miles north-north-east of the town on the range dividing Brisbane from the Burnett waters. As the name implied, the Scrub Paddock diggings were surrounded by dense scrub, the only entrances to the diggings being where the Gooroomjam Creek entered it and where a road had been cut through the scrub leading to *Yabba* station. Almost all the gold in the region had come from two distinct creeks, one of these was on the Burnett Falls, and was known as German's Gully or Dry Gully, the other was on the Brisbane Falls and was known as White's or Manaramby Creek. German's Gully was certainly the richer of the two, from that location gold nuggets up to thirteen ounces were known to have been found, and other nuggets from seven to nine ounces had also been located there. By 1886 the gully, which ran into Gooroomjam Creek (a tributary of Barambah Creek) had been worked for approximately a mile down from its head.

Manaramby Creek diggings had also been extensively worked. The 1886 government report for these diggings claimed: 'The gold from these creeks was very pure, its value at the Sydney mint being £4 2s 6d. per oz.'

Another small gold bearing area was the Wild Horse Reef, situated to the east of Manaramby, this was a narrow reef that widened as it became deeper. The reef had been worked almost entirely by one man who had put down two or three shafts to a depth of approximately thirty-five feet. The reef was of white quartz with gold showing plainly in it. The lone miner would burn the quartz to make it more friable for crushing, and then crush the quartz with a stamper worked by hand. Using this particularly primitive method the miner was extracting approximately two ounces of gold to the ton, but a large percentage of the gold was almost certainly lost due to elementary crushing methods.

The Black Watch reef was located approximately one third of a mile south west of the Wild Horse Reef and on top of the range. The width of the quartz reef varied greatly from two or three inches near the surface to some three feet at a depth of seventy-six feet. In addition to the gold, the reef was also comprised of a large percentage of copper, and one ton of quartz yielded 16 dwt 8 gr of gold and 80 ozs 17 dwt of silver. Half a mile east of this reef was another gold bearing reef upon which a shaft had been sunk to a depth of forty feet. Two assays of the ironstone located on this reef yielded 15 dwt and 9 dwt 19 gr of gold per ton.¹⁹

Yet despite all the hopes of a rich gold reef, the gold at Nanango was never to prove the salvation of the colony of Queensland. Once the alluvial gold had been worked out, some miners continued with reef mining, sinking some quite significant shafts, but most of the miners drifted away to seek their fortunes on richer fields such as Gympie and on the Crocodile River diggings. Despite this, gold mining in the region continued and the focus of attention became the claim known as Hooper's Luck operated by the Hooper's Luck Gold Mining Company. According to the first annual report of the company, a Huntington crushing mill was set up at the site but for the first few months of operations it ran only intermittently as the company experienced difficulty in finding anyone who could operate it successfully. The report, written by the company chairman, W. Ginn, claimed: 'Recently we secured the services of Mr Peter Hansen, for a short period, to put the machinery in proper order and alter the (washing) tables so as to save the gold. He did this

work very satisfactorily ... and the mill has since then given much better results. Mr Hansen also instructed an employee of the Company (Joseph Barr) how to manage the mill and save the gold, and Mr Barr is now in charge and giving satisfaction.²⁰

The Joseph Barr mentioned in the above report was killed at the site in 1891 after falling down a shaft. Suffering from internal injuries and two broken legs he was taken to the Ipswich Hospital where he died five days later.

F.W. Lee, the son of police magistrate Archibald Lee, witnessed the aftermath of the incident. Lee, then a schoolboy, later wrote: 'I can recall an accident that happened to a man named Barr at the old Hooper's Luck mine. He collapsed and fell a considerable distance down a mine ... He was taken from Nanango to the Ipswich Hospital in a wagonette. We school boys saw them going by our old playground and he waved to us from where he lay in the van. He died a short time after reaching the Ipswich Hospital.'²¹

In March 1888 the press reported of the area:

Within the past month a mineral lease of about 80 acres has been taken up by Henry Lock (of Brisbane) and party ... The new find is platina. Besides the lease, five prospecting areas adjoining have been taken up. A sixteenth in one of the prospecting areas changed hands for £50. Hooper's Luck are crushing with their Huntington machine every day. This is considered the proper sort of crushing machine for the kind of stone raised from the Hooper's Luck shafts.

Cook and party have applied for a machine site for the purpose of erecting ten head of stampers. This company will, besides crushing their own stone, crush for the public. Graham and party have taken up a piece of ground within sight of the township, where they are trying to cut the reef in the slate country ... The shareholders of the Morning Star are sinking a new shaft and have struck a soft formation similar to Hooper's Luck, carrying quartz leaders leading to the reef at the 24ft. level. At the Seven-mile, Norton and party are down 45ft. The country is very hard. The reef is now 4 ft. wide. Two tons of the surface stone crushed at Gympie gave 19 dwt. per ton. 7 dwt. having been got in the tailings. It is expected the stone at the 45ft. level will give a return of 1½ oz per ton. Reid and party, McDonald and party, and the Day Dawn have three good reefs in the grounds. Good alluvial is known to be below at the Seven-mile. At *Taromeo* there are twelve prospecting areas all working. Reid and party are working on three reefs, all carrying good gold. Aitken and party have also a good reef showing gold. Parsons and party have a very good claim which also carries gold. At *Taromeo* alluvial can be got by deep sinking. All the reefs are heading for freehold upon *Taromeo*, which belongs to Mr Walter Scott.²²

By November the same year the situation had changed slightly for the worse, no significant gold discoveries had been made and the press was reporting that: '... The prospects are not quite the right sort to push *Taromeo* ahead.' The region must have been a difficult one to work as there were claims that some of the miners were afraid to go too deep in case they did not come up again. There were six claims then being worked at *Taromeo*, each claim had a small quantity of fine quality gold which was spread uniformly throughout the reef. One particular claim, the Red Queen, was certainly the most favoured, but the miners working it had only little capital, and without a steady infusion of money, it was impossible to properly work the reef. The reef was down to seventy feet and showing good gold at the bottom of the shaft, but a further two months of concentrated work was required to show any kind of decent profit. The problems were further compounded by the fact that the men working the reef were not expert gold diggers, and had only little experience in such work.²³

The police magistrate at Nanango during the mid 1890s was Theo Pugh who was appointed to the position in 1895. In addition to his duties as magistrate Pugh also acted as land commissioner and gold warden. Pugh died suddenly in Toowoomba on 14 March, 1896, after having undergone an operation. The press reported that he had been: 'recovering nicely, when a relapse set in that terminated in his death.' Pugh was described as a well liked person in the Nanango district and had: '... endeared himself to all who came into contact with him by his patient and kindly bearing in all matters connected with his duties.'²⁴

Over the following years little of any importance happened on the goldfields. By 1897 the press was reporting that: 'Gold mining is quiet, about three men being on the old alluvial workings on Yarraman Creek, and a party of two prospectors are at work on the old lode about a mile to the east of the township.'²⁵

Progress over the following decade was slow and marginal. In February 1901 a syndicate of miners headed by a man named Love was working a shaft known as 'The Dyke', upon which they had been digging for several months in an attempt to drop a prospecting shaft on the reef. Several leases had been taken up in the mine and an unnamed investor had paid £200 for a share in the venture. The men working the mine had also applied for a further twenty-four acres of leasehold property, bringing their holding up to approximately fifty acres. Alongside this lease a local Nanango businessman named J. Davidson had also taken up a lease of forty acres, and many others in the town were looking at the venture with curious eyes, wondering if this time there was, indeed, a golden future in the region. The press reported:

... there have also been a good few persons having a look round with a view to secure leases and try their luck should the prospectors strike anything rich. I do not suppose, however, there will be much sinking down till Love and party have got down a good deal farther, as the rule in mining is generally to hang on while the prospectors prove the ground. The Government have recently granted the prospectors £840 to assist them in sinking deeper, and this gift will be very welcome, as the little company have only subscribed a small amount to put down a trial shaft. The prospects continue to improve, and I quite anticipate that the company will shortly put their mine on the market to secure adequate capital and machinery for effectively working it.²⁶

There were, of course, other minerals of importance to the South Burnett, as the following press report of April 1901 illustrates:

There is a rumour that tin has been discovered quite close to Nanango, in the bed of Sandy Creek, and if so it will be a discovery of much value, should it be found to exist in payable quantities. It is very probably that tin lodes do exist somewhere in the vicinity of Nanango, as I have more than once been assured by miners who were doing a little promiscuous prospecting 'on the off chance,' that they have come across specimens of tin. Whether the present discovery is of any permanent value will no doubt be known before long, as the parties who have found what they believe to be tin intend having some samples assayed or submitted to some competent authorities for their opinion. As traces of many other minerals have been picked up in this part of the district at odd times, it is more than probable that something valuable will be discovered ere long.

In the quartz mine at Hooper's Luck; steady progress in sinking is being made, and I am informed that the stone is improving in quality as they go down. Some mining experts from the Gympie side paid a flying visit of inspection to the mine last week, and it is said they were all pleased with the prospects. There is sinking also going on in one or two other mines adjacent, and although there is nothing special to report at the present moment, everything looks promising.²⁷

The following month another report concluded that a visit to: '... the Nanango claim' was well worth the effort, as the mine was likely to do much to enhance the general prosperity of the Nanango district. The mine was situated: '... in the thick scrub on the crown of a ridge overlooking the town,' and it was considered a strange place for a gold mine. However, the manager of the mine, a Mr Evans, assured the public that it was a viable proposition and that a shaft over two hundred feet had already been dug onto the reef. The reef itself was twelve feet wide at the bottom of the shaft, and was yielding approximately four ounces to the ton on a general crushing. Press reporters were shown quartz which, they were assured, would go far higher, up to twenty ounces to the ton, making the reef a particularly rich one.²⁸

At this time the well known Hooper's Luck claim, on the One Mile Diggings, a claim which had, during the 1880s, provided its owners with reasonable returns, was again in operation and was, according to contemporary reports, the principal mine then being worked on the field. By June 1901 work was continuing, a shaft had been sunk to 225 feet, but before that level was reached the miners experienced difficulties with water seepage and the shaft had to be continually pumped out. This problem led to a temporary discontinuance of excavating the main shaft and

the miners began to dig crosscut shafts to the east and west, believing that this was the fastest way of finding the rich reef they were sure was close by. Within days of cutting these shafts they discovered a quartz formation similar to those found at Gympie and their hopes soared, the press reporting: 'It is considered more than likely that a reef may be found at any time now, and it is to be hoped that this is the case, as the plucky little proprietary who are working the show have but limited capital at their command and cannot, in all probability, stand a drain much longer on their resources.'²⁹

Five tons of stone from the Hooper's Luck claim had recently been sent away for assay and the company running the operation was hoping that with good results it would be able to erect its own stamping battery at the site to treat stone from the mine.³⁰

By 18 July that year (1901) the main shaft had been sunk to 250 feet and the owners had discovered several gold-bearing leaders of varying thickness, thus increasing the chances of discovering a major reef close at hand. However, the lack of a significant amount of capital was restricting operations, most of the company's funds had been used in tracing the leaders. Facing financial starvation the owners had formed a public company, they then had a total lease area of approximately fifty acres. The new company was called 'The Golden King'.

The memorandum of association of the Golden King Gold Mining Company provides the following information:

The registered office of the company was situated at Margaret Street, in Toowoomba. The objects for which the company was established were to acquire, hold and work certain leases and mining tenements and mines, including the gold mining lease Numbered 4 dated 13 April, 1901, and issued to Edwin Lowe of Nanango for an annual rental. This portion of land was in the County of Fitzroy, Parish of Nanango, District of Burnett and contained 10 acres in Portion 1, known as the 'Nanango Dyke', and also the gold mining lease Numbered 5, also dated 13 April, 1901, and issued to Edwin Lowe, and also the gold mining lease Numbered 6, containing 5 acres.

The capital of the company was £15,000 in 60,000 shares of 5/- each, of which 20,000 shares were fully paid up and were to be issued to the holders of the leases, mining tenements, and mines.

The directors of the company were Charles Campbell, a butcher of Toowoomba, Denis Sheil also of Toowoomba, whose occupation was described in the articles of association as: 'gentleman', William Selby of Nanango, a businessman, John Davidson of Nanango, another 'gentleman', John Harrop Henzell of Brisbane, also a 'gentleman', John Thomas Eldridge of Toowoomba, an accountant and Thomas Alfred Trevethan, a manufacturer of Toowoomba.³¹

Most of the issued shares were quickly taken up — an indication of the confidence the public had in the venture, and the original owners had each maintained one thousand contributing shares. A local correspondent reported: 'I understand it is intended to put down a vertical shaft at once and procure a battery for crushing, so that it should not be long before Nanango is heard of as a live mining centre with unlimited possibilities for expansion if the opinion of mining experts and authorities is worth anything. There are several miles of country along the line of reef now being worked which are supposed to contain payable ground. Once the main reef is located, I am sure there will be a considerable development in mining in these parts.'³²

The new company intended to immediately put on about a dozen men at a cost to the company of approximately £25 a week in wages.³³

For the following six months operations at the mine continued roughly as expected. No golden fortunes were won and no fabulously rich reef was discovered but the mine's main reef was certainly a payable proposition — for a while at least. The company ordered Walkers Engineering at Maryborough to build the winding plant, this was to be used to carry the stone from the face of the reef to the surface for crushing. A twenty head crushing battery had been purchased and erected by an engineer named Bassett, the press reporting: '... that everything will be done in the most careful way for saving the fine gold that is known to be in the stone.' Although the quality of the stone was known to be low grade ore, there was a large lode available and it was generally believed that the operation would continue for many years, thus vastly improving the wealth of

the Nanango region. When the miners took their Christmas break in 1902, the golden future of Nanango looked promising.³⁴

A new gold discovery in the Nanango region 'electrified' the town three months later in March 1903 when a syndicate of men including a miner named Singleton, H. Powers, Evans and Melver announced that they had applied for mining leases on Greenwood Creek, approximately six miles south west of the town. An enthusiastic report of the discovery claimed that the prospects of the mine were particularly good and that the ore had yielded seven or eight ounces of gold to the ton. Many Nanango residents rushed to the prospecting area and pegged out claims.³⁵

By the following month (April 1903), the situation at the Golden King mine was depressing. The new stamping battery was unable to function as there was no water to wash the crushed rock over the sluices. The gully in which the crushing battery was constructed had a large catchment area, but the drought had left this dry. The press reported: 'It is hoped for the sake of the town that water enough to enable crushing to be carried on will soon be obtained, as matters with our local tradespeople are dull and the 100 or so hands which the mine would employ in the event of the crushing proving satisfactory would serve materially to brighten matters up.' While waiting for the rain to fill the catchment area, mine management ordered that a further shaft be dug on the reef.³⁶

A heavy rainfall during the third week of July that year put about three feet of water in the mine's dam, but this, it seems, was not sufficient for operations to commence. At the same time Mr Hector Munro, a well known Nanango licensed surveyor, completed a report on mining operations in the Nanango region. In his report Munro revealed that the winding plant ordered from Walkers, at a cost of £400, had finally been installed and that once full, the dam at the mine would hold sufficient water for the mine to operate for twelve months. Munro also toured the other regions of mining interest and added that the Junction Mine was being worked by R. Bushnell and a group of miners and that these men were waiting to put a trial crushing of their ore through the stampers at the Golden King battery. Another party of prospectors was working on the eastern fall of the main range at Greenwood Creek, their claim was an old one called Mount Power. On Yarraman Creek alluvial gold was still being found. Munro, rather optimistically, wrote: 'Two or three old prospectors have been working here for some years and made tucker when there is sufficient water. They strip the surface soil off one of the ridges, wash it and get free gold. I have seen 5 to 7 colours to the dish after carrying it down to the water to wash it. With sufficient water and capital this will probably be a second Mount Morgan.' Munro added that gold was also still being recovered at *Taromeo* and at *Scrubby Paddock*.³⁷

By August 1903 further problems were being experienced at the Golden King mine. Heavy rains had evidently weakened the wall of the dam which gave way, flooding the mine area and apparently putting a considerable quantity of water into the mine-shaft. The mine was forced to close for several months while cleaning up operations were carried out.³⁸

By November that year the situation had not improved, the press claiming: 'The Golden King mine is still silent, but the new dam having been completed, the manager and managing director, Messrs Bassett and Eldridge, have returned with a few men. I understand a start is being made to clean out mullock from the shaft and to get up a fresh lot of stone in readiness for crushing when there is a sufficiency of water. The mine lies east of the town 1½ miles, and whilst almost too much rain has fallen in the town and among the farmers to the west, there has been very little over the catchment area of the Golden King dam. A good fall of rain this week put a quantity of water in the dam, but not sufficient to start the company's battery.'³⁹

A subsequent description of the region revealed:

In the early days the first claim there was known as 'Hooper's Luck.' The very name is indicative of some sort of luck, and old hands say Hooper had good luck and a considerable number of ounces came out of his claim. About seven years ago a Toowoomba syndicate took up the lease, and having gained fair prospects from a lode on which they sank a ninety-foot shaft, bought the old Mt Shamrock crushing plant in order to treat their ore. The mill was erected, but the lode proved low grade, and the 'Golden King' claim was abandoned, and the machinery (which bears the name 'Tooth & Co., Maryborough') now drives the saw-milling plant for a timber company.

Gold is plainly visible in the stone from the 'Golden King' claim, and a few men still prospect on the reserve, buoyed up with similar hopes to those which floated the 'Golden King' Company. Nanango goldfield reserve is a large one, being 10,000 acres — much too large — and, although it would be unwise to ignore the presence of minerals on the area and the necessity for a goldfield reserve, a great portion of it could be used to better advantage as agricultural farms. The goldfield area extends right into the town of Nanango, and quite a number of mining homesteads have been taken up for a payment of 5/- per year. These will be of high value shortly, especially as they are adjacent to the proposed railway terminus. The Department before tabling the railway to Nanango would have acted wisely had they excused the town portion from the goldfield reserve and cut it up into township allotments.⁴⁰

A report written by the Nanango gold warden, Mr P.G. Knyvett, for the under-secretary of mines in 1912 gives us an exact description of the work then being carried out in the vicinity. Mr Knyvett reported:

Very little mining of any consequence has been carried on, and practically no minerals have been recovered during the past twelve months. A fair amount of prospecting has been done at intervals, but the results thereof have not been encouraging...

In the vicinity of the town of Nanango several attempts were made to locate payable gold reefs close to the old workings, but the efforts were not attended with any success, and for the present have been abandoned.

About 10 oz. of alluvial gold were obtained by fossickers from Seven-mile Creek.

At Rocky Creek work was carried on for part of the year by the Ruby Tin Sluicing Company on their alluvial areas, and also by Messrs Macnamara and Powers on their mineral leases. The only reported return from this field was a parcel of lode tin weighing 6½ cwt ...

At Blackbutt Mr James Langan has done an amount of prospecting, but the ore so far located is of low grade, and being a combination of many minerals will not pay the cost of treatment. The ore on this property contains gold, silver, lead, copper, zinc, arsenic, bismuth, and sulphur, and would be very difficult to treat by any of the processes at present in use.

At *Taromeo* several parties have been prospecting for gold and silver on private property, but the results obtained have not been very encouraging, as only low-grade silver-lead ore has so far been discovered ...

The estimated population upon the Nanango Goldfield on the 31st December was 504, but only 4 of these were engaged in mining. The field is gradually being settled by a resident population, who are building for themselves homes thereon and placing their land under cultivation.⁴¹

Despite the rhetoric, the hopes and dreams that Nanango was to enjoy a prosperous future based upon its gold, no major discoveries were to be made — although the dreams continued and the Golden King was later reopened as Grey's Luck, (also reported as Gray's Luck) the prospect still carrying evident potential, as a report later demonstrated: '... there is Charley and his 'Luck'. If you happen to be a stranger in our town and meet a benevolent looking gentleman rather inclined to be stout, with a stately stride — well that is Charley; and he will probably accost you thus: "Have you seen the nugget of gold out of the last crushing out of Grey's Luck?" If you say no he will take you to our local jeweller (Mr McComb) and point with pride to the thimble-shaped nugget of the precious metal which is to be hoped is going to be of tremendous consequence to the town of Nanango.'⁴²

An account of the preliminary workings of this venture, written by the gold warden, Mr P.G. Knyvett, in June 1913, claimed:

During the past two months a little activity has been displayed in working the ground close to the town of Nanango formerly held by the Golden King Company. Messrs Gray (sic) and party have taken up an 8 acre lease, which they have called Gray's Luck. Finding the water too heavy in the old shafts, they commenced to sink a new shaft about 100 yards to the south, and at 30ft holed into an old drive which had apparently been worked for many years. They continued this drive, and met a number of small veins of quartz carrying gold. From

here a small crushing of 4 tons 7cwt. of ore was obtained, and with the assistance of the Mines Department this was forwarded to Gympie, where it was crushed and yielded 4 oz. 12dwt. of smelted gold, of the value of £3/17/6½d. an oz.⁴³

Shares in the company sold well, the *Nanango News* reported in July 1913 that 5550 shares had been applied for and that the closing date for the company's share issue was 31 July, adding: 'The gold from the last crushing is on view at Mr McComb's window in Drayton Street and Mr A.E. Dimmock can give all information regarding the mine to intending shareholders. The prospects for Grey's Luck is certainly bright, and with the success of the mine would naturally come better times for Nanango and district.'⁴⁴

Press reports were enthusiastic over the 'discovery' claiming:

The recent discovery at Nanango of a lode thought to be gold-bearing led to some interest being taken in the matter. Mr C. Gray, (sic) a pioneer of the district, made certain overtures to the Government with the result that he was given permission to have a sample from the lode taken to Gympie to be crushed, and tested. The first sample — about 6 tons — gave a yield of 4oz. 15dwt. and a second sample of the same quantity was able to show 6oz. The result has just been made known to Mr Gray, and on Monday he was able to bring the 6oz. to the *Courier* office. The gold, which is said to be more valuable than that gained at Gympie, was got from the lode, which is said to average 15ft. at the surface and 11ft at the 200ft. level. The lode is within a mile of the township of Nanango, and it is claimed that if a State or private owned battery was put down employment would be given to from 500 to 1000 men. Since the result of the first crushing was made known a number of areas have been taken up by intending prospectors. In connection with the field it is interesting to note that it was found before Gympie, but it has been lying dormant for a large number of years, during which time a sawmill was built upon the site.⁴⁵

The mine, situated on the Mines road, approximately one mile from the town near the old Timber Corporation sawmill site, had, by July 1913, undergone a considerable transformation and the proprietors of the new company were particularly pleased with the work that had originally been carried out there, work which was conservatively valued at around £2500, mainly in sinking the shaft. There was much regret that the old mine machinery had been dismantled and sold, as the press claimed: '... and yet the gold is still there, as late developments have amply proved, and now all and sundry are weeping and wailing and gnashing their gums ... it is a thousand pities that it was disposed of before a thorough prospecting campaign had been carried out in the vicinity.'⁴⁶

The first meeting of shareholders in the company took place in August 1913 at the Nanango shire hall, chairman of provisional directors, William Moffatt, informed a gathering of more than thirty-five shareholders that the share-list has closed with 11,000 shares applied for. Moffatt also stated that a further four acres of gold bearing land, belonging to C.B.M. Grey, had been purchased. Also at that meeting C.S. McClymont, W.R. Gataker, J.P. McKeone, Thomas George McNamara and William Moffatt were elected directors and Stuart Cavaye was elected auditor to the company.⁴⁷

One of these directors, Thomas George McNamara, was a well known Nanango district identity. He was born on 1 April, 1876, and in about 1880 was brought to the South Burnett by his parents, settling at Erin Vale. He and his brother Alex walked each day to school in Nanango, a round journey of some nine miles. McNamara took over the running of the property upon the death of his father in 1918. In 1910 he had married Sarah Ann Kathleen Hayes and the family lived at Erin Vale until 1923 when they went to live in Alfred Street, returning to Erin Vale in 1929. McNamara was a member of the Nanango Shire Council and was prominent in the affairs of the Catholic Church. He died in May 1953 after an illness of several months.⁴⁸

The Grey's Luck mine was, by October 1913, the new venture upon which all the hopes of the region's gold prospects were pinned. By that time the mine was well equipped with boilers and winding gear, directors J. Evans and George Watt were fortunate in being able to obtain a second-hand winding plant from Gympie for less than half its original value.⁴⁹ However, while operations at the mine had been continuing for many months, the official opening of the mine had yet to take place. The newspapers reported: 'The poppet head poles are lying in the bush ready for

hauling ... there is every prospect of the mine being in full swing before the end of the year, and once the mine is at work and something tangible is being done, with encouraging prospects no doubt the holders of the next block will follow suit and ere long there should be a large influx of population in Nanango.⁵⁰

A few days later, following the official opening of the mine on 24 October, 1913, the press claimed: 'Mrs Moffatt, wife of the Chairman of Directors of Grey's Luck Gold Mining Company, has undertaken a great responsibility in setting the wheels in motion of Nanango's great hope. It is to be hoped many blessings will fall to her share at the hands of successful shareholders. The speeches were good, the whistles blew all right, and the wheels revolved merrily, but who can tell what mother earth has in store for those who have had the courage to try to wrest the secret from her. A little encouragement was the announcement of the fact that the Mines Department has graciously condescended to contribute £200 on a £ for £ basis to give the venture a push along, Good Luck!⁵¹

According to the mining warden's report for September 1913, six men were then employed on erecting the winding plant and re-tubing the boiler prior to commencing work on deepening the shaft from 225 feet to 400 feet, digging out cross cuts at various levels to intersect with the lode.⁵²

In February 1915 the assistant government geologist, Lionel C. Ball, B.E., published an account of a visit he had recently made to the mining operations at Grey's Luck, including some of its history. He stated that while two government grants, one of £200 and another of £250, had been made available to the directors of the mine, there appeared to be little prospect of the company ever striking any significant gold. Ball wrote:

The surface received a thorough prospecting from the early claim-holders, but it is believed that operations on the whole were not highly remunerative. Several attempts have been made to improve matters by exploiting the ground on a large scale, and several companies have thereby come to grief. The Hooper's Luck Company erected and worked a 5 head stamper battery in 1875 or 1876. A Mr Parsons ran a Chilian mill at Nanango during some months in 1893, and in 1903 the Golden King Company put up a 20 head battery, but did little or no crushing ... no rich crushings would seem to have been reported. My impression is that the best returns did not exceed 1 oz. of gold per ton, and the average was likely not more than a few pennyweights.

The present company was ill-advised to embark on the venture without first securing expert advice, and without looking up the records of previous companies ... The directors also have been influenced by certain irresponsible persons to sink, in the expectation of an improvement in depth, but this is directly opposed to practical experience the world over ... and, though all things are possible, and there may be a reef ahead, at the present time there is no warrant whatever for its further extension ...

By way of an historical summary, it may be noticed that gold was discovered here a few years before the opening of Gympie, which event took place in 1867. Of the profits made by the prospectors during the first few years we have no records, but Messrs O'Brien and Hooper would seem to have been most favoured, and the latter is currently credited with having won some few thousand pounds worth of gold.

Within a few years of the first rush, companies took over the exploitation of the ground, and one of these — Hooper's Luck G.M. Co., Ltd. — erected a 5 head battery in 1876. The crushings for the five years during which the mill ran have not been separately recorded, but we may rely upon a total of at least 2000 tons having been treated; and the average yield — I give the opinion of a well informed local millman — was little more than 1 dwt, per ton, certainly not more than 5 dwt. In 1887, the same company erected a Huntington mill and crushed about 1000 tons for a doubtful yield, but so unsatisfactory that the company was wound up in 1890. Another company, holding the Phoenix claim, had already decided in 1888 that its ground did not warrant the erection of crushing machinery.

A slight revival eventuated in 1891 when the Perseverance G.M. Co. began operations; but the year's crushings of 159 tons yielded only 39 oz. gold (or slightly less than 5 dwt. per ton); and in the following year the Perseverance and Phoenix both abandoned their holdings. Meanwhile, Parsons and party of working miners had erected a Chilian mill and puddling plant, and, 'by picking out the best and most likely stone from the old workings near the surface,' they managed to secure in all between 500 and 1000 tons of crushing stuff, the average yield of which was less than 5 dwt. per ton. They finally ceased work in 1894, 'the

ground being very patchy and the return not sufficiently remunerative or certain to keep men away from other work at fair rates.⁷

Again in 1900 the *Nanango Dyke Syndicate* applied for the abandoned ground, renaming it the Golden King. The syndicate, assisted financially by the Government, began the sinking of a deep vertical shaft, a work carried on by the superseding Golden King G.M. Co., which also erected a 20 head battery. The first crushing of 90 tons from the underlie shaft (on G.M.L. 18) afforded only 14 oz. gold (about 3 dwt. per ton); and, as subsequent crushings gave poor results, the mine was closed down, even though the whole of the Government subsidy had not been expended.

After four years neglect of the field by the mining community, renewed but still unsuccessful attempts were made by some prospectors to locate a payable reef in the vicinity of the old workings. In 1913, however, Mr Ch. Gray (sic) bottomed on the old workings at the 30 ft level near Hooper's Luck. By prolonging the old drive southwards, 12 tons of stone was got and crushed at Gympie for 10 oz. gold, and besides this 5 tons of payable stone in the shallower ground. With Government aid the company attained a depth of 271 ft., and at the 260 ft. level put in a crosscut 194 ft.; but no gold-bearing reef have been thereby revealed.⁵³

Despite many optimistic predictions for a vast golden future for the Nanango region, as L.C. Ball indicated in the above report, no immense lodes of gold were recovered and the industry virtually stagnated with only the occasional desultory expression of interest being made. For example in June 1921 there was something of a revival of interest when a quantity of gold rich quartz was brought into town from a mine known as Mount Franey north-east of Nanango. Tests showed that the gold was certainly worth further investigation and the press again claimed that Nanango was: '... on the eve of an era of unprecedented prosperity.'⁵⁴ Three claims in the locality were quickly taken up and there were soon other prospectors on the field. In addition to these there were prospectors at various regions all through the known gold bearing areas, and since the beginning of that year the Nanango Warden's Office had issued forty-five miners' rights. The operators of the mine at Mount Franey, claimed: 'The shaft has been timbered and windlass and brace erected since last breaking down, which produced some very good specimen stone. We have got some very coarse gold and will commence sinking Monday 30th May when it is reasonably expected to get further results.'⁵⁵

The 1920s were difficult times for gold miners and the world generally saw a steady decline in the numbers of operating gold mines, places such as Nanango and Kilkivan were no exception. According to a report on gold mining in Australia, tabled in federal parliament by the Development and Migration Commission on 14 June, 1928, there were a number of significant reasons for this steady decline. The commission's findings revealed that the primary factor of the decline was the increase in the world's general price levels relative to the price of gold which had remained stationary since before the First World War. Gold output had diminished rapidly, from £14.6 million in 1906 to £2.2 million in 1926, this was due mainly to the high costs involved in gold production. The report claimed: '... While an outstanding cause is the general rise in the world price level of most commodities without any corresponding increase in the price of gold, local conditions have also contributed. Local conditions include the tariff, which has increased the cost of machinery and plant, legislation for the reduction of working hours, increased wages, industrial insurance etc., increased direct and indirect taxation, and in some cases, possibly inefficient business and technical control.'⁵⁶

On small and difficult goldfields such as those found in the Nanango and Kilkivan regions, these problems were almost insoluble and the casualty was, of course, local gold production. The cost of producing an ounce of gold had increased to such an extent that it was unprofitable to do so, and mines that may have survived before the war were forced to close. Rich finds were fewer, and according to the commission's report, gold mining had become more of a speculative gamble than a solid business that could be established and carried on over a long period of time. With such difficulties facing the gold mining companies it was obvious that only the very richest seams of gold could be profitably worked, those that provided the highest yield for the minimum amount of outlay in terms of machinery, wages and particularly taxation. The taxation laws of the day limited the profits from gold bearing ores and actively discouraged their exploitation. Taxation on the sale and transfer of mining leases made it difficult for prospectors to obtain the financial backing necessary to open up their deposits of gold.⁵⁷

Over the years there have been no significant discoveries of other minerals in the Nanango region, although there was once a belief that the area included a significant diamond field. T.A. Clapperton is reported to have believed that such a field existed and is said to have sent a sample of gravel from Stoney Pinch to Brisbane for assay. Richard Johnstone who selected land at Kunioon was also convinced that such a diamond field existed at Stoney Pinch and a company was formed to mine the region, however, the diamonds that were discovered proved to be so small that they were virtually valueless.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Twenty

Nanango and District Goldfields

1. M/C. 13 November, 1862, p 4.
2. M/C. 13 March, 1873, p 4.
3. M/C. 15 January, 1924, p 7.
4. MBC. 25 September, 1866, p 3.
5. Ibid.
6. MBC. 6 October, 1866, p 4.
7. Date of proclamation, 8 January, 1867, a copy may be found in MBC. 19 January, 1867, p 5.
8. MBC. 16 February, 1867, p 2.
9. M/C. 15 January, 1924, p 7.
10. Ibid.
11. For a detailed report on these diggings see: *Report on the Gold Deposits in the Neighbourhood of Nanango, 1886*, Nanango Shire Council archives, p 2.
12. M/C. 13 July, 1867, p 2.
13. Reproduced in SBT. 7 June, 1972, p 12.
14. N/N. 23 September, 1932, p 5.
15. MBC. 15 June, 1867, p 5.
16. MBC. 29 June, 1867, p 6.
17. For a detailed description of the goldfield at that time see: MBC. 13 July, 1867, p 5.
18. MBC. 30 June, 1867, p 2.
19. *Report on the Gold Deposits in the Neighbourhood of Nanango, 1886*, Nanango Shire Council archives, p 2-4.
20. First annual report to shareholders, Hooper's Luck Gold Mining Company Ltd., Nanango file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
21. *Memoirs of Nanango* by F.W. Lee, undated paper, Nanango Shire Historical Society, file: Pioneers p 7.
22. M/C. 30 March, 1888, p 3.
23. M/C. 29 November, 1888, p 3.
24. M/C. 27 March, 1896 p 3.
25. M/C. 19 November, 1897, p 3.
26. M/C. 25 February, 1901, p 2.
27. M/C. 30 April, 1901, p 3.
28. M/C. 1 May, 1901, p 3 and *The Age*, 25 May, 1901.
29. M/C. 20 June, 1901, p 3.
30. Ibid.
31. Memorandum and articles of association of the Golden King Gold Mining Company Limited. (Nanango, Queensland), JOL reference RBJ 338.76 gol.
32. M/C. 18 July, 1901, p 3.
33. Ibid.
34. M/C. 25 December, 1902, pp 2-3.
35. M/C. 25 March, 1903, p 3.
36. M/C. 25 April, 1903, p 3.
37. M/C. 22 July, 1903, p 3.

38. M/C. 19 August, 1903, p 3.
39. M/C. 20 November, 1903, p 4.
40. M/C. 5 January, 1910, p 4.
41. N/N. 11 July, 1913, p 4.
42. M/C. 13 August, 1913, p 8.
43. N/N. 20 June, 1913, p 5.
44. N/N. 18 July, 1913.
45. M/C. 9 July, 1913, p 8.
46. For a copy of the company's prospectus see: M/C. 12 July, 1913, p 5.
47. N/N. 29 August, 1913.
48. K/H. 21 May, 1953, p 2.
49. N/N. 10 October, 1913.
50. M/C. 16 October, 1913, p 6.
51. M/C. 4 November, 1913, p 5.
52. N/N. 24 October, 1913.
53. *Queensland Government Mining Journal*, 15 February, 1915.
54. M/C. 2 June, 1921, p 2.
55. Ibid.
56. M/C. 20 June, 1928, p 3.
57. Ibid.

21

Maidenwell and District — the Formative Years

As we have seen earlier in this history, the settlement of Maidenwell and district came about following resumptions from *Tarong* station, the first resumption taking place in 1882 followed by the well known Quarter Resumption in 1901 and another major resumption in 1906.

The first selectors in the Maidenwell region were John and James King and William McConnell, all of whom took up their selections in 1882, although of the three selectors only John King was to remain. James King forfeited his original selection to take up another, however, in 1895 he was accidentally burned to death, aged thirty-one years. William McConnell continued paying his rent until circa 1885/6 when he abandoned his selection and it was taken up by John and George Bishop.¹

In 1884 land at Pimpimbudgee was selected by Charles and James Smith and John Davidson and that same year other selections at Tureen were taken up by John Davidson and Dick Bushnell. No more selections were taken up in the area until the 1901 resumptions from *Tarong*.²

Of those first three selectors, John King certainly played the most significant role in the establishment of Maidenwell. He was born at Chalgrove, Oxfordshire, England, in 1853. Upon completing his education he worked for a while as a gardener and later emigrated with his parents to Australia. He was married in 1875 at Ipswich, he worked for a while on railway line construction and subsequently at a brick factory and finally took out his selection in 1882. One of his first tasks was to provide a home for his family, he constructed a slab hut with a shingle roof and dug a well, the first well in the region, and so the family named it Maidenwell.

In 1889 John King constructed a far more substantial homestead that featured wide verandahs and a cellar beneath the kitchen. His first wife died in 1898 and he remarried in Toowoomba, his second wife, having previously been married, also had two children. The King homestead was a resting place for coach travellers on the Nanango Jondaryan route, the passengers taking their meals in the Kings' dining room. In 1912 John King purchased the block of land where the village of Maidenwell would later be established and in 1914 the Maidenwell Hotel was constructed on the site, this was the first building in Maidenwell, the timber for the hotel being cut at the Kowitz sawmill on nearby Middle Creek. The builder was John Coe.³

Other buildings were soon afterwards constructed, including the Maidenwell Hall. This hall came successively under the ownership of Gladys Pool, the daughter of John King, and later the R.S.L. Unable to maintain the building the R.S.L. subsequently handed it over to a committee of locals and in 1994 it was sold for the nominal sum of one dollar to the Nanango Shire Council on the understanding that the council would carry out extensive renovations and maintenance. Improvements made to the hall since that date include a kitchen re-fit, new tables and chairs, a new stage, curtains and kerbing and channelling to the roadways, part of the funding coming from the federal government.⁴

John King died in 1934 and his wife also passed away two years later.⁵

Another of the early settlers at Maidenwell was Hugh Connolly, who took up land in the district in 1906. Mr Connolly was born at Highfields, Toowoomba, in 1894, he came to the Maidenwell district with his brother, Mat, who had selected land on Tanduringie Creek. Hugh Connolly later worked on fencing, road work, timber felling and timber milling. He enlisted in the First World War and was wounded in France. He died, aged eighty-eight years, in 1983.⁶

Another early selector of the region was Patrick O'Brien who lived at *Springfield* where he operated a dairy farm for approximately thirty years before his death. O'Brien was described as being a cheerful man who did much for others and was held in high esteem. He died suddenly at his home on 29 December, 1931.⁷

Among the region's early settlers were Mr and Mrs A. and J. Armstrong who, prior to arriving in the Maidenwell district had led a colourful and adventurous life. In December 1879 with four young children they sailed to New Zealand, arriving there in February 1880. Five years later they moved to Sydney and later to Katoomba and Lithgow. Later they travelled north to Queensland where Mr Armstrong was engaged in the coal mining industry at Ipswich and at Howard. They took up land at Crows Nest and in 1893 when William Lane formed his plans for the settlement of New Australia in Paraguay, the Armstrong family was among those who sailed to the new land filled with a hope for a successful and prosperous future. However, Lane's colony failed and the Armstrongs returned firstly to England and finally Australia where Mr Armstrong worked initially at Charters Towers, then Stanthorpe before selecting land in the Maidenwell district. He died in 1928 and his wife, Jane Armstrong, who was a native of Durham, England, died, aged eighty-four years, on 10 December 1931.⁸

Schools in the region included Tureen, Wengenville, Pimpimbudgee and Tanduringie. The Meandu State School on the Tarong Road, eight miles from Nanango, was opened on 30 August, 1909, following local resident support and the canvassing of the district by Charles Berlin. Its first teacher was Ellen Callanan.⁹

Notes and Sources

Chapter Twenty-one

Maidenwell and District — the Formative Years

1. A letter from M.S. Bishop to the shire clerk of the Nanango Shire Council, dated 16 May, 1949, claims that the land was taken up in 1885. A copy of this letter may be found at the Nanango Shire Council archives, unnamed file.
2. For full details of the names and locations of selections see: *In the Shade of the Bunyas*, pp 10–12 and letter to the shire clerk, Nanango Shire Council, from M.S. Bishop, dated 16 May, 1949, Nanango Shire Historical Society, Nanango file.
3. For specifications and other details of this hotel see file: Hotel Plans, 1904–1914, Nanango Shire Council archives.
4. SBT, 26 April, 1994, p 12.
5. *In the Shade of the Bunyas*, pp 14–15.
6. SBT, 2 March, 1983, p 37.
7. K/G, 31 December, 1931.
8. *Ibid.*
9. For details on the dates of opening and closing of these schools see file: Maidenwell and District Schools, Nanango Shire Council archives and: *Seventy-five Years of Education, Maidenwell and Districts*, by Vicki Gorton and Glenda Hinton, Nanango Shire Council archives. For details of the Meandu Creek School golden jubilee see: N/A, 9 July, 1959, p 1.

22

Kunioon

Like many other small rural settlements in the Nanango region Kunioon came about following resumptions and the impact of closer settlement. Among the early selectors in the region were Charles Fairbrother who later sold his holding to E. Sawtell. W. Thorpe, Ted Rossow, J.A. Lobb, Charles Grey, Joe Potter, James Lyon, William Brown, W. Thompson, W. Johnson, Thomas and James Embrey, Julius Wagner, James Thompson, J. Kidd, Sandy Murray and J.T. Yeates were some of the foremost farmers who did much to settle the region during its formative years.

The land was generally in blocks of one square mile which had to be cleared and planted by hand, those early selectors sowing initial crops of maize and rearing a few pigs, the produce being taken into Nanango for sale. Later, wheat became an important regional crop and was made more viable following the arrival of the rail line at Nanango in 1911. Like almost all other centres on the South Burnett, the farmers at Kunioon embraced the dairy industry, sending their cream to the butter factory at Nanango. Two schools served the district, Kunioon and Kunioon West which was on the border of Kingaroy shire.

One of the early selectors to the Kunioon region was Hugh Langan. Langan was born in Ireland and arrived in Australia when he was nineteen years of age aboard the sailing vessel *Maracara*, arriving in 1886. He lived for a short while in Maryborough before travelling to Rocklea where he worked as a farm hand, subsequently finding work with Frank Darley at Kunioon. While working for Darley, Langan secured his first block of land on Barker Creek, later obtaining a second block of land on Meandu Creek which he called *Avondale* and where he made his home. Langan was married to Roseanne Barrett of Middle Ridge at St Patrick's Cathedral Toowoomba, he was an ardent Catholic and while working for Frank Darley would walk eight miles to mass. He died at the Mater Hospital, Brisbane on 13 July, 1955, aged eighty-eight years.¹

In the Kunioon district was the selection known as *Ennis*, and owned by C.S. Cecil. This property was comprised of 220 acres with a frontage to Barker Creek. On the Kingaroy-Tarong road was *Rotherwood*, owned by Howard Goodger, 240 acres of rich scrub land with lucerne, oats and wheat.²

George West was the owner of a property in this region who, in 1913, was having trouble with some of his neighbours, the press claiming: 'This old gentleman, who is very aged, is making a valiant struggle to improve his holding by his own effort, and in this he is occasionally handicapped by certain of the young bloods resident in the vicinity in such a manner that is neither creditable to their manhood or their charity. The poor old chap who asks nothing more than to be left alone, is disturbed at night by his house being bombarded with missiles, and only on the day previous to our visit a bullet hole had been drilled through his tank and a quantity of his water had run to waste.'³

Close to West's property was *Nietta*, owned by Mr R. Snare who had taken up the farm circa 1911. *Almora*, owned by J.T. Buttsworth, was a property from where Kingaroy could be seen in the distance. Buttsworth was created a justice of the peace in October 1913.⁴ Other properties included James Embrey's *Springhill*, H. Manley's *Hay-Tor*, J. Porter's *Mount Zion*, J.S. Kidd's *Merri-Cooma* and J. Swain's *Beaumaris*.⁵

Also in the Kunioon region was a share farm being worked by W. Buttsworth and owned by George Ernest James Chaseling, this was under corn and a trial crop of Japanese millet had been grown there following the clearing of the land, however, as this proved to be a very labour intensive crop it was considered unprofitable.⁶ George Chaseling was among the very early

selectors of the South Burnett region, he married Clara Adeline Knight, the marriage taking place on 23 August, 1893. The couple travelled from Clunes, on the Richmond River, New South Wales to the South Burnett in 1907. George Chaseling died in 1941 and his wife died at the St Aubyn's Private Hospital in Kingaroy after a long illness on Wednesday 17 November, 1954, aged eighty-seven years.⁷

Notes and Sources
Chapter Twenty-two
Kunioon

1. K/H. 28 July, 1955, p 2.
2. N/N. 8 August, 1913.
3. Ibid.
4. N/N. 8 August, 1913 and 10 October, 1913.
5. N/N. 22 August, 1913.
6. N/N. 5 September, 1913.
7. K/H. 25 November, 1954, p 8.

23

Brooklands — the Village that Vanished

The village of Brooklands, on the rail line from Kingaroy to Tarong, was first established as a resumption from *Tarong* station in 1879, the land being taken up by James Isaac Markwell. (For details on James Isaac Markwell and his brothers, Charles and Walter, who were also early settlers in the Kingaroy district, see Chapter 77.) The land was later acquired by E.F. Lord and a partner named L'Estrange, their holding included five thousand acres of freehold with an added 2500 acres of leased land. After the coming of the railways Lord and L'Estrange sub-divided the property, thus opening it up for closer settlement. The sub-division came about only after considerable difficulties, the Nanango Shire Council objected to the plan but after an investigation of the matter by an authorised surveyor the project was subsequently approved.¹

The first sub-division took place in 1914 with twenty farms being put up for sale, these ranged in size from 40 to 172 acres. The sale of this sub-division took place at Kingaroy on 29 May that year.² At around the same time the township site was surveyed with forty-five quarter acre allotments. With the extension of the rail line through to Tarong during the latter part of 1915, Brooklands, which was a meeting place of seven main roads coming from the settlements of Taabinga, Tureen, Neumgna and Kunioon, was in an extremely advantageous position. The first train from Taabinga to Brooklands arrived in August 1918 and the future of the township appeared to be certain. Among the first to purchase land following the surveying of the town was Tom Walters who had worked for Lord and L'Estrange. Other early settlers included Fred Hall, George Jacobsen, Fred Woodall, George Hasemann, Harry and George Trace and Robert Cavanagh. Soon there were a number of commercial premises, including a general store, a boarding house, a cafeteria, butcher's shop, sawmill, blacksmith's shop, the Brooklands School of Arts, a school and two churches, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian. Timber was one of the region's foremost industries and a cheese factory was established by the Maryborough Cooperative Dairy Association.

In 1928 the Brisbane press gave a rare detailed description of the small community claiming:

Next month (August, 1928) ten years will have elapsed since the railway to Brooklands was opened for traffic. During the decade much development work has been done, and many of the flats along Barker Creek carry green coats of lucerne, the fertility of the land and abundance of water at shallow depths making the area very suitable for this crop. Dairying also is successfully carried on in the district, which is excellently watered, and has been appropriately named.

Originally Brooklands was part of *Tarong* station, but some years ago a fairly large area was secured by the Lord family, of Eskdale, Brisbane Valley, and was used for cattle grazing. About 1914 a large portion of the land was cut up and sold for farms, there being a good demand for the flats, which experienced men knew were ideal for lucerne growing and dairying. Messrs H.C. and W.F. Greenslade, working under the firm name of Greenslade Bros., are lucerne growers in a fairly large way. They have had up to 70 acres under crop, but by rotating crops on the old paddocks there are now about 40 acres under crop. Up to six cuttings a year can be obtained from the flats, although up to the present nothing has been done in the way of fertilising. A 7 h.p. engine is the motive power for chaff cutting, and an up-to-date dumper is used. A hay shed holding 120 tons of hay is full, in addition to several stacks, which will be cut during the next dry time. All the lucerne is sent North, as far as Rockhampton, thus saving the double journey from Theebine to Brisbane and back, a distance of 238 miles. The brothers settled on their farms some four years before the line was opened. Mr Fred Hall came originally from New South Wales, and after spending some time on the Darling Downs moved to Brooklands. In addition to lucerne, of which he has 25 acres, he has 30 acres of white corn, and in the season he grows wheat. He says that the

land, a black, friable soil, is well adapted for wheat, and he has obtained up to nine bags to the acre ... A visit was paid to Mr G.H. Hasemann, an old pioneer of the Laidley district, whose brother, Mr P. Hasemann, is a well-known business man in Harrisville. This farm is about six miles from Brooklands, and is one of the old selections taken up more than 40 years ago, it was originally selected by Mr A. Murray, and was bought by Mr Hasemann 22 years ago. About 140 acres are under cultivation, of which 40 are lucerne. Peanuts, maize and other crops make up the balance.

Mr Hasemann is a blacksmith by trade, and, with Mr Fred Eanglund, also a tradesman, have built their own thresher for peanuts. A new principle has been introduced: the drum, instead of beating the nuts off, is fitted with spikes which act as 'fingers' and pulls them off. Peanuts are difficult to thresh, except when thoroughly dry ...

Dairying is carried on, and new concrete bails have just been finished for a four-stand milking machine. Indeed, there are a good number of machines in the district. A chaff dumper bore testimony to the inventive genius of a country blacksmith, as on it were the words, 'The Lockyer Patent, T. Pook, Laidley.' Other farmers in the vicinity include Messrs M.E. Grimmet, E. Lubke, and J.W. Shepperdson. Mr E.S. Lord lives on the old *Brooklands* homestead, and is going in for dairying in a big way. In addition to his own farm, he has three others worked on the share system, and 450 cows are available for milking ... Mrs Cavanagh works a good farm for lucerne and dairying, about two miles from the township. Her husband, the late Mr P. Cavanagh, who died a few months ago, was one of the pioneer selectors of the district, who were almost isolated in those days, as instanced by Mr J. Maloney, a son of one of the old-timers, who said: 'They used to grow wheat, and had to cart it to Toowoomba — a distance of some 70 miles — to be gristed, getting about a bag of flour for every bag and a half of wheat.' From 120 to 130 pigs are sent away from the district monthly, some of them coming from the Neumgna soldier settlement.

The school under the headmaster-ship of Mr T.D. Patulla, with Miss E. McDougal as assistant, has an attendance of 50 children. A Babcock tester is installed, and the children taught the method and value of herd testing. Every dairymen in the vicinity can know the value of each cow in his herd if he likes to weigh her milk and send a true sample to be tested. The township has a fine general store, boarding-house, a cafe, and butcher's shop, and Mr T. Preston, formerly of Laidley, runs a sawmill and blacksmith's business. A lot of timber was sent away a few years ago, but there has been a lull in the business. The Government, however, has considerable areas of good pine a few miles away. There is a School of Arts with between 400 and 500 books. Mr P. Gwynne is the secretary.³

The provisional school at Brooklands was opened on 16 October, 1916, following considerable public demand. For the first two years of its existence the school operated from the town hall, constructed by Lord and L'Estrange. The school was upgraded to a state school in 1920. The first teacher was Miss Florence Ada Hall. The first school building was completed in August 1920. Most of the early teachers lived in the village boarding house.⁴

James Isaac Markwell, the man who had originally taken up the land where Brooklands would later be formed, died on 26 April, 1928, at the age of eighty-five years.⁵

Despite the apparent wealth of the region, Brooklands, as a township and important rural centre, eventually began to decline. By the early 1960s the rail line had closed, the dairy industry was also beginning to wain, as was the timber trade, and in 1966 the Brooklands post office also closed — essential services then coming from the centres at Nanango, Kingaroy and Yarraman. With the drift of population away from the centre, school attendances dropped dramatically, from fifty pupils during the term of Patrick Joseph Batch's tenure as head teacher (3 June, 1957 to 5 July 1959) to just twenty by the mid 1960s. Over the following years all the buildings that had once formed a part of the village were removed, leaving only the Presbyterian Church. Brooklands, the simple dairy and timber community that had once been praised for its famed lucerne, had simply vanished.⁶

Notes and Sources

Chapter Twenty-three

Brooklands — the Village that Vanished

1. See: memorandum, plan of sub-division of the Brooklands Estate, QSA COL/054.
2. For further details on this sale and some of the early settlers see: *Middle Creek State School Golden Jubilee* booklet, 1966, State Schools file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
3. *The Courier*, 14 July, 1928.
4. For further details on this school, including a listing of teachers, see: *Middle Creek State School, Golden Jubilee* booklet, 1966, State Schools file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
5. See obituary, dated 18 May, 1928, Pioneers file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
6. For further details on this district see: *Courier Mail*, 14 July, 1928, and various unidentified press reports, Brooklands file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.

24

Blackbutt and Benarkin, the Early Years



Early settler's homestead, the beginning of a township.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84283.

As we have seen earlier in this history, the area where the communities of Blackbutt and Benarkin later became established once formed a part of *Taromeo* station, settled circa 1842 by Simon Scott. It was Simon's son, Walter, who, in 1889, voluntarily allowed a portion of the station to be resumed and it was on this portion where Blackbutt and Benarkin would become formed.

Early settlers in the region frequently camped at what was known as the Well Holes, where Benarkin would subsequently become established. This site featured a clear spring of fresh water and the area must once have been a colourful scene, families, individuals, horsemen, workers, shepherds and stockmen arriving with wagons of goods, temporary camps of canvas spreading throughout the surrounding bush with cooking fires and all the impedimenta archetypical of early settlement. As these first selectors began to take up their land, their resources were generally meagre and hence their farms were basic in the extreme, rough slab and bark dwellings with few farm tools. While selectors were arriving in the district from circa 1886, the name of Benarkin was not officially adopted until 1912. The *Government Gazette* then proclaiming: 'It is hereby notified, for general information, that the Governor in Council has approved the name of the Government Township, situated at Benarkin railway station, and hitherto known as Blackbutt, being altered to Benarkin.'¹

The towns of Blackbutt and Benarkin have become well known for the timber industry which, indeed, formed the true economic geneses of those settlements, but the original selectors of the

160 acres blocks of land resumed from *Taromeo* were initially more interested in clearing the scrub and planting their first crops, primarily of maize, the thick stands of timber that abounded on their properties were, at first, regarded as more of a hindrance to progress than an asset, and thousands of valuable trees were simply cut down or ringbarked and left to rot where they fell or were burned. Like almost all other rural sectors of the South Burnett, the early days of settlement were difficult, both financially and physically for the selectors, they faced trying conditions, the lack of supplies and facilities and worked their small farms with only the most basic of implements. Food and other supplies came from Nanango or Yarraman, there were few medical facilities, the postal system was in its infancy, water was frequently scarce, selectors' huts were extremely modest. J.E. Murphy records that some of the first selectors included: 'H. Burchardt, C.C. Ogilvie and his son, George Packer, A. Rodgers, Jesse Crumpton, Thomas Coulson, William Gibson, John Dreghorn (senior), John Dreghorn (junior), John Hart, William Durham, John Douglass, John Galvin, Highmoor Watson, James Millar, George Rogerson (senior), George Rogerson (junior), Alex Rogers, Harry Morris, Fred Schuster, Robert Dreghorn, Noah Bygrave and Elizah Packer.'²

Benarkin once boasted three hotels, one was owned by Harry Judge, another by John Brown and the third by Bob Vickers, one hotel was later dismantled and two others destroyed by fire.³



Early Blackbutt.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84440.



The developing township of Blackbutt, 1900s.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84308.

For the first two decades of the region's history the economy of the area depended firstly on agricultural pursuits and then on the burgeoning timber industry. Sawmilling was the primary industry of the district, the mills providing work for hundreds of men, both at the mills themselves and in the scrub, felling and carting timber. These early mills included Andersen's Blackbutt Timber Company, Heaslip and Houston's mill on the Crows Nest Road, Blinco Brothers, also on Crows Nest Road, A.J. Raymond's mill at *Taromeo*, T. Emmerson's mill on the Crows Nest Road, Les Muller's mill at Nukku and a later mill, established in 1919, was Syd Gould's mill in Hart Street Blackbutt. William Ewing Houston later owned two mills, one at Blackbutt and another at *Taromeo*, the *Taromeo* mill was gutted by fire circa 1930.⁴ Les and Dolly Muller arrived in Blackbutt in 1948 to settle at Nukku where they constructed their sawmill and house near the rail siding. The mill was primarily involved in making fruit cases which were supplied to the Granite Belt, Gayndah and Mundubbera regions. In November 1960 Muller purchased the *Taromeo* mill owned by W.E. Houston Pty. Ltd.⁵ Another addition to the sawmilling family was the Benarkin mill owned by Wilkinson and Son of Nambour, which began operating at Benarkin in 1960.⁶



The timber loading yards at the Blackbutt railway.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84381.



Blackbutt railway station, circa 1916.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84392.

The difficulties facing those early selectors and timber-men were outlined in an article, published in 1905, under the heading of: *Subduing a Howling Wilderness*. The report claimed:

Blackbutt is twenty miles from nowhere. On very recent maps it is laid down between Esk and Nanango. The first question a visitor asks his guide when viewing the sights of the settlement is 'How on earth did you manage to dig this place out?' ...

Those who have seen Blackbutt can have but a poor idea of the nature of this undertaking. The narrow roadways cut in the course of years are walled up on each side with standing timber that is in places impenetrable ... It is about fourteen years since the first settlers went to Blackbutt. These men by virtue of their pioneering pluck, belong to the noble army of martyrs, for theirs has been a social martyrdom. Messrs Packer (deceased) and Dreghorn, J.P., belonged to the vanguard ... Blackbutt is lofty and Mr Dreghorn's house is on a culminating point in the range. The view is commanding. From this point of vantage one's eyes sweep an expanse of wild and weird woodland, reaching far to the north and west. Range after range ... appears till the distant horizon is reached. The Bunya mountains, Dalby-wards, come within the range of this survey. Patches of 'rung' timber, which in other parts give a checkered appearance to the landscape, are absent from this scene. Most of the country the eye meets in its glance is dense scrub, or else belts of hoop and bunya pine — for here is Queensland's great reserve supply of building stuffs ...

The early struggles of the Blackbutt settlers were desperate. It cost so very much to clear the land. After years of work with axe and grubber all the toiler could see for his toiling was a mere hole in the forest ... But a great revival took place when Anderson's (Esk) sawmill was erected in the heart of the settlement some years ago. Pine logs now found a market, instead of the flames — their early fate. This industry circulated cash and relieved the financial deadness which settles on every place that cannot export, or cannot turn to account its natural resources. Some selectors affirm that they have cut pine to the value of £10 per acre off their selections. Of late another sawmill has been erected (Emmerson's) and this has also added to Blackbutt's prosperity. Moreover, settlers are now sending cream to Mooretown, and, as the supply is steadily increasing, this is a fruitful source of income ...

There are mineral deposits at Blackbutt which have been prospected in a spasmodic way. Some day the work will, doubtless, be done systematically. Specimens of silver ore were exhibited in Nanango at the last show ...

Blackbutt has a public hall and a provisional school ... One of the 'sights' of the place is a huge blackbutt tree on Mr Hart's place, the base of which is burnt out so as to form a rude Gothic archway, through which a horseman may ride ...⁷

Just seven years after this report the twin settlements of Blackbutt and Benarkin were evidently taking on a more civilised form. In September 1912 the local newspaper, the *Nanango News*, published a description of the region detailing many of the towns' features, as this is one of the best descriptions we have of early Blackbutt and Benarkin, and especially of those early businesses and businessmen, this report is reproduced, in part, below:

After passing the old *Bear* homestead, the birthplace of Mr R.J. Lougheed, which together with 1200 acres is still owned by that gentleman, and which is situated on Cooyar Creek, the engineers' main camp is reached, and here a fine engineering feat is to be seen in the railway bridge which is being built across that stream. The main structure is supported by 6 huge concrete pillars and the approaches assist in giving it an imposing appearance. Here, as could be expected, a canvas town exists, and there is to be seen the usual temporary store (the particular one is owned by Mr Keeble, of Benarkin) and blacksmith shop. The beef and bread supply is delivered from Blackbutt. Mr T. Thompson, the well-known Nanango carrier, whose teams run daily and deliver goods between the two towns, has also a half-way camp at this locality ...

A short distance from the main camp and what is known as the '93 Mile' a school has been recently erected by district residents, and Mr D.W. Ward, the schoolmaster, is busy instilling into the mind of the rising generation an education which will be useful in after life. He is a gentleman who is much respected by his pupils, who average 28, and although only a recent arrival in the district is most popular with the parents. We understand that with the advent of the train and the naming of stations en route, 93 Mile will afterwards be known as 'Salty Creek.' In close proximity to the school is the selected site for the station and also Lougheed's Dip.

The people hereabouts complain of the distance which they must travel to procure their mail, a distance of 6 miles (to Blackbutt) ... It is an opportune time here to mention that the coach service, owned by Mr Alex McCallum and Mr Charles Millis ... weather permitting, is always punctual. It is an excellent service ...

Continuing through heavily timbered country ... the new township, situated on Mr B. Luck's property comes into view and here the station house and station-master's residence is already erected ... The property is only 2 miles from Blackbutt, and property owners are losing no time in improving and making their holdings available for farming purposes. In this respect one who is making good headway is Mr R. Dreghorn ... This gentleman has a substantial residence with a nice lot of cultivation surrounding it ... In this vicinity ... can be seen the residence of Mr Thomas Doran.

Dairy farming also plays a very prominent part in the way of profitable investments hereabouts, and every selector has his herd of dairy-cattle. Opposite to Mr Dreghorn's farm is the property of Frank Harding and there could be seen some good looking dairying cattle. This gentleman ... Mr Harding is a son of Justice Harding.

Blackbutt, now hove in sight. To one paying his maiden visit, the first glimpse of the township is somewhat disappointing, but on closer acquaintance, and when a general view is obtained of the expansion and improvements everywhere to be seen, one feels re-assured. Buildings are being everywhere erected ... One of these is being built for Mr Lloyd, and the contractor is George Woods, late of Kingaroy, and is intended for an hotel ... It is a two-storeyed building, the rooms are large and airy, and other sanitary and healthy conditions are not being overlooked. In all there are 10 bedrooms, dining and sitting rooms, billiard and other necessary rooms which all go to make up an up to date hotel.

The other is being built for Mr A. Boldery, by Mr D.A. Menzies, of Toogoolawah ... The foundations were only laid on the occasion of our visit, but a view of the architect's plan shows it to be a large, commodious and attractive building. Mr Menzies will be remembered in Nanango, as the contractor who erected the local post office ...

Blackbutt now boasts of three hotels ... the Commercial Hotel, of which William Norris is the licensee, is a comfortable hostelry.

The Grand Hotel, presided over by Mr H.G. Sutton, one of the pioneer business men of the town, is ... centrally situated. It is one of the latest additions, the licence having only been granted at the last Licensing Court ... Previous to becoming the licensee, Mr Sutton owned the Blackbutt Stores ...

Mr H.H. Smith, licensee of the Blackbutt Hotel, ... is awaiting the completion of the building before-mentioned, when his trade should considerably improve ... The Blackbutt Stores, owned by Mr F.A. Loosemore, is an establishment where all the local business connected with the Postal Department is conducted ... It is also the receiving office for the *Nanango News* ... Immediately opposite are the business premises (store) of Mr J. Muir ...

In the same street Mr E.T. Drake has a mixed general business known as the Red Flag Stores. Opposite again is the butchering establishment of George Preston ... His average kill is 9 bullocks weekly, besides sheep and pigs ... A little further down is another similar business, which is conducted by Mr C.G. Giles, late of Toowoomba ...

The Blackbutt Emporium is still another business ... It is owned by Mr H.M. Born, ... millinery and dressmaking ... Within a stone's throw is the general store owned by Mr R. Howard. Besides these businesses there is the usual fruit and refreshment rooms, the saddle and harness factory, owned by Mr George Morgan; the local bootmaker, Mr F. Leitchfield, late of Nanango, and the local tobacconist shop owned by Harry Ogilvie, who also keeps a billiard room. The proprietor holds a unique record, as he is the first white born in Blackbutt.

A district's progress could be gauged by the number of blacksmiths' establishments it possesses ... There are no less than 3 businesses of this description established in the town. They are owned by Messrs T. Emmerson, Cameron, and Green & Cislowski, the latter firm having recently erected a building in Coulsen Street.

The auctioneering firm of Levinge, Ferguson & Co have a branch business presided over by Mr W.I. Ferguson, situated in Hart Street ...

Spread throughout the district are 4 timber mills all working at high pressure. They include: Andersen's Blackbutt Timber Company, Messrs Heaslip and Houston's, Blinco Bros. (Crows Nest Road) and A.J. Rayman's (at *Taromeo*). The first mentioned company is

situated right in the centre of the town ... This mill is managed by Mr J.F. Brett, who is also the managing director of the company. He is a gentleman who has been largely responsible for the splendid headway which the town has made. He holds a multitude of honorary positions, among others being that of Shire Councillor ... Mr Houston, is the helmsman at the mill owned by himself and Mr Heaslip (who is one of the district Licensing magistrates) ...

Blackbutt now boasts of a Salvation Hall ... and a Church of England, the latter recently dedicated by Archbishop Rivers, while a new church is about to be erected for Roman Catholic denomination. Presbyterians and Methodists also hold services in the district.

The State School, until recently in the charge of Head Teacher W. Wallin, now transferred to Toowoomba, has an average attendance of 85, is shortly to be removed, and the Educational Department is now having the necessary plans prepared whereby a building will be erected in keeping with the district's progress, and for this purpose 10 acres have recently been acquired. Mr Dumigan, late of Halifax, is his successor.

A circulating library is also in existence in the town, and is much appreciated. James Fyfe has charge of the books and he makes an excellent librarian ...

The town has also a hall, owned by Mr Crumpton, and it is in this establishment that most of the local social events, as well as all the visiting theatrical companies engage. It is a substantial building ...

Another hall, known as the Blackbutt Town Hall, erected by public subscription, has to manage its affairs Mr R. Howard ... (The hall committee) have recently installed in this building an acetylene gas plant, and have purchased a new piano. It is here that all public meetings are held, and where visiting clergymen meet their congregation ...

The Blackbutt farmers ... have an organization known as 'The Blackbutt Farmers Industrial Association.' Their President is Mr J.F. Brett, and the secretary, Dr. D. Rosenberg ... Blackbutt has its Progress Association ... a Chamber of Commerce will also be established shortly.⁸



The office of C.E. Levinge, Nanango auctioneer, circa 1910.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 159815.



Royal Bank of Queensland, Blackbutt, circa 1920.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84473.



Police station, Blackbutt, 1914.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84290.

The Royal Bank of Queensland at Blackbutt, which later became the National Bank, was opened on 3 April, 1908. Its first manager was C.R. Anthony who served until 1909. A receiving office of the bank was opened at Benarkin in 1913 but this served the community for only a short while and was closed the following year. In 1912 the press reported of the Blackbutt branch: 'The familiar sign of the Royal Bank, as in most towns of promise, here greets the eye ... The branch is managed by Mr A. Heers, who is also the hon. secretary of the local Masonic Lodge, he is deservedly popular, and is never backward in assisting any object which would tend to the advancement of the town. He is ably assisted ... by Mr H.A. Park.'⁹

One of the more well known early residents of the Blackbutt region was Fred Gilliland. Born at Brookfield, Brisbane, in 1902, his family moved to Mooretown (Moore), where Fred Gilliland

was educated, later taking a position with the Colinton Condensed Milk Factory. He subsequently took up work in the timber industry, joining his father in timber carting and earned a name for himself as an almost legendary bullock team driver. In 1929 he married Grace Williamson at Toogoolawah and the couple lived at Kipper Creek in the Esk region, moving to the Blackbutt district five years later. One of the more memorable feats of Fred Gilliland's early years was the removal of his home by bullock wagon, an event that has been photographically recorded for posterity, the home coming from Kipper Creek to Blackbutt across difficult terrain and creeks. Fred Gilliland remained in the timber industry for his entire working life and he died, aged eighty-five, in 1987.¹⁰

Among other early residents of the region was William Joseph Langton, born at Gowrie, near Toowoomba on 9 September, 1874, the son of Mr and Mrs W.S. Langton. After completing his education he worked initially with his parents at Birra near Toogoolawah, later moving to *Eskdale* station. He married Margaret Ward of Dalby, the marriage taking place at Esk, and the family later moved to the Blackbutt region by horse and dray where Langton had selected land. He selected a second block in 1910 and was heavily involved in the timber industry, carting logs to the various mills. Selecting added blocks of land at Barker Creek and Maidenwell, he relinquished logging in 1925 to take up full time grazing. William Langton died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Saturday 13 June, 1970, aged ninety-five years, his wife having predeceased him in June 1952.¹¹

In his detailed history of the Blackbutt and Benarkin areas, Sydney Stocks states that other early settlers included T. Coulson who came to Australia from Newcastle-on-Tyne aboard the *Jumna* in 1897, working initially in the coal mining industry prior to selecting land in the Blackbutt district. Isabella (Granny) Ogilvie became well known as a bush nurse. With her husband and one small child she had arrived in Queensland aboard the vessel *Star Queen* in October 1874, the same vessel which, the following year, was to receive headlines in the colony's press due to the inhuman treatment of its passengers by the ship's captain.¹²

As we have seen earlier in this section, Harry Ogilvie was the first white child born in the Blackbutt district. Sydney Stocks records that when just a child Ogilvie lost an eye due to a gunpowder explosion and later so badly damaged his right arm during a car accident that it had to be amputated at the shoulder. Francis Harding was another of the early selectors, who, with a 320 acres farm, ran a productive dairy herd, hospitality at the Harding home was reported as being both warm and legendary.¹³



C. Collins, first blacksmith, Blackbutt, circa 1912.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84383.



Club Hotel, Blackbutt, circa 1915.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84369.



Hart Street, Blackbutt, circa 1920.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 84472.

Electric power to Blackbutt was turned on during a special ceremony on 20 November, 1953, the official ceremony being performed by the minister for mines and immigration, E.J. Riordan who stood on the platform of a truck to throw the switch on one of the newly erected lighting poles. The event was regarded as a gala occasion in Blackbutt, as the lights came on there were loud cheers from the crowds, the press later reporting: 'Gaily bedecked jalopies formed a procession around the street under flags and coloured lights. The Nanango Town and District Band played.' The event was the culmination of the completion of the Blackbutt-Benarkin-South Yarraman system which was installed at a cost of £45,000 by the Wide Bay Regional Electricity Board, power being supplied by a generating unit at Yarraman owned by Mr C.W. Budgen under contract to the board until a line could be constructed to the power station at Howard.¹⁴

In addition to its agricultural and timber wealth the Blackbutt and Benarkin regions have yielded an interesting amalgam of mineral deposits, including gold, silver, bismuth and copper. The Mystery mine situated approximately ten miles south of Blackbutt near the northern bank of Emu Creek was well known for its gold, silver and bismuth — despite the fact that it lay in difficult terrain. Other mines included the Red Queen mine at *Taromeo*, yielding both gold and silver, the

Lady Mary mine, the *Taromeo* silver-lead mine, the *Taromeo* copper mine near Blackbutt, the Mount Langan gold, silver and bismuth mines and many others. Among the more memorable gold rushes was that of the Nukkinenda gold rush of January 1919 when a man named J. Parish discovered gold at Nukkinenda, seven miles south-east of Blackbutt. Sydney Stocks reveals that gold had been located at the site forty years previously while men were ringbarking trees there. Following the rediscovery of the gold a syndicate was formed to work the claims.¹⁵

In 1971 'a promising reef' of gold, silver and copper was discovered on a mining lease in the Blackbutt ranges by the Myall Mining Company. This company was founded by four men from Dalby, J.R. Perry, D.J. O'Hagan, I.Gay and G. McDonald. Assays of samples taken from the field had revealed one ounce of gold, two ounces of silver and a very substantial eighteen per cent of copper to the ton. The lease was ninety-seven acres in size and was situated near Taromeo Creek in a region of state forest. O'Hagan told the press that his company had purchased special machinery and had constructed a building on the site. Within the area of the lease there were three old mines, two of which had caved in, the third was reportedly in perfect condition with timbered shafts. The press later reported: 'Recently Mr O'Hagan and his partners entered the shaft and removed some of the timbers from the wall. Samples taken from this area of about five pounds in weight revealed pure silver ore in the centre when cracked open.'¹⁶

The school at Blackbutt was first opened as a provisional school in January 1896 with R.B. Ryan as its head teacher, it was situated on the Crows Nest Road at a site known as Little Belgium, and in addition to providing an education to the children of early residents, the school also functioned as the region's post office. It became a state school in 1909. A new school building at Crofton Street Blackbutt was constructed in 1913.¹⁷

The Taromeo Provisional School came about following public agitation for a school to be established in the region. In 1908 J.H. Jones of the Taromeo sawmill wrote to the Department of Public Instruction advising the under secretary of that department that there were sixteen children of school age in the district and that more families would move to the area once a school had been established.¹⁸ Over subsequent months and following an inspection of the proposed site, the school building went ahead and was completed by September 1909, the tender of G. Bell, with a price of £197, being accepted for its construction. The school was opened in October 1909 with an initial enrolment of ten pupils.¹⁹

By 1910 there were many families and their children living at the construction camp of the Blackbutt railway and those children were not receiving any kind of formal education. At that time the rail line was being extended firstly to Benarkin (in May 1911) and later to Blackbutt (in December 1912). The district subsequently was inspected by Inspector H. Canny to ascertain the possibilities of establishing a school on the site. Canny spoke to many of the families in the district, most of whom claimed that a school was badly needed. Canny recommended that a small school of canvas with a wooden floor be established. The school was eventually opened on 4 July, 1910, as the McNamara's Camp Provisional School with its head teacher being Herbert Edward Ryan. This school was moved to Well Holes in November 1910 and the name was changed to the Well Holes Provisional School. This improvised school building was replaced by a more substantial structure in 1913. The school closed in 1920, due to poor attendance figures, and despite years of public agitation calling for the re-establishment of a school in the district, nothing was achieved until 1935 when a new school was constructed. However, this school was destroyed by fire before it could be occupied and its head teacher, George Knight, opened a temporary school on the verandah of his home until a second school building could be constructed, this was opened in April 1936.²⁰ Other schools in the district included the Googa Googa Creek State School, opened in 1921, the Nukku State School and the Taromeo Soldiers' Settlement State School.²¹

Notes and Sources
Chapter Twenty-four
Blackbutt and Benarkin, the Early Years

1. QGG 13 April, 1912 Number 102, Vol 98, p 1033.
2. WW. p 121.
3. For details of these hotels and other industries in the Benarkin region see: *Well Holes to Benarkin*, Benarkin State School publication, 1984, pp 18-22.
4. N/N. 29 October, 1936.
5. For further details of these mills see: SBT 23 May, 1997, p 2.
6. *Cradled in the Ranges*, S.N. Stocks, p 75-76.
7. *The Queenslander*, 1 April, 1905, p 17.
8. N/N. 6 September, 1912.
9. *Ibid.*
10. SBT. 11 March, 1987.
11. N/A. 2 July, 1970, p 1.
12. For details of this incident see: Matthews, Tony, *River of Dreams*, Vol 1, pp 150-51.
13. For details on other early selectors see: Stocks, S.N., *Cradled in the Ranges*, pp 132-138.
14. K/H. 26 November, 1953, p 6.
15. For details on these claims and the subsequent operations of the syndicate see: Stocks, S.N., *Cradled in the Ranges*, p 87-88.
16. K/H. 7 April, 1971, p 1.
17. For a listing of teachers from 1913 to 1979 see: State Schools file, Nanango Shire Historical Society. A detailed history of this school may be seen in: Stocks, S.N. *Cradled in the Ranges*, pp 90-98 and: *To School Along the Public Way*, by S.N. Stocks and Max Morton, Blackbutt State School Centenary Committee, 1996.
18. *Well Holes to Benarkin*, p 23.
19. For comprehensive details on this school and its teaching staff see: *Well Holes to Benarkin*, Benarkin State School publication, 1984. See also SBT. 28 August, 1985, p 23.
20. For comprehensive details on this school and its teaching staff see: *Well Holes to Benarkin*, Benarkin State School publication, 1984.
21. For details on these schools see: Stocks, S.N. *Cradled in the Ranges*, pp 102-107 and (Googa) SBT. 14 October, 1987, p 15.

25

Some Major Fires in the Nanango Region

One of the most devastating fires to strike within the township of Nanango occurred on 29 January, 1913, when the Palace Hotel and adjacent buildings, including the Palace Theatre, were completely destroyed. The hotel was owned by P.J. Macnamara and leased to Robert Joy Lougheed. Other buildings destroyed included the refreshment room and fruit shop of Mrs J.G. Goss, the tobacconist shop, billiard room and barber's salon of Adolf Hoffman, G.C. Stuart's tailor's shop and P.J. Macnamara's stationery and newsagency business. Following the fire the press reported:

The origin and exact location of its commencement are not known, but Mr Lougheed was awakened at about half-past 2 o'clock by the smell of smoke, which appeared to be issuing from somewhere in the direction of the kitchen or spirit room. He immediately raised an alarm, and quickly the whole of the occupants of the fast burning building were out and in places of safety. In their haste to flee from the burning building — especially as most of the occupants slept in rooms in the upper part of the house — naturally very little of a personal nature was saved, and indeed considering how quickly the flames spread they were indeed fortunate in getting out unscathed.

The ringing of the ... church bells very soon brought a large number of people on the scene, and plenty of assistance was available. Unfortunately, however, the main buildings were burning too fiercely, and practically nothing could be done to save them. The efforts of the willing workers were then turned towards saving the furniture and stock in the numerous rooms. But the flames spread so rapidly that very little beyond valuables could be got at in time. When the flames reached the spirit room, the added fuel of some hundreds of bottles of liquor gave the fire an added impetus, and it literally leaped from room to room and fairly oozed out of the cracks as they were made by the heat. Reaching the bar, and eating fiercely into the upper storey the whole time, the flames worked round the front, carrying with them the coffee room, dining room and other rooms at the rear ...

From the hotel, the flames easily jumped over to the adjoining billiard saloon and tobacconist shop, and from there to the Theatre, all of which went off like so much match wood. The plumber's shop also caught, and there were few amongst the onlookers who did not think that this building also would be consumed, but the throwing on of water, aided by the break made by the ferro-concrete wall of the Palace Theatre, saved it from destruction ...

When daylight dawned, the scene that presented itself was indeed a pitiable one. All that remained of a fine block of buildings were a few half burned awning posts and the charred remains of timber and galvanised iron and the ferro-concrete wall of the Theatre. The streets were strewn with furniture, crockery, tin-ware, papers, stationery and other stocks from various shops, and the burnt appearance of the walls of the places surrounding showed what a terrible heat was thrown from the burning building.¹

The hotel had originally been constructed in 1902 for Patrick Joseph Macnamara, the owner and editor of the *Nanango News*.²

The Commercial Hotel Fire

One of the largest fires ever to sweep through the town of Nanango occurred at approximately 8 o'clock on the evening of Monday 29 January, 1940. The fire broke out in a bedroom of the Commercial Hotel at the intersection of Drayton and Fitzroy Streets, and quickly spread to adjoining buildings. As we have earlier seen, the hotel had originally been constructed as a single storey building in 1893, a second storey was later added to the hotel. Connected to the hotel were

sample rooms and six shops, at the time of the disastrous fire one of these was being run as a fruit shop by Miss K. Raper, two of the shops were occupied as residences, another by a hairdresser, Charles Parnell, and a general store run by Mr E.C. Hannaford. The shops were owned by an Auchenflower woman, Mrs I.M. Cassidy. There were several other buildings destroyed by the fire.

As soon as the alarm was raised a bucket brigade was formed to fight the fire, but it was quickly evident that the old Commercial Hotel was doomed. Guests of the hotel all managed to get safely out of the building and the bucket brigade began work to save the buildings on the opposite side of the street which were now showing alarming signs of heat blistering. The licensee of the hotel was Vincent John Downey and the hotel itself was also owned by the Auchenflower woman, Mrs Cassidy. The fire was first discovered by a general servant named Daisy Collins. Miss Collins had finished her shift in the kitchen and had gone upstairs to do some ironing. At first she had not noticed anything amiss nor had she seen any smoke. However, while she was ironing she heard the crash of a glass object, and looking out of the doorway she saw that there were flames in the hall-way. She then shouted: 'Fire, Mr Downey, the hotel is on fire.'³

The hotel proprietor, Vincent John Downey, who had been the licensee since January the previous year, later stated that he had been sitting in the garden plot in front of the hotel when he had heard Daisy Collins call out to him from the upper storey of the hotel. He ran upstairs and found Miss Collins in the ironing room, close to the men's bathroom. He then noticed that the hall in front of him was a mass of flames. He ordered Miss Collins to run to safety, and, realising that the fire had taken a strong hold of the building and that there was little he could do to fight the blaze, he called out for everyone to immediately leave the hotel, although there were no guests in the hotel at the time of the fire.

Kevin J. Downey, Vincent John Downey's son, later said that the first he knew of the fire was when his father ran up the stairs. He followed his father and realised that the hotel was on fire. His father then ordered him to save the cash from the register and vacate the hotel. Vincent John Downey then ran into the office to empty the safe of cash.

Curiously, another fire had broken out at the hotel on Saturday 27 January. At 9.30 that evening Daisy Collins had heard, '... a sort of roaring noise,' coming from one of the bedrooms. On looking out of her own bedroom door she had seen the glare of what appeared to be a fire reflecting on the verandah railings. She had got out of bed walked across to room eighteen where she saw a fire burning. She called for help and John Downey had arrived to quickly extinguish the flames. The fire had broken out in an unoccupied room, starting in a kapok mattress and spreading to the nearby wall.⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Twenty-five

Some Major Fires in the Nanango Region

1. N/N. 31 January, 1913.
2. For details on the inquest into the fire see file: Nanango Fire, 1913, Nanango Shire Council archives.
3. N/N. 1 February, 1940, p 1.
4. *Ibid.* For details of the licensing of this hotel see: Hotels file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.

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Local Government at Nanango

As a stated policy of this history it is not intended to reproduce material that has already been adequately covered by previous publications, therefore the following is only a precis of the history of the Nanango Shire Council. For those who require a more detailed history the author recommends a publication entitled *The Saga of a Shire*, by former Nanango Shire Council shire clerk, Robert Morris.



George Hall Jones, first chairman of the Baramba Divisional Board. Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.



William B. Green, first clerk, Baramba Divisional Board. Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society.

Prior to the establishment of shire councils the various regions of the South Burnett came under the control of divisional boards. Nanango was gazetted as the Baramba (no 'h') Divisional Board on 11 November, 1879.¹ The region under its control originally included parts of present Nanango, Kingaroy, Kilkivan and Wondai shires.

The first divisional board meeting in Nanango was held in a private house at the bottom end of Henry Street. According to the *Queensland Government Gazette* of 13 February, 1880, the appointees of that first board were:

Subdivision No 1.

James Millis
 Patrick McCallum
 Saul Mendelsohn

Subdivision No 2.

Robert Noel Davenport
 James Porter
 Isaac Moore

Subdivision No 3.

George Hall Jones
 Rawdon Benetey Briggs
 Robert McCrum*

Auditors

Richard S. Alford
 Benjamin Green.

**There is some variation in the spelling of this surname. The 1880 electoral roll gives it as McCrann, while the 1879 electoral role and the list of the first members of the Baramba Divisional Board, gazetted on 13 February, 1880, gives it as McCrum. George Hall Jones was appointed the board's first chairman.*

On 17 March, 1883, the foundation stone of the first shire hall was laid by Sir Thomas Mclwraith, then state premier. The hall was constructed by a contractor named Lovett and an official banquet was held that evening at the Burnett Inn.²

The name of the division was officially changed from Baramba to Nanango on 19 October, 1888, following the creation of the Kilkivan Divisional Board which took responsibility for a large tract of land that had once come under the jurisdiction of the Baramba Divisional Board. The proclamation appeared in the *Government Gazette* on 20 October, 1888.³ The alteration came about following a council decision that was made on 9 March, 1888. On 12 March, 1888, the council clerk, J. Darley, wrote to the minister for public works in Brisbane: 'At the meeting of the Board held on the 9th inst. it was resolved to request that you would be good enough to allow the Board to change its name to the Nanango Divisional Board as owing to the severance of a portion of the Division, very little of the *Baramba Run* is in this Division, whereas the whole of the *Nanango Run* is, and the township of Nanango is in the centre of the Division.'⁴

In 1902 alterations to the Local Government Act provided for the subsequent establishment of the Nanango Shire Council which came into being the following year. The council then assumed further responsibilities and a full time shire clerk was employed.⁵

Council Chambers Fire

At 2 o'clock on the morning of Monday 19 November, 1934, the whistle of the butter factory blew an alarm and this was quickly joined by the bells of the Church of England. Residents of Nanango came awake to discover that the council chambers in George Street were on fire. A crowd of people rapidly assembled on the scene but there was little to be done. The building, constructed more than fifty years previously, was by then ant-eaten and in a poor state of repair. Even as the crowds gathered there were flames on all sides. Volunteers worked to save adjoining sheds containing petrol and tools, they removed burning timber which was falling in that direction and extinguished flames on the fence. The building had contained no strong room and valuable books and records had been stored in two fairly ordinary safes. When the building had completely burned down the safes were discovered amid the ruins but they were too hot to handle that day. The following day they were forced open with a hammer, chisel and crowbar. Inside council officers

found several copies of the *Nanango News*, still in quite good condition, but most of the other documents in the safe had been destroyed. The fire was the first major fire in Nanango for eleven years. The council offices were insured with the State Government Insurance Office for £360.⁶



Nanango Shire Council.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society.

An enquiry into the cause of the fire was held at the Nanango court-house before the police magistrate Mr F.G. Illidge, on 23 January, 1935. Those to give evidence included the shire clerk, John Wilfred Waraker, who had held that position for eighteen years, the shire engineer, E.H. Parsons, who was been employed by the council for between seventeen and nineteen years and Victor Rupert Charles Green, a clerk. Several of the staff employed in the building were smokers but they all steadfastly claimed that they had been careful in their habit. The offices had, surprisingly, not been lit with electricity, staff working during the hours of darkness had to light kerosene lanterns, despite the fact that the council was the administrative body for the local electricity authority. Engineer Ernest Howard Parsons also admitted that his key to the offices had once been stolen, stating: 'I had it for about six years fastened to a gold watch chain. One night I left it hanging in my waistcoat pocket and it disappeared. I think it must have been stolen.'⁷ Victor Green, one of the smokers, also stated that while he did smoke at work he was in the habit of placing his cigarette butts in a small stove, kept at the offices for waste paper disposal. He told the enquiry, however, that he believed it would not be likely for any papers in the stove to be blown out into the room where they might set fire to the building.⁸

Subsequent investigations revealed that the back of the building was frequently used by courting couples and that beneath the building there had been a deep accumulation of leaves and other rubbish and while it was believed that a stray cigarette had caused the fire there were also concerns that it had been deliberately lit.⁹

Operations of the council were transferred to the old school building which had been moved to Drayton Street and work was commenced on the reconstruction of the destroyed books. However, by May 1935 little progress had been made and in July 1935 Robert (Bob) Morris arrived to take up his appointment to complete this reconstruction. The reconstruction was completed by May 1936 by which time Morris had discovered a discrepancy in council funds. The senior clerk, Victor Green, was later charged with theft and following the reconstruction the shire clerk resigned and Robert Morris was appointed to that position.¹⁰ Green went to trial in October 1936 charged with stealing a total of £557/0/9d, but the issue was a difficult one. Former shire clerk John Waraker stated that Green had admitted stealing the money but the police officer in charge of the case also admitted that he had questioned Green without giving him a correct and legal warning. It was also alleged that the operations of the council and particularly its book-keeping procedures had been in a 'chaotic' state for several years. Green was subsequently found not guilty and discharged.¹¹

New council chambers were subsequently built, the chambers, of brick construction costing £2187, were opened by Cr. C.S. McClymont in Drayton Street on 8 February, 1936, the press later reported: 'The architect was Mr Sidney W. Prior of Brisbane. Mr J. Lane of Brisbane handled the contract. The material for the building was obtained locally. Mr. J. Pembroke supplying the bricks and the timber being supplied, milled and dressed, by the Timber Corporation. Much of the labour was also obtained locally, and the electricity arrangements were carried out by Mr D. Andress, the council's mechanic.'¹²

In October 1973 new extensions to the chambers were opened, and in February 1983 the press reported that the council was: '... investigating the cost and feasibility of replacing the existing shire offices with a new administration block.' Shire chairman, Councillor Reg McCallum, stated at the time that plans for new offices had been discussed several years previously and that plans had been drawn up in 1982. McCallum also revealed that the original building, opened in 1932 was in a poor state of repair, its foundations were slowly subsiding and the walls were cracked.¹³ The following month the council decided to proceed with the new construction at a cost of approximately \$400,000 and accepted a tender for the construction. Extensions and renovations to this building were carried out in 1997.¹⁴ In September 1996 the council opened new offices and a library at Blackbutt. This project was achieved through the generosity of the late Archie Muir, a former Blackbutt businessman who had left the land and a bequest to the council.¹⁵

Water Supply

The history of Nanango's water supply dates back to the 1930s when there was some agitation to have such a scheme implemented. However, no firm moves were made until 1936 when a report was prepared by the Irrigation and Water Supply Branch of the Lands Department, following an investigation of the proposal. The report was presented to the council in 1937 and several schemes were investigated, although a scheme to take water from Cooyar Creek was strongly recommended. It was pointed out to the council that the cost of taking water from Cooyar Creek would be substantially lower than taking it from Barker Creek, and that the maintenance and filtration of the Cooyar Creek scheme would also cost substantially less. The council adopted these recommendations, however, the outbreak of war in 1939 forced the council to shelve the scheme during the duration of hostilities. Almost as soon as the war ended in 1945 the council once again raised the question of water supply. Another report was prepared, this time by the Department of Local Government, which gave estimates of cost considerably in excess of the 1939 quotes. The scheme went through various processes of council debate, and as the government was then offering a one third subsidy, it was decided to put the plan into operation. The decision was made in November 1945 and the Local Government Department was requested to process the necessary surveys, plans and specifications and to act as consulting engineers to the project. Plans proceeded through 1946 and 1947 and the council commenced the initial construction of an access roadway to Cooyar Creek. However, at that stage the council began to have some doubts concerning the advisability of continuing with the project, owing to the increasing costs and the general economic state of the country. The scheme was then estimated to cost £141,000. The government agreed to increase its subsidy to fifty per cent. The council applied for a loan to cover the remaining costs and before this could be approved a poll of Nanango residents had to be taken. The poll was strongly in favour of the scheme, the loan was approved and on 19 June, 1951, the water supply scheme actually commenced, the press reporting: 'The 19th June, 1951, will, no doubt go down as an historical date in the progress and growth of Nanango, as on that day the Water Supply Scheme actually commenced. The Engineer in charge of the job and his administrative staff took up duties on that day and the first men were employed carrying out construction.'¹⁶

It was estimated that the work would require approximately sixteen months to complete, this would entail the construction of accommodation, the water supply system, water treatment plant, piping reservoirs, the access roadway, the construction of store sheds, crushing plant and flying foxes. The council estimated that all other work would be completed by 1953 with water being supplied to the town in June that year.¹⁷

Some Prominent Members of the Council



James Millis. Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

James Millis

One of the more prominent of the council's shire chairmen was James Millis, an early owner of *Nanango* station. James Millis was born at Armidale, New South Wales, and was the son of William Millis. He was married at Armidale, aged twenty-seven years, to Maria Johnston, there were three children to the marriage, Sarah, Charles and James. Maria was the daughter of William and Ann Johnston, a labourer and later mail stage driver, she was born at Armidale, New South Wales on 28 March, 1852.¹⁸ Prior to arriving at *Nanango* station James Millis was the manager of *Colinton* station and upon his departure from that position was presented with a framed reference, which, according to subsequent reports was: 'A treasured possession (of the family) ... The reference is elaborately got up and is typical of the craftsmanship of the early day printer. It refers to the honesty and integrity of James Millis Esq, manager of *Colinton*, and is signed by owners of the station and bears the names of witnesses of repute.' In addition to *Nanango* station Millis also owned a property situated approximately eighty miles from Chinchilla, its name was *Wodger*.¹⁹

Maria Millis died of pulmonary tuberculosis at *Nanango* station, aged fifty-eight years, on 7 December, 1911, and was buried the following day at the Nanango cemetery.²⁰ James Millis died, aged ninety years and nine months at *Nanango* station homestead in May 1940, and was also buried in the Nanango cemetery.²¹

A.J. McCallum

One of the longest serving members of the Nanango Shire Council was Councillor A.J. (Archie) McCallum, who followed in the footsteps of his father, Pat McCallum. On 7 May, 1920, the *Nanango News* reported: 'At Saturday's meeting of the Nanango Shire Council the Chairman, Cr. J.A. Lee, extended a hearty welcome to Councillor A.J. McCallum, saying that that gentleman's father had taken a prominent part in the work of the Council and he was sure he would follow worthily in his footsteps.'

The prediction was an accurate one. For the following thirty-one years A.J. McCallum served the council faithfully, being returned at every election and finally retiring, due to ill health, in May 1951. At the time of his retirement the *Nanango News* also published: 'In the early days of this century, Archie McCallum was regarded as one of the best coach drivers in the State. Nothing gave him greater thrill than being able to yoke up a couple of unbroken youngsters for the run to Esk. His experiences during the days of the old coach are both varied and humorous. In the field of sport Mr McCallum was an outstanding footballer, and whenever horse-racing was on A.J. always had a prominent part to play.'²² A.J. McCallum was replaced on the council by T.W. Penny, a grazier and farmer of Barambah Road.²³ During a lunch hour break of the Nanango Shire Council on Tuesday 15 May, 1951, members of the council visited A.J. McCallum's residence in Drayton Street to attend the official presentation of a 'rest chair', given to him as a memento of his days on the council.²⁴

C.S. McClymont

Charles Stewart McClymont was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, on 29 June, 1884, the second son of Charles D.F. McClymont and his wife Agnes. He arrived in the Nanango district as a schoolboy circa 1891, and went to live on a selection with his uncle, William Hugh McClymont. He was educated at the Nanango State School, the Brisbane Grammar School and Gatton College, later taking a position in a Brisbane office where he gained experience in business enterprises.

He quickly became interested in rural pursuits, especially in the production of beef cattle and spent many years learning the business on his uncle's farm. The press later reported of him: 'On the death of Cr. J.A. Lee (chairman of the Nanango Shire Council) in 1928 Mr McClymont was appointed (1929) by his fellow councillors to the vacant position. At the elections of 1930 ... Mr McClymont headed the poll for Number Two Division and was again honoured in being elected chairman for the next three years.'²⁵ McClymont married Cora Darley, the third daughter of John Darley, on 22 February, 1916, his son, John Stewart, served on the council from 1952 to 1955.²⁶



Charles Stewart McClymont.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

David McCauley

David McCauley arrived in Nanango in 1904 to clear scrub and to work on the selection that had been taken up by his father, Tom McCauley, circa 1908. During all his life in the Nanango region he was heavily involved in public affairs, he was a foundation member of the South Burnett Regional Electricity Board representing Nanango when the board became a part of the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Electricity Board. He was a member of the Queensland Executive of the Local Government Association for ten years and for many years president of the South Burnett Local Government Association. He was elected to council in 1926 and served as chairman from 1946 to 1961.²⁷

Alan Anger

Alan Anger arrived at Nanango during the 1930s and was the town's dentist, he later became involved in breeding pedigree goats and took up general farming. He was elected to council in 1955 as the representative of Number One Division and was elected chairman in 1961. He resigned in March 1969 stating that he had: '... lost the confidence of councillors and townspeople and on several occasions had been held to ridicule over council decisions, and therefore felt he had no option but to resign.' Despite this, Alan Anger was highly respected and was later described by Reg McCallum, who served on Anger's council as, '... a real genuine man who served the council well.'²⁸ Alan Anger and his wife later moved to Yeppoon where they had purchased a home.²⁹

Peter Henry (Bill) Hunter

Peter Henry Hunter was born at Jimboomba in 1903 and came to the Nanango district five years later when his father, Henry (Harry), purchased the contract to a large block of timber at

East Nanango. P.H. Hunter, or Bill as he was commonly known, completed his primary education at Nanango and later worked with the P.M.G. The family bought land at East Nanango, Brooklands and in the Upper Yarraman region where they raised pigs and produced cream. In 1925 Bill Hunter married Ena Green whose parents were also early residents of the district, and the young couple moved to Manumbar. Bill Hunter joined the 8th Division A.I.F. during the Second World War and was sent to Singapore, he escaped to Java in 1942 when the island surrendered to the Japanese. However, he was eventually captured and with thousands of other Allied prisoners-of-war, forced to work on the infamous Burma Railway. When the Japanese surrendered in 1945 he was in Indo-China.

Upon returning to Australia, Bill Hunter resumed farming and when Councillor H. Hoggart died in 1948 Bill Hunter was appointed to the shire council. During the following twenty years he was successful at all elections and served on many committees, including chairman of the plant and works committee. In 1969 Councillor Alan Anger resigned from the position of chairman and Bill Hunter was appointed in his place. During the 1970 elections he was elected unopposed and although opposed in 1973 he was again elected with a clear majority. He remained chairman until 1976 when he did not seek re-election. He later retired to Buderim and died at the Buderim Private Hospital on 7 February, 1986.³⁰

Reginald McCallum

The McCallum local government dynasty was to continue with the election to the council of prominent grazier and show exhibitor, Reginald McCallum in March 1968, the *South Burnett Times* reporting: '... Mr Reginald McCallum is the new Nanango Shire Councillor in Number 2 Division. The position became vacant following the recent resignation of Cr. A. Wylie. Cr. McCallum was elected to the position at the March meeting yesterday. Up until the retirement of the late Cr. A.J. McCallum in 1951, the name had been represented on the Nanango Council since 1912. As we have seen, Cr. McCallum is a son of the late Beach McCallum and a grandson of Pat McCallum, a pioneer of the Nanango district.'³¹ At the time of Reginald McCallum's election to the council the shire chairman was Alan Anger. Reginald McCallum was married on 26 May, 1951, he and his wife, Edna, had two daughters, however one girl died, the other, Libby, now works at Tarong power station.³²

Reginald McCallum was elected to the post of chairman in 1976, replacing Bill Hunter, and has held the position of chairman, and subsequently mayor, since that time. At the most recent council elections, held in March 1997, he was challenged for the position by the council's deputy mayor, Cr. Roslyn Gregor, and also by another Nanango resident named Virgil Smith, but was returned with an impressive majority.³³

Allan Carswell Wylie

The man whom Reginald McCallum replaced, Allan Carswell Wylie, was a well known Nanango identity. He was born on 14 December, 1899, at Bulimba, the second son of Allan and Mary Carswell Wylie (snr). The family moved to Coorparoo where Allan spent most of his childhood. He completed his education at the Central Technical College and later joined the staff of the New Zealand Loan Company in Brisbane. When he was eighteen years of age he enlisted in the first A.I.F. and served as a driver with the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance, a painting by George Lambert hanging at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra shows Allan riding the leader in a horse-drawn ambulance. After being discharged from the army, Allan Wylie worked at a variety of positions, including that of jackeroo, book-keeper and overseer on sheep stations including *Clareborough* and *Glen Lyon* in northern Queensland, *Merrigal* in New South Wales and *North Bungaree* in South Australia, later moving to the Nanango district where in addition to farming he became heavily involved in public affairs. He died in New South Wales in August 1973.³⁴

Some Shire Clerks and Chief Executive Officers

J. W. Waraker

As we have seen, J.W. Waraker resigned from the position of shire clerk in May 1936 and was replaced by Robert John Lund (Bob) Morris.³⁵

Robert John Lund Morris

Bob Morris was born in Bundaberg in 1908 and was appointed to the council in 1935 in order to complete the reconstruction of the council's books following the disastrous fire of the previous year. Upon the resignation of J.W. Waraker, Mr Morris took up the position of shire clerk and remained in that position until August 1974. He enlisted in the R.A.A.F. during the Second World War and his position was temporarily filled by Leonard Abraham, a Nanango accountant. Bob Morris retired from the council in 1974 and acted as an electoral secretary to the premier, he later researched and wrote a history of the Nanango Shire Council.³⁶

Leonard Abraham

Leonard Abraham was born at Hemmant, Queensland in 1896 and later served during the First World War, being wounded in October 1918. After the war, Abraham drew a block at Mannuam and for a while worked the land. It was during this period that he became interested in accountancy and joined the accountancy company of H.C. Huston and Son of Kingaroy where he trained to gain his qualifications. In 1939 he opened his own accountancy business in Nanango and in 1941 married Elsie Muriel Green. He became acting shire clerk of the Nanango Shire Council when Bob Morris joined the R.A.A.F. in 1942 and remained in that position until 1945. The press later reported of him: 'Some years ago ... Mr Abraham suffered a coronary occlusion and grave fears were held for his recovery.' Leonard Abraham died at the Nanango Hospital on Thursday 2 March, 1961.³⁷

Brian Ottone

Prior to his appointment to Nanango on 9 April, 1984, Brian Ottone served as shire clerk for the Herberton shire for four years and six months. His previous engagements included employment with the Atherton Shire Council from 1971 where he was appointed shire clerk in 1979. He resigned from the Nanango Shire Council in February 1989 to take up a position as assistant shire clerk with the Mulgrave Shire Council. His position was filled by Ross Hollands.³⁸

Ross Hollands

The current chief executive officer of the Nanango Shire Council is Ross Hollands who took up his position at Nanango in April 1989. Ross Hollands was born at Murwillumbah on 2 March, 1955, the son of Keith and Lois Hollands. Keith Hollands served in the air force during the Second World War and did some of his training at Kingaroy. After the war he became a businessman and during the late 1950s entered into a partnership with Ken Thomas, the founder of T.N.T., to begin a shipping and transport company operating out of Cairns. The business grew to considerable proportions operating not only a truck fleet and ships but also aircraft. Other interests included mining enterprises, a wholesale and retail food store in Port Moresby, and the partners were heavily involved in the prawn industry with trawlers and mother ships. They built a processing factory in Cairns where they also constructed a large dry dock.

Ross Hollands was educated at Cairns after the family moved there in 1959 and Ross commenced his education at the Parramatta Park State School in 1961. From there he went to Edge Hill State School and later to the Trinity Bay State High School in Cairns. Completing his senior certificate in 1972, he went to the University of Queensland where he completed a bachelor of commerce degree from 1973 to 1975. Upon graduation he worked in private enterprise, his first position was with Cameron McNamara, consulting engineers in their accounts section, following which he worked for William Adams Metals in Brisbane, again in accounts. He left William Adams to move to Ayr where he worked at the local Toyota dealership as an accountant, and in 1979 he became shire accountant at Eacham Shire Council on the Atherton Tablelands, later being promoted to deputy shire clerk.

Ross Hollands gained his shire clerk's certificate in 1982 and at the beginning of 1985 went to Europe for a year, returning at the end of that year to take up a position with the Boulia Shire Council in early 1986. In 1987 he was appointed shire clerk at Peak Downs Shire Council on the Central Highlands and was appointed shire clerk at Nanango in 1989. In 1996, he attained his graduate diploma in management from the University of Southern Queensland, (Toowoomba).

Ross Hollands was married at Cairns in 1979, his wife, Karen, graduated as an art teacher and now has a bachelor of education degree and a graduate diploma of early childhood education. She presently teaches at the Kingaroy State School in the special education unit.³⁹

Known Chairmen of the Nanango Shire Council

1880-1884	George H. Jones
1885-1886	Walter Scott
1887-1891	James Millis
1892	
1893	James Millis
1894	
1895-1896	James Millis
1897	Hugh Moore
1898-1900	James Millis
1900	R.S. Brown
1901	J.A. Lee
1902	Patrick McCallum
1903-1906	James Millis
1907-1908	Henry Short
1909	Ernest F. Lord
1910-1913	James Darley
1914-1917	J.F. Brett
1918-1928	John A. Lee
1929-1946	C.S. McClymont
1946-1961	D. McCauley
1961-1969	A.A. Anger
1969-1976	P.H. Hunter
1976-	R.B. McCallum

Shire Clerks (and Chief Executive Officers of the Nanango Shire Council)

1879-1884	William B. Green
1885-1908	J. Darley
1908-1916	S. Cavaye
1916-1936	J.W. Waraker
1936-1974	R.J.L. Morris
1942-1945	L. Abraham (Acting)
1974-1984	R.V. Hohnke
1984-1989	B.A. Ottone
1989-	R.A. Hollands

Notes and Sources
Chapter Twenty-six
Local Government at Nanango

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3. QGG Number 47 Vol 45, 20 October, 1888, and Shire History file, Nanango Shire Council archives.
4. QSA COL 054, 12 March, 1888.
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6. N/N. 22 November, 1934, p 1.
7. N/N. 24 January, 1935, p 1.
8. *Ibid.* For copies of the depositions made by J.W. Waraker, C.S. McClymont, Victor Rupert Charles Green, Ernest Howard Parsons and Robert Vincent O'Shea see file: 1934, Nanango Shire Council archives.
9. N/N. 7 March, 1935, p 1.
10. For details on this case see: *The Saga of a Shire*, by Robert Morris, p 88.
11. For details of this case see: K/G. 30 October, 1936.
12. N/N. 13 February, 1936, p 1.
13. SBT. 16 February, 1983.
14. SBT. 9 March, 1983, and author interview with council executives, May, 1997.
15. SBT. 24 September, 1996, p 1.
16. N/N. 28 June, 1951, pp 1-2.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Certificate of baptism and death certificate of Maria Millis, copies of these documents may be located in the History, Short Extracts, Various, file, Nanango Shire Council archives.
19. N/A. 2 September, 1954, p 1.
20. Death certificate of Maria Millis.
21. N/N. 23 May, 1940, p 2.
22. N/A. 10 May, 1951, p 1.
23. *Ibid.*, p 2.
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25. N/N. 5 May, 1933, p 2.
26. C.S. McClymont file, Nanango Shire Council archives.
27. SBT. 30 July, 1964, p 20.
28. Author interview with Reginald McCallum, conducted at the Nanango Shire Council, 26 May, 1997.
29. N/A. 13 March, 1969, p 1.
30. SBT. 7 April, 1976, p 6 and 19 February, 1986, p 6, see also private paper, Shire History file, Nanango Shire Council archives.
31. SBT. 13 March, 1968, p 1.
32. SBT. 1 December, 1982, p 40.
33. SBT. 18 March, 1997, pp 1 and 7.
34. SBT. 22 August, 1973, p 14.
35. N/N. 28 May, 1936, p 1.
36. *The Saga of a Shire*, R.J.L. Morris, Nanango Shire Council.
37. N/A. 16 March, 1961.
38. SBT. 15 February, 1989.
39. Author interview with Ross Hollands, conducted at the Nanango Shire Council, 26 May, 1997. See also SBT. 12 April, 1989, p 6.

Contemporary Nanango, Blackbutt and Benarkin Regions

As the oldest town on the South Burnett, Nanango has played an important role in the overall development of the region. We have seen previously in this history how the settlement of Nanango began and how it finally developed through the implementation of closer settlement and the long awaited arrival of the rail line. Since those days Nanango has experienced various periods of prosperity and decline, depending upon climatic, political and social conditions, but the one aspect that has spelt long term economic growth has been the construction and operation of the power station at Tarong, details of which will be covered later in this history. Apart from the Tarong power station and the operations of the Meandu coal mine, there is little in the way of large scale industrialisation in the Nanango shire. A sawmill still operates near Blackbutt and at the Nanango industrial estate there are a variety of small factories and other enterprises which give a boost to the local economy.

Community services at Nanango are similar to those of other centres, the Q.A.T.B. was commenced at Nanango in 1941 with G.A. Watt as the chairman of the provisional committee. The service was originally established as a sub-centre for the Yarraman ambulance, the first secretary-superintendent was J.L. Noble. An independent centre was gazetted in July 1944 with L.N. Kirkham as president. Similarly, the fire brigade at Nanango began during the 1940s, the brigade being gazetted in July 1946 with C.H. Warnick as its chairman.¹

Today the region which covers the shire of Nanango is greatly reduced from the original area proclaimed under the Baramba Divisional Board in 1879. During the past fifteen years, due primarily to the siting of the Tarong power station, the population of the shire has risen by two hundred and fifty per cent. Nanango now has a population of around 3500 with an overall shire population estimated to be 8500. Increased populations such as these mean increased services and Nanango has certainly seen an increase in essential services since the power station was constructed. Additionally, the Nanango Shire Council has worked towards providing modern facilities and conveniences such as sporting, picnic and other recreational areas, and many of these are largely supported by community groups. Housing construction continues to be an important part of the region's overall economic structure and the council is endeavouring to bring employment to the district through projects such as further development at the industrial estate which is situated on the D'Aguiar Highway at the southern end of the town. Tourism too plays an important role in the region, and being one of the state's oldest towns with a rich diversity of history encompassing one of the state's more interesting mineralogical histories, Nanango has much to offer. In addition, there are scenic regions such as Coomba Falls, near Maidenwell, the Bunya Mountains, and tours are available at both Tarong power station and the nearby Meandu mining complex. Those interested in the region's history can visit Ringsfield House, which, as we shall see later in this history, is one of Nanango's early private hospitals and now houses a large historical collection and archives, and *Taromeo* station near Blackbutt and Benarkin is now privately owned but may be visited by appointment. Berlin's Museum is only a few minutes from Nanango on the Maidenwell road and houses a large collection of gems and artifacts, its owner, Angus Berlin, is an expert on regional history and owns an extensive private archive of historical documents.

Industries in the district include timber milling, the manufacturing of mattresses, and the traditional primary industries of beef, beans, pigs, dairying, grain crops and peanut production still continue to flourish.

Artistically, there are and have been several artists who have come to prominence in the region, one of these is Blackbutt wildlife artist John Spies, who came to Australia from the Netherlands

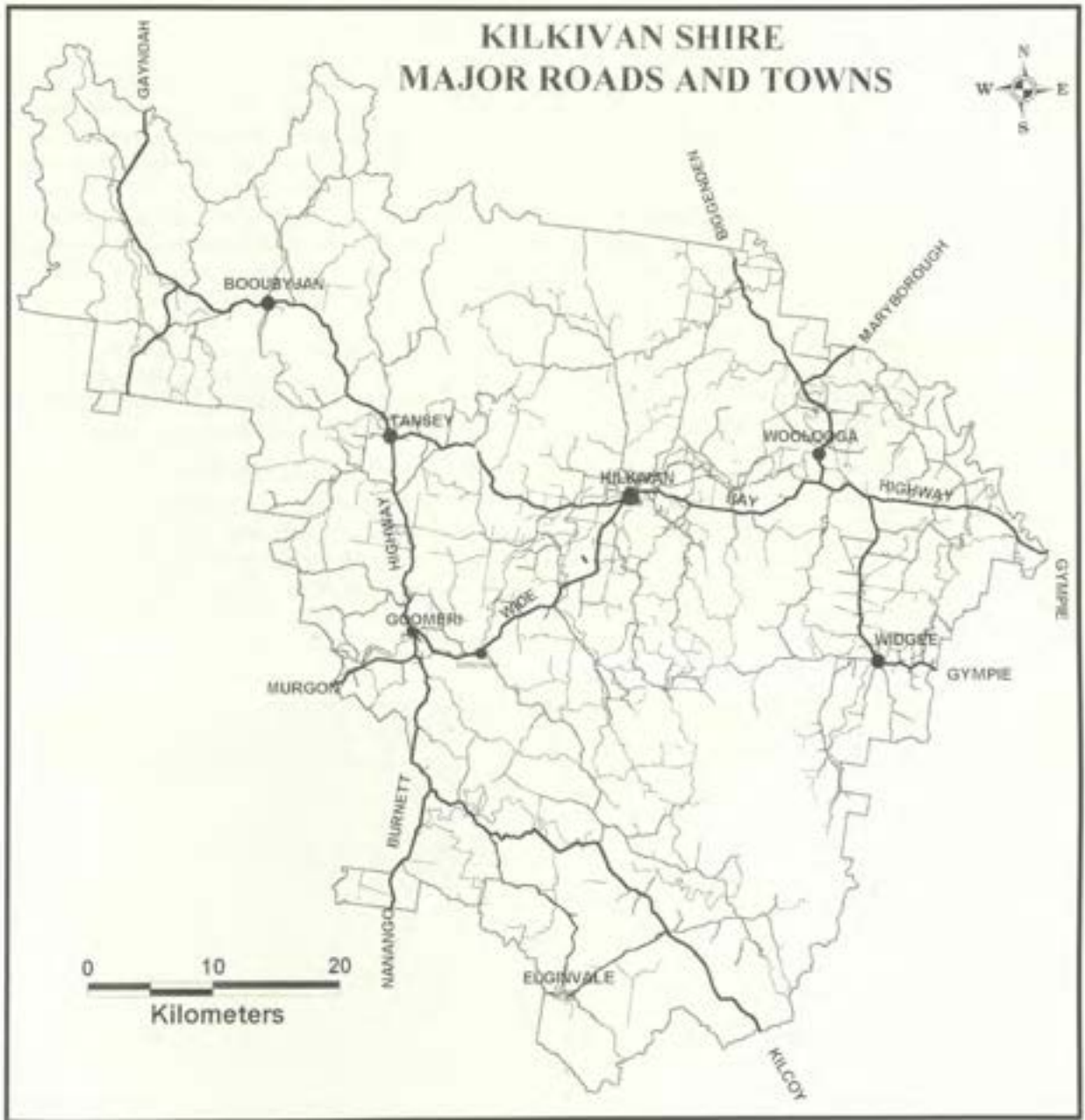
in 1955. He lived initially in Tasmania and later spent several years in New Zealand, but was always impressed with Australian wildlife and was determined to do what he could to preserve their images. The artist's works are exhibited at the Magpie Gallery in Kingaroy and they have also been exhibited in Victoria.²

Notes and Sources

Chapter Twenty-seven

Contemporary Nanango, Blackbutt and Benarkin Regions

1. WW. pp 99–100.
2. SBT. 6 August, 1996, p 2.



Kilkivan and District — the Pastoral History

It is difficult to accurately establish when the first European pastoralists settled in the Kilkivan district. Henry Stuart Russell's exploration of the Wide Bay region in 1842, and Simon Scott's establishment of *Taromeo*, circa 1842, followed by W.E. Oliver's *Nanango* station and J.J.M. Borthwick's settlement at *Tarong* were the catalysts for other such individual settlements in the South Burnett. As we have seen, Russell himself was quick to establish his own holding at *Burrandowan*. New South Wales lands were rapidly being taken up and the pastoralists were eager to reach farther north and west, into the territory we now know as Queensland, in order to select their vast holdings on which to depasture tens of thousands of sheep.

Boobyjan Station

Among the first non-indigenous settlers in the Kilkivan/Goomeri region were Clement and Paul Lawless, Irishmen from County Cork, who had arrived in the colony in 1840.

On 15 May, 1840, at *Woodview*, County Cork, Ireland, Mary Lawless, the mother of Paul and Clement, wrote a brief entry in the family bible: 'My two beloved sons, Clement and Paul, sailed for England on their way to the New World, Australia, to push their future in that rising and flourishing Colony. May the sun of Righteousness shine upon them and be a lamp unto their feet and a light into their path.' Paul at that time was twenty-three years of age, his brother was twenty five. They left Liverpool aboard the ship *Clydesdale*, on 1 June, 1840, but were forced to return to port and finally sailed on the 29th of that month.¹



Boobyjan 1884.

Source — *Boobyjan archives*, Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.

The brothers at first attempted sheep farming at Liverpool Plains, but due to drought conditions which led to the loss of many of their sheep, in 1842 they moved their operation to *Nindooindah* in the district of Moreton Bay, a property they later sold. In 1846 they travelled into the South Burnett seeking fresh pastures and decided to move their flocks to the two properties they would call *Boobyjan* and *Winderah*. *Boobyjan* was an aboriginal name for a large granite rock that is situated close to the site where the station homestead would later be built. (Today the rock faces the Burnett Highway to Gayndah). The brothers returned to the region soon afterwards driving a vast flock of sheep in what has been described as one of the: '... most spectacular droving performances in Australia.'² In their book *Wilderness to Wealth* Murphy and Easton record that during this epic journey the brothers experienced considerable hostility from the indigenous people who allegedly launched frequent attacks, killing sheep, and the brothers were delayed for two weeks at Booinbah Lagoon while attempting to protect the stock from these attacks. However, there appears to be no record of any large-scale violence against the settlers. A.T. Elliott, in his article dated 13 January, 1949, claimed that while the aboriginal people were resentful and indeed managed to delay the brothers for a fortnight at Booinbah Lagoon, there was no evidence of mass bloodshed nor was there evidence of more than isolated cases of violence.³

Upon arrival at their station, the brothers delineated its boundaries by cutting marks onto trees — the run extended for approximately 281 square miles — and commenced to build their modest four-roomed homestead on a hill overlooking a lagoon. This home was stoutly constructed of ironbark, it had a shingle roof and a nursery was added in 1861, this later became the dining room.⁴

Like almost all other stations in the South Burnett region, the Lawless brothers experienced great difficulty in obtaining men to act as station hands and shepherds, and eventually brought in Chinese, Irish and German workers who were willing to perform the necessary duties, often for wages far less than men of British background would accept. Desertion from those duties was also a frequent occurrence, and the Lawless brothers were continually seeking fresh recruits.

On 16 March, 1849, Clement wrote to his sister-in-law stating, in part: This Colony will suffer this year from the low price of wool last year and lower even this. Many of the settlers are bringing Chinese from Hong Kong to prevent absolute ruin, as after all is said and done by Government, the supply of English migrants is not equal to a tenth part of what is wanted for immediate use. We can import Celestials for about ten pounds per head at six pounds a year and they will be engaged for five years, so we will be able to grow more wool at a very low rate.⁵



Paul Lawless.

Source — Boobyjan archives,
Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.



Clement Francis Lawless.

Source — Boobyjan archives,
Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.

In 1849 the brothers applied for the two leases, and although their tender for the land was soon afterwards accepted, the leases were not actually issued until 1862, therefore, from the time they settled on the properties, until the issue of the leases, the brothers had no legal right to either of the properties and the improvements they made on them were done so at some financial risk.

A later official description of the two stations described them as:

Booubyjan, Lease, C. Lawless, 11,500 acres, capacity 6000 sheep, minimum rent £15. Name of water, Liffey (this refers to Boonara Creek), Southern boundary: Marked tree or trees on both sides of the creek, with a scrub on eastern bank; on the west by very broken country; on the north, marked tree on the creek; and on the east by broken mountainous country. This piece is estimated at from six to seven miles from north to south.

Winderera, Lease, P. Lawless, 16,000 acres, capacity 6000 sheep, rent £15. Continuation of creek which forms southern boundary, south and west boundary very broken country and large pine scrub; north boundary a small oakley creek and high rocky ranges; eastern boundary, all broken country.⁶

The station's wool-shed was constructed in 1856, wool and tallow, packed in the membranes of sheep's stomachs, was sent by bullock wagons or drays to the nearest port at Maryborough. Supplies for the station were back-loaded in Maryborough for the difficult and time-consuming return journey.

Paul Lawless took ship for Ireland in 1855 and returned with his bride, Ellen Nash, in 1859, their first child was born in Sydney and they later travelled via Maryborough to *Booubyjan*. Ellen Lawless was reputedly a woman of considerable personal character and her journey from Sydney to *Booubyjan* was something of an adventure. A later account of Ellen and her travels claimed: 'Ellen Lawless was the only daughter of William and Ellen Nash, of Rossacon and Drumcumma, near Mallow, in County Cork, Ireland.'⁷

In later life Ellen wrote her own memoirs which began: 'After we were married on 4th November, 1858, we went to Edinburgh for a fortnight, but it rained incessantly so we stayed in London at Morleys, Trafalgar Square, for a few days then on to Bath to my Aunt's and soon on to Ireland. Paul wanted to have a season's hunting before starting for Australia, so (we) rented ... an old very dilapidated house. I was supposed not to know anything about housekeeping, nor did I, as in those days girls were never allowed into the kitchen ... On April 5th, 1859, we left Cork for Australia.'⁸

The couple landed at Sydney where their first child, Caroline Mary, was born. The station's centenary publication later claimed: 'At the end of that year they left for Maryborough in a sailing vessel and proceeded thence straight to *Booubyjan* by road, their journey being full of adventure. Starting off in a high English dogcart, the nurse and the luggage following in a springcart, they reached the *Booubyjan* Range on the third day where the dogcart broke down, and the last ten miles was in the springcart. The country was then in a very primitive stage, the house to which they came was a four-roomed slab building with a shingle roof.'⁹

Enid Douglas Lawless later wrote:

Clement had returned to Ireland a few months before, Paul and Ellen settled down to a busy life together. For Paul there was an enormous amount of work to be done; for Ellen the re-organising of the homestead from a bachelor establishment of many years, to a comfortable household with a mistress.

The house was four roomed, slab walls, calico lined, floors of pit-sawn timber, the nails hand-made on the place; the kitchen quarters were reached down a shingle covered gangway ...

A storeroom was built, and there Ellen handed out the daily rations for the house, drawn from the main store. The water for the house came from the lagoon in front of the homestead, up the long hill on a horse drawn dray in wooden casks. The drinking water was filtered through charcoal in large stone filters. Disaster came to one new chum in charge of the water cart when he backed it into the lagoon; man and horse were drowned. Candles and soap were made with the tallow ... The washing was taken to the creek to be done, and spread on the grass and bushes to dry, the whole process taking a couple of days to do.

With the arrival of the next child, John Paul, in 1861, a nursery was built, the walls of slabs, and lined inside with calico. The Irish girl, Hannah, was installed with the two babies. Two night lights of china, one made like a cat, one like an owl, with eyes illuminated with a wick burning in tallow, glowed through the night ... An accomplished needlewoman, Ellen added embroidered stool and cushion covers to brighten the rooms; rugs in wool and tanned hides were used to add comfort to floors.

To mark the birth of John Paul, Ellen decided to plant a tree, so a young bottle-tree seedling was brought in from the scrub, and planted in the corner of the garden overlooking the flat ...

News came that year from Ireland that Clement had married Miss Henrietta Babington Wise, and had bought *Kilcrone House* near Cloyna. Paul's nephew, Thomas Pyne, was sent out to his uncle for colonial experience.

From *Imbil* (station) logs of cedar were brought to the homestead by the teamsters when they came to draw rations. They made the cedar into furniture — tables of all sizes, one with 3 planks, to measure 9 feet long by 4 feet wide and 2 inches thick, for the dining room; others for the kitchen, wash-stands for the bedrooms, and high chairs for the children ...

In November, 1862, a second son was born to Paul and Ellen. They named him William after her father, and Burnett after Surveyor Burnett ... The new baby joined his sister and brother in the nursery and another bottle tree was planted. After a few weeks Ellen decided it was not growing, so had it moved to a flat below the house ...

Soon after the birth of William Burnett, the long awaited leases arrived. *Boobyjan*, in Clement Lawless' name, and *Windersa* in Paul Lawless'. Signed by the first Governor of Queensland, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, dated 9 June, 1862, they were numbered 97 and 96 ... and the whole of the *Boobyjan* Run covered an area of 281 square miles. The boundaries joined *Ban Ban* in the north-west, *Mondure* in the south-west, *Boonara* to the south-east and *Teebar* in the north-east.¹⁰

Over the following years the homestead at *Boobyjan* was slowly improved as the mercurial rise and fall of station profits permitted. During the 1860s, a strange disease suddenly struck at the tiny settlement, particularly in the shepherds' cottages, most of which were occupied by German or Chinese men and their families. A rash of deaths swept through the community, probably attributed to diphtheria, killing numerous children.



Drawing room, Boobyjan.

Source — *Boobyjan* archives, Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.

As we have seen, the second son of Paul Lawless, William Burnett Lawless, was born at *Boobyjan* in 1862. During the early 1860s the homestead was visited by a travelling parson who was given every hospitality of the house, and when he discovered that Ellen's two sons had not been baptised, he offered to perform this service for them. The offer was quickly accepted by the family, the ceremony duly carried out, and nothing more was thought of the matter after the parson had gone on his way. However, in 1865, news came that the travelling parson was nothing more than a plausible impostor. The two children were immediately re-baptised by their uncle, the Reverend Lawless Pyne. A second daughter, Ellen, was born to Paul and Ellen at *Boobyjan* in July 1864.¹¹

In 1865 Paul Lawless's health was failing. The family returned to Ireland aboard the ship *Colonial Empire*, where they were met by Clement and his wife, Henrietta. However, the change of climate did not improve Paul's health, he died on 7 August, 1865, and was buried at Ballnacarra, (also given as Ballinacurra) near Cork. Ellen Lawless later wrote: 'On May 3rd, 1865, we arrived back in Cork and went to Kilcrone for a few weeks. Paul placed himself in the hands of a diabetic specialist, but with no avail. He died on 7th August, 1865, and was buried in a new vault in the churchyard at Ballinacurra in the midst of a very heavy thunderstorm. My father, (William Nash), who was in our open wagonette, got such a fearful wetting and chill during the long drive that he was attacked with a stroke of paralysis in about a fortnight from which he never properly recovered ... he died at Drumcumma in March 1871.'¹²

Ellen Lawless remained with her family at their home, *Woodview*, near Cloyna, but in March 1867, owing to the Fenian rising in the vicinity and the subsequent danger, she left Ireland and spent four years travelling with her children on the Continent, living at Veney in Switzerland, the Austrian Tyrol and later at Bonn on the Rhine. However, once again violence forced her to move and following the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, she decided to return to Queensland with a servant, her children and a Dr May, a professor at Bonn University whom she had engaged as a tutor for her children. The group sailed to Australia aboard a small clipper of the Aberdeen line named the *Damascus*, arriving finally at Maryborough late in 1870.



Ellen Lawless.

Source — Boobyjan archives,
Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.



Henrietta Lawless.

Source — Boobyjan archives,
Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.

Ellen Lawless herself covered this period of her life when she wrote: 'Late in 1869 we went to Bonn and lived at the Belle Vue right on the Rhine. The bank wrote me that I should come out and look after my own business as they were not satisfied with station reports. Tom Pyne and his wife occupied the old house (at *Booubyjan*) so Miss Robinson and myself and children went into a new cottage, not finished when we arrived. Dr May had his quarters and school room in the old nursery. I had to bring someone to coach the boys as I had entered them for Rugby (school) before we left ... In 1871 I went to *Imbil* for three months, the station was making no attempt at paying, and expenses (were) heavy ... then Clement wrote to me to get rid of both managers, rather a thankless job as he had put them in.'¹³

A report of subsequent events claimed in 1947: 'The following two years are principally memorable for the gold and copper fever which possessed the whole countryside, and gold was found at *Booubyjan*, which caused a lot of excitement. In 1873, Clement Lawless returned from England (having again visited Australia several years previously) and decided to sell his share at *Booubyjan* and *Imbil*, on the Mary River, which the brother also owned.'¹⁴

This period must have been a particularly trying one for Ellen. In her memoirs she tells of the return from England of Clement and his wife in 1873 but describes the period as one of: '... great unpleasantness as none hit it off with them and at last we agreed to sell everything.' The family arranged to have the stations sold through a Sydney agent, but, as Ellen continues in her memoirs: '... there was a terrible muddle made, as, at the sale, Clement bid over himself which stopped anyone else bidding ... Anyway, I was a bit in despair as *Imbil* had been knocked down to me which I did not want a bit, and Clement got *Booubyjan*, the last thing he wished for.'¹⁵

Ellen sold *Imbil* station to the butchers Elworthy, Mellor and Best and then acquired *Booubyjan* from Clement, paying £2000 less than Clement had paid for it due to his error in out-bidding himself. Clement and his wife Henrietta, returned to Ireland soon afterwards and Ellen followed them to England via the new San Francisco route where, in 1874, she took a house at Old Heddington Place in Oxfordshire.¹⁶

In 1877, Ellen's daughter, Caroline Mary, was married to Evan B. Jeune, and the couple returned to Bundaberg, Jeune having formed a sugar plantation, *Brangan*.

However, Ellen's business interests at *Booubyjan* were now in serious difficulties, as she later wrote:

Then came rather a shock in the form of a wire from the Commercial Bank in Sydney asking me to come out to look after things. I sold all the furniture, took a house for a month ... and I started out from Plymouth on September 2nd (1878) ... On arrival I went straight to the Commercial Bank and rather a shock when Mr Dibbs (the bank manager) said they were afraid they would have to compel me to sell *Booubyjan*, the overdraft was too big. This, of course, was news to me as I was led to suppose that *Booubyjan* was in a flourishing state. I passed a terribly anxious fortnight trying to have a certain sum advanced to reduce the overdraft from £10,000 to £8000 which the bank agreed to let it stand at. At last I sold out all my gas shares which a week before were selling at £12, but electric light started and down went the gas shares with a jump and I only got £5 a share, they brought me the necessary £2000 but at a tremendous loss, of course. We came straight up to *Booubyjan* where, of course, things were very unpleasant and there was a real turn out ... Then Lumley Pyne, who had no particular billet, came to the rescue and took over the whole management.¹⁷

Ellen Lawless then moved to Toowoomba until 1880 when she and her daughter returned to England, but soon afterwards, on hearing of the death of Mrs Jeune, who died in Maryborough in 1881, she returned to Australia accompanied by her youngest sons and daughter. In 1881 the daughter, Ellen, married Bryan M. Palmes who then held *Cracow* station on the Dawson River in partnership with John Atherton, of *Miva*. From then on Ellen lived in Queensland, occasionally returning to England. She died on 22 July, 1922, after suffering an accident during which she broke her hip.¹⁸

In 1888 a large portion of *Booubyjan* was resumed for closer settlement. One of the blocks, *Cloyna*, was purchased by the previous manager of *Booubyjan*, H. Lumley Lawless Pyne. At this time too the station was forced to abandon sheep production due to problems with spear grass

and other maladies, turning instead to cattle production and the breeding of horses, including mounts for the Indian Army.

As we have seen, the two brothers, J.P. and W.B. Lawless were both educated in England, and upon their return to Australia J.P. Lawless became manager of *Winderera* station. He married seven years later and lived at *Winderera* where he established a Hereford stud. His brother at *Booubyjan* also converted to stud cattle and died, aged 83 years in 1945. Another resumption in 1902 further reduced the size of the station and opened the way for added settlement in the region. *Booubyjan* station is today owned by Stephanie and Michael Lawless. The Lawless family at *Booubyjan* is reported to be the third oldest family business in Queensland and the sixteenth oldest in Australia.¹⁹



Michael and Stephanie Lawless, present owners of *Booubyjan* station.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

Boonara Station

Boonara station formed one of the earliest settlements in the region that later became Kilkivan shire. Like so many other stations in the district, the settlement dates of which are somewhat obscure, *Boonara* was settled circa 1846, or earlier, by Edward (Ned) Hawkins who initially constructed a rough hut on the property. In a similar fashion to other pastoral holdings, Hawkins experienced difficulties through isolation, the lack of willing labour and from diseases in his stock. He constructed a more substantial building on the property prior to 1849 when he left for California to participate in the gold rush that was then taking place. While away he left the holding under the control of a manager named Berthelsen. Hawkins was killed in California during an attempt to cross a flooded stream, and the station was subsequently purchased by Sydney businessman David Jones for his two sons, David Mander and George Hall Jones.

An account of the station, written in 1933, reported:

Where the township of Goomeri now stands was at one time portion of the great expanse of country known as *Boonara* estate. In the early forties (1840s) three men from New South Wales ... set out on the long trail to Queensland with the intention of taking up land there and building up homes for themselves in the north. They were men by the name of Lawless, Archer, and Hawkins. The party eventually arrived at what is known today as the South Burnett, and Mr Lawless selected a large area, called *Booubyjan*, about 26 miles from where the township of Goomeri now stands. Mr Archer continued on further north and took up the property to become known as *Eidsvold*, whilst Mr Hawkins chose *Boonara*, which in later years was destined to change its name to Goomeri.

After one or two years of hard toil occupied in settling down and preparing the land, Hawkins and Archer decided to try their fortunes at the Californian goldfields, which at that time were coming into prominence and men from all parts of the world were rushing in search of the precious mineral.

Archer was accompanied by a black boy name Jacky Small, evidently named after Jacky Small Creek, which runs through the *Eidsvold* property, whilst (Edward) Hawkins had with him a Chinaman. Unhappily whilst on the other side of the world the members of the Australian party were drowned. Thus, upon the death of Hawkins, *Boonara* fell into the hands of his brother-in-law, a man named Berthelsen.

Just about this time the late Mr David Jones, of the well-known Sydney firm of David Jones and Coy., was looking for land on which to settle his sons, D.M. and G.H. Jones, and he purchased *Boonara* estate, which then comprised an area of 265 square miles. Water was plentiful, and the standing timber was gradually ringbarked to improve the carrying capacity of the holding for pastoral and grazing purposes, and great flocks of sheep and cattle were pastured.

Boonara soon established a reputation for the quality of its sheep and wool, but in later years the introduction of the spear grass and the rapid growth of foot-rot disease sounded the death-knell of the industry, and it fast began to dwindle.

Grazing was then carried on solely at *Boonara*.

Boonara station was the first to introduce the Clydesdale draught horse and to put the Clydesdale on a payable basis. The first Clydesdale sire on the property was 'King of the Ring', who was obtained from Mr Andrew Towns of New South Wales, who has established a name as one of Australia's leading breeders of horse flesh. Year after year saw buyers from all parts of the state making their way to *Boonara* to secure their Clydesdales, as it was recognised that their breed was one of the best.

The original holding, with its enormous area, was taken up under the long tenure pastoral lease system and as these fell due they were gradually resumed by the government for closer settlement.²⁰

Upon the death of David Mander Jones in 1864 the station passed to his son, Llewellyn, then merely a child. At that time the management of the holding was carried out by George Hall Jones, David's brother.



Boonara station.

Source — Boobyjah archives, Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.



Kilkivan homestead.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Kilkivan Station

The area where *Kilkivan* station was later established was originally settled by James Sheridan,²¹ reputedly a strong-willed and courageous man who established his holding at Running Creek, some twelve miles north of the present township. However, like most other stations in the region, Sheridan and his men came under chronic attack from hostile indigenous people, and after the deaths of several shepherds and the killing of many of his sheep he was forced to admit defeat and abandoned the run. John Daniel Mactaggart was the next non-indigenous settler to take over the run at what later became known as *Kilkivan* station, the run being registered under the names of A. Brierly (also Brierley) and J.D. Mactaggart.

Mactaggart was born on 11 November, 1823, the son of Daniel Mactaggart, a farmer and solicitor who founded the well known legal firm C. and D. Mactaggart at Campbeltown, Argyll.²² Mactaggart was something of an intriguing figure, he sailed to Australia aboard the vessel *Sea Horse*, arriving in 1841. En-route the ship had experienced a collision in the notoriously stormy Bay of Biscay and the captain had been forced to return the vessel to England for repairs. After a few years at Sydney, Mactaggart had travelled north to the Brisbane River and subsequently came farther to the Wide Bay and Burnett, possibly around the Maryborough and Nanango regions, and possibly in 1847 or 1848. During this period he is reported to have met James Sheridan at Maryborough and at that meeting Sheridan is alleged to have told Mactaggart of the lands he had recently abandoned. Returning to Moreton Bay, Mactaggart drove a large flock of sheep to the Burnett, reportedly intending to settle at Degilbo, but as this had already been taken up by William Henry Walsh, Mactaggart continued to drive even farther north, past *Boonara* and finally taking up *Kilkivan*. He named the property after the family farm, Kilkivan, near Machrihanish, a part of Argyll on the western coast of the Kintyre peninsular — the southern mull (headland) of which was later made famous in Paul McCartney's memorable song of that region.

Like Sheridan before him, Mactaggart experienced hostilities from the local aboriginal people who attacked his shepherds and flocks. He built a quite formidable home on a hill overlooking the property, this was something of a fortress rather than a house, constructed of solid log walls. There is a local story that Mactaggart was the brunt of so many aboriginal attacks that he decided to give up the run and to return to Maryborough, however, he reportedly was aided by two men sent by neighbour Ned Hawkins. With the help of these men Mactaggart was able to repulse any further aboriginal attacks and to continue raising his flocks.

Little is known of Mactaggart's relationship with the aboriginal people, although it is certain that there was considerable conflict. J.E. Murphy records that both *Kilkivan* station and *Gigoomgan* station, then under the control of H.C. Corfield, experienced difficulties with aboriginal attacks and the two station holders occasionally aided each other in suppressing the

local people.²³ *Gigoongan* was first taken up by H.C. Corfield and William Richardson who tendered for it in May 1849. The tender was accepted in November that year.²⁴

However, one of the best sources of information regarding the hostilities that then existed between Mactaggart and the local indigenous people was recorded by John Green, a man who was befriended by the aboriginal people of the Widgee region and who wrote a quite remarkable account of his experiences with the people in that area. John Green was evidently a humanist who believed in close relationships with the aboriginal people and that the customs and heritage of those people should be recorded and preserved. He was a staunch believer in the rights of aboriginal people and detested the actions of white settlers and squatters who were waging war against the aborigines. In particular, John Green wrote about the conduct of Mactaggart who had taken over the holding at Kilkivan from James Sheridan. On 17 March, 1851, John Green wrote:

I have noted that Jimmy Sheridan's place is just to the north where he gave up the land after repeated attacks by natives over the years. All of his shepherds and sheep were butchered, if one believes local gossip. He departed for Wide Bay Village (Maryborough) in poor means with no sign of return. There was rumour that many natives in that area were killed for their part in killing the flocks — this now being reason for much of the now hostile mood towards other squatters west of the ranges by the natives and near new stations like *Wydgee* (sic) and *Wuloogar* (sic). I have heard stories that homesteads are built in the manner of large fortresses and great armories are held to fend off attack. The wives and children live in dire fear of cowardly attack so I have been informed. A Scot called Mactaggart, of some arrogance and ignorance, has taken Sheridan's place and other lands nearby — his reputation of brutality and wicked butchering of the natives is widespread amongst the settlers but not talked about because of his connections with government officials in Wide Bay Village. His station property at *Kilkivan* is the largest in the area. Large groups of armed herdsmen have been brought through from the port to roam at will on the station.

I reflect quickly on the last gossip report of a few months earlier that the mad Scot on Sundays after church devotions with station people and his family, set about on the normal Sunday excursion to conduct a fox hunt on horseback with all the menfolk taking part. The revulsion displayed by the collectors of the gossip and their listeners indicated there were no foxes. A pounded native or natives were set free thereafter being set upon by the men on horseback and were soundly whipped until they were dead or set upon by dogs and torn to pieces. I have no desire to meet the man ...

My thoughts pass to the stories of the mad Scotsman ... who once came from Wide Bay with a great army of shooters and a sheep herd. There was gossip that they shot every native in sight whether friendly or hostile in an unsightly series of massacres in their endeavour to reach the lands he owns at the place called *Kilkivan* station with his herds. It seems he did not come this way but further to the north and west. The settlers knew of these deeds but remained quiet in reporting the matters for fear of falling out of favour with the protection he offered and the arrogance he displays to others. It is also common gossip that he shoots natives for sport.²⁵

Mactaggart was particularly affected by the difficulties of obtaining labour for his run, ticket-of-leave men were sometimes available, as were Chinese and German stockmen and shepherds, but all of these were in the minority and those willing to work in such a dangerous place as *Kilkivan* were even more difficult to find. Additionally, Mactaggart claimed to be adverse to the employment of Chinese as, in his opinion, they could not be trusted. Mactaggart believed that the only answer to the problem was either a massive influx of free immigrants, or the re-introduction of the convict transports and the allocation of convicts to the various runs — most of which were experiencing similar difficulties. In January 1850 a large meeting was held at Ipswich to discuss this very problem, the meeting being well attended by many members of the colonial squirearchy. The Ipswich court house was filled with well-known Queensland squatting identities, Richard Jones, Patrick Leslie, Francis Bigge, J.D. Mactaggart, Doctor William Dorsey — the medical practitioner of Ipswich, and many others. Mactaggart stood during the proceedings to address the crowd, the *Moreton Bay Courier* subsequently reporting:

Mr Mactaggart ... had ridden from Wide Bay, a hundred and fifty miles, for the purpose of supporting any system of immigration or of transportation that would meet the wants of the squatters, and furnish them with labour for their operations. He knew that labour must

be had, and the only labourers spoken of were free white men, exiles, and Chinese. He saw no prospect of free immigration, and he was opposed to the employment of Chinese. He had heard of their malpractices at a station next to his own; he had been informed of abominations not to be named, and he was opposed to their introduction. Some speakers had said that there was enough labour in the districts. Just then, upon his own station, he was giving £30 a year for shepherds. A short time ago he gave £40. It was about eight months previously that a man had called at his station; his sheep were at that time all running in one flock, and he had lost hundreds of them in consequence. He asked the man if he would engage, and, after some consideration, he said that as he (Mr Mactaggart) was short-handed, he would stop with him for thirty shillings a week! They were ready to give £20 a year for shepherds. He would be one to support free labour, instead of employing Chinamen, and all the squatters in his vicinity were of the same opinion. None of them would import Chinamen if they could get any others, but labour they must have. (Cheers and groans. A person, apparently a labouring man, made some remarks in a loud tone, about soldiers and sailors carrying arms, and having no labour to do; and a shepherd being obliged to carry a musket, and labour also. He was turned out by a constable).²⁶

In May 1850 Mactaggart was involved in a court case in Brisbane over allegations made by the commissioner for crown lands, John Carne Bidwill, based at Maryborough. Bidwill had alleged that Mactaggart had been selling illegal spirits to his men. According to contemporary reports, during a dinner conversation held at Bidwill's house, Bidwill had spoken to his guests of Mactaggart's alleged crime. One of the guests at that dinner table had been a man named P. Piggot, a close friend of Mactaggart, who reported the allegations to Mactaggart. J.D. Mactaggart sent another friend carrying a note to Bidwill's house. The note challenged Bidwill to a duel, a challenge Bidwill refused to accept.

On 12 July, 1849, Mactaggart saw Bidwill standing with some of his friends near the Mary River at Maryborough. Bidwill, seeing Mactaggart approach, evidently in a somewhat hostile manner, reportedly said to his friends: 'That man is coming to commit an assault on me — prevent him.'

Despite the attempts by these friends to protect Bidwill, Mactaggart managed to push his way through and struck the commissioner with a whip on his shoulder, shouting as he did so: 'You refuse me satisfaction.' Bidwill was furious and later admitted that had he carried a pistol with him that day he would have shot Mactaggart.

Mactaggart was found guilty of the assault at the Brisbane Circuit Court. He was sentenced to imprisonment for one week and fined twenty pounds.²⁷

Upon Mactaggart's release from prison a welcoming crowd and a small band greeting him on the wharf at Maryborough.²⁸

According to an unpublished document, believed to have been written circa 1913/14, the original residence built by Mactaggart on his station was blown down into the Wide Bay Creek during a cyclone and the house which became the main building of the station was later constructed. An earlier report, dated 1903, confirms that: '... the *Kilkivan* head station is on a high ridge close to the bank of the Wide Bay Creek ... and is much younger than the original station buildings.'²⁹ The immediate vicinity of the house was later described in the following way: 'In the corner of the compound are the bachelors' quarters, slabbed with cedar. On the slope at



J.D. Mactaggart.

Source — Tom Ryan collection

the side and rear are the store and other substantial buildings and the moss-covered dome of an underground tank stands as an indication of the measures taken for insurance against the periodical dry spell. Orange trees bearing heavily surround the house enclosure and a wide spreading jacaranda gives generous shade ... An interesting relic of the old days is the wool-shed which stands on the original freehold block ... and though falling into decay through the ravages of white ants, it is a monument to the faithful builders. At one end of the building is what was formerly the wool room, with its old fashioned screw press.³⁰



Kilkivan station woolshed.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Mactaggart died on 17 January, 1871, and for more than twenty years the station was managed for his widow by trustees until it was sold to George Hall Jones in 1892. The trustees appointed through Mactaggart's will were George Hall Jones and Thomas Bloodworth.³¹

Upon his death Mactaggart was buried on the crest of a hill overlooking *Kilkivan* station and the small township of Kilkivan. Also located on *Kilkivan* station are the graves of George Hall Jones, the first chairman of the Kilkivan Shire Council (when it was a divisional board) who had purchased the station from Mactaggart's estate, his wife Rose, and Jones's son, David Lacey Jones, who, for many years, had enjoyed a distinguished career as the shire clerk of Kilkivan Shire Council.

David Lacey Jones was the third son of George Hall Jones. Born at *Boonara* station, he was shire clerk of Kilkivan Shire Council for forty-one years and was considered an expert on local authority matters and law. He was president of the Kilkivan Show Society, Race Club and School of Arts and in his younger years had been a noted athlete. He was also rector's warden of the Kilkivan Church of England. David Lacey Jones died at his residence in Kilkivan on Monday 2 September, 1945, at the age of sixty-seven years after suffering a long period of poor health. He was survived by his wife (formerly Miss Mildred McKewen). At the time of his death one of David Lacey's sons, Owen, was serving in the R.A.A.F. and a daughter, Gwen was serving with the A.M.C. David Lacey Jones was buried at the *Kilkivan* station cemetery on Tuesday 3 September, 1945.³²

The *Kilkivan* homestead and property were purchased by Frank Stephens of Maryborough in 1912. His son, Hugh Clifford Stephens, later wrote: 'In 1912 my father bought *Kilkivan* homestead which I reckon was the highlight of his life. From then on all our holidays were spent there. The old *Kilkivan* homestead was a rambling place with a timber shingle roof — later covered with

corrugated iron. All the timber in the house apart from the floors was red cedar. The wall planks were T and G about 12 inches wide. Quite often we'd have up to twenty people staying there.³³ Frank Stephens died in September 1943, his son, Hugh, worked in many parts of Queensland before serving during the Second World War and later helping his brother, Duncan, to run *Kilkivan* station. He subsequently became a dairy farmer on his own selection and with his sister, Beth, who then owned *Kilkivan* station, ran both his own selection and the *Kilkivan* holding. Beth sold the station in 1967 and Hugh Clifford Stephens died on 15 November, 1994, aged eighty-eight years.³⁴

The homestead constructed by Daniel Mactaggart was destroyed by fire in 1941, a report of the event later claiming:

The destruction of the *Kilkivan* station homestead by fire removes one of the foremost landmarks of the *Kilkivan* district. The property was purchased from the estate of the late G.H. Jones by Mr F.H. Stephens, of Maryborough, who later took up his residence there and went in for dairying, the station property having been previously cut up and sold. Mr Stephens purchasing the homestead land and property. Some time ago Mr Stephens built another residence for himself about a quarter of a mile from the homestead and the old home was occupied by the family working the dairy for Mr Stephens. The fire broke out about 7 a.m. and was first noticed in a room in which Mr Duncan Stephens, a son of Mr F.H. Stephens, had his furniture stored. He is not residing in the district at present. Nothing was saved except the kitchen, which was detached from the main building by a passageway. The homestead was insured, also Mr Duncan Stephen's furniture, but the occupiers of the house lost their all with no insurance.

The foundations of *Kilkivan* were laid in the homestead, the land of which was taken up by the late Mr J.D. McTaggart (sic) about 80 years ago, who had a slab house built in which he resided with his wife and family until 1870. He then built a magnificent house of 10 rooms. The house was built wholly of cedar, the trees growing on the property which were cut down and shaped by pit saw.³⁵

Other Pastoral Holdings

Some of the other major pastoral holdings within the shire included *Widgee*, *Manumbar* and *Woolooga*.

Widgee was taken up by William Tooth and Company (comprising William Butler Tooth and his brother Atticus Tooth) during the 1840s. Tooth and Co. tendered for the run in February 1849, but this tender was not accepted. The Tothos' *Widgee* run was comprised of two holdings, *Basin of Weeje Widjie* (also *Weeji Widjie*) and *Orange Tree*, the sizes of which were 16,000 acres and 15,000 acres respectively. Tenders were accepted for the runs in March 1851.³⁶ In 1856 W.B. Tooth transferred his interests in the station to his cousin, Robert Tooth. In 1863 the station was mortgaged to Robert Cran for £12,500 and in 1868, following an economic depression, the station was assigned to the Bank of New South Wales. In March 1872, after an extensive resumption of lands, the station was sold to John Broadbent and Daniel Williams, Broadbent acted as manager and lived at the station while Williams was merely a financial partner and continued to reside at Sydney. In 1875 and 1876 more of the remaining area of *Widgee* was resumed but the owners strongly protested and fifty-five square miles were granted for a period of five years.³⁷ There followed a lengthy period of struggle between the lease holders, the government and those who wished to settle on the land. Daniel Williams died in 1885 and his interests were transferred to the trustee of his will, Peter MacPherson. In July 1895 John Broadbent left *Widgee* and his interests were transferred to William Forest and Peter MacPherson as trustees of Daniel Williams, J.P. Voss then became manager. In September 1902 the trustees became Peter MacPherson and Arnold Wienholt and Wienholt became closely involved in the management of the station. Thereafter the station was controlled by numerous managers until it was eventually sold to the government in 1910 for £94,407/10/- and broken up for closer settlement.³⁸

Woolooga was first taken up by the Murray brothers during the 1840s, possibly October 1849. The brothers experienced considerable difficulties with the local indigenous people who clearly resented this intrusion and the Native Police were frequently called to the station in order to control the outbreaks of violence. In 1857 the station was sold to Robert Tooth who later went

into partnership in the station with Robert Cran. The mortgage was surrendered to the Bank of New South Wales in 1868, it was later sold to Lord and King and subsequently to Sir Horace Tozer. Thereafter it changed hands several times to P. Lillis, then to C.J. Booker and was finally sold to the government for closer settlement.

Manumbar, as we have seen earlier in this history, was first taken up by John Mortimer and Andrew Anderson in 1848 and was comprised of four blocks, *Manumbar*, *Gobonga*, *Toomcul* and *Gallangowan*. The tender for the run was made by these two men in April 1854 and accepted on 30 April, 1855.³⁹ The first resumption from *Manumbar* was made in 1879 when the site of *Elgin Vale* station was excised from the original property and settled by James and Alexander Porter.⁴⁰

Notes and Sources

Chapter Twenty-eight

Kilkivan and District — the Pastoral History

1. *The Pioneers, Clement and Paul Lawless, Nindooindah, 1842, Windera and Boobyjan 1847*, Boobyjan station archives, Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.
2. WW. p 281.
3. QCL. 13 January, 1949, p 7.
4. SBT. 5 November, 1959, p 8.
5. *The Pioneers, Clement and Paul Lawless, Nindooindah, 1842, Windera and Boobyjan 1847*, p 2, Boobyjan station archives, Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.
6. *Souvenir of the Centenary of Boobyjan and Windera, 1847–1947*, p 5, Nanango Shire Historical Society and Register of Runs, QSA CLO N7–8.
7. *Souvenir of the Centenary of Boobyjan and Windera, 1847–1947*, p 7, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
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12. *Memoirs of Ellen Lawless*, p 1, Boobyjan station archives, Michael and Stephanie Lawless collection.
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18. *Souvenir of the Centenary of Boobyjan and Windera 1847–1947*, pp 8–9.
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20. SBT 24 March, 1933, p 6.
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22. Family document describing antecedents of the Mactaggart family, Kilkivan Historical Society and Register of Runs QSA Z4345, CLO/N12–14.
23. A description of one episode may be read in WW. pp 290–191.
24. *Tabular Register of Tenders and CCL Reports, 1849–63*, JOL.
25. *Tales of a Warrior, The Clans of Kippandingi*, pp 8–9, 14, being the diaries of John Green, edited by Brett J. Green, 1995. Note, in this publication the name of Mactaggart has been deleted, but in the original diaries Mactaggart is mentioned by name.

26. MBC. 14 January, 1850, p 1.
27. MBC. 18 May, 1850.
28. Author interview with Douglas Mactaggart, December 1994.
29. *Farming and Grazing in the Gympie District*, 1903, Kilkivan Historical Society.
30. *Kilkivan Homestead*, unpublished paper, author unknown, written circa 1913/14, p 1, Kilkivan Historical Society.
31. Last will and testament of John Daniel Mactaggart, QSA file 673, roll Z66.
32. SBT. 20 September, 1945, p 8.
33. *The Life and Times of Hugh Clifford Stephens*, pp 1–2, Kilkivan Historical Society.
34. *The Life and Times of Hugh Clifford Stephens*, Kilkivan Historical Society.
35. K/H. 29 September, 1941, p 2.
36. *Register of Runs*, QSA CLO/N12–14.
37. B/C. 13 October, 1875, p 2.
38. For a more detailed history of this station see: J. Dale's chapter in Logan, pp 412–432. A description of the station and its boundaries may be found in the *Register of Runs*, QSA CLO/N12–14.
39. *Register of Runs*, QSA CLO/N7–8.
40. For details on this holding see: Matthews, Tony, *The Coffee-pot Mill, a history of the Elgin Vale steam-powered sawmill*, Kilkivan Shire Council, 1997.

Gold and the Growth of the Township

The town of Kilkivan has had a colourful and fascinating history, indeed it has been formed at three distinct locations, the first at West Coast Creek, the second at the Rise and Shine reef, and the third at the present site of the town which was formed when the rail came through in 1886. Actually, the township moved once more, at least in part, the business section of the town moving to its present site along Bligh Street when the railway station was moved to facilitate its extension towards Murgon, Wondai and Kingaroy.

The first site of Kilkivan township was established only after gold had been discovered in the region. Gold was apparently first discovered at Black Snake in the early 1850s, but the deposits proved to be shallow and so no significant exploitation of the goldfield was made during that period.¹

It is generally believed that gold was also found in 1867, shortly after the discovery of gold at Gympie in October that year, but again nothing became of the matter until May 1868. At that time six prospectors from the West Coast region of New Zealand, following the line of the fabled Gympie reef, discovered gold approximately six miles south of the *Kilkivan* station homestead, this claim was later called the West Coast Creek and was the site of the first township, a scattering of bark shanties and calico tents. The names of only four of those first gold prospectors are known, Stewart (also reported as Steward), Preston, O'Neill and McMullen (also reported as McMillan). On 7 May, 1868, the press reported: 'A very extensive rush has set in to Kilkivan. Gold has been found four miles from (the) head station on Fat Hen Creek. The first find was made in a four foot sinking ... prospects show 1 dwt to the dish.'²

The *Brisbane Courier* later claimed: 'We are now, through the courtesy of Mr King, the commissioner, enabled to publish reliable information ... On Saturday evening last (2 May, 1868), Steward and McMillan, two New Zealand diggers, called upon Mr Commissioner King at a late hour, they being afraid of attracting public attention by (so) doing in the day-time, and reported to him that they had discovered gold at Kilkivan on Mr Mctaggart's (sic) run in a creek named Fat Hen Creek, five miles distant from the head station. They showed Mr King a sample of the gold ... as there was an apprehension on the part of the prospectors of being rushed, Mr King, at a very great sacrifice of personal comfort, left at daybreak on Sunday morning, and accompanied by one of the party proceeded to the spot.'³

Yet it is clear that J.D. Mactaggart knew of the existence of gold on his holding long before this time. He reportedly first became aware of the traces of gold at Kilkivan circa 1851, when he sent a sample of ore to Sydney for assay, however, this sample proved to have a very high content of copper and, apparently, for a while at least, no further interest was taken in developing the field as a gold producing area.

In 1865 Mactaggart was again at the centre of a gold debate and he even addressed a meeting of interested persons in Maryborough. However, as a press report of that year clearly demonstrates Mactaggart had serious reservations concerning the gold on his property and, at that time at least, he was unwilling to reveal its exact location before the shearing season was over. Mactaggart knew that if he started a gold rush, not only would he lose his valuable hands at a critical time of year, but his lands would also be inundated with miners and prospectors and they could destroy valuable creek-side property.⁴

According to the *Brisbane Courier*, also in 1865, Mactaggart sent another sample of the gold to Sydney for assay, the newspaper later published: 'On *Kilkivan* run it has been long known that

payable quartz reefs exist. In 1865 Mr McTaggart (sic) the proprietor, went to the trouble and expense of sending a quantity of stone down to the Mint for assay.⁶ Mactaggart apparently sent four samples of ore to Sydney for assay, they returned varying amounts of gold, copper and silver.⁶

Despite this, there was evidently some commercial interest in developing the mineral deposits of the region and a Sydney company was certainly making arrangements to mine both gold and copper from the district. In September 1867, long before the much vaunted 'discovery' of gold at Fat Hen Creek, (and even before the discovery of gold at Gympie) the *Brisbane Courier* reported:

We informed our readers some time ago that land had been taken up at Kilkivan for copper-mining by a company formed in Sydney for the purpose. Mr Smith, the manager of the company, arrived in Maryborough this week for the first time from the mine, having gone there from Brisbane. He brings down with him a dray load (three tons) of the ore, specimens taken from some half-score different parts of the field, all of which he pronounces rich in various degrees with copper, which are to be sent to Newcastle to be smelted and assayed. The ore at the site of the mine is abundant on the surface, and for years to come there will be no expense for sinking. Rich lodes have also been traced for miles, and the field may be said to be inexhaustible. The company have large smelting works, wharf, and tramway at Newcastle, erected for smelting ore produced from a neighbouring mine, which seems to be worked out, and the ore will be sent to Newcastle for the present to be smelted. The ore will be brought to Tiaro, a distance of forty-five miles in drays, then brought down in punts to Maryborough to be shipped ... It will be remembered about eighteen months ago a ton of specimen quartz was sent from Kilkivan to the Sydney Mint for assay, some of which was found to yield at the rate of three ounces of gold and one of silver to the ton. This was from a spot about four miles from the copper mine. It is quite probable, when a population of miners get settled in the neighbourhood, that alluvial gold, as well as payable quartz reefs, will be discovered. Two hundred drays are wanted by the Kilkivan Mining Company for the carriage of copper ore from the mine at Kilkivan to the head of navigation on the Mary-Tiara.⁷

The goldfields and all the mineral deposits of the Kilkivan region were never as rich or as extensive as most would have wished, in some regions they were richer than others and varying economic climates also did much to dictate the extent to which these deposits could be worked. As we shall see in this chapter, there were many variables which the miners had to take into consideration when developing mineral deposits — especially the possible extent of the deposit and the costs of production such as the purchase of machinery, taxation, tariffs, wages and processing. All of these items were particularly important on the Kilkivan mineral deposits, especially so as the costs of production often soared against what were, in real terms, only relatively small returns. Kilkivan, for example, never produced gold in the quantity or richness of the Gympie field where one and a half tons of ore could yield an incredible 470 ounces of gold.⁸ In comparison, gold yields at Kilkivan rarely went beyond four or five ounces to the ton — and yields were often considerably lower — yet these returns were still considered a worthwhile proposition.

The first gold-rush to Kilkivan began in May 1868 when gold was discovered at Fat Hen Creek on Mactaggart's *Kilkivan* station. The location of the gold was on a small tributary of Fat Hen Creek which was later named West Coast Creek. A description of the field written by one of the early miners claimed that within a few days there were three thousand miners on the field and more were pouring in each day, taking the total to somewhere between four thousand and four and a half thousand, the rush may have peaked at approximately five thousand.⁹ The rush to Kilkivan was a replication of the rush that had taken place to Gympie in October the previous year. Despite warnings in the press that the field was not a proven one, that it may have consisted of only shallow alluvial gold, shopkeepers in nearby towns such as Maryborough and Gympie simply closed up and moved to the new diggings, sailors deserted ships in the Mary River, shearers and shepherds abandoned the stations and headed for the new discovery bringing with them their wagons, tools, food and horses.

A miner at Gympie, who himself later went up to the Kilkivan diggings, stated that when the news of the new rush arrived at Gympie the community came alive with gold fever. He added: 'Suffice it to say that all Gympie was moved by a sharp and sudden march to Fat Hen Creek ... In less than an hour the fact (news of the new gold find) had reached into the most remote gullies, scrubs and pockets of the One Mile, Walker's Gully and Nashville. People who were idle did not only rush, but men who had good payable claims went likewise. Some men went away in the

excitement without bread, tea or sugar, tent or blanket, aye, even without a pick, dish or shovel. All Sunday night the din of the rush was heard. In the stillness of night the steady tramp of men and the plaintive shout was heard which was enough to arouse the peaceful slumberer, faintly telling him that something great was going on.¹⁰

The *Nashville Times* in May 1868 warned that despite the fact that thousands of men had rushed to the new field there was certainly no evidence that this was to be a new Gympie. Prospectors on the field had been interviewed and while some were showing reasonable returns, others were having trouble getting any colour at all in their dishes. The scene was one of mass confusion, some prospectors working the creek, others sinking shafts. The report claimed:

The flat is now pegged out for two miles on each side of the prospectors and the creek has resolved itself into two branches, both of which are being tried ... The space of the ground is so great that ... out of two or three thousand on the field, there still exists a difficulty in ascertaining what each is doing ... The deepest hole at the time our informant left was 28 feet deep. One thing may be said, that with a solitary exception we have not received any very discouraging news. There has been great scarcity of provisions, but as there are now about ninety drays on the road, and as Mr McTaggart (sic) has erected a store, that complaint will not exist for long. Grog was among the early arrivals, and we have heard of fabulous prices paid for it. The owner of one cart loaded with bread did well, as in a few minutes he disposed of his loaves at 2s each. Flour was sold for 1s the pannikin full ... There are 200 sheep on the diggings which are sold at 10s a head, the miners being their own butchers. This may now be altered as some 'Knights of the Cleaver' have left Gympie ... There has, of course been the usual amount of 'barneys' over claims, and (claim) jumping has been the order of the day.¹¹

By 12 May, however, the news from Kilkivan was not favourable and many hopeful miners were drifting back to Gympie, the press claimed that the rush was a 'duffer' and up to four thousand men were making preparations to leave.¹² The following day the situation remained much the same, some miners were retrieving gold while others found nothing, the New Zealand miners had pegged extensive claims and J.D. Mactaggart has erected a rough store.¹³

By 14 May the field had gained ground as a possible source of wealth and many more miners were arriving in the hope of finding good gold-bearing ground, yet the reports of the field were mixed, some claiming that they were retrieving sufficient gold while others stated that the field would never yield enough gold to maintain a township of any size. The press claimed: 'Reports from Kilkivan are very contradictory, gold has been found in other creeks there. Nashville (Gympie) nearly collapsed after the Kilkivan rush but reflux of population has made it more cheerful again. Kilkivan correspondent states great numbers of experienced miners but poor looking country, prospectors getting a little but not much to speak of. Some 20 shafts bottomed at 8 feet to 24 feet, no payable prospects, colour only.'¹⁴

By 21 May the same newspaper reported that the original New Zealand miners were gaining good returns of gold and that a township had been laid out, '... giving permanence and prosperity to the field.'¹⁵

Many of the men rushing to the new goldfield were inexperienced miners, but some had been digging for gold at a variety of places and were well aware of the difficulties involved with the work. One experienced miner who visited the scene in May stated that he had seen little in the way of payable gold, that while gold was certainly being found, the amount of work involved for the few grains of gold that were being recovered made it appear as though the Kilkivan rush was to be a 'duffer'. At that time about twenty shafts had been dug, some had 'bottomed out', the miners giving up after having found no gold, while others were continuing with modest results. One of the butchers was advertising his chops and steaks at 3d and 4d per pound, quite a reasonable price, considering the circumstances, and was quick to tell his customers that his meat was: '... guaranteed free from pleuro-pneumonia.'¹⁶

On 18 May a correspondent writing from the new goldfield claimed:

Upon the left bank of West Coast Creek, immediately beside the line of alluvial workings, a town has been formed in one long street, about one chain wide, commencing opposite the prospecting claim, and ending far away in the distance on the road leading from the diggings.

The population ... numbers about two thousand. At least one thousand more were upon the ground, but seeing no prospect of suddenly realising fortunes, as at Nash's Creek in its earliest days, they decamped almost immediately after they had arrived for Gympie, where they hoped to secure a certainty in the ground temporarily abandoned for this rush. However, now that a second and a third lead has been discovered we might, as in the case of Gympie, well anticipate a second rush, and, like Gympie, too, the capabilities of this field will, I doubt not, be found more enduring on a second test ... In conclusion, I may remark that a protection area has been granted for quartz-reef prospecting; that gold has been found in the ravine, in the creek, in the gully, and in the flat, with surfacing on the hillsides. The general impression is that in the Kilkivan discovery we see the commencement of an extensive field not likely to be productive of immediate massive fortunes, as at Gympie, but moderately productive and inexhaustible in its wealth.¹⁷

Apart from the well known claims such as Italian Gully and German Gully the miners were working at claims in other regions of the goldfield including Star Gully, Kangaroo Gully, Three-grain Gully, Come-to-it Gully and Station Gully.¹⁸

Thus was the first township of Kilkivan born, a rough settlement of miners struggling to find their El Dorado in the coarse wilderness that was *Kilkivan* station at that time. Also reported at the same time was another description of those very early days of the Kilkivan rush, this, printed in the *Maryborough Chronicle*, was reproduced from the *Nashville Times* of 27 May, 1868.

We have not had an opportunity of learning much of this rush (Kilkivan) lately, as the diggers have been coming away from even that goldfield en-route for Yabber (Yabba). The latest news is favourable so far as regards the diggings, as we understand many are doing well, and that some of the gullies are turning out better than was anticipated.

A correspondent writes as follows: 'Things, I am astonished to find, are looking much brighter since I was here last. So little were my ideas of a goldfield here, that I never expected to weigh upon Kilkivan a nugget 1oz 2 dwts. This is a fact. It was found in Jack Reid's claim. Star Gully, and the same party told me, when weighing the nugget, that they wash generally 2 ozs. to the load. A party in Fat Hen Creek, two claims below the prospector's claim, wash 2½ dwts. to the dish. Many diggers whom I have spoken to say that they are satisfied with what they find and my man tells me that most of his customers here are on payable gold. The little gully which runs across the township has turned out well, and all the short and auriferous gullies behind, on the right towards Kilkivan are payable. There is no mistake but that those diggings are permanent for a long time to come ... In one day a party washed out of four small loads 4½ ozs., which I bought at £3 8s. 6d. — a fine sample.'¹⁹

The first commissioner to administer the goldfield was Charles James Clarke who travelled from Gympie to carry out his duties. When he arrived he found considerable confusion at the diggings, some shanties had been erected, storekeepers were selling goods from tents and from the backs of their wagons, and prices for these goods, beef, flour, tea, rum and sugar, in time honoured tradition, were considerably inflated.

Another report, also dated May 1868, gives us a clear indication of the goldfield at that time:

Accounts still reach us of a contradictory nature. A gentleman who left on Sunday tells us that he regarded the field as in a flourishing state. New ground had been broken in several places, and always rich enough to induce a good number of miners to work it. There had been no heavy finds, but lots of poor men's ground was to be found, and there was the chance, whilst holding on at wages, of a good rush every day. On the other hand, we have heard a returned miner pronounce the field a duffer. The *Nashville Times* has the following on this rush:

'There are still very contradictory accounts received of this new goldfield, and it is difficult indeed to pronounce any decided opinion on it, there being so much self-interest at stake in all the accounts received. We learn through Mr Commissioner King, who has received information to that effect from his colleague in office, Mr Clarke, that three new prospecting claims have been granted by him, and that the diggers are now settling down to work. From one prospecting claim two pennyweights were obtained to a dish. There is, however, one general belief, namely, that the ground is very patchy ... There is now a population of about 1500 persons. Out of another prospecting claim only a few grains were

washed from three dishes. Another informant tells us of eleven pennyweights to the load. A recent arrival from Kilkivan, again, states that there were a large number making wages, and that in all the gullies and flats, to within three-quarters of a mile from Mr Mactaggart's station, there were prospecting parties, and for some miles in the opposite direction. Stores are now well supplied and we believe ourselves, from the quantity of gold which is found, there must exist in the district some payable patches. Very little, however, has as yet found its way to the banks in Gympie, which may be looked upon as rather ominous of little being obtained. News has been received confirming the existence of a reef, in the stone of which some fine gold has been found. Yesterday there was a large exodus from the One-mile Creek, owing to reports being circulated of the finding of gold ground near the Wide Bay Creek.²⁰

Evidently there were, even in the very early days of the Kilkivan rush, some serious reservations regarding the eventual richness of the field. Miners were certainly taking out gold in sufficient quantities to pay their wages and to provide them with the necessities of life, food, rum and tobacco, but it seemed clear to both the miners themselves and to interested observers that the Kilkivan rush would never produce a highly rich mining area or reefs similar to those being found at Gympie. The miners working their claims were recovering sufficient gold to keep them reasonably happy, and they believed that soon they would find the rich reef for which they were all looking. It was, as we now know, a futile dream. A visitor to the mining area of Kilkivan in 1868 wrote:

The colour of gold has been found nearly all over Kilkivan run ... but squatters don't want goldfields near or on their stations ...

I don't think much of the spot that has been rushed at Kilkivan. A little gold may be got there, but no large population as at Gympie will be maintained by it. A vast number of miners are out prospecting, and something may be lighted on — if not in the next few months you may make up your mind that there is no goldfield to be found — such a thorough searching the country is getting.

A tale is afloat amongst the diggers — and it is that I wish particularly to draw your attention to — that Mr McTaggart, (sic) the proprietor of *Kilkivan*, is in collusion with the prospector who found gold on Fat Hen Creek, and that the claim was a 'salter' for the purpose of creating the rush — Mr McTaggart's advantage being, that thereby he would get rid of his fat cattle at a good price. As there are many persons who listen to this yarn, who from not being able — from want of information on such matters — to see its absurdity, believe it. I would just point out a few reasons which will show them how ridiculous it is; that, so far from the proprietor of the station wanting a goldfield there, he is at the present time suffering enormous loss, which he has no prospect of recovering. Mr McTaggart, in the first place, does not get one penny more for his cattle on the station than he was selling them for before the rush; so he gets no more profit — this I know. Then his losses are first — 25 square miles of his run are rendered practically useless — the diggings are in the middle of the cattle run; on which 2000 head of cattle have been used to run. These cattle have been all driven away, some of them have made tracks for neighbours' runs, where they are liable to be impounded. I have heard that Mr McTaggart has said that he would give a cheque for £1000 if only the diggers would leave his station in the same state it was in three or four weeks ago, and would not return. Yet he was most courteous and obliging to all who have sought information from him, and the cost of entertaining visitors, brought to the station by the rush, can have been no trifle. There are a good many people who visit the head station, and demand rations for nothing as if they had a perfect right to them. It ought not to be necessary to observe that the diggers have no more claim upon the squatter at the station than they have upon the storekeepers and butchers at the diggings. Lastly, I would notice that in addition to the several occasions of loss I have indicated, the extra working of the station, in consequence of the rush, is no trifle. Mr McTaggart is now employing eight more men, I hear, at a cost of £400 a year, more than he did before the rush, in looking after his sheep. Yet the stupid report was actually believed, I hope by but a few, that Mr McTaggart 'salted' a claim to create this rush, which has been a heavy loss to him every way without bringing him a farthing profit.²¹

A journalist working for the *Maryborough Chronicle* also visited the goldfield at Kilkivan at that time and his report corroborated the writings of other investigators who had visited the region. He wrote from Gympie: 'Although I have seen a good number of miners who have returned from the Kilkivan rush, I can say nothing positively of the field, good or bad. The general description of the place is most hopeful, but they say the spot rushed is not worthy of the name of

a diggings, only a few payable claims having been found on it as yet; but then the country is likely-looking for gold, and the precious metal has been found in several other creeks besides the one rushed. My own opinion is that there will be a good goldfield discovered in that district before long; all that I can hear favours such a notion.²²

By the following month the situation at the Kilkivan goldfield had changed very little. Some of the men who had rushed to the goldfield had left soon afterwards to join the rush to Yabba where another small field had been found, others, disappointed with the Kilkivan field had returned to Gympie. The miners at Kilkivan continued to find gold in quantities sufficient for their wages — and in the depressed state of Queensland during the 1860s, with work almost impossible to find, this was far better than being unemployed. The miners' only real grievance, it seems, was the lack of any kind of communication with the outside world, many of them wishing to send letters and messages to family and friends in Maryborough and Gympie, but as yet there was no postal service operating to or from the goldfield.²³

Within two weeks, however, local prospects were, seemingly, improving, and a report of 13 June, 1868, stated that a large amount of gold had been discovered. Gold buyers were claiming that while gold was plentiful, money with which to purchase it was not. On the previous Sunday two valuable nuggets had been discovered, the heaviest weighing more than thirteen ounces.²⁴ The following week, as shafts were continued to be sunk, it was revealed that a total of five hundred ounces of gold had been transported by the gold escort from Kilkivan to Gympie, and that some of the shafts had been sunk to a depth of twenty-five feet.²⁵ By 20 June a stamping battery was reported as being en-route to the diggings, the *Brisbane Courier* reported that the battery belonged to Mr J.T. Threlkeld, an experienced gold miner with extensive interests in other goldfields.²⁶

The gold bearing area was composed of a number of distinct sites, these included Star Gully, Kangaroo Gully, German Gully, Italian Gully, Fat Hen Creek, Three-grain Gully, Come-to-it Gully and Station Gully. In Italian Gully gold was being found that was well water-worn indicating that it had travelled considerable distances downstream before coming to rest. The richness of these gullies varied greatly, some yielding only 1½ ounces to the load while others gave up to eight ounces per load. There were more gold sluices on the Kilkivan field at that time than there were in Gympie. A reporter claimed in late June 1868: 'This place during the last week has again been noted for its excellent finds of gold in alluvial mining. Excellent finds — not with a view to sudden and rapid fortunes, but I mean to say excellent wages.' During that week there had been for sale several parcels of gold from four to eleven ounces respectively, each parcel was the result of approximately one week's work, and it was claimed that some of the gullies at Kilkivan were as rich as most of the gullies then being worked at Gympie. The gold commissioner, Charles Clarke, was enthusiastic about the possibilities of future development of the field. A report attributed to him claimed: 'Commissioner Clarke at Kilkivan, (gives) an extremely favourable account of the progress of that goldfield. The population there numbers about 800 who are all getting gold. Stores, however, (flour and sugar particularly) are scarce and dear. Several fine nuggets have been brought into Gympie from Kilkivan during the past week — one of twenty-eight and another of thirteen ounces, and several smaller ones, together with a considerable quantity of gold.'²⁷

Disposal of the gold was a perennial problem for the miners, as there were no gold-buyers on the field, apart from a few storekeepers with limited funds, many of the miners were forced to either send or take their gold to Maryborough or Gympie, or simply hold on to it until it could be disposed of at a realistic price. However, this practice left the miners in something of a quandary, mining cost money, especially in terms of food and other supplies, and if the gold could not be sold then the diggers were faced with a considerable dilemma. Early in July that year, (1868) a good sized nugget weighing twenty-seven ounces was found at the head of West Coast Creek, a report of the find also added:

The gold generally found on these diggings has been of a fine character, but the finding of such a nugget as this encourages the hope that more heavy gold will be picked up. A large amount of gold is in the diggers' hands which they are at their wits' ends to know what to do with — lucky fellows to get into such a perplexity! There is no gold receiver on the part of the government — no gold buyers — no bank. On Saturday last a public meeting was held in Mr Thompson's West Coast store to consider the situation and devise a remedy ... It was

proposed by Mr Thompson and seconded by Mr Parker and carried unanimously that a petition be sent to the directors of the Bank of New South Wales, Sydney, requesting them to open a branch or appoint an agent for the purpose of purchasing gold and other bank business on the Kilkivan diggings.²⁸

Shortly afterwards, in August 1868, a very large nugget, one of the largest ever discovered on the Kilkivan goldfield, was found by two miners at Star Gully. A witness who saw the nugget soon afterwards enthused: 'Today, the 12th of August, will be recorded in the (gold) commissioner's books as a great day for Kilkivan ... We have found a nugget at the top of Star Gully weighing 73 ounces. It was found by a party of miners in search of a quartz reef. It is a fine piece of solid gold. I saw it myself. The lucky digger carried it in a billy, like tea infused, and what is more, it has only to be divided by two.'²⁹ The nugget was later described as being, '... a splendid specimen of gold. It is free of quartz and is about twice the size of a turkey egg.'³⁰

Within days an even larger nugget had been found, this one weighing more than one hundred ounces. It was discovered by a group of miners working at the top of Italian Gully.³¹

One miner on the goldfield at that time wrote of the region: 'A large hotel is going up here. We think it will do, but the future will tell all. The township looks pretty well; it is a beautiful sight by lamplight. As you approach the field by night you have before you a long array of sparkling lurid slumbering camp fires, and then the beautiful line of store lights, peeping out from every side of the street is very much like approaching Londonderry ... by railway. Upon the left of the hill-side, is the camp, or what the commercial traveller might call Government House, the residence of Her Majesty's representative, the police station, and everything Governmental. But ye gods! if you only saw Kilkivan Government House! Modesty forbids me to say anything further ... The Commissioner is the worst housed man on Kilkivan, and before he could get a place to lay his head on, he had to pay for the building of it out of his own pocket.'³²

By September that year facilities on the diggings were certainly improving. The petition to the Bank of New South Wales had been successful and the first branch of the bank opened at Kilkivan on Saturday 22 August, 1868. This was described as being: '... a neat and substantial structure, by far the best in town.'³³ Another description of the building claimed: 'The building is very neat, after the style of the court-house, Gympie, 21 feet by 12. It is very well got up and beats the bank buildings in Nashville hollow. The usual bank business will be done, and gold to any amount will be purchased.'³⁴ The first manager was a Mr Buckland, of Gympie, who came in for immediate criticism for transporting three hundred ounces of gold to Gympie rather than sending the gold to Maryborough by the gold escort.

The lack of water continued to be a problem for the miners who needed it for sluicing, a few showers put some water into the gullies but the miners often had to contend with gullies that were completely dry. Many of the miners were content with the gold they were finding but they generally believed that they were getting only the alluvial gold washed from a far richer reef that had yet to be found.³⁵

The town, situated on the flat on Rossmore Road near the site of the present Kilkivan cemetery, must certainly have been a lively place at that time, with approximately a thousand diggers on the field and with only a small police presence — a sergeant and half a dozen troopers operating from a tent police station — it was a sometimes lawless place. The magistrate presided over the Police Court and was said to have been kept very busy. Two publican's licences were granted on Wednesday 26 August, 1868, the recipients being J.R. Thompson for the West Coast Hotel and J.F. Cornelius for the Commercial Hotel.³⁶ A great many grog shanties also sprang up on the diggings, these became well frequented and some housed a number of prostitutes whose services were in great demand. In February 1869 there was considerable concern over the problems being caused through not only the drunkenness, but also the absence of the police magistrate who had, evidently, been recalled. A gold miner who signed himself only as, 'a married man', wrote a scathing letter to the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* in which he described the conditions on the goldfields during the evenings and nights:

I regret to think the present government should place the inhabitants of the town of Kilkivan, although not a promising goldfield, in such a position as to take from us the protection of a police magistrate, for since the removal of Mr Scarr from office, the town has

not assumed its peaceable condition as through his instrumentality. Whether the government intend pursuing this course, I don't know; but one thing is certain, we are not to have the benefit of a police magistrate. I think the best the Executive can do is to authorise the officer in charge of the police to act in such capacity, in quelling disturbances and rowdiness, which I am sorry to say is now a nightly occurrence; in fact, the shanty I shall more particularly mention was in Mr Scarr's time fined 20s. for allowing such midnight broils. Since that time there are five licensed publicans, who close their houses at the proper time. I therefore think that only in justice to them, the police should interfere to compel the shanties — who keep up a continual din of unearthly sounds and discordant music from the strains of a drunken fiddler and a rowdy individual upon a kerosene tin — to keep proper hours also; or else should lay information against such parties to stop proceedings of criminality and vice which are now being nightly enacted. I shall now refer to the disgraceful disturbances which took place on Saturday night last, at the shanty mentioned as being fined. From midnight till breakfast time on Sunday morning could be heard shouts of 'A ring, a ring!' during which time several pitched battles were fought, to the annoyance of the would-be slumbering neighbours. Certainly one man had occasion to give information to the police that during these riotous proceedings he had been robbed of £20, and the suspected party (a lady) was taken into custody from one of the bedrooms attached to the saloon of this notorious shanty.³⁷

In addition to the hotels and shanties there were soon a number of stores on the field, blacksmiths, bakeries and grocery stores, most of the owners were businessmen from either Maryborough or Gympie who had stocked up wagons with provisions and moved rapidly to Kilkivan. As we have seen, for a while, J.D. Mactaggart also ran a small retail store on the field.

By May 1869 the population of the new township had evidently decreased significantly, with one observer estimating that there were only five hundred people on the goldfield, including women and children. Seven puddling machines were being worked along the West Coast Creek claim, and in the lower end of Star Gully there were approximately seventy men working. Sluicing parties were working the heads of West Coast Creek, wherever water was to be found in sufficient quantities, and there were fossickers all over the goldfield. Tunnelling operations were being carried on by a man named Coogan and his party of men in Italian Gully, this being the richest gully to have been found on the field. The tunnel had been extended some 400 feet in an effort to find the elusive reef, but no reef had been discovered. Approximately two hundred ounces of gold were being purchased each week by the bank and stores, but the miners were complaining of the serious lack of women, as one writer claimed: '... The inequality of the sexes would constitute a formidable weapon in the hands of ... advocates of immigration. Whilst scores of able-bodied, noble-hearted well-to-do swains bill and coo and bewail their unhappy state there are ... in all, two marriageable single persons of the female persuasion to select from.'³⁸

By now the illegal grog shanties had been closed and a sergeant of police and a few constables were on the field, '... to ensure obedience to the law in the face of every attempt to infringe it.' A mail service had commenced, township residents were regularly being supplied with bread, fresh milk, butter and meat, vegetables were being purchased from a number of Chinese growers. These Chinese occupied some three acres of land on the right bank of the creek approximately three miles below the diggings, '... and there they toil unceasingly and by their unflagging industry prove the surest conservators of the public health among their fairer-complexioned brethren,' the press claimed.³⁹

In early June, 1869, the press reported that the original New Zealand prospectors still had about six months' work on their claims, the population had then grown again and two hundred ounces of gold were being purchased weekly at the township. A Mr Forrest had been gazetted clerk of petty sessions and registrar of births and deaths.⁴⁰ A brief note in the *Brisbane Courier* of 24 June claimed that a: '... party from Kilkivan (was to) journey to Melbourne to buy a crushing machine. Mines good and solid at Kilkivan.'⁴¹

That month, Thomas Mullaly applied for a publican's licence to operate the Digger's Arms near Kilkivan. At the same time and scheduled for the same licensing meeting to be held on the 25th of that month, Ashbury Bright also applied for a renewal of his licence to operate the Kilkivan Hotel. Mullaly's Digger's Arms was described as containing two sitting rooms and four bedrooms, excluding those used by Mullaly, his wife and three children. Mullaly had never owned a

publican's licence before. The hotel was situated approximately seven miles from the diggings. Ashbury Bright's application for licence renewal for the Kilkivan Hotel described the hotel as containing two sitting rooms and four bedrooms. Bright was married, but apparently without any children at that time — as none are listed in the application.⁴²

Over the following months the population of Kilkivan declined as the lure of other gold discoveries drew them away to regions where they hoped to find better luck, although many remained, satisfied to work for what was generally just a modest wage. Additionally, a new syndicate had been formed, the Kilkivan Quartz-crushing Company, with the object of erecting on the field a set of ten head stampers.⁴³ One resident described the township, stating: '... there is yet left sufficient speculators in the shape of businessmen and reefers, to prove that Kilkivan is still in existence, and likely to remain so for a considerable time. As proof of this I may mention that there is now a subscribed capital raised for purchasing a first-class quartz crushing machine for the reefs on Mr McTaggart's (sic) run in the immediate vicinity of Kilkivan, and a gentleman is about to proceed immediately to Sydney or Melbourne for the purpose of purchasing same.'⁴⁴

By the following year it was clear that there was no fabulously rich reef as yet undiscovered on the Kilkivan field, those miners who remained were finding only sufficient to scratch a living, most of the alluvial gold had gone. However, the small and dwindling community was soon to gain fresh hope with the discovery by a German prospector named Endreck of a new goldfield at One Mile Gully. A report of the new rush claimed: 'We have obtained some further particulars relative to the new rush to Sheep-station Creek or One-mile Gully, Kilkivan. Our informant, who arrived yesterday, states that the locality is situated about two miles and a half from the old township, and nearer the *Kilkivan* station. There are about one hundred men at work, all apparently satisfied ... In the opinion of many of the diggers, the place is a better-looking country for gold than the old Kilkivan diggings.'⁴⁵

The rush to One-mile Gully was a short one, it attracted more than one hundred men and for a while there was a frenzy of activity, but in the long term the field proved to be shallow and unprofitable and eventually the numbers of diggers dwindled as they left to seek other gold-bearing areas.⁴⁶



William Spencer.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.



Annie Spencer. 'Live and Let Live' Rossmore.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

In July 1871 the press reported that only about sixty Europeans and the same number of Chinese were then working the Kilkivan goldfields. The halcyon days of the Kilkivan goldfields were, apparently, over.⁴⁷

Among the first settlers to the Kilkivan region was the Spencer family. This family played an important role in the embryonic days of Kilkivan, they later invested in farming and timber interests and were highly respected members of the local community. A paper, currently in the possession of the Kilkivan Historical Society, gives some details of this family's early history, it claims:

The Spencer family arrived in Kilkivan from Southern Victoria on 10 June, 1868, driving a dray pulled by 2 horses — a heavy draught and a saddle mare. The family consisted of William and Annie Spencer and 6 children — Emma Sarah, Jane Amelia, Elizabeth Mary, Ellen Louisa, William Edward, Maria Margaret, Annie Louise and Charles Alfred.

They also brought with them a small flock of goats for milk and meat. They had £200 in an old school book tied with string. The horse and dray were used on the goldfield to cart gravel to the battery. If gravel was gold bearing, payment was made. No gold — no payment. The battery was situated on Portion 417 on Black Soil Gully, it was removed about 1910. William Spencer never dug for gold, he sold milk, butter and vegetables to the miners.

William Edward Spencer (a son) followed timber and got a bullock team. Charles Alfred Spencer (another son) cut most of the timber. The bullock team was also used to plough gold bearing ridges to be carted to the battery.

When the family first arrived they built their first hut on Portion 204. A bigger one was soon built which was later used as a hay shed. The first house was built about 1886. All timber for the house was carted by William Edward and Charles Alfred and then pit sawn by them on the property. Some of the cedar was hauled by bullocks from Sister Tree Creek, Gympie. All furniture was made on the property by Charles Spencer. When the house was nearly completed, a bush fire in a dry season almost burnt it down. The women eventually stopped the fire by sweeping it back with brooms.

William Edward Spencer hauled goods from Maryborough including beer and spirits. They had to be careful or the spirits would be milked on the return journey.

Emma became Mrs Jones and lived around Kilkivan. Jane became Mrs Bloomfield and lived at Kolan. Both girls reared large families. Elizabeth was drowned in the Burnett River at the age of 33. Maria married five times and lived at Aramara. She also reared a large family. Annie married Pat Dorna and lived at Pine Hill, Brooweena.

William and Charles selected land, the bullock teams were used in clearing the land. William and Charles bought M.H.L. 796 and 953 from *Kilkivan* station. Charles carried the money in gold sovereigns over to *Kilkivan* homestead in a sugar bag.

The name, *Live and Let Live*, was given to the place by Annie. The Spencer family interests were cattle and timber. Charles was a breeder of Devon Cattle and William a timber worker most of his life. As well as looking after the cattle, Charles Alfred did most of the timber cutting. After a burst appendix and peritonitis in 1927, Charles was not able to do much work and never rode a horse again.

Charles Alfred married Agnes Frances Ray on 19 January, 1910. William Edward married Agnes Clarke Jones about the same time. Annie Spencer died in 1919. William died when he was about 55 and was buried in the old Gympie cemetery. William Edward died in 1919 (aged 58).

William Henry and George Spencer started a sawmill, adjoining the *Live And Let Live* in April 1934, using timber from the property. They moved the sawmill to Oakview in April 1935. The sawmill was moved to Gympie in December 1971.

Charles Alfred died in March 1951. Agnes Spencer (Charles' wife) retired to Kilkivan in 1952. After suffering a broken hip and later a broken leg, she died on 23 September, 1961.⁴⁸

Notes and Sources
Chapter Twenty-nine
Gold and the Growth of the Township

1. *Mineral Resources of the Kilkivan District*, Geological Survey of Queensland, report 60, Queensland Department of Mines, 1974, p 5.
2. B/C. 7 May, 1868.
3. B/C. 9 May, 1868, p 6.
4. Andrew Wedderburn Melville, an early resident of Maryborough, discussed this issue in M/C. 11 November, 1865, p 2.
5. B/C. 9 May, 1868, p 6.
6. For precise details of this assay see: B/C. 9 May, 1868, p 6.
7. B/C. 28 September, 1867, p 6.
8. See M/C. 2 June, 1919, p 6 for details of this particular crushing which took place in the Monkland mines.
9. M/C. 29 May, 1869, p 2.
10. *The Nashville Times*, 13 May, 1868, p 3.
11. *The Nashville Times*, 9 May, 1868.
12. MBC. 12 May, 1868.
13. MBC. 13 May, 1868.
14. MBC. 19 May, 1868.
15. MBC. 21 May, 1868.
16. *The Nashville Times*, 13 May, 1868, p 2.
17. M/C. 28 May, 1868, p 3.
18. *The Nashville Times*, 27 June, 1868, p 3.
19. M/C. 28 May, 1868, p 3.
20. M/C. 21 May, 1868, p 3.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. M/C. 2 June, 1868, p 3.
24. M/C. 13 June, 1868, p 2.
25. M/C. 20 June, 1868, p 2.
26. B/C. 20 June, 1868, p 5.
27. M/C. 30 June, 1868, p 2.
28. M/C. 11 July, 1868, p 3. See also *The Nashville Times*, 11 July, 1868.
29. *The Nashville Times*, 15 August, 1868, p 3.
30. *The Nashville Times*, 19 August, 1868, p 3.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. M/C. 1 September, 1868, p 3.
34. *The Nashville Times*, 29 August, 1868.
35. M/C. 1 September, 1868, p 3.
36. *Ibid.*
37. M/C. 27 February, 1869, p 3.
38. M/C. 29 May, 1869, p 2.
39. *Ibid.*
40. B/C. 5 June, 1869.
41. B/C. 24 June, 1869.
42. M/C. 12 June, 1869, p 1.
43. *The Gympie Times*, 13 October, 1869, p 3.
44. *The Gympie Times*, 19 June, 1869, p 2.
45. M/C. 5 July, 1870, p 3.
46. For further details of this rush in its early stages see: B/C. 15 July, 1870, p 3.
47. B/C. 26 July, 1871.
48. *Live and Let Live*, undated paper, Kilkivan Historical Society.

Black Snake, Mount Coora and Mount Clara

While gold was reportedly first discovered at Black Snake during the early 1850s, the real rush to Black Snake occurred in February 1869 and the prospectors working the claims there did particularly well — at least during the early days of the field's development. The best and most profitable lode at Black Snake seems to have been the Rose, Shamrock and Thistle. By 1869 approximately fifty persons were said to be working the field.¹ In February 1869, days after the rush to Black Snake had commenced, a correspondent writing to the *Gympie Times* stated: 'I am glad to inform you that a rich reef has been struck and a prospecting claim granted. It is called the Black Snake Reef.'² Another early visitor to the new diggings at Black Snake stated: 'The place known as the new rush at Kilkivan is situated on the head of Black Snake Creek, which runs into Wide Bay Creek and is about thirteen miles in a south-west direction from Kilkivan township. On my arrival on the ground I found about 40 men there, but very little work had been done, and nothing at all approaching to payable gold had been got anywhere. The camp at present is on the head of Black Snake Creek, which is in that place a wide grassy gully with a chain of fine reedy waterholes running up it, bounded on each side by low ridges, not very thickly timbered. The prospectors at Black Snake are at work on a leader ... Fine gold can be seen in a considerable number of specimens from this claim.'³

By 1871 the diggings at Black Snake were proving to be profitable but difficult. A crushing machine, known as the 'Hope' machine had been erected at the diggings, but the manager of the machine, J.W. Hillcoats, claimed that the only real winners at Black Snake were not individual miners but companies with sufficient capital to put down shafts. In a report dated 1 February, 1871, he claimed that those men who thought they could come to the diggings and find a reef were very much mistaken. He added that the Shamrock line of reef was a reasonably profitable one and had yielded up to 8 dwts per crushing, (although this was not a particularly good return). Number 3 South had gone as high as 2½ ounces to the crushed ton, but that other mines had been abandoned because their owners had lacked the capital necessary to put down shafts on the reef. Hillcoats wrote that the gold being taken out of the diggings was of a very good quality and was fetching up to £3 14s 3d per ounce at Gympie, adding: '... The success of the trial of 3 tons of ore from the prospectors' claim, Mariner's reef, first crushed at the machine, and the concentrated tailings treated in the furnace ... has been so satisfactory that ground adjoining has been taken up and formed into a small company and will be tested in the same manner for gold, silver and copper.'⁴

As with most other early goldfields there was no mail service at Black Snake at that time and miners complained that such a service was badly needed. Hillcoats was incensed that an earlier press report had claimed that he was erecting: '... a spacious and costly dwelling' and that this confidence of his was: 'a guarantee for the future.' In fact, Hillcoats refuted this, claiming that his home was: '... a plain cottage of three bedrooms and a sitting room just large enough to contain my family, (eleven in all), having no pretensions in any way to architectural elegance, and at the very smallest possible outlay.'⁵

By 1873 the situation at Black Snake had changed dramatically, the emphasis of mining being for copper, and control of the operations falling largely into the hands of a single company, the Black Snake Gold, Silver and Copper Company. In August that year a report published in the *Maryborough Chronicle* gives a clear indication of what the field looked like and the operations then being carried on there:

Black Snake Gold, Silver, and Copper Mining Company. This Company, of which Messrs, E. Vickery and J. Christoe are the principal members, is not, so far as I know, a publicly registered company, but partakes more of the nature of a private undertaking. The scene of

operations extends along the whole line of the Shamrock Reef, and includes other equally valuable reefs in the immediate vicinity. These reefs were discovered about four years ago and continued to be worked remuneratively though not vigorously by the several parties of claim-holders to within a year ago, when they were all bought up by the present company. In size the reefs average 2½ feet wide, with good workable ground, and produced, some of it, 4½ ozs. to the ton, besides large quantities of silver. In depth the reefs, while still carrying gold and silver, changed into rich copper lodes, for which they are at present mined. The company's plant consists of the late Pioneer Quartz-Crushing Machine (now greatly extended and improved); and detached at the distance of a quarter of a mile, are two furnaces of capacious dimensions, and a large calciner, capable of calcining between 70 and 80 tons of ore weekly. Both furnaces and calciner will be completed and ready for work in a fortnight ... An assay office in close proximity to the calciner — also on the point of completion, but already replete with the necessary scientific apparatus — is a specimen of arrangement, constructiveness, and taste. There is a large number of hands employed apparently under a judicious management ...

Mount Coora mining operations are confined to Arthur's lode, on which, in addition to several smaller workings, a shaft is down 90 feet. At the depth of 90 feet the water begins to get stronger, and powerful pumping machinery, it is felt, will shortly be a necessity. The old furnace is at present giving entire satisfaction, and a new furnace and calciner will be ready for work in a very few weeks. The great difficulty experienced with the old furnace was the bottom continually giving way, rising and fusing with the molten metal, and suffering the metal while in this state to descend and bury itself beneath. The approved material is a pulverised quartz, obtained from the Black Snake Crushing Machine, which is laid, fused, and set in a double bottom. The Mount Coora lands, which comprise some 1100 acres, are situated at the extreme head of Fat Hen Creek amid very impracticable country.

Mount Clara Copper Company's lands are situated on the western boundary of the Mount Coora, the workings being three-quarters of a mile distance from those of the Mount Coora. The bearing of Arthur's lode on the latter property is almost due west, and I have no doubt that in time it will be found and mined in the Mount Clara lands. The operations now carried on by the Mount Clara are on another and distinct lode not altogether dissimilar from Arthur's lode. For the facility of procuring firewood and other conveniences the Mount Clara furnace is established a mile or so down the creek. The road from the mine is hilly and in a few places awkwardly precipitous, yet capable of being made a very good road. Its construction entailed heavy sidelong ascent and descent cuttings, ponderous bridges across yawning mountain gulfs and ravines, an immensity of stumping, clearing, and general levelling, and the wonder is how the manager, Mr Smith, even managed to make so good a road out of what at first sight would appear a series of unapproachable fastnesses. His financial resources, too, I understand, were very slender. The furnace is sound and serviceable, and at the time of my visiting was in full blaze. Mount Clara is a Maryborough Company. It at one time gave indication of a nervous flutter towards assuming tangible proportions ... The company and over-discriminating public were duly apprised of the 'improving character of the lode,' and the directors, to 'work the mine' (let us generously presume) borrowed between £4000 and £5000. But the excitement, notwithstanding, abated, the works were stopped, and the directors no longer visit the mine or see anything of it; but they offer the shareholders to take it over for the debt. The mine is let on tribute to the late manager, Mr Smith, who at present is commencing to re-open the works and resume operations on this principle ... The Clara is a very good property of increasing richness with increasing depth, and only requiring amply extensive smelting apparatus to make it a highly remunerative property. But Mount Clara, the once *Clara Carissima* of the Maryborough directors and Maryborough and Brisbane brokers, is now dying of neglect.⁶

The Mount Clara field was established in the early 1870s, and in April 1873 a government geologist stated that with two or three furnaces it could become the most important copper field in Australia. In May 1873 the Mount Clara Copper Mining Company met in Brisbane and decided to raise the capital to construct smelting and refining equipment at the site, they estimated that they would be required to borrow up to £5000 for the venture. The company experienced numerous difficulties, work was stopped but later resumed and by September 1873 three tons of copper ore had been transported to Maryborough. Those first few years of operations were extremely speculative to the investors of the company. The *Brisbane Courier* later stated:

Two gentlemen held one of these selections (on which copper had been located), in extent 120 acres, on which copper, of course, of unparalleled richness was assumed to exist ... That such wealth should be wasted was not to be consented to for a moment, so nineteen other gentlemen

joined the first two and they sat down calmly to declare the value of the treasure they had found ... so, dividing the interest into fortieth parts, the two original owners kept half for themselves and the nineteen holding the other twenty portions, agreed to find £60 to expend in working the mine ... the partnership became a company and the Mount Clara Copper Mining Company, capital £10,000, (was formed). But time went on and ... copper mines require capital for their development ... and instead of capital and development the Mount Clara Copper Mining Company in liquidation presented itself and the grim visage of an official liquidator, acting on behalf of clamorous and angry creditors appeared on the scene.⁷

The operation was offered for sale in February 1874, the *Brisbane Courier* ran an advertisement which described the mining operation as being sold by the mortgagees through James Duncan and Company. The sale took place at the Royal Hotel, Maryborough, and a property description claimed: 'On this property there has been erected a first class smelting works capable of turning out about three tons of pimple copper weekly.'⁸

The Mount Clara Copper Mining Company was sold at auction to Edward Booker for £4000 on 12 February, 1874, the bidding having gradually crept up from £2000. Booker was a well known Maryborough businessman.⁹

The operation was again sold in December 1874 to the Mount Coora Copper Mining Company under the management of Captain W.H. Price. The press subsequently reported: 'It is understood that the Mount Coora Copper Mining Company has purchased from the mortgagees, the property known as the Mount Clara copper mine.'¹⁰ By May the following year there were twenty men employed at Mount Clara, the ore being transported to the smelting works at Mount Coora, the mixing of the ores from the two mines being found to be more economical and therefore more profitable.¹¹

The names of Mount Coora and Mount Clara are inexorably intertwined with the exploitation of copper deposits in those regions. At Mount Coora, seven smelters were established, each made of red brick clay, at Mount Clara the smelter was constructed of local stone hewn to rectangular blocks and set in clay mortar. The smelters in the region worked for only a few years and had closed by 1875, the mines yielding insufficient returns to pay the costs of production. The smelter at Mount Clara has now been preserved by the Kilkivan Shire Council and is listed by the Australian Heritage Commission under the Australian Heritage Commission Act of 1973, the listing was formalised on 14 June, 1977.¹²

The gold deposits at Black Snake were not rich and in 1886 the government geologist reported to parliament that the district was entirely deserted, adding: '... no mining has been carried on there for some years back. Shafts have been sunk on many of the reefs but unfortunately, in nearly every case they have either fallen in or are partially filled with water.'¹³

One of the early miners in the region was Samuel Edward Jones, a former smelter from Swansea, South Wales. He arrived in Queensland in 1872 — although it is believed that he had previously been in Western Australia. Upon arriving in the Kilkivan district he worked at Mount Clara and Mount Coora. He married Emma Sarah Barton on 24 March, 1873. Emma, a well known midwife in the district, had been born in London on 20 December, 1851, arriving in Australia with her parents in February 1853, the family landing at Melbourne. This family remained at Ballarat for several years and in 1868 Emma and her mother, with their stepfather, William Spencer, came to Queensland. Samuel Jones died on 4 September, 1901, but Emma lived for many more years, she died on 8 August, 1947.¹⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Thirty

Black Snake, Mount Coora and Mount Clara

1. M/C. 29 May, 1869, p 2.
2. *The Gympie Times*, 9 February, 1869, p 3.
3. *The Gympie Times*, 13 February, 1869, p 3. For details on the first impressions of the gold commissioner see: B/C. 18 February, 1869, p 3.
4. M/C. 7 February, 1871, p 2.
5. Ibid.
6. M/C. 23 August 1873, supplement, p 1.
7. B/C. 14 April, 1875, p 2.
8. B/C. 11 February, 1874, p 4.
9. B/C. 13 February, 1874, p 2, and 3 December, 1874, p 2. For some details of the sale and its conditions see: B/C. 17 February, 1874, p 4. See also: SBT. 22 February, 1978, p 18.
10. B/C. 3 December, 1874, p 2.
11. B/C. 27 May, 1875, p 2.
12. For technical details on the operations of this smelter and its restoration see: *Report on Proposed Restoration Work at Mount Clara Copper Smelter Chimney at Fat Hen Creek, Kilkivan*, by R. Chapman, shire engineer of Kilkivan Shire Council, dated 28 June, 1979, copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
13. *Report on the Geology and Mineral Resources of the Districts of Kilkivan and Black Snake*, by W.H. Rand, 1886, p 4, Kilkivan Historical Society.
14. Letter to the author from Dawn Choate, dated 20 December, 1996.

The Second Kilkivan Township

As the population of the region slowly increased, the situation at the original Kilkivan township at West Coast Creek was changing dramatically, the alluvial claims were virtually worked out and it was evident that the goldfield would never reveal any fabulously rich reef. At the point when it seemed clear the township would die, two men, Allen Cook and Tom Harding, discovered a new goldfield which was situated near the site where the rifle range would be later established, the year was 1874. They called their find the Rise and Shine and almost overnight the old claims at West Coast Creek were abandoned as the rush to the new diggings took place. It was originally intended to call the new town the Rise and Shine, but as there was already a township by that name, the embryonic canvas and bark hut village was called firstly Mount Neureum and later Kilkivan. According to Murphy and Easton there were two batteries operating on the field.¹

The first hotel at the second township was established by John Beer, a particularly apt name for a hotel owner. John Beer was born in England in 1822, his wife, Ann Elizabeth, was born in Ireland in 1840. John, his wife and family, travelled by horse and wagon from Bendigo to Kilkivan to establish their hotel on the goldfields. They brought up a family of ten children, four sons and six daughters. John Beer died on 13 January, 1889, his wife, Ann Elizabeth, having predeceased him on 17 June, 1879, both are interred at the Kilkivan cemetery.²

Ashbury Bright moved his business operations from the Mount Coora region and opened the Royal Hotel and a store at the new site. The first commissioner at this new goldfield was the infamous John O'Connell Bligh, a former Native Police commander who had done much to decimate the aboriginal population of the Wide Bay and Burnett districts. Bligh marked out the streets of the new site and, characteristically perhaps, named the main street after himself.

Stores at the new site were opened by M. Devine and J. Wormald, these two men were bitterly opposed to Commissioner Bligh and frequently did what they could to annoy him, including defacing the official notices he regularly posted around the goldfield. The first unofficial post office was run from Michael Mackey's store, however, the first official post office was situated on the eastern side of the town with Charles James as postmaster.

On the relatively new Rise and Shine reef there was considerable consternation over the granting of leases on lands that had hitherto been worked by miners who had spent many years on the field. One of these miners claimed that he had been working Kilkivan gold ever since that first discovery in 1868, he had seen the field rise and die and had moved, with many others, to the new discoveries, particularly to the new Rise and Shine reef. He claimed that one party of miners, 'Messrs Cogan and Co.', had spent three years tunnelling into the heart of a mountain where they believed the reef was to be found and that the new system of leases would take such enterprise from the men who were the rightful (if not the legal) owners. The miner claimed that the lease system had been devised for established goldfields such as Gympie and was not suitable to new reefs where speculation was still in its infancy. 'How well those Kilkivan gold-miners have deserved of their present discovery is known only to themselves and others and myself,' the miner claimed, '... who have witnessed and marvelled at their repeated attempts to discover something fresh amidst hardships of successive disappointment, exposure and even hunger.'³

The miner claimed that after years of toil, and with success now just possible, the new system of leases was designed to ruin the miners who had given years of their lives in an effort to discovering the major reef on the field. He ended:

But just now, as they are beginning to reap the reward of their long years of labour, they are beset by a troop of mining speculators from Gympie, who, availing themselves of Gympie law, secure wholesale by lease large areas of the line of the new discovery. See the monstrous injustice. The working miners of Kilkivan are allowed to undergo all the pains and penalties of discovering, but the Gympie speculators are permitted to overpower them by force of law and reap the rewards of this meritorious industry ... leases were never intended to extend newly discovered ground of the quality and character of the Rise and Shine.⁴

In 1876 a mining conglomerate was formed and erected a ten-head stamper battery in the centre of the township. It first began operations in June that year. However, this field, like the West Coast Creek field years previously, was never to sustain any long term development. The gold was shallow and far from rich and slowly the financial outlay of recovering it began to outweigh profits. Despite this, enthusiastic and optimistic miners continued to work the reef.

By 1877, when production was at its peak, the small township was changing dramatically with the addition of new buildings, houses of varying sizes, a new hotel which had been constructed by two men named Cogan and Maguire, and various stores. In these stores residents could, for a change, find a selection of farming tools, whereas prior to this time and the opening of the land for free selection most of the tools available in the town were for mining purposes. Surveyors' marked trees were everywhere to be seen at the corners of selections, clearly defined with the regulation post three feet high. Slowly, surely, the town began to come alive with early settlers.⁵

In October that year the site was visited by the Gympie correspondent of the *Brisbane Courier* who reported:

I arrived at the township of Neureum or more generally known as the Rise and Shine. This town derives its name from the Rise and Shine reef. It has a population of about 150 inhabitants. It boasts a store, public house, butcher's shop, and boarding house. It has also a chemist, who, together with retailing drugs, is also a superintendent of the postal department. He also does a good trade in 'hop beer,' which is famed throughout the district. Adjoining the chemist shop, on the left hand side, is the lock-up, which, according to current report, must be exceedingly well named, as it is very seldom opened. This speaks well of the orderly behaviour of the inhabitants. Upon the right of the chemist's is the school house, which is presided over by Mr Kennedy who has thirty-three healthy looking youngsters under his charge. The chief products of the place consist of gold, goats, and children. The gold I shall refer to presently. As for the goats, they appear to be innumerable and form a very novel and striking feature as they roam about in flocks on the ridges. One person alone, I am informed, is the owner of nearly one thousand ... goats. The children, as previously mentioned, appear very healthy, and a very good sample of children in general. A medical man resides in the town, and appears to have a sinecure ... This place does not in the least resemble a mining township — more like some rural village. Business is very dull ... Altogether the general aspect of the place does not accord with its aspiring and brilliant cognomen of Rise and Shine ...

Several of the miners are complaining about the owner of *Kilkivan* station fencing in the water. I believe that a petition will be forwarded to the Minister for Lands, praying that he will cause the place to be surveyed for a reserve.⁶

Over the following years the mining progressed without any startling discoveries, although there were hopes that the Kilkivan district would yet reveal a golden wealth that would take the region into a new phase of prosperity.

Notes and Sources
Chapter Thirty-one
The Second Kilkivan Township

1. WW. p 306.
2. Family note, Kilkivan Historical Society.
3. M/C. 18 August, 1874, p 2.
4. Ibid.
5. M/C. 4 June, 1877, p 3.
6. For a more detailed description of the mines then in operation at the Rise and Shine see: B/C. 3 November, 1877 p 6.

The First School at Kilkivan

The first school in the Kilkivan district, known as the Neureum Provisional School, was established at the Rise and Shine region in 1875. The school committee, formed that year, comprised of Michael Cogan, William Spencer, George Penny, John Beer, Thomas McColm, William Fraser and Michael Mackey. The building was to be supplied by residents of the district while the Department of Public Instruction in Brisbane provided a teacher and necessities such as books, maps, and charts.

On 10 November, 1875, the committee wrote to the Board of General Education requesting that a school be established at the site, their letter stated, in part: 'There are 25 children here between the ages of 6 and 14 years with the number increasing. There is a quartz crushing machine being erected here on the Rise and Shine reef and in a very short time we expect to have a large population. We ask the co-operation of the Board in providing us with a provisional school.'¹

Another letter dated 15 December, 1875, pointed out to the department that the process of establishing a school was moving rapidly ahead. Michael Cogan, the secretary of the school committee, wrote: 'Respectfully beg leave to say that the School Committee appointed here have procured a school room and also appointed a female teacher who has been teaching school at Mount Coora for some time and gave general satisfaction to the Parents of the children whom she taught. She is married and I believe a competent teacher.'²

The first school at the diggings was a simple construction of pine palings with a slab floor, according to the detailed statement of schools opened during the year of 1876, it was listed as costing 'Nil', and was opened on 6 March, 1876, with Sabina Page as its teacher, her annual salary was £60.³

Sabina Page was an Irish woman from Dublin, born on 9 September, 1859. According to her certificate of employment she had no formal qualifications, she had taught briefly in a private school at Mount Coora for a short time during 1875-76, and her employment record for the school at Kilkivan later stated: 'Arithmetic is practiced but not taught, grammar and geography are mere memory work and that not at all satisfactory.'⁴

Sabina Page resigned her position as head teacher on 19 February, 1877, in her letter of resignation she informed the Board of Education that her parents were living in Brisbane and that they wanted Sabina Page to live with them.⁵

On 23 February, 1877, Sarah May Oates, a married woman with several children living at the Prospect claims, applied for the position of head teacher. Mrs Oates told the Board of Education and, in a separate letter, the secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, that her husband was a blacksmith and that he and their eldest daughter were capable of looking after the remaining children while Mrs Oates was working at the school. Sarah Oates claimed to have a thorough understanding of the requirements of the position and the keeping of school records and gave several personal references. A note, added to the letter forwarded to the Board of Education, stated that upon the request of the school committee the application was declined as a male teacher had been appointed.⁶

According to the 'Teachers and their Yearly Emoluments' return, the next teacher at the school was N.F. Kennedy, who was appointed on 4 April, 1877. Kennedy was paid at first a salary of £70 per annum rising later to £80 per annum, he remained in charge of the school until the following year when he was: '... removed by the Department.'

On 4 May, 1878, a district inspector visited the school, he was not pleased with the state of affairs at the school nor was he impressed with another application for the position of head teacher made by Sarah Oates. In a letter to the under-secretary at the Department of Public Instruction he stated:

This school was not in operation at the time of my visit, the teacher having been removed by the Department, but to what locality I am unable to say. The building is of paling and is very dilapidated, the books and maps are in a disgraceful condition owing to the ravages of cockroaches and other insects. The registers and school records have been carelessly kept by the late teacher.

Some woman (Mrs Oates) residing at Neureum has made application for the school, but the parents generally are of opinion that she is not a fit and proper person to be placed in charge of young children. She is living in adultery with a man of the place.

Owing to the failure of the diggings, many families are deserting the township so that in a short time a school may be unnecessary.

At present there are about 20 children who would attend school. A more suitable building however, should be erected.⁷

Despite this disparaging report, Sarah Oates was appointed to the position of head teacher with a salary of £60 per annum — considerably less than that paid to her male predecessor.⁸ Yet the appointment of Mrs Oates to the position was received in the general community with some misgiving and she resigned from the position in June 1878, her resignation being accepted on 15 July that year. The circumstances of her resignation centred around her private life, numerous allegations had been made, most proffering judgments on grounds of morality. Yet Mrs Oates, in her letter of resignation, pointed out that her private life was her own affair and threatened legal action, she wrote:

I herewith beg to tender my resignation as teacher at the Neureum School as my husband is so indignant at the ridiculously absurd charge made against me, and at the same time our solicitor advises me to demand your authority for making the charge and he advises me to give no information as to time and place of my marriage beyond the fact that it did not take place in Queensland and, of course, does not need registering in Queensland.

The only person we can suspect of trying to injure my reputation is Constable (M) Cahill against whom there is a case of perjury pending trial at the Gympie Police Court and my husband is subpoenaed as principle (sic) witness and we are fully determined to sue for damage done to my reputation ... I shall retain possession of the school and continue teaching Untill (sic) I hear from you that my resignation has been accepted.⁹

One man who came to the defence of Sarah Oates was C.L. James, the post and telegraph master, who had also recently been voted chairman of the school committee. James wrote to the under-secretary of public instruction in Brisbane on 5 August, 1878, stating that some people were attempting to have the school closed: '... in pure spite to Mrs Oates.' James went on to point out that he strongly defended Mrs Oates, giving her a glowing character reference and naming one of the leading agitators, Senior Constable M. Cahill. James also pointed out that there were considerable problems over the appointment of a new committee, some of the residents of the Rise and Shine not recognising the appointment of the new committee. Mrs Oates also wrote to the department stating that she intended retaining possession of some of the school's property and books until she was fully paid for the work she had carried out at the school even after her resignation.¹⁰

By this time the case had become both confusing and acrimonious. On 23 November, 1878, the district inspector of schools wrote to the under-secretary at the Department of Public Instruction informing him of the difficult situation. He stated:

Being at the Black Snake and within 12 miles of Neureum, I thought it advisable to ride over and ascertain the state of the school house, furniture etc. I found the building in a very dilapidated condition and unfit for school purposes without extensive repairs — the doors are without locks, and were for some time left open so that the school house became a camping place for goats. The maps have been destroyed, rollers torn off, the paper torn from

the canvas, and not a book was to be found in the school. On enquiry, I ascertained that the school registers and books were in the possession of Mrs Oates. I saw her, but she positively refused to give them up until the Department paid her ten weeks' salary which she considers is owing to her after she sent in her resignation. It appears that she kept on the school for that time, without any authority from the Department, supposing that she would be re-appointed.

The inhabitants are divided into cliques and are uncertain which is the proper committee. The new committee are accused of having appointed themselves unknown to the old committee and the majority of the parents.

I informed them that the dispute would be settled at the end of the year, as a new committee would be required for the next year, and that they had better unite to subscribe a fixed sum to augment the teacher's salary and that until some guarantee of this sort could be given, the Department would not be able to recommend them a teacher.

The majority of the parents appear to be very apathetic about the school and some declare that they will rather allow their children to be without education than send them to such a woman as Mrs Oates, although they have nothing against her character, but must be actuated by personal spite.

It is pretty generally believed that although Mrs Oates has been living with her present husband for a considerable time (some eight or nine years), her former husband is still alive, this circumstance, however, was almost forgotten until she was appointed teacher, when female jealousy revived the scandal.

Another female candidate (a married woman) is about to apply for the appointment, but as she does not reside at the Shine, I was unable to see her and report on her fitness for the office.

As most of the children (about 20) are young, a female teacher would be preferable to a male, if a suitable candidate could be found.¹¹

The school remained closed until another teacher, Mrs Innes, was appointed in 1879. According to an internal memorandum of the Department of Public Instruction dated 10 June, 1879, Mrs Innes left the school without leave, possibly in May or June of that year, to visit her sick mother in New South Wales. While absent she left her husband in charge, the memorandum stating that he was conducting the school, 'tolerably'.¹² Mrs Innes was later replaced by another teacher named Ernest Stephen.

In February 1881, C.L. James informed the Department of Public Instruction that the name of Neureum had been changed to Kilkivan, he stated: 'I respectfully beg to inform you that the post name of this town has been altered from Neureum to Kilkivan to avoid confusion with a town of a similar name.'¹³

In March 1882 a new committee was appointed, this consisted of C.L. James, the post and telegraph master, Ashbury Bright, a storekeeper, Jacob Engel, Sam Jones and John Penny, all miners. It was decided to demolish the old school and build a new one, until that time classes were taken in the Sunday School. Subscriptions in aid of the school fund were collected, by 3 April they amounted to £20.¹⁴ In August 1882 James reported to the Department of Public Instruction, stating: 'I beg to report that the new school building has been completed and will be ready for occupation on Monday 21st inst. The size of the building is 18ft by 35 ft from floor to wall plate, the cost £71, a double water closet is about to be erected at a cost of £5. As the building is in debt the supplying of proper desks etc will have to be deferred until more money is collected.'¹⁵

By April 1884 the school was under the charge of another teacher, John Burns, however, Burns was severely criticised for his drunkenness and his inability to carry out the duties assigned to him. In April 1884 C.L. James informed the under-secretary at the Department of Public Instruction that: '... we find that Mr John Burns has generally neglected his duties, and drinking since the Xmas holidays, the roll books and other books belonging to the School have not been written up since the middle of December, he also neglected opening the school on the following days: the last two school days in 1880, the second school day in the present year, the 26th and 27th March and today, the cause being drunkenness. Some of the children come a distance of 5 to 12 miles and are boarded here at the parents' expense, we have on each occasion of Mr Burns' offence reasoned with him and given him every chance, but to no purpose.'¹⁶



Kilkivan Provisional School 1883, teacher Mr Williams.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

Application for the establishment of a state school was made by members of the committee on 24 July, 1884, the number of children that would attend such a school was given in the official application as thirty-one and the amount raised by public subscription then totalled £31. By that time the school was under the care of a Mr Williams, a note appended to the official application by an officer of the Department of Public Instruction somewhat caustically stated: 'No returns have been received from Mr Williams, the lately appointed teacher.'¹⁷

The district inspector visited the school shortly afterwards and recommended that a state school not be approved for the community as there were insufficient pupils, the average attendance at the school during the previous quarter had been just 20.4 and at the time of the inspector's visit there had been just seventeen pupils in class, two pupils had to travel a distance of eighteen miles to the school.¹⁸

By August 1887 the school was evidently under the control of a teacher named D.W. Daly. That month Daly applied to the Department of Public Instruction for permission to join the Mounted Infantry Volunteer Defence Corps in the region. His application was approved.¹⁹

In September 1887 the school building was inspected for valuation purposes and the superintendent of school buildings later reported that the building was: '... of very little value to the Department.' He added that the school was built of slabs with saplings for rafters and plates, and that the only items of value were the floorboards, the cedar sashes, the iron roof and the ceiling boards. His subsequent report on the building ended: 'The desks, forms and (water) closets are useless. The value of the material to the Department is about £32.'²⁰

In December 1887 plans for a new school building were submitted to the Department of Public Instruction in Brisbane, the estimated cost of the new building was £650.²¹

However, for the following two years the proposal stagnated. At a public meeting held on 26 January, 1889, it was again decided to apply to the Department of Public Instruction for the establishment of a state school, the number of students had then risen to sixty-four and £104/8/- had been collected.²²

On 23 May, 1889, the secretary of the school committee, by then Thomas Wood, wrote to the department and pointed out that the work on a new school should be commenced without delay. At that time the school had been closed for six months, possibly due to the lack of a teacher.²³

The school at Kilkivan was awarded the status of a state school on 6 June, 1889, the announcement appearing in the *Government Gazette* of that date. After much agitation the new school was constructed in 1889 and opened by Mr H.W. Lee on 28 November that year.²⁴

Other schools in the region included those at Cinnabar, Rossmore, Oakview, Calgoa, Running Creek, Woolooga, Widgee, Sexton, Upper and Lower Wonga, Brooklands, Boonara, Goomeri, Tansey, Elgin Vale, Goomeri West, Goomeribong, Kinbombi, Barambah, Booinbah, Oakfield, Dadamarine Creek, Boobyjan, Watchbox, Manumbar, Gallangowan and, Mount Marcella.²⁵

In many instances children in the bush were seriously disadvantaged by distance and the possibilities of obtaining any kind of education were quite remote. Additionally, life in those remote places was also frequently dangerous for young children, they faced the dangers of snake-bite and injury from other animals and insects, periodic accidents — many of which were particularly severe, and various illnesses endemic to children, measles, whooping cough, scarlet fever and other even more serious diseases such as polio and typhus. With little or no medical care in close proximity, accidents and illnesses often proved fatal.

One man who wrote a brief account of such dangers was Robin Perrett. Many years later, in 1918, Perrett wrote:

I am the owner of an 80 acre property on the Kilkivan to Tansey Road known as the Five Mile, the western end of this property, I believe, was known at some time as the *Five Mile Sheep Station* ... Mrs Hester, whose husband was the manager of Kilkivan mines, told my mother all about this place, she described (the station) hut as (being) built with walls of timber slabs which had holes bored in (them) to poke a gun through in the event of wild native attack. The firearms they had were always ready loaded, muzzle loaders, but alas this purpose ended up in a ghastly tragic affair ... a little girl and her brother were playing around the hut as soldiers, the foolish boy pointed the gun at his sister, the gun exploded and tore open her chest, she remained conscious for the duration. The boy ran down to Mrs Hester and said his sister was sick. Hesters' place was a mile (away). Mrs Hester hurried up, she tore up some bed-sheets and wrapped them around the girl, she asked for a drink of water, Mrs Hester had an awful job finding some container to give (the girl) this drink. The parents were absent when the shooting took place. When (the father) came home he galloped away to (bring) a doctor, but all was too late. How dreadfully sad all this is. One can feel pity for the boy, I cannot imagine how he could live it down. When I was a child I found a muzzle-loader barrel under a log some hundreds of yards from the hut, I wonder if it is the tragic gun.²⁶

The Expansion of Kilkivan

By January 1883 there remained considerable activity on the Kilkivan goldfield and in the district generally. The Kilkivan Gold Mining Company had a contractor working to sink a shaft on the reef and a depth of 25 feet had been reached before a long spell of wet weather had postponed the work. A report dated 11 January that year claimed that the ground around the reef was becoming a little softer and easier to work, and the reef itself had increased in size from four inches to nine inches and contained a large percentage of gold, one test yielding more than ten ounces to the ton. The company had their own crushing battery on the site. The Rise and Shine United Company was raising stone from the reef, they owned a small battery and had recently crushed sixteen tons of stone with a return of 128 ounces of gold, which, as the report of the crushing claimed, '... must have been very satisfactory to the shareholders. The reef still looks good for another handsome cake (of gold) to gild the company's first annals of '83.'²⁷

The Number 2 South Rise and Shine had then commenced opening up a tunnel after digging a surface cutting of approximately thirty feet, their intention was to cut into the reef at a depth of about seventy feet. Some small reef indicators had already been discovered and these were gold bearing.



An early view of Kilkivan.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Kilkivan gold was evidently being retrieved in sufficient quantities to keep the various companies reasonably happy with their operations. Thirteen months later gold was still trickling into the various companies' coffers. The reef on the Rise and Shine United and the Kilkivan Gold Mining Tribute was showing coarse gold with a large amount of auriferous minerals from which the gold was being easily extracted. In February 1884 the Rise and Shine had been crushing for two or three weeks and had retrieved 34 ounces of gold from fifteen tons of ore.²⁸

On 9 February, 1884, a public meeting was held in the Kilkivan school house with the intention of inaugurating a progress association for Kilkivan. A committee comprising of Michael Mackey, M. Davey, T. Bloodworth, H.S. Hester, T. Hunter, J. Courtman, F. Ellery (the honorary secretary) and T. Rose, (chairman) was appointed. A press report of the meeting claimed that the association had been formed: "... So that the government and divisional boards in future may not find the Kilkivan folks so apathetic as to their interests as heretofore."²⁹

Notes and Sources

Chapter Thirty-two

The First School at Kilkivan

1. Original letter held at the archives of the Kilkivan Historical Society.
2. Ibid.
3. *Teachers and their Yearly Emoluments — return for 1876 to 1878; and Statement of Schools, Table One, 1877, entry 33, p 15, Kilkivan Historical Society.*
4. Employment certificate, dated 31 March, 1877, Copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
5. Letter of resignation, Sabina Page, Kilkivan Historical Society.
6. Letters to the Board of Education and the secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, from Sarah Oates, copies held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
7. Letter from the district inspector to the under-secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
8. *Teachers and their Yearly Emoluments — return for 1876 to 1878, Kilkivan Historical Society.*

9. Letter from Sarah Oates to the Department of Public Instruction, dated 27 June, 1878, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
10. Copies of original letters held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
11. Copy of the original letter held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
12. Memorandum dated 10 June, 1879, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
13. Letter from C.L. James to the Department of Public Instruction dated February 1881, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
14. Copy of letters from Ernest Stephen, head teacher of the Kilkivan Provisional School and C.L. James, secretary and treasurer of the committee, copies held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
15. Letter dated 17 August, 1882, copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
16. Letter dated 21 April, 1884, copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
17. Copy of original application held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
18. Inspector's report, dated 23 May, 1885, copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
19. Letter from D.W. Daly to the Department of Public Instruction, dated 6 August, 1887, copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
20. Report of the superintendent of school buildings dated 13 September, 1887, copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
21. Copy of original costing held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
22. Copy of application dated 9 February, 1889, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
23. Letter from Thomas Wood to the Department of Public Instruction dated 23 May, 1889, copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
24. Letter from H.W. Lee to the Department of Public Instruction dated 28 November, 1889, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
25. For a history of each of these schools see: Logan, Dulcie, *Where Two Rivers Run*, pp 306–332, numerous documents concerning many of these schools may also be found at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
26. *Some Little Bit of Kilkivan History*, by Robin Perrett, private unpublished memoir, 1918, pp 1–2, Kilkivan Historical Society.
27. M/C. 11 January, 1883, p 2.
28. M/C. 14 February, 1884, p 2.
29. Ibid.

Long Tunnel and Continued Growth

Gold deposits were discovered at Long Tunnel Mountain, close to West Coast Creek in 1882 and the Long Tunnel Company was formed. The company set up its own battery. Monday the 8th of January was to have been the official start of the machinery but the company's directors had postponed the event due to extremely wet weather. While waiting for the weather to clear, carts were continuing to bring ore down to the battery and tunnelling operations were still being carried out under the management of George Neil.

In March that year a trial crushing of five tons of ore from the Long Tunnel Company's mine yielded over four and a half ounces of gold to the ton, a quite reasonable return, and speculators were beginning to believe that at last the goldfield would have a permanent future. There were plans to have other crushing machines established, and the New Year Reef was continuing to show good quantities of gold.¹

The Number One North Long Tunnel was also in operation, although at that time they had not found any gold but were continuing to dig. There were several other speculators on the field, most of whom were doing little until the results of the Long Tunnel crushing were known. The 1883 report concluded: '... Should that turn out as expected, heart will be given to the various shareholders in these outside ventures to put a little money in for prospecting purposes.'²

By the end of 1885 many of the gold mining ventures in the region were still in operation. In December that year the population of the Kilkivan township was 'rapidly increasing' and more buildings and new services were required to facilitate this increase in population. The Rise and Shine United Gold Mining Company was still working a section of the reef, reportedly with twelve miners at that time, and the Long Tunnel Company was retrieving gold at a reported rate of some four or five ounces to the ton. By this time too the rail line from Maryborough was being constructed and with its arrival the residents of Kilkivan envisaged a new epoch of wealth and prosperity.³

Yet there was a voice of restraint, and this belonged to John Falconer, a highly respected mining engineer who had recently examined many of the colony's gold deposits, including several in the South Burnett. According to a report Falconer later wrote, many of the gold deposits in the region were being worked incorrectly and that the retrieval of the gold from the stone should be carried out by an entirely different method. He cited an example, claiming:

Some years ago a mundic reef was worked on the Burnett Range between Barambah and Kilkivan, unsuccessfully however, although the Sydney mint assay gave 13 ounces of gold to the ton, besides other metals, silver etc., 16 tons of ore were taken out and two tons sent to the Black Snake machine at Kilkivan to be crushed, yielding only 5 dwts gold. One ton Three hundredweight was sent to Gympie and with similar results. The reef and stone were abandoned. I visited the reef again four and a half years afterwards. Meanwhile the stone had disappeared and in its place was a low mound of red ferruginous cement streaked with greenish clay (green earth). This mound was washed up with the result of 11 ounces 4 dwts of pure gold ... gold found in the Kilkivan diggings came from a hill of decomposed felstone porphyry which had been setting free its gold for ages, and it was into this hill that the celebrated Long Tunnel was driven for the purpose of striking a reef which never existed, and the 200 tons procured from the drive on being crushed only yielded a few pennyweights. When gold occurs under these circumstances the most economical and satisfactory way of getting it out is by imitating nature as nearly as possible by making large mounds of the stone and assisting decomposition by acids, steam or water and washing out the result.⁴

Evidently no one paid any real attention to this advice, for the following year the press was reporting: '... The Long Tunnel and Perseverance claims, Kilkivan, which are again being worked, have given the holders excellent encouragement to persevere in prospecting for the treasure that must undoubtedly exist in the hill at the foot of which such rich deposits of alluvial gold were unearthed in former days.'⁵

By May 1886 the impending arrival of the railway had reached fever pitch and the township was readying itself for the vast increase in population and business the rail would bring. A report of the impending event claimed: 'It seems incredible that a district abounding as this does in gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, antimony, asbestos, cobalt, manganese and various other minerals including the expensive and magnificent cinnabar lodes should lay dormant all these years. Of course the cost of carriage is and has been the principle (sic) drawback.'⁶

The impending opening of the rail service had evidently attracted prospecting investors to the region and the township had experienced the visits of several businessmen interested in the district. A Victorian smelting company was considering investing heavily in the Black Snake area, especially so as assays of ore taken from the various lodes at Black Snake had yielded 300 ounces of silver, 7 ounces of gold and a profitable percentage of copper to the ton. However, the main drawbacks to the profitability of this potential wealth were the difficulties in obtaining the right refractory process, the Victorian company was able to provide this expertise.

In Kilkivan there was some confusion regarding a survey of the town, a press report of May 1886 claimed:

... attention should be called to the necessity of having a township reserve surveyed in the vicinity of the railway station. There is now two hundred pounds worth of building material lying on the ground, the owners of which are waiting some action on the part of the proper constituted authorities to point out where they are to erect their buildings. Progress to settlement and a stoppage of business being established is therefore the result ... The Rise and Shine township was surveyed and laid out by the late Warden Bligh. The Police Reserve needs fencing, or we shall have miners and business people asserting their right to residence areas, under the Goldfield Act, as it is in close proximity to the railway station. The cemetery grounds needs the same, as it is at the mercy of the thousands of cattle that roam over the field. There is no doubt that these and many other wants would be satisfied but for the extraordinary apathetic nature of the residents.⁷

As the date set for the opening of the rail line moved closer, the township came alive with expectancy. A report of a display of minerals set up in the court-house gives us some idea of the potential wealth of the region at that time, (although mining was generally on the decline) the display was arranged to coincide with and to inform the influx of people expected for the opening of the rail line. The report claimed:

The finest set of exhibits was undoubtedly that of the Quicksilver Estates Company, sufficiently large to convey a fair idea of the wonderful richness of the cinnabar ores now being worked by this company. Some of the ore exhibited contained 80 per cent of pure mercury, the maximum percentage, as it has never been known to exceed 84 per cent. A small bottle was shown containing 4 lbs. of mercury taken from a 5 lb. nodule of cinnabar. Two large basins on each side of a central exhibit of a variety of valuable ores, were filled with quicksilver as a sample of the material now being turned out by the mine. An excellent sample of another commercial commodity obtained from the cinnabar, viz., vermilion or rouge, was also shown. The ores from the Black Snake country were varied and very fine, including some of the refractory gold ores from the recently acquired English property, the Kabunga mine; also rich silver ores in which Sydney companies are interested. Several specimens of valuable cobalt ores and nickel were also on view, as well as many good lumps of rich copper. The Rise and Shine reef was well represented, a plate of very rich specimens attracting the eye, while the alluvial gold taken from the flats was another worthy sample of Kilkivan's underground treasures. We should also mention that some of the best Californian cinnabar was exhibited for the sake of comparison, but it could not be compared for richness of quicksilver with the Kilkivan product. There were many other nice exhibits of lesser importance, and the whole had been very tastefully arranged by Mr Hester. The visitors expressed their surprise and pleasure at seeing such a fine lot of minerals all representative of the resources of this district.⁸

One of the more prominent businessmen to be functioning in the embryonic township at that time was John Coleman. Coleman was a native of Ireland. As a young man he visited America, later returning to Ireland only to emigrate to Australia in September 1875. Initially he worked at various cattle and sheep stations and when a section of the Mount Perry railway line was being constructed he opened a store on the line. This venture must have been successful and when the line was being built to Kilkivan he again opened a store at a place known as McFarlane's Siding, a short distance on the Kilkivan side of Woolooga. Coleman then followed the construction of the line, moving with the workers and their families, opening stores at Kilkivan, Coleman's Siding, and Goomeri. He married Catherine Murphy at Bundaberg in 1890. The press later reported of him: 'He ... became a permanent storekeeper in Kilkivan, buying the McKewens out, and also acquired other property in Kilkivan and Goomeri ... He retired from active business and went into grazing and fattening country. He acquired some fine property in this district. John Coleman's name was synonymous with the welfare of the district. He dipped a willing hand deep into his pocket to assist every movement for the poor, and there is barely a working man in the district who has not at one time or the other been the recipient of some kindness to tide him over hard times.' John Coleman died in May 1923, aged seventy years.⁹



John and Catherine Coleman.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.



J. Coleman's Railway Store.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

John Coleman's sister was Margaret Jane Coleman who later married into the McCarroll family — also early settlers in the district. Alexander McCarroll was from Ireland, he was born on 19 January, 1850. The McCarrolls were originally flax farmers and Alexander McCarroll married Margaret Jane Coleman on 6 August, 1886, he was sponsored by his brother-in-law, John Coleman, to come to Australia circa 1886 or 1887, taking up land at Kilkivan.¹⁰ The press later claimed of them:

Alexander McCarroll (of *Lisamore*, situated on the town boundary, half a mile from P.O., close to 100 acres; the homestead built on a ridge is surrounded by beautiful grounds including flowers (roses a speciality), shrubs and ornamental trees; the work is attended to by the daughter of the house, Miss Ethel. *Lisamore*, which is one of the best situated and best attended villas in Kilkivan, was purchased 7 years ago by Mr Alexander McCarroll. The latter also selected 14 years ago about 1500 acres of grazing land, ringbarked and well watered by dams and creeks ... Mr A. McCarroll was married in Ireland (Ballyweaney), at the Presbyterian Church, to Margaret Jane Coleman in August, 1886. The newly married couple came straight to Kilkivan where the husband worked in the mines for 5 or 6 years, then went dairying, and finally grazing. Mrs McCarroll has been dead for a few years and left behind her two boys and two girls.¹¹

Margaret Jane McCarroll died on 10 May, 1906 and Alexander died at the Kingaroy Hospital on 29 October, 1925.¹²

Notes and Sources

Chapter Thirty-three

Long Tunnel and Continued Growth

1. M/C. 11 March, 1882, p 3.
2. M/C. 11 January, 1883, p 2.
3. M/C. 9 December, 1885, p 3.
4. M/C. 22 November, 1884, p 5.
5. M/C. 19 June, 1885, p 2.
6. M/C. 20 May, 1886, p 3.
7. *Ibid.*
8. M/C. 7 December, 1886, p 3.
9. Coleman file, Kilkivan Historical Society and letter to the author from Dawn Choate, dated 20 December, 1996.
10. Letter to the author from Dawn Choate, dated 20 December, 1996.
11. M/C. 29 March, 1911, p 6.
12. Letter to the author from Dawn Choate, dated 20 December, 1996.

The Third Kilkivan Township and Further Mineralogical Development

Kilkivan at that time was little more than a ramshackle village surrounded by hills and mines, the land scarred by mining operations, a typical small mining community struggling to survive in the harsh Australian bush. Facilities were few, modern amenities were sadly lacking, the population, spread over a wide rural area, depended for their livelihoods on the few small mining operations still in existence or on general farming. Little wonder then, that the arrival of the railways, opened in the township on Monday 6 December, 1886, was a momentous occasion. (For details of the coming of the railways to Kilkivan see Chapter 42).

Yet, as small as the township was at that time, it certainly had a great deal of character, many of the mines had been abandoned and the township was very much in its embryonic stage of rural development as the following description dated December 1886 attests:

Kilkivan, the little township at the end of the journey, reminds one forcibly at first sight of the deserted gold-diggings, but a second glance instantly convinces the stranger that it is, like the proverbial Phoenix, being evolved from its ashes. The site of the hamlet is delightful, being surrounded by lofty hills or rather detached hummocks, from the summits of which a grand view of the adjacent country can be obtained. There are several dilapidated huts, the remains of the old rush, but on the other hand the post and telegraph office, police station, and recent railway buildings have quite the appearance of decent civilization. There are besides three 'pubs' and three general stores. Already the affairs of the little place are becoming active and agitated, and the expectations of good times through the development of the immense mineral resources of the district are most sanguine ... The place is literally alive with goats, and they are nearly all white, being of a half-bred angora species. All day they gambol on the hillsides, and as the sun sets their return home is like an avalanche of snow precipitating itself upon the village. The history of the ups and downs of the checkered life of Kilkivan is full of interest, but is too voluminous to attempt to adequately describe. The first indication of mining is the Rise and Shine reef workings, situated about 600 yards south of the post office. The reef runs east and west and has been sunk upon by at least 15 shafts of an average depth of 100 feet, all but one of which are now abandoned. That one is being worked with payable results, turning out stone that is being crushed by the steam 3 head battery close by for an average yield of 3 ozs. to the ton. As is well-known, an immense quantity of gold has been taken out of this reef since its discovery, and no doubt the abandoned claims will again be taken up with the facilities now offered of working them more economically. The fine and complete crushing plant of 10 head of stampers once used to crush the stone from the Rise and Shine claims now forms the main battery in the Gympie Quartz Crushing Mill. The stone sent in from the lower levels being of a refractory nature the plant above-mentioned proved unpayable, but the tailings were subsequently jumped by the brother Hester, who obtained a lot of gold from them by aid of the Berdan pans. The Long Tunnel is situated further south on the other side of the hill, and was put in about 300 feet before being abandoned and a considerable quantity of gold obtained. The roof has fallen in about half way. The old alluvial workings lie a couple of miles south of the present township, and although at one time they supported 2000 miners are now almost deserted. Nevertheless gold still exists here in quantities that would be probably payable if worked on the hydraulic principle as employed in California. These alluvial workings extend to and were worked as far as the Black Snake, about 12 miles in a westerly direction from Kilkivan, where rich finds were made, and the almost inexhaustible deposits of copper discovered. Relics of the old days are here in the shape of a crushing battery and a pyrites mill. The interest now attached to this locality is concerning the gold found to be largely associated with the copper, and it is in this vicinity that the Kabunga Gold Mining Company recently floated on the London market is situated. But perhaps the most important mining concern in this district is the Kilkivan quicksilver property of a London company of capitalists. They own a number of large detached freehold areas extending from a point

about five miles N.W. of Kilkivan to a distance of 20 miles or so. Operations are being carried on quietly but vigorously, and it is certain that quicksilver will soon be one of the staple products of the district.¹

With the coming of the rail service the people of Kilkivan also began to believe that the time was ripe for the establishment of a local divisional board. Kilkivan at that time came under the control of the Widgee Divisional Board at Gympie. The possibility of forming a local board at Kilkivan was to have been discussed during a meeting of the Widgee Divisional Board in January 1887, but as there were not sufficient people present to form a quorum, the question was not considered, a reporter claimed, "The Gympieites want to stick to us like a ferret to a rabbit."²

By 1886 when the rail line arrived the mining epoch of the Kilkivan district was continuing in various forms and some interesting results were being obtained from many of the various mining ventures then being worked. The assistant government geologist, W.H. Rand, reported to parliament that year that crushings from the Rise and Shine mines were averaging 2 ounces 1 dwt and 8 grams per ton and that crushings from the most northerly part of the reef were providing the best results.³ According to Rand there were several mining ventures then in operation.

The deepest shaft on the Rise and Shine was 110 feet in depth. At a depth of seventy feet the gold was free and could be clearly seen in the white quartz. Parallel with and to the east of the Rise and Shine were the Morning Star and the Welcome reefs. Rand reported that the mining operations included the Rise and Shine, the Morning Star, the Welcome, the Number 2 Rise and Shine, the Perseverance reef, Number 1 South Perseverance, Hayes' Tunnel, New Year's reef, Number 2 North Long Tunnel, Number 1 North Long Tunnel, Long Tunnel P.C. and Number 1 South Long Tunnel.⁴

By 1887 a relatively new mining venture at Kaboonga was showing reasonable results for a company formed to dig for gold there, the Rise and Shine mine was still in operation and taking about two ounces of gold to the ton. They had struck black slate conglomerate and greenstone similar to the mineralogical formations found on the Gympie goldfields.⁵

The prosperity promised with the arrival of the rail was becoming evident, new buildings were being quickly erected and the population of Kilkivan was expanding. The police lockup was situated in the same building as the court-house and the residence of the senior constable, an arrangement that sometimes created certain difficulties, especially for the constable, "... whose family have to put up with the filthy language emanating from any drunken scoundrel he may be compelled to place under control."⁶

There were three church groups present in the embryonic township, the Primitive Wesleyans, the Church of England and the Roman Catholic, however, none of these organisations had yet constructed any churches, their services being held either in private homes or in public buildings. By December 1887 the groups had all, reportedly, secured land for construction but no building had been carried out.⁷

The coming of the rail also brought a new influx of Chinese workers, a resident at Kilkivan lamented: "I don't know whether you are sending your surplus population of Chinkies up here or not, but there is a considerable increase in that undesirable class of individuals, and some of our own people seem to be inclined to encourage them; but if they had suffered as some of the early miners had done, they would very soon alter."⁸

In September 1887 a meeting was held to resuscitate the almost defunct progress association. Mr Tansey was voted to the chair and it was resolved to give the association the title of the Kilkivan Progress Association with an annual membership fee of five shillings.⁹

In November a meeting was held of local people with a view to forming a company to work the abandoned Perseverance mine. Several years previously some very rich gold had been found at this mine, although no sinking had occurred as the miners had evidently lacked the money to do so. A trial crushing made prior to the November meeting had yielded more than three ounces per ton. Evidently the prospects were good.¹⁰



Bligh Street, Kilkivan, looking east.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

By 30 November the Perseverance Gold Mining Company had been privately floated with sixty thousand shares, the share list was quickly sold and many people were disappointed that they could not become involved.¹¹ The following month another mining business, the Kilkivan Amalgamated Gold Mining Company was formed and it too sold its share issue over subscribed within twenty-four hours of the release of its prospectus. The company intended working an area of some fifteen acres which had never been extensively mined, and there were general hopes that at last a solid reef would be found.¹²

Indeed, mining was again becoming big business in the Kilkivan district and the prospects of large returns were attracting not only local but also overseas capital. In 1887 the Kilkivan Mines Ltd. Company was formed, the *European Mail* of 16 December reporting:

It would be difficult to state the exact number of people who are now on this site awaiting favourable opportunities for floating colonial gold mines. Additions seem to be made to their number every week. It was thought that the next prospectuses issued would relate to Victoria, but the Melbourne people do not seem to be so venturesome as those from Queensland, and they will have to wait now until the Kilkivan Mines (Limited) is disposed of before they can appeal to the public with any chance of success. The capital required in this instance is £120,000 in £1 shares. 2,000 acres of freehold mineral Lands in the Black Snake Range are to be purchased, and it is anticipated that these lands will yield gold, silver and copper in such abundance as to pay handsome dividends. At the head of the company is Mr Septimus Hedges — director of the Kaboonga Gold Mine — and he has for his associates on the board Mr W.T. Hill, director of the Orita Gold Mines (Limited), Capt. Richard Revett, director of the Ceara Harbour Corporation (Limited), and Mr Clement W. Tancred, M.E., director of the Queensland Quicksilver Estates (Limited). The Australian committee comprise the Hon. E. Vickery, M.L.C., Sydney, the Hon. George A. Lloyd, M.L.C., Sydney, and Mr Boulton Molineax, J.P., chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Customs, Sydney. In view of the richness of the ore, the cheapness of transport, and the ready market for the ore in this country, the directors propose to follow the advice of Dr Robertson by reducing it to matte, of the average value of 50s. per ton, and shipping it direct to England. This will have the double advantage of reducing the necessary working capital and of enabling the company to make early returns, without the delay attendant upon the erection of mills. Apart from the profits on shipments, the directors are of (the) opinion that very considerable profits should accrue to the company from the sale or lease of suitable portions of its property to sub-companies and others. The purchase price for the whole property has been fixed by the vendors at £90,000., of which they agree to take £40,000 — being the maximum amount allowed by the rules of the Stock Exchange — in fully paid shares, and the balance in cash.¹³

By February 1888 the Kilkivan Amalgamated Mining Company had begun operations in pumping out the shafts they wished to work. A contract had been let for the sinking of the main shaft to a depth of 124 feet, a depth, according to a contemporary report, never before attempted at the site. A.E. Harris was the secretary to the company and the position of manager was filled by John Hunter.¹⁴ By August the company had sunk a shaft to 260 feet and the reef at places was two feet wide.

The Perseverance Gold Mining Company was also sinking a shaft with reportedly good results.¹⁵ By 14 August they had received their winding plant and under the direction of the manager, a Mr Wittington, this had quickly been installed and tested. Water in the shaft had created problems but when this had been cleared good quality gold could be seen in the reef.¹⁶ A correspondent writing from Kilkivan to the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* happily claimed: 'Gold is the order of the day and there are very few who do not hold scrip,' (shares).¹⁷

Despite the rhetoric and the hopes of a new golden prosperity for Kilkivan, none of the companies were to experience any fabulous discoveries of gold or any significant returns for the ores they crushed. A trial crushing of the Perseverance Company's mine in June 1889 gave a disappointing return of just 15 dwts to the ton, certainly not enough to make the company a profitable venture, and over the following years the mining industry once again dwindled virtually to nothing.¹⁸ There were hopes raised, very infrequently, that new ventures could be started, new money raised to at last find that elusive El Dorado for which the miners of Kilkivan had long been searching, but the lessons of the past had been learned, and companies were exceedingly reluctant to invest their monies into ventures with such high risk potential. 1896 saw a few prospectors on the field and the newspapers were publishing reports of a new revival but the reports were, as usual, grossly over optimistic and generally came to nothing.¹⁹

Notes and Sources

Chapter Thirty-four

The Third Kilkivan Township and Further Mineralogical Development

1. M/C. 8 December, 1886, p 2.
2. M/C. 13 January, 1887, p 3.
3. *Report on the Geology and Mineral Resources of the Districts of Kilkivan and Black Snake*, W.H. Rand, 1886, p 3, Kilkivan Historical Society.
4. For details of crushings, locations and geological formations within these various mines and reefs see: *Report on the Geology and Mineral Resources of the Districts of Kilkivan and Black Snake*, W.H. Rand, 1886, pp 1-4, Kilkivan Historical Society.
5. M/C. 13 May, 1887, p 3.
6. M/C. 15 December, 1887, p 2.
7. *Ibid.*
8. M/C. 4 August, 1887, p 3.
9. M/C. 7 September, 1887, p 3.
10. M/C. 12 November, 1887, p 3.
11. M/C. 30 November, 1887, p 2.
12. M/C. 29 December, 1887, p 3.
13. Reproduced in M/C. 30 January, 1888, p 3.
14. M/C. 3 April, 1888, p 2.
15. M/C. 1 March, 1888, p 3.
16. M/C. 17 August, 1888, p 3.
17. M/C. 8 November, 1888, p 3.
18. M/C. 29 June, 1889, p 7.
19. M/C. 7 February, 1896, p 3.

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Running Creek and Yorkey's Paddock

The goldfield at Running Creek was opened up in 1893, with ore being sent for processing to the stampers at Gympie. The profits were reasonable, a company was formed and a set of stampers was later erected on site.

The discovery of gold at Yorkey's Paddock, near Running Creek, north of Kilkivan at the turn of the century gave the mining industry something of a boost. The gold was found by a teamster named Walter Schacht, a small mining operation was quickly at work and a crushing battery was later erected. The claim was eventually sold and the value of the field varied considerably. In 1903 a crushing of 35 tons of ore yielded more than 130 ounces of gold, certainly a viable proposition at that time.¹ Leases over the property included 'Zealandia', 'Triad', 'Triad Extended', 'Waratah', 'Beer and Dawson's' and several others. A report of the field dated May 1904 revealed:

Mining in this district is not altogether at a standstill notwithstanding the sudden closing down of the Scottish Merodian (sic). Tulloch and Sons are pushing on workings in their claim, the 'Triad,' and have 30 odd tons ready for crushing.

Prospecting is the order of the day. What is known as 'Roger's' claim is now getting a further trial by a re-organised party of five local miners. The shaft is down 50 odd feet, and they are now driving east and west. Three small parcels were tried by the previous party, the best yielding 16 dwts., but concentrates are exceedingly good, being £21 per ton. From this it will be seen that the property is well worthy of further development, and it is pleasing to note that local men consider it so.

A property known as 'Edwards' is also receiving attention. A trial parcel is now going through the Huntington mill and shortly a further parcel will be put through from a different quarter, but on the same lode. It will be remembered by many non-residents that this was worked some eight years ago before crushing plants were on the field. I understand a trial parcel at that time was forwarded to Gympie but the result was not satisfactory.

The Scottish Merodian and plant is to be let on tribute. Taking advantage of the dullness of mining, Messrs Peterson Brothers have not been idle. They have erected a furnace for roasting the tailings, principally from the 'Zealandia' mine. An ... assay that was received from Mr Dixon, assayer of Maryborough, was very satisfactory, and on his directions the calcining is proceeding. They have a tramway line laid on to the tailings and everything is now in thorough working order.²

By July that year (1904) the results of crushings were not spectacular, quite the reverse, a report of the yields dated 18 July showed that the crushing from 'Roger's' claim had been quite low, a crush of twenty-three tons yielded only a little more than eighteen ounces of gold. 'The result baffles everyone,' the report lamented. Rogers and his team of miners then discontinued mining, although Rogers himself took with him about seven tons of surface tailings which he hoped, when treated, would repay him for some of his financial outlay.³

Other workings continued with varying results. E.E. Peterson had a group of miners working the 'Zealandia', although they were experiencing a lot of trouble with water in the shaft. Peterson, in July 1904, had recently been ill, having suffered, 'a partial paralysis of the jaw.' The press reported: 'He has been in the Maryborough Hospital, all in the district are pleased to hear that he has so far improved that his medical adviser allows him to return. He is most popular, and his absence from the district is greatly missed.'⁴

Yorkey at this time was still very much a fledgling community of bark humpies, canvas shelters and a few more substantial dwellings.

In 1903 residents of the small community attempted to have a provisional school opened at the settlement and the district inspector visited the region to investigate the possibilities. On 18 July that year he submitted his report to the Department of Public Instruction at Brisbane claiming:

I arrived on the field about 10 a.m. on the 9th inst. The place is a mining township having a large and expensive battery at work the property of the Scottish Marodian Mining Company. The mill has been working for some three or four years, but I was told that the results so far have been but moderate. On enquiry I found that the local subscriptions, the amount of which is stated in the printed schedule as £27/7/6d will not be available, but only a sum of between £12 and £15. The committee propose that a temporary building made of close palings with iron roof would suffice. They say that they wish not to incur any large expenditure of money, as the settlement may not be permanent. The proposed building would be 20 feet x 14 ft. and it can be erected at a cost of about £25. One member of the committee ... proposed that the residents should put up the building at their own expenses each helping with the labour. The site consists of some two acres of bush country on a hill-top. It is held as a mining lease by a Mr Godfrey Ortt. I was informed that Mr Ortt was willing to give the land, but when I saw Mr Ortt in Kilkivan next day he told me that it was not as yet decided by him and his brother to grant the land for a school site. The committee have a teacher in view named Mr Albert Braysher. I was told that he had been in charge of a provisional school; but I could get no satisfactory answer as to why he left the service. On the question of accommodation for a female teacher Mr Tulloch said he would build an additional room to his house to provide such accommodation. I cannot say with any degree of certainty whether the settlement is likely to be permanent or not. But in the meantime it seems a pity that some eighteen children should not be provided with some means of education. Towards that end I recommend that if a building such as above described be erected by local effort and conveniently furnished, that the school be established and a teacher be sent.⁵

A cryptic note appended to this report stated: 'I do not think the Department is warranted in spending money for a school in this place, considering the doubtful character of the settlement, but if they erect a weather-proof building we might send them requisites and provide salary for a teacher for a time till we see how the population is maintained. Mr Braysher will not do for a teacher ... he was tried and found wanting.'⁶

On 16 February, 1903, a public meeting was held at Running Creek and William Tulloch, Adolf Dombrow, John Hedges and Arthur L. Batts were elected members of the school building committee. Batts was appointed secretary. Fifteen children were ready to attend school and a building fund of £27/7/6d had been raised.⁷

The school was finally opened in 1903 and was officially designated the number of 748.⁸ The school master was Herbert Jensen Breusch, who reported in November 1903 that all the school requisites had arrived in good order.⁹ James Saunders, a mine manager was elected chairman of the school committee, Arthur Lovell Batts was its secretary and the other members included William Tulloch, the treasurer, John Hedges, a carrier and A. Braysher, a miner.¹⁰ The school house was also used for religious services. Reverend H. Denny promised in July 1904 that monthly services would be held there.¹¹

Twelve months later the gold prospects for the region had not improved. Tributors working the 'Zealandia' lease had abandoned it and had moved to the old 'Triad' ground. The Peterson brothers attempted to treat some of the 'Zealandia' tailings. A press article claimed:

They went to great expense erecting furnaces etc. Last February, two gentlemen (Messrs Robinson and McKenzie, of Paradise, late of Kalgoorlie, West Australia) paid a flying visit to this district, and were allowed to take with them samples for assay to their plant then in Paradise. They returned in March, and entered into negotiations to treat the whole lot, about 2,000 tons. They immediately commenced to erect their plant necessary for treatment ... The whole plant is neatness and compactness itself. The assay plant is a great advantage to the advancement of the district, as by their courtesy and generosity, several assays have been made of properties lying dormant, and may probably be taken up and worked. Up to the present time they have treated some 500 tons, the result being most satisfactory to all concerned. Mr Robinson has had considerable experience having been twenty years connected with mining. I understand he represents Western Australia capital for investment, and I am informed that whatever properties he has recommended after inspection, have all turned out good.¹²

By July 1906, however, the prospects at Yorkey were not good, and many of the men working there had left to try their luck at places such as Calgoa, taking with them, of all things, the roofing from their cottages. An eyewitness account of Yorkey, written in July 1906, gives us an idea of the condition of the village at that time:

A stranger visiting Yorkey at the present time and seeing so many dwellings without roofs on would naturally conclude that the district was being deserted. Not so, however. Several men have left ... to try their luck at copper. As they were all married men, so they transferred their iron roofs to that place. It is only a matter of time when other families will arrive here to take their places, and benefit thereby by having unroofed houses already erected for them. The secretary of the Merodian (sic) Coy. (E.B. Davidson), paid a visit to the field a short time back and gave those remaining (five) the option of reorganising their party to a complement of fifteen, on the same terms as heretofore, and the tribute at time of writing is being worked with 12 men, Mr David Curley (also reported as Corley) being appointed manager. The battery will, I understand, start tomorrow on 100 tons unearthed. The prospects of Mudloo, (sic) six miles distant, are very encouraging as a copper producer. Several leases have been taken up and worked.¹³

Despite somewhat optimistic reports such as this, the decline, however, continued. By early the following year the field was almost completely abandoned. A report dated 19 February, 1907, stated: 'Mining at present is at a complete standstill.' The Peterson brothers had, by that time, moved to the 'Triad' claim and had pumped out the shaft using a horse and whim. However, after two trial crushings had been completed it was evident that the mine was not a workable proposition, yielding just six and seven dwts to the ton. The February report claimed, 'Much sympathy is expressed for these two gentlemen who have struggled hard at all times to advance the field and expended a good deal of capital during their stay in the district. Owing to limited funds they cannot carry out their desire to follow the reef ... They have now decided to leave for pastures new, taking up their abode in Warwick. They have the good wishes of everyone, knowing they have done their best and deserve a better fate. They are the pioneers of this goldfield, having remained here since 1899.'¹⁴

Before leaving the region the Peterson brothers claimed that, worked under more advantageous circumstances, the Yorkey goldfield still had much to offer, a 'splendid investment' in their words. They said that the field required money and that small operators should combine their resources to maximize yields from the various mines. In the 'Zealandia' and 'Marodian' there were also two antimony lodes, further inducement to potential investors with sufficient capital to work the seams.

In the same report it was revealed that thirteen miners who had taken up the 'Marodian' claim had also been forced to close. The causes of this closure were interesting, the report stating that the operation: '... came to a sudden collapse early in November (1906), the cause being a badly organised party, distrust and general dissatisfaction. They will have good cause to remember their bungling in winding up so hurriedly, and the local boarding house also mourns their departure.'¹⁵ Like many other mines in the region, these miners had experienced great difficulties with subterranean water seepage and also with low returns, their crushings yielding only approximately 17 dwts to the ton.

The 'Marodian' cyanide extraction works under the management of a man named J.H. Bennett, was processing some ore in 1907, but the works were not producing any great returns and it seemed unlikely that they would remain in operation for long. A correspondent writing to the *Maryborough Chronicle* from Yorkey in February 1907 concluded: '... As this will probably be the last occasion I may have the pleasure in contributing to your valuable paper, the prospects of progressiveness being very remote, I conclude by saying that it is with regret that the Yorkey, as a gold producing one, predicted by my first contribution years ago, has not come up to expectations. A glance at the surface workings of the principal mines where reckless expenditure, unnecessary expenditure of shareholders' money, is so deplorably depicted, show the cause can be easily attributed.'¹⁶

Despite the hopes for a solid golden future and the large amount of money that was, overall, pumped into mining projects at Yorkey, the field eventually petered out and was virtually abandoned. The stampers at the 'Marodian' claim were used on at least one occasion to test

samples of copper from Calgoa, and Walter Schacht, the man who had discovered the goldfield, gave up mining altogether, constructed a 'substantial dwelling' opposite the local store and turned his attention to timbergetting with a team of bullocks. The boarding house, better known as the Twickenham Restaurant, fell into disrepair, a report of it claiming that it was: '... an eyesore. The roof has been taken off and the proprietor, after eight years' residence, has at last been compelled to seek fresh fields and pastures new. He has during his term seen many changes, mine stoppages through droughts, other vicissitudes, and was the first to erect a business place on the field.'¹⁷

The barometer of any region's prosperity may be read in that region's official school documentation and the school at Running Creek was no exception. In August 1909 a memorandum of the Department of Public Instruction gave details of the school at the mining site stating: 'There are only about five families represented, one is a farmer, another a miner, and the others are really dependent upon the farmer. Half the children are coloured. There is very little likelihood of this school increasing, as it is a mining centre rather than an agricultural one, and as a mining centre it is not a success.'¹⁸

Notes and Sources

Chapter Thirty-five

Running Creek and Yorkey's Paddock

1. M/C. 6 February, 1903, p 2.
2. M/C. 20 May, 1904, p 3.
3. M/C. 21 July, 1904, p 3.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Letter to the Department of Public Instruction, dated at Maryborough, 18 July, 1903, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
6. Department of Public Instruction document, stamped 20 July, 1903, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
7. Application for the Establishment of a Provisional School, dated 6 March, 1903, Running Creek, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
8. Department of Public Instruction memorandum, undated, copy held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
9. Letter from H.J. Breusch to the Department of Public Instruction, dated 7 November, 1903, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
10. Letter from H.J. Breusch to the Department of Public Instruction dated 5 December, 1903, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
11. M/C. 21 July, 1904, p 3.
12. M/C. 14 July, 1905, p 3.
13. M/C. 14 July, 1906, p 6.
14. M/C. 22 February, 1907, p 2.
15. *Ibid.*
16. M/C. 22 February, 1907.
17. M/C. 3 February, 1908, p 4.
18. Department of Public Instruction document, dated 16 August, 1909, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society.

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Cinnabar

One of the most important mineralogical deposits in the Kilkivan region was that of cinnabar and, over the years, the mining of cinnabar and its production into quicksilver has created considerable interest and a significant economic platform for the region. The cinnabar lodes were discovered during the early 1870s by James Godfrey (also reported as Edward Godfrey), a shepherd on *Kilkivan* station. In his book, *Wilderness to Wealth*, J.E. Murphy gives the date as 1873, as does Dulcie Logan in her history, *Where Two Rivers Run*. However, K. Bischoff, in his well researched technical article concerning the production of mercury in the Kilkivan district, places the year at 1872.¹

The shepherd who discovered the cinnabar reportedly took a sample to 'Dan Mactaggart' and this was rudely retorted and a small amount of mercury was produced. A later report of the event claimed: 'Jimmy Godfrey, a shepherd working for a pioneer squatter named Dan Mactaggart ... handed to his master some abnormally heavy reddish coloured stones. The shrewd Scot deduced that mercury was the most likely content of such a weighty ore, converted a gun barrel into a species of a retort and after applying heat, drops of pure quicksilver were precipitated into a dish of water.'²

However, if cinnabar was, in fact, discovered in 1872, then this report and subsequent publications of the event are substantially flawed, as J.D. Mactaggart was dead by that time. Mactaggart had died in January 1871 and the Mactaggart involvement in cinnabar mining must have been carried on by his family. In any event, if Mactaggart was involved in that first historic gun-barrel retort, then the discovery of the deposits must have taken place prior to January 1871.

More than thirty deposits of cinnabar were subsequently discovered in the region, later named Cinnabar, and the Mactaggart family interests reportedly took out a large quantity of very rich ore.

In 1873 Doctor G. Wolff, representing Australian capital investments, visited the Kilkivan area to inspect the cinnabar deposits. What he found convinced him that there was money to be made in the exploitation of the mineral deposits. He boarded ship to return to Europe to arrange the details but unfortunately he died during the voyage and these early plans came to nothing. In 1887 the Duke of Manchester visited the region with the object of inspecting the deposits and starting a company to extract the quicksilver. The duke was accompanied by a geologist named James Hurst. However, history repeated itself and the duke died soon afterwards leaving Hurst to finalize the details of the formation of the company, Queensland Quicksilver Estates.

A man named W.C. Tancred, representing the English company Cinnabar Estate, had visited the field and had returned to England with a favourable impression of the possibilities of development.³ A visitor to the Mactaggart family's operation in February 1887 claimed that the mine looked to be a valuable one, the ore could be seen in several lodes and it was estimated that the yield from these lodes would be around fifty to seventy per cent pure quicksilver.⁴ A report written about the field by the assistant government geologist, William H. Rand, in 1892, claimed that between 1884 and 1886 Samuel and William Hester produced as many as sixty-eight flasks of quicksilver from the Cinnabar lodes near Kilkivan, and in 1887 the Kilkivan Cinnabar Company produced nine flasks, or 0.3 of a ton. In 1891 the Mactaggart family's returns were 47 flasks, or 1.5 tons.⁵

Samuel Limbert Hester, the son of John and Mary (nee Limbert) Hester, was born at Leicester, Leicestershire, England, on 21 November, 1835. In addition to his brother, William, he also had two sisters, Joyce Ann and Catherine. He married Fanny Catherine Buckley, at Melbourne, in

1875 and arrived at Kilkivan in 1876. Sam Hester, it seems, was also something of a journalist and he wrote articles for the *Mining Journal* in London. One of his reports to the journal, written on 13 August, 1887, gave details of the mines then in operation at Cinnabar, these included the Wolff, Queensland, Paton, and Slaty Gully mines.⁶

According to another mineralogical report the deposits of cinnabar were very numerous and were scattered over many square miles of country to the west, south-west and south of Kilkivan. The report claimed that the principal localities were, '... Gold Top, 5 miles N.W. of Kilkivan, Mactaggart's, on Five Mile Creek west of Kilkivan, Wallman's Lode, on Messenger's selection on Boonara Creek, 7 miles W.S.W. of Kilkivan, Seven Mile Camp on Wide Bay Creek to the S.S.W. of Kilkivan, and Ten Mile Camp on Wide Bay Creek, south of Kilkivan.' The report also claimed that between Gold Top to the north west of Kilkivan and the Ten Mile Camp to the south, a distance of some twelve miles, there existed a belt, approximately four miles wide in which there were many deposits of cinnabar.⁷

The Hester brothers were two of the field's better known investors, according to a biographical report published in 1911, they had come from California to Australia sometime during the 1870s and had quickly become successfully involved in prospecting for Cinnabar near Kilkivan. Once they had discovered their lode they formed a company to work it. In April, 1874, the *Gympie Times* reported that: 'Mr Hester, the manager of the Gympie Cinnabar Company's selections, is retorting the specimens of ore he has obtained from the mines, and he expects to be able shortly to place on exhibition at Gympie one hundredweight of the quicksilver obtained.'⁸ Hester was evidently able to keep his promise to display that amount of quicksilver as the press later reported that it was on display at the Bank of New South Wales in Gympie.⁹

Sam Hester married Fanny Buckley, a widow, and for approximately fourteen or fifteen years they lived in a modest cottage on the cinnabar field. There he kept a small herd of milking cows and after the demise of the cinnabar deposits Sam became manager of the Black Snake Gold-mining Company.

William Hester later became the proprietor of the Sovereign Hotel in Gympie. He married Mary Catherine Walsh of Gympie on 1 November, 1897.¹⁰ A visitor to the site of the Hester brothers' operations in 1911 described it, writing: '(I) visited the ruins of the Cinnabar retort works, also the ruins of the last cottage inhabited by the late Sam Hester, both situated on the banks of the Five Mile Creek ... I could picture it myself, the bustle, the turmoil, the energy and activity displayed at the works, the deadly fumes of the quicksilver, the excitement and anticipation over the returns, the brown faces and hands of the workers ... now on this field there remains nothing but ruin and desolation and the silence of the grave.'¹¹

The *Queensland Government Mining Journal* of 15 December, 1914, provides the following information:

The first discovery of mercury ore in the Kilkivan district was made in 1872 by Edward Godfrey, a shepherd on the old *Kilkivan* station. This was at the Five-mile, near King Bombi Creek, where ... Mactaggart's party, including the discoverer, at once secured a mineral selection (No 1886). In the following year the same party applied for mineral selection No 2447. Under the terms of the old Mineral Lands Act, by which an expenditure of 50s. per acre was entailed, both selections have long been freehold.

During the inevitable 'rush' many other mineral selections were applied for by Coop, Paul, and Molyneaux among others, but of these only six are now held in the vicinity of the first find, besides four at the Seven-mile, on Wide Bay Creek, and two at the Ten-mile, between Wide Bay and Copper Mine Creeks.

The discovery seems to have attracted world-wide attention; and, towards the end of the year 1873, a Dr G. Wolff, who represented an Austrian firm, took options over M.S. Nos 1886 and 2447, and purchased Coop's M.S. No 2463 at the Seven-mile. He expressed confidence as to his ability to close the option, but, unfortunately, he died while on the return journey to Europe, and the negotiations fell through.

At about the same time the Messrs Hester, fresh from the cinnabar mines of the United States, were drawn to the new field, a large area of which they proceeded to prospect, latterly on behalf of the Wide Bay and Gympie Cinnabar Company. (Not registered in Queensland). Mr Sam Hester, after entering into partnership with Captain Eldred, who held

mineral selections at the Seven and Ten Miles, erected retorts at the Five-mile on M.S. No 2444, during the years 1874–1876. A lull supervened for a period of ten years, and then the Duke of Manchester, happening to visit Kilkivan, took over Hester's and Eldred's holdings and formed a London company known as the Queensland Quicksilver Estates, Limited, with a nominal capital of £400,000, of which sum but £40,000 was actually subscribed. The vendors are said to have received 340,000 paid-up shares, together with £15,000. Extremely high prices were paid for land, and large sums were frittered away in expenses, leaving only £8,600 for developmental work, from which nine bottles of quicksilver resulted. The company consequently came to grief within three years, its general effect on the mining industry of the district having been distinctly mischievous. The property is believed to have reverted to one or more of the original holders.

Meanwhile, in 1887, some prospecting was done by Mactaggart's party with a view to interesting British investors, but nothing like equitable terms could be arranged; and the ground was again allowed to lie idle until 1891, when arrangements were made with the Hester Bros. to work the deposits on M.F. 2447 and to retort the ore raised. At first they netted a profit, but, after a year's experience of a falling market, the owners were compelled to cease operations, which towards the last were conducted at a relatively heavy loss. This may be attribute in part to the small scale on which exploitation was carried on, there being only three or four miners employed; but the high cost of retorting (£4 per ton of ore), in conjunction with the payment of a bonus of £1 per flask produced (or 33s. per ton of ore), was crippling.

Notwithstanding this failure, Mr W.H. Hester, in the following year, became the lessee of M.F. 2447, under a tribute of 12½ per cent of all mercury recovered; but after a few months he abandoned lode mining as unprofitable, though still optimistic as to the alluvial.

The freeholds have remained untouched since 1892, but we learn from the annual reports of the Warden that prospectors were in the field during 1908, 1910, 1911, and 1912, but that they had done little work and very little ore had left the district.¹²

The region was destined to survive, firstly for its mineral properties and later as an agricultural centre. The Cinnabar Provisional School was opened in 1896 and a state school became established on 2 May, 1916, when the lodes were being worked due to the rapid rise in the price of mercury following the outbreak of war in 1914. Sixteen children attended that first day.¹³ The school closed in December 1971.¹⁴



Jim McArthur and Mort Beer — prospecting shaft on flat, Cinnabar.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

In October 1921 news arrived that postal notes would be made available at Cinnabar. E.B.C. Corser, the member for Wide Bay, announced that he had received a letter from the postmaster-general which stated: 'With reference to my communications of the 26th July last, regarding representations made by Mr J.J. Mallon, secretary, Cinnabar Settlers' Progressive Association, in favour of the establishment of improved postal facilities at that place, I have to inform you a reply has now been received from the Railways Department agreeing to undertake the sale of postal notes at Cinnabar, and arrangements are being made for the commencement of business at the earliest possible date.'¹⁵

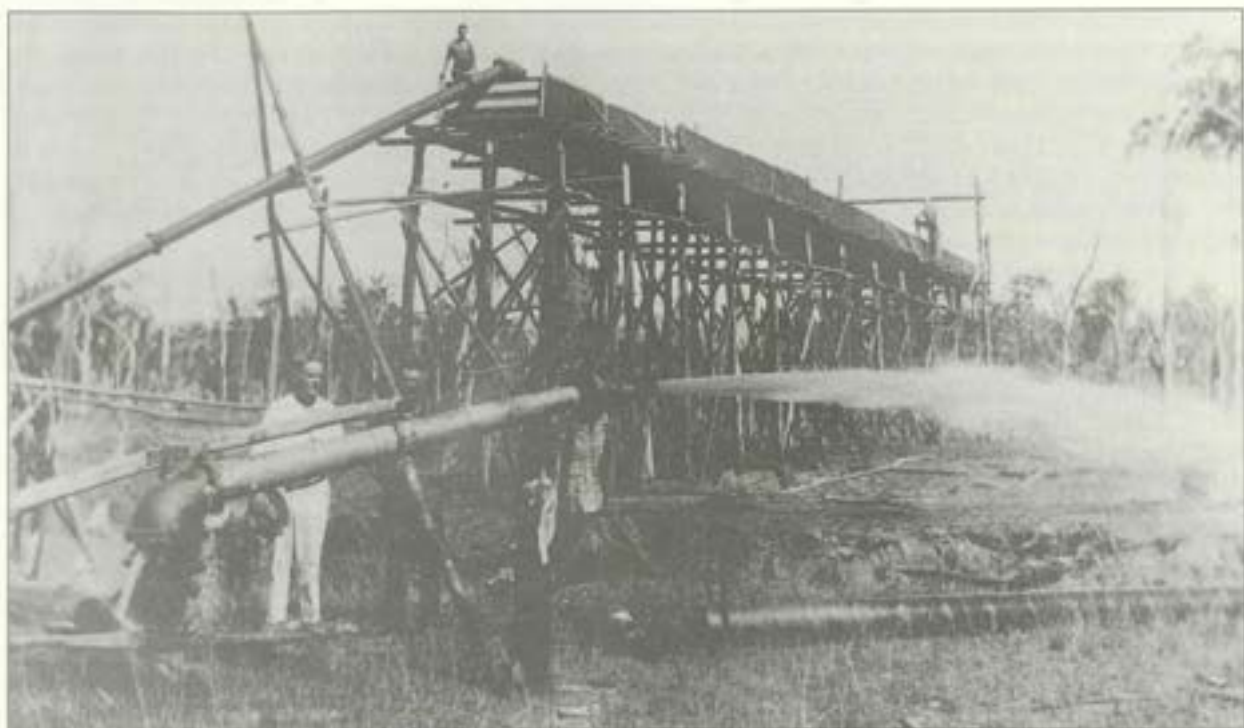
The Cinnabar Hall was opened on 4 June, 1929, which was described in the press as being: 'Cinnabar's Great Day.' The hall was constructed from funds raised through a series of sports meetings, £80 being raised in this way, and also through an overdraft loan. Two blocks of land on which the hall was to be built were donated by W.B. Lawless. The building was constructed by Mr J. Lundh of Kilkivan, it was forty-nine feet in length and twenty-nine feet wide with a twelve feet verandah. There was also a stage, a dressing room and a spotted gum dance floor. An acetylene gas plant to provide light and other power requirements was installed, this plant was a gift from the chairman of the building committee, Mr A.W. Davies. A drop scene reproduction of 'The Triumph of Harlequin' was executed free of charge by artist G. Hughes, and for the opening celebrations the hall and stage were decorated with pot plants. An opening night concert was organised by local school teacher, Miss E. Bowen, approximately four hundred people attended. The official opening ceremony was performed by Councillor J.W. Johnstone, in the absence of W.B. Lawless, chairman of the Kilkivan Shire Council.¹⁶

A significant boost to quicksilver mining in the Kilkivan region was made during the early 1930s when the Queensland Quicksilver Development Syndicate Ltd. opened their operations, working the Bloodworth and Commotion lodes. In 1932 the press reported, 'The Queensland Syndicate two years ago acquired 160 acres of mineral freehold four miles from Kilkivan and has prospecting rights and options on practically 1000 acres.'¹⁷ By that time the syndicate had carried out a large amount of prospecting work and had erected a treatment plant under the management of Mr John Lennox. The engineer responsible for adapting the machinery to the specific requirements of double distilled mercury production was Brian C. Elliot of Brisbane. In April 1932 the press claimed: '... Up to the present about 9½ tons of ore has been treated yielding 1500 lbs of mercury, the average yield being 8 per cent mercury which determined a value of £60 per ton.'¹⁸ This return was said to have been one of the best in the world at that time, the only other deposits yielding a better return were the Almaden ores of Spain which yielded ten per cent.



The reopening of one of the cinnabar mines. The mines were reopened by the Queensland Quicksilver Development Syndicate, 1932.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.



John Lennox, mine manager at Cinnabar when the mines were being worked by the Queensland Quicksilver Development Syndicate.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.



Mine manager, John Lennox (left), with shareholders, at Cinnabar during the 1930s.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

The Cinnabar mercury had been sold to a number of organisations including wholesale druggists, the Commonwealth Navigation Department Lighthouse Service the Brisbane City Council Electric Light Department and the Queensland Railway Department. When the operation was officially opened by the mines minister, Mr A.E. Atherton, in April 1932 a report of the company's activities claimed:

In connection with the lode formation, four shafts have been sunk, their depths ranging from 30 to 50 feet ... Payable ore is being brought to surface from the shafts.

Equally important in the syndicate's activities is the treatment plant erected on the site. Within the red-oxidized building on the hillside is the huge oven-like retort unit. Stoked, with wood, intense heat is generated beneath four cast-iron retorts. Into the retort the ore goes for the mercury distillation process, which is aided by the addition of quicklime. Half-a-ton of ore is treated in each charge which occupies eight hours. The cinnabar, that is, the mercury ore, together with the 10 per cent of lime, is brought to a temperature of 1000 degrees Fah. The mercury is thereby distilled and collected in a condensing chamber.¹⁹

Shareholders in the company included the chairman, E.C. Bingemann, who was also manager of the Guardian Assurance Company in Brisbane, other board members were J.S. Hyland (Queensland Metal Company), F.G. Pumfrey, of Pumfrey and Blakey, Brisbane, W.G.A. Smyth, of Isles Love and Co., F.E. Short, of F.E. Short and Co., Brisbane, and H.E. Hurst. The secretary to the company was W. Blakey. The syndicate was composed largely of Brisbane shareholders with some local capital coming from Kilkivan investors.²⁰

H.E. Hurst was the son of James Hurst, one of the original pioneers of quicksilver production in the region, who had accompanied the Duke of Manchester on his investigation of the possibilities of cinnabar development. He later wrote an account of subsequent events and claimed:

Active mining development work has been going on at the mines since last November, under the direction of Mr John Lennox, as general manager ... Four large retorts have been installed in a suitable building, and an official opening of the reduction works will take place early this month ...

In 1929 the writer, a geologist and mining engineer, one of the pioneers of Kalgoorlie ... having recalled the circumstances of his father's visit there in 1887-89, decided to inspect the locality.

He was much impressed with the possibilities of the gold, and then visited and made certain inquiries at the mining warden's office at Gympie. On starting for Brisbane he met an insurance man, Mr E.C. Bingemann, and mentioned the deposits. The result was a syndicate of six was formed ... The writer, at the request of others in the syndicate, commenced prospecting and eventually applied for the right to search for minerals under the Mining on Private Property Act. A lease was afterwards applied for 80 acres of freehold block 2447. While the application was before the court the present government repealed this Act, and as it was made retrospective, the application for a mineral lease was refused. He then approached the owner of the freehold block, and later an option agreement to purchase was granted to him, and afterwards transferred it to the present company.

Returning to Kilkivan the writer pegged out and applied for a number of prospecting areas of about 1000 acres. In the meantime he had secured a 12 months' option to purchase two more freehold blocks at the Ten Mile. Later Messrs Bingemann, Pumfrey, and Hurst visited the owner and confirmed the arrangement on behalf of the group.

In March, 1930, a company was incorporated entitled the Queensland Quicksilver Development Company, Ltd. The capital was £6000 ... The writer was entrusted with the management, and resided at Kilkivan until the July following, when the board of directors considered sufficient developmental work had been done to justify an appeal to London or the Southern States for more capital. In December it was arranged to form a large company in Melbourne. However, the terms being unfavourable to the Brisbane company, it was decided to withdraw the negotiations. On his return to Brisbane the writer, advised the board to erect a small retorting plant to prove the value of the ore.

Although the plant, which was installed at Bulimba, was crude and defective, very good results were achieved and the first batch of mercury recovered was sold at a highly satisfactory price. It was possible to recommend production on a larger scale. Production was further carried out under the supervision of Mr James Hyland, of the Queensland Metal Company, Ltd., Bowen Street, and sales of the metal have been made to the Commonwealth government and other large consumers.²¹

The morning of the official opening of the syndicate's operations was an exciting one for the small Kilkivan community. The official welcome was accorded to the minister, A.E. Atherton, at the council offices. Present at that welcome were the syndicate's chairman, E.C. Bingemann,

F.P. Power, J.A. Cullinane, R. Rankin from Gympie, Councillor A. Leitch, chairman of the Murgon Shire Council, Councillors L.A. Hall, M. Platt, C.C. Jones and A.W. Davis, all of Kilkivan Shire Council. Archdeacon Glover had also travelled from Toowoomba to be present at the opening ceremony. There were various speeches, Atherton, for example, stated that the young people of the state should leave the cities and go into the country to earn their livings and to help the state prosper by working the land and developing its natural wealth. After these speeches the official party was taken by motorcade to the scene of the mining operation, four miles from Kilkivan, where staff conducted the visitors around the site. A reporter on the mines later wrote: 'The hillsides presented an animated appearance as dozens of visitors trudged upwards and followed the single-file tracks around the ridges to shafts Nos 8 and 10, and the Bloodworth shaft. Windlass and platform indicated the pit mouths and visitors were able to grasp the amount of lode developmental work already accomplished. A charge of ore was undergoing treatment at the plant and interest was manifested in the process.'²²

The visit of the mines minister also stimulated renewed interest in mining generally and a deputation of Kilkivan miners and members of the Kilkivan Progress Association — introduced by the local M.L.A., E.H.C. Clayton — met with the minister to request his aid in getting mining on a more solid footing in the region, especially in relation to the Long Tunnel Mountain claim.²³

Unfortunately, the cinnabar mining operations of the Queensland Quicksilver Development Syndicate remained open until only 1933. However, the mining of cinnabar received a considerable boost during the Second World War when prices for many raw materials were high and when a company known as Q.S. Mines N.L. became interested in the district. In 1941 the press reported:

Quicksilver, or mercury, is essential for making high explosives. Yet this Queensland field — at Kilkivan, about 150 miles from Brisbane — is being worked only in a small way by the few companies there. Fully exploited, the field would free the Empire from dependence on any outside source of supply, Q.S. Mines, N.L., the biggest operator, claims.

This company has been communicating with the federal government for months, but it has not been able to get the support it considers it should have. It has asked the federal government to install a retort, costing £1500, and to buy the company's output at a price fixed by the prices commissioner.

The federal treasurer (Mr. Faden) has refused financial help ... The Queensland government has advanced it £400 for development work, available £ for £ with money spent by the company, but the state's funds for help to mining are not unlimited.

Mercury's great value in war is as a detonator of explosives. That is why the price per lb. has jumped from 6/- just before the war to 20/-. In the last war mercury sold to 70/-. In peace-time the world's supply is controlled by a combine, which handles the output of mines in Spain and Italy. In the last years of peace Australia imported 60,000 lb. from Spain and 15,000 lb. from Italy, with 300 lb. from England, and negligible amounts from other countries. Supply from Italy is no longer available, and that from Spain may not always be open. England has prohibited the export of mercury.²⁴

The war years were certainly the most profitable for the Cinnabar miners, from 1939 onwards the demand for mercury escalated dramatically. With the demand for the mineral being high, old deposits around the world once again became profitable concerns. In 1940, ten million lbs of mercury were mined world wide, the chief producer was Italy which produced almost half that amount, the United States produced 1.25 million lbs, Spain, Germany, Russia, the Bavarian Palatinate, Hungary, Tuscany, Mexico and Peru also produced limited quantities.

There were two companies then working on the Cinnabar field, Q.S. Mines No Liability and Queensland Quicksilver. As we have seen, mercury was being used in explosives, it was a vital component of bombs, shells and mines, it also had many medical applications that were important to military operations. Every soldier carried a quantity of mercurous chloride and iodine, the salt of which was a powerful antiseptic, Mercuric zinc was known as Lister's antiseptic. Just prior to the war one flask of mercury cost £10. In 1940 it cost £19. By 1941 the cost of a single flask of mercury had risen to £72.

If there was ever any kind of military target on the South Burnett worth the attention of Japanese long range bombers, then it was the mercury mining operations at Cinnabar. The

Japanese were certainly well aware of the deposits, Japanese espionage agents roamed throughout the state prior to the war making careful surveys of military and civil facilities that might serve the Japanese military following a Japanese invasion of the country. Agents disguised as tourists and businessmen travelled the countryside, some on bicycles, others by train and car, drawing maps, speaking with locals, and carefully recording everything of interest. The Cinnabar deposits would certainly not have escaped their attentions. Additionally, the Australian press during that time was also not adverse to publicising the importance of the mercury deposits, and to foreign intelligence services, press stories were one of the most favoured forms of information. For example, in 1941, when the Japanese had Queensland firmly within their sights as a military target, the *South Burnett Times* published a lengthy report detailing the importance of the mercury deposits at Kilkivan, the report had been taken from an editorial which had been published in the German monitored London press. There is no doubt whatever that this report would have found its way into the files of both German and Japanese intelligence departments and it would seem likely that the region would have been marked for special attention following an enemy invasion of the state.²⁵ The publication of such important information was then a sensitive issue. In September that year the local branch of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A., during a meeting at the Hall of Memory at Goomeri, passed a resolution that urged the censorship of newspapers be reinstated and strictly enforced.²⁶

Despite the promising prospects for the mine and regardless of the problems it was experiencing in its attempts to obtain assistance in producing the mercury, the mining operations near Kilkivan closed after the cessation of hostilities when prices once again plummeted.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Thirty-six

Cinnabar

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10. See family tree, Kilkivan Historical Society and M/C. 23 March, 1911, p 3.
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26. SBT. 18 September, 1941, p 8. For a detailed outlook on the mercury industry at that time, see: *The Facts of Kilkivan Mercury*, an article written by S.R. Hoskins, secretary to the company Q.S. Mines No Liability, which was published in SBT. 23 October, 1941, p 5.

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The Turn of the Century and the Growth of the Kilkivan Region

Mineral exploration in the Kilkivan region was certainly stagnating during the first ten years of the century, although, as we have seen, there were attempts being made to retrieve gold through the cyanide process at Black Snake and other regions, copper was being taken from the lodes at Mudlo and cobalt was also being retrieved from Black Snake.



Mudlo copper mine.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Cobalt had been one of the most exciting discoveries in the region, having first been located by Mr F. Smith during the early 1870s near Mount Coora. Working the lode was particularly difficult as it was located in mountainous terrain with no roads or other methods of transportation. W.H. Rand, the government geologist, had enthused about the prospects of cobalt in 1886. On 31 December, 1886, Rand wrote:

In accordance with instructions received from Mr Robert L. Jack, government geologist, I visited the cobalt lode discovered by Mr F. Smith in the neighbourhood of the Black Snake, near Kilkivan.

The lode is situated on the eastern slope of a steep and narrow spur, running in a northerly direction from Mount Coora, and which separates the head of Fat Hen Creek from a steep gully which joins it at the northern end of the spur ... A tunnel has been driven about 80 feet on the back of the lode at a spot 14 chains north of the summit of Mount Coora ...

From what has already been done towards the opening up of the lode, there can be but little doubt that it will prove to be a very valuable deposit.¹

The Mount Cobalt Company was formed in 1898 to work the cobalt lode, and in 1903, John Lake, an employee in the cobalt mines, was injured during his shift due to the accidental discharge of a charge of gelignite. He was badly bruised and his thumb was blown off. Fellow workers quickly applied first aid and he was taken to the Maryborough Hospital for emergency treatment.²

From 1902 to 1904 the cobalt lode at Black Snake was worked with varying results but it was finally closed and the site became deserted.

Such disappointments were endemic to the district. In March 1905 one of the region's companies, the Marodian Gold Mining Company, closed down, throwing a considerable number of men out of work.³ The extraction of copper was now probably more important to the region than was gold. In March 1905 three Brisbane men named Green, Keenan and Freeney took over the Mudlo copper claim and conducted a trial crushing of five tons of ore.⁴

By 1921 the copper bearing ore at Mudlo had been largely extracted. A government geologist from the Department of Mines inspected the region in June that year at the request of the managing director of the Mudlo Mining Syndicate Limited, Mr C.P. Christoe. The company was then considering spending a considerable amount of money on added transport and water schemes, having already spent more than £10,000 on the venture. A road was in the process of being constructed through the Mudlo Gap, this was being built by the Kilkivan Shire Council with some funds coming from the syndicate. Additionally there was a perennial problem of the lack of water and several schemes were being investigated whereby water, at an economical cost, could be obtained for the mining operation. The syndicate claimed that they were prepared to spend an added £5000 on both the road and water schemes. However, the geologist's report was far from promising. In a letter to the under-secretary for mines in Brisbane he stated: 'I have carefully sampled all exposures in the mine and ... it is plain that the richest shoots above the adit have been depleted and it (would be) unwise to place too much reliance on probable ore below until the lode has been blocked out in the usual way. Moreover I have sampled the ore paddocks, but my estimates of quantities at grass are only a fraction of those which the syndicate's proposals are based.'⁵

Successive resumptions from stations such as *Kilkivan*, *Manumbar*, *Woolooga*, *Widgee*, *Barambah* and *Boonara* all opened up additional lands to closer settlement. In 1908 16,000 acres of *Kilkivan* were opened up, the auction being conducted by Hain and Searight of Sydney. In addition to the country blocks, seventy-nine town blocks at Cinnabar were offered for sale.

Life in the bush for many of those early miners and selectors was difficult, lonely and tiring, they lived in primitive conditions, often in tents or bark humpies, with rarely any contact with the outside world. The miners generally worked forty-eight hours each week for a basic wage of a few pounds and rations, their food consisted generally of beef, tea and damper. There were few women on these distant mineral fields and even fewer available unmarried women, the men were often restless, tired and isolated. Their work in the mines was usually particularly arduous, working deep underground using candles for illumination, there was little, if any, mechanization and all the rock had to be hewn and carted by hand in the dust-choked semi-darkness. Deep underground it was airless and hot, during the summer months the temperatures in the mines soared to almost unbearable levels. Once their shifts had finished the men would come to the surface where, if there was no wife to prepare and cook food for them, they had to make their

own meals and wash and mend their own clothing. Life like this often went on for month after month with little or no respite and certainly few holidays. Little wonder then that sometimes the pressures of such a life sent men beyond reason. For example, in July 1905 an old Danish man named Emil Anderson went on a rampage at Yorkey. For some considerable time Anderson had been employed as a woodcutter at the claim, he had always been considered harmless but his fellow workers had noticed that he had, 'eccentric habits'. Suddenly, without a warning of any kind, he went on the rampage around the mining camp, destroying utensils and burning down his own humpy. The event was reported to Sergeant Marshall at Kilkivan who went up to Yorkey and arrested Anderson, the press claiming: '... A good deal of sympathy is expressed by many old miners here for the old fellow.'⁶

It would, of course, be impossible to name all of the early miners and selectors who settled in the Kilkivan region, they were far too numerous and, in many cases, their histories have been long lost. Some selectors came to the region, took up their holdings and subsequently moved away, leaving little, if any, evidence of their occupancy. However, many others remained to forge the genesis of agricultural development in the district. Among these first settlers was James Connors of *Glen Erin*, a resumption from *Manumbar* station. Connors was the son of an Irish shepherd who had originally worked in the Nanango region. Samuel Henry Glasgow also selected land from *Manumbar* which he named *Ivanhoe*, he later married Isabella Banks, and was for many years a member of the Kilkivan Shire Council. His brother, Robert, also selected in that region.

Richard and William Westaway purchased land from *Kilkivan*, this property was known as *Dunmorin*, they also owned *Piggot Plains*, a selection taken from *Barambah*.

One of Richard's grandson's was Noel Warburton who later served as chairman on the Kilkivan Shire Council and was the inaugural chairman of the Murgon meatworks.

Peenam was a selection from *Barambah* which was taken up by Francis (Frank) Hunt. Frank Hunt was of English stock, arriving with his family when he was two years of age.⁷ Another selection in the region was *Bellavale*, owned by Archibald Banks.



Home and family of George and Bertha Zahnleiter 'Glenalvon' Coleman Siding. Their daughter, Louise, and son, Herb, are in the garden. The house was later removed to Goomeri. Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Among the first residents to arrive following the discovery of gold at West Coast Creek were George and Bertha Zahnleiter. The family subsequently acquired *Glenalvon*, a selection at Coleman's Siding, where they operated a dairy, later changing to grazing. James Hewson was another selector at Cinnabar and was aided by his son, George, who also worked as a drover at *Widgee* station.

James Wason came from England to train as a jackeroo on *Gigoomgan* station and later became an accomplished stockman. Following his marriage he selected land at Mudlo, his wife, Margaret, was just seventeen years of age at the time. They operated a dairy at Mudlo, Margaret made cheeses which she took on horseback to Woolooga railway station where they were loaded onto a train for Maryborough. Upon the death of James, his sons took over the running of the property.⁸

By now, of course, there were many other aspects of importance in the Kilkivan region, services and infrastructure were improving each year. For example the first Kilkivan show was held on 3 July, 1914, F.E. Hopkins was its first secretary. A police presence in the township included Constables Doolin and Tobin. By 1913 the police station was situated in Bligh Street.⁹

Notes and Sources

Chapter Thirty-seven

The Turn of the Century and the Growth of the Kilkivan Region

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8. *Ibid*, pp 128-30.
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Some Early Selectors in the Kilkivan Shire

When the rail line was established to Kilkivan in 1886 it became necessary to have a siding at Woolooga to serve the residents of that community, the name of the siding was taken from *Woolooga* station. Over the following years the site became a prosperous rural service centre supplying goods and facilities to local farmers and other residents, it boasted a hotel, a hall, several stores, a blacksmith's shop and post office.

One of the foremost early settlers in the Woolooga region was Thomas Thomas who is credited with constructing the first store, hotel and hall at the small township. Thomas was a miner working at Gympie when he purchased two hundred and nine acres in a crown land sale in May 1907. Thomas, his wife, Sarah, and their children moved into a modest home on the property and they named the holding *Budock* after the family home in Cornwall, England. The township had already been surveyed but the original site was found to be unsuitable so land was acquired from Thomas Thomas on the other side of the hill and surveyed into town blocks. Thomas constructed the first hall and hotel in 1908, both were to burn down in 1936. He also later constructed the first store which was a wedding present for his daughter, Louise. A second store, known as the Post Office Store, was constructed for his second daughter, Susan. In 1917 Thomas also constructed the town's first saleyards.¹

Other early settlers in the region included J.H. Cecil, G.H. Harvey, M. Platt, Fred Walker, J. Sellen, P. Smith, B. Smith and E. Pike. John Wilson was a miner from Gympie who selected a property from *Woolooga* station, naming his selection *Carmyle*, the name taken from a town in Scotland. George Elderfield took up a property from *Woolooga* station during the mid 1880s, this property was later taken over by his sons.



Main Street, Woolooga.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society



Woolooga Hotel.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society



Woolooga from the railway water tower.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

One of the primary properties in the Woolooga district was owned by Joseph Macfarlane, a builder from Scotland who had originally come to Gympie to carry on his profession. He selected land at Woolooga circa 1876. For many years his property was known as *Old Woolooga*, but due to confusion arising from the similarity of names with *Woolooga* station, Macfarlane's property was re-Christened *Craigleigh Dairy*. With a frontage to Wide Bay Creek, it covered 2500 acres,

1750 acres of which were leasehold and used for grazing purposes. A 1903 report of the station claimed: 'The homestead, which is about half a mile from ... the 17 Mile Gate on the Kilkivan railway, consists of two houses, shed, barn, pig-sties and yards ... Mr Macfarlane was the first to send cream away from these parts, having dispatched his cans to the Model Dairy in Brisbane prior to the Gympie butter factory being inaugurated.'²

Other early settlers in the Woollooga district included C.A. Booker, J.A. Morrison, John Bambling, John Dray, Frank Spiller, W.S. Harvey, G.J. Olsen, A. Bambling, Thomas Dawson, W.G. Currant, A. Wilson and W. Wilson.

A colourful description of Kilkivan, written by a correspondent to the *Maryborough Chronicle* in March 1911, gives us an idea of the state of the small township at that time, it lists not only the good points, the prosperity-related advantages brought by the rail, but also the problems associated with living in such a small rural community where there was little funding available for bettering services such as roads. The writer claimed:

There are two stores in Kilkivan. One, the railway store, is owned by Mr John Coleman, and was opened by him in 1886 at the opening of the railway line in Kilkivan. The second, the Premier Cash Store, was purchased by Mr J.H. McKewen from his father three years ago; he removed it to a more central position, and renovated it up-to-date. His manager is Mr George Garden, late of Butler & Co., of Gympie ... There are two hotels here. The nearest to the railway station is the Federal Hotel; the present lessee is Mr J.F.J. Watter, late of Tingoora, who purchased the goodwill four months ago. He is ably assisted by Mrs Watter. The culinary department is in the hands of Miss Ellen Tullock, a tall, dark haired young lady. The second hotel is the Kilkivan Hotel, owned by Mr George Moessinger, now of the Mining Exchange Hotel in Gympie. The present occupier of the Kilkivan Railway Hotel is Mr G.B. Tucker, late of Wondai, in which town he opened a cordial factory some two or three years ago ... There is a station master, Mr Barney Futerell (a new arrival), and a staff; Miss Fanny Hall, daughter of Mr Frank Hall, station-master at Springsure, is the postmistress here for the past 11 months; although very young for such a post, Miss Hall is well up to her work. There is a telegraph and telephone attached to the post office, Miss Hall is well assisted by Miss Mary Moessinger, who started her duties in Kilkivan at the same time as Miss Hall ... The local butcher is Mr John Moreland, who purchased the business six months ago from Mr A. Braysher. He seems to be the right man in the right place. There are two blacksmiths, one baker, one saddler, and several small shops besides.³

Early residents of the Kilkivan district were well known to local people at the time, but over the years many of their names have become lost, their occupations forgotten. We are fortunate, therefore, to have the writing of a frequent visitor to the region, a travelling feature writer working for the *Maryborough Chronicle*. In 1911 this writer travelled to the Kilkivan region and visited many of the selections that had then been taken up, later writing a description of the homes and farms and of the people who lived at those places. This piece of historical literature allows us to experience the colour and texture of those early days and once again recall the ambience of colonialism in the Kilkivan district.

Arriving in the Kilkivan district the writer stayed at *Gobybagum* (meaning land of honey) farm, his hosts being Mr and Mrs H.B. Loe, the owners of the selection. Loe had been in Australia for about thirty-six years, having spent about fifteen years travelling in many countries. His wife had been about thirty years in Queensland. The farm was approximately two miles from the Cinnabar railway station and two miles to Kilkivan. The first of those visited by the feature writer was Robert Craig storekeeper, newsagent, and agent for the *Maryborough Chronicle* and *Colonist*, who was born in Dublin, Ireland, and came to Australia with his father and mother at the age of seven years. His father had been a private in the 28th Infantry. Arriving initially at Hobart, Robert Craig's father obtained his discharge from the army at Wollongong, after 11 years' service in the 28th Infantry. The family returned to the Maitland district, took land and worked as farmers for a period of ten years, Robert Craig helping his father on the farm until he was twenty years of age. He then worked at a number of various jobs, such as horse driver with a wheat threshing machine for four years and a horse teamster to the Rocky River (from Morpeth to Mudgee). He then went to Newcastle as a copper smelter for the Adelaide Co. and stayed there for seven years. He subsequently engaged with Vickery & Co., in the same profession, at Black Snake, and later followed different occupations such as kangaroo shooter, miner, fencer and house

builder, finally opening a store and a newsagency in Kilkivan. He married Amelia Logue of Dublin, circa 1857.

Charles Scheinpflug of *Dalton Station* was employed at the same store for many years. Scheinpflug was an accomplished artist in oils and sketches. Circa 1919 he constructed a new house on his property which was described as being: '... one of the sights of Kilkivan. When the house was finished he married a Miss Zahnleiter of *Glenalvon*, Coleman Siding.'

William Tulloch of *Rose Villa*, had been in Queensland for twenty-three years when the *Chronicle's* feature writer visited him in 1911, most of those years had been spent in mining and prospecting. He was prospecting in the Kilkivan region for about twelve months prior to being engaged by the Kilkivan Shire Council. *Rose Villa* was a town cottage which Tulloch constructed circa 1909.

Allan Braysher was a grazier and butcher who lived on a small holding called *Mayfair*, seven acres in size, within the township, but he also owned 625 acres situated three miles out of town on Black Snake road. Braysher married May Fraser of Kilkivan circa 1871. The couple purchased a $\frac{1}{4}$ town allotment at the Goomeri sale of 1911.

Jacob Angel of *Viewlands*, owned 280 acres situated at about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the railway station where he carried on farming and dairying. He married Miss E. Craig, daughter of Mr Robert Craig. Jacob Angel purchased *Viewlands* circa 1907.

Mrs C. Hohensee, formerly from Biggenden, owned *Seehen* cottage, she was a dressmaker in Bligh Street (near Cameron's Refreshment Rooms), she arrived at Kilkivan in 1905 with her husband, Charles, — a timber-getter by trade. They were newly married when they first arrived.

John Florence of *Elgin House*, had been working for the shire council since 1894. He married Isabella McCarthy circa 1888. Isabella had come to Queensland about five years previously and six weeks after her arrival she married Patrick McCarthy. The couple had one girl and a boy, but the boy died in infancy. Pat McCarthy was killed four years after his marriage. His widow subsequently married John Florence.

Frank Wex of *Pepperina Cottage* (2 acres), a timber-getter, was married to Eveline McCarthy on 15 April, 1903, Eveline was the surviving child of the marriage between Isabella and Patrick McCarthy.

George Wex owned *Florenceville*, a one acre town allotment. He too was a timber-getter. He married Jessie Florence a step-sister to Mrs Eveline Wex on 7th October, 1908.

Charles Wex the brother of George and Frank Wex, owned *Glenore*, also a one acre town allotment, this was described as being '... splendid black soil, well adapted for vegetable orchard or flower gardens.' Charles Wex married Catherine Agnes Beckett of Gympie on the 22nd April, 1908.

Andy Wallace of *Sunnyside*, previously of Boonara, owned two acres of town allotment, a few hundred yards from the railway station. He also selected 1880 acres of *Boobyjan* station. Wallace married Annie Euler, of Goomeri, whose father was the well known German immigrant, August Euler of *Sunny Hill*, near Goomeri.

John Clancy owned *Hill View* cottage and was a ganger on the railway line. He married an Irish woman named May Hehir.

Samuel Baxter was the owner of *Vincentia*, a one acre town allotment, and worked as a bullock teamster. On the 21st February, 1911, he was married to Norah Marguerite Hall, of Kilkivan. The ceremony was performed by Father Matthew Horan, of Ipswich, who had travelled to Kilkivan to conduct the marriage. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later published: 'There was a tremendous crowd, both at the Catholic Church and afterwards on the railway platform to bid God-speed to the new married couple, who, after having partaken of the wedding breakfast that was held at the bride's parents' took the train for Sydney for their honeymoon.'⁴

J.H. Baxter (brother to Sam Baxter), owned *Colter Cottage*. He was a timber-getter by trade and had come to Kilkivan from Biggenden. He married Mary Margaret Colch, the only daughter of Mr and Mrs Thomas Colch, of *Clincon*, on 16 December, 1908. J.H. and Sam Baxter's

grandmother (Mrs Ann Baxter), who died circa 1910, had once owned the hotel *Live And Let Live*. She and her husband had been early settlers in the Biggenden district.

Thomas Colch was the owner of *Clincon Cottage*, five acres, situated half a mile from the township. He came from Ireland to Queensland in the 1860s and worked in the bush until he met a Miss B. O'Dowd at *Booubyjan* station and the couple later married. Thomas Colch and his wife arrived in Kilkivan about 1886, Thomas worked as a general labourer for the shire council.

James Joseph Colch a contractor and builder of Kilkivan, left his parents when he completed his education. He worked at *Booubyjan* station and another station for about three years; returned to Kilkivan and worked at the mines for two years. He later became employed by the shire council and was subsequently a horse team driver and horse breaker. He went to New Zealand in 1902 and for three years he learned the trade of carpenter. He again returned to Kilkivan and built several cottages in the town before moving to Kingaroy. He left Kingaroy in 1908 to once more return to Kilkivan where he continued with his building trade, constructing many of the town's houses and cottages, including *Vincentia Cottage* for Sam Baxter and his wife. He purchased a town allotment at the Goomeri sales and later took contracts for house building there.



James Joseph Colch, contractor and builder.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

George Robinson Brown lived at *Rose Cottage*, a block of land fifteen acres in size which was 1½ miles from the post office. Robinson was a bullock driver and had been in the district since circa 1883. He also worked at various jobs, such as horse team carrier, kangaroo shooter, brumby catcher and horse breaker. He married Sarah Ann Turner circa 1905. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later published: 'Mr George Brown has the reputation of being one of the best breakers of leaders for bullock teams in the district. He has sold seven leaders for £84 that he broke in less than two years in his leisure time. He is also an amateur pen and ink drawer. I was shown some of his sketches drawn from Nature. They were original and well executed indeed for an amateur, who has had no teaching whatever.'⁶

Stephen Pye owned *Ivy Lodge*, a town allotment of three acres. He came to Kilkivan around 1901, was a railway line ganger, did some mining and later worked as a road overseer. He was born in New South Wales and came to Queensland as a child. He married Miss M. Gilliver.

John Lake of *Maryvale*, was a timber cutter and former miner who had resided in the district since about 1881, firstly at Black Snake. In 1890 he married Mary Ellen Connerty who had been two years in Kilkivan before she was married.

From Kilkivan to the Black Snake there were many selectors, Charles M. Waldoock owned *Mayfield*, five hundred acres, and was a dairyman and timber-getter. The property was situated four miles from Kilkivan and twelve miles from Black Snake. Waldoock was born at Cressbrook and later came with his parents to the Mary River. He was married there and selected *Mayfield* in 1888. He was one of the pioneer timber-getters on the Murgon Ranges.

Girvan Crawford owned *Balmoral*, who purchased the property from Mark Knowles circa 1904, the property was situated five miles from Kilkivan. Crawford had worked as a bullock teamster, and later went in for dairying and general farming. He married Ellen Hayden circa 1905, whose parents lived at *Olive Green* on the Mary River.

Mrs A.C. Williams owned *Rosedale*, 314 acres, where she carried on dairying, general farming and grazing. *Rosedale* was situated ten miles from Kilkivan. In addition to *Rosedale*, Mrs Williams owned another 160 acres selection, nearly adjoining the homestead. She also owned another 1200 acres of grazing land a few miles from the homestead. Her husband, Emmanuel Williams (who died in December 1910) came from Portugal about fifty years previously and worked as a miner for many years. He followed every rush in New South Wales, New Zealand and Queensland. He arrived at Black Snake in 1869 and early in the 1870s married Miss A.C. Zahnleiter a native of Victoria. Williams worked for three years at the Black Snake mines before his marriage and not long afterwards he selected *Rosedale* homestead, composed at that time of 144 acres.⁶

At Black Snake lived George S. Webb, the proprietor of the Black Snake Hotel. The press later claimed:

The history of the Black Snake Mines starts 40 years ago, more or less, when Messrs James Orphant (who now resides at Orphant Crossing on the Mary River) and party worked the Black Snake Reef. Amongst them there was Bob Collins, of Charters Towers, who for a long period kept a hotel in that town ... I think they christened the iron reef "The Shamrock, Rose and Thistle". The mine is situated at $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the hotel, and from the surface to 80 and even 100 ft. down, as many as 11 ounces of gold to the ton were yielded, but the average was 8 ozs. I am told Bob Collins sold his share to Mr Vickery (Sydney) for the sum of £4,000 at the right time and left for Charter Towers at the period of the gold rush. If my information is correct the first crushing battery was erected 34 or 35 years ago and was finally abandoned at the beginning of the century. I visited the ruins a month ago. What a picture of desolation. In the very centrifuge, reeds are in full bloom. At the beginning there must have been fully 250 workers in Black Snake ... The mines in or around the Black Snake are rich, but the drawback is the separation of the various minerals without loss. It has been done 30 years ago in a laboratory in Swansea, (South Wales) by a French professor of chemistry with Black Snake specimens with such remarkable success that had those at the head of the mine accepted his terms, which were very reasonable, instead of dallying and trying to curtail his price, Black Snake instead of being a dead failure, would be now a flourishing town ... At last when the latter recognised their error and tried to approach the French professor he was dead, taking with him his secret in the grave.⁷

The Webb family has become well known in the Kilkivan shire. George Slater Webb was born in Ross County of Meath, Ireland, and before coming to Australia on the ship *Cairngorm* on 2 July, 1863, he was studying medicine, but at the age of twenty-one decided to come to Australia where he remained for the rest of his life. His early days in Australia were spent seeking work at the mines around Gympie, but he eventually made his home near the Black Snake mine in the Kilkivan district, and after marrying Mary Jane O'Reilly on 24 August, 1868, they lived and raised a family of four boys and three girls.

During George Slater Webb's lifetime he became a well respected and prominent businessman, owning the Mount Mia hotel (where he and his family lived), the Post Office Store, butcher shop and some 18,000 acres of selected grazing country in the Kilkivan and Widgee districts.

His first land selection was made at Widgee on 15 November, 1881, 600 acres at a cost of 10/- per acres. This land is part of other adjoining land he later purchased at Widgee and which

became known as *Thornside*. This is currently owned by George Slater Webb's grandson Fabian Webb and his wife Tanda.

William Slater Webb, son of George Slater, eventually inherited the *Thornside* grazing land, where he lived. He married Hilda Scally on 7 December, 1921, they raised a family of five boys and three girls. From this family came the three Webb Brothers, Fabian, Marius, and Berard now well known internationally for their contribution to country music.

In September 1982 the three brothers threw open the gates of *Thornside* to celebrate its centenary, and also to celebrate their recording and performing of country music for twenty-five years. This is where and when the now renowned Country Music Muster was born which today is the biggest outdoor Country music event in Australia having raised in excess of two million dollars for charity since its inception.

Fabian Webb also founded the Kilkivan Great Horse Ride in 1986 and April 1997 more than 750 riders took part riding three separate trails into Kilkivan. This event created an Australian record for numbers of people on horseback at one time. Fabian Webb has been a member of Kilkivan Shire Council continuously for the past thirty years and during the Queensland Local Government Conference in Cairns in September 1997 received an award for his long service to Queensland Local Government.⁸

Between Black Snake and Cinnabar lay the farm belonging to James Stockden, this property was known as *Osborne Farm*. It was fifteen miles from Kilkivan and eight miles from Cinnabar railway station. Stockden carried on dairying and general farming. *Osborne Farm* was purchased circa 1905. Stockden was born in Gympie, he worked for three years in the Glenmar (Monkland) mine.⁹

The Hunter family, James and Eliza and their children, were early settlers in the Kilkivan district, although James Hunter died suddenly in 1901 at the age of sixty-three years. His obituary described him as being: '... one of the oldest and most widely respected pioneers of the Kilkivan district.' James had never suffered any serious illness during his life and was on the point of retiring on 3 June, 1901, when, without any warning, he collapsed and died, leaving a widow, three sons and four daughters.¹⁰ Following his death his wife, Eliza, continued to manage the farm with the help of her family. Ten years later, in 1911, a report of her property claimed:

Mrs E. Hunter and her late husband came to *Mount View* about 35 years ago. They had just been married and were the first pioneers on the Wide Bay Creek that took land so far up. They arrived at night and camped in a hut (still standing, [1911] and, in fact, is Mrs Hunter's own bedroom still). She doesn't want to relinquish it for more comfortable quarters which have been added on all sides of that primitive hut, which I am told was built over 50 years ago for one of Mactaggart's shepherds. That hut is the identical room that Mrs Hunter has been using for a bedroom for the past 35 years. Her husband died 10 years ago next 2nd June. What memories of the past, what reminiscences of the long ago doesn't that room bring into Mrs Hunter's brain? The struggles, the solitude of the virgin forest and many adventures humorous or otherwise more or less connected with that hut of a half-century. For instance, on the first morning that Mrs Hunter awoke from her bridal couch, what was her fright to behold the wooden shutter (there were no such luxuries as windows at that time) full open and framed with dusky heads of both sexes, half inside the room. For a moment Mrs Hunter could not talk. She awoke her husband and pointed him with her finger the blacks at the window. Mr James Hunter rose, up took his gun, and pursued the blacks who helter skelter ran in every direction yelling every time they heard a report. Of course Mr Hunter did not harm them, he wanted only to frighten them out of the place. They were inoffensive as the future later on proved. Their presence at the window was merely a childish curiosity. *Mount View* is one of the prettiest homesteads that I have come across in the district. The building with its quaint nooks and corners, is quite original. When Mr Hunter came with his bride he added to the original hut, and 5 years ago a new wing was added to it, and many drawings and paintings (the work of the young ladies of the place) ornament the walls. Built on a high ridge at a stone's throw from the Wide Bay Creek, *Mount View* has indeed a commanding position of the neighbourhood.¹¹

Eliza Hunter had married her husband, James, at Gympie, circa 1879. James and his brother Robert had arrived in the Kilkivan region at the time of the first gold rush. Robert established a property near the township which he called *Grace Hall*, after an estate near his birthplace in

Ireland which was owned by the Duke of Manchester. When the duke later visited Kilkivan to investigate the cinnabar lodes, Robert Hunter was able to entertain him at *Grace Hall*. The site selected by James for his homestead was in particularly mountainous country and so he called it *Mount View*. Eliza Hunter died at St Mary's Hospital Maryborough on 9 October, 1919.¹²

James Meakin was the first selector to take up land from *Widgee* station at Wodonga in 1877, he later transferred the holding to his father. William Meakin selected another holding in 1878 and this too was transferred to the father. The holdings were sold to Catherine Ellen Hillcoat, the wife of John William Hillcoat, in May 1887, their son, Harold, and his wife, settled on the holding in 1891.¹³

Patrick Dray was an early selector, taking up land resumed from *Widgee* station in the Ten Chain Road region. Dray had come from the Gympie goldfields to the Kilkivan region, he later acquired another property at Woolooga.

A few other early selectors in the *Widgee* region included Bill O'Brien at Station Creek, who took up his holding in 1885, Owen O'Donnell, a successful gold miner from Gympie took up his holding, *Traquair*, in 1889. John Shanahan originally selected at Amamoor Creek but gave up this holding to select property at Station Creek in 1885. James McCarthy selected at Glastonbury Creek in 1876 after an unsuccessful career as a gold miner. William Cotter selected his property, *Beatrice Vale*, in 1887. Adam Mulholland selected his farm, *The Groggy*, in 1886, it was later transferred to his son, William Andrew (Bill) Mulholland in 1892. William Wooster took up *The Grange* on Station Creek in October 1887. Thomas Kelynack, Michael Purcell, Patrick Dray and Thomas Pike were also selectors in the district, Pike established the well known vineyard called *Acacia Vale*.¹⁴

F.L.B. Mackrell owned *Sellwood*, (also reported as *Selwood*) a farm three thousand acres situated 3½ miles from Kilkivan and 1½ miles from Cinnabar, it was purchased in 1894. *Sellwood* was composed of agricultural and grazing land. Mackrell was born in Bowen, New Zealand, his father was the manager of *Brombi Park* cattle station for more than twenty years. In 1899 F.L.B. Mackrell accompanied his father and mother to England and stayed there for about two years, during that time his mother died. On his return to Queensland his father purchased *Sellwood* and at his death in 1903 his son, F.L.B. Mackrell became owner of the property. His only sister joined him and became house-keeper for her brother.¹⁵

George and Timothy Fitzpatrick of Bular were also early selectors. A feature writer for the *Maryborough Chronicle* later wrote in 1911: 'About 24 years ago two brothers of the name of George and Timothy Fitzpatrick, born in Cannas, County of Clare (Ireland), after a sojourn in New South Wales eventually took two small selections (goldfield area) in Bular. One of their sisters (Elizabeth) joined them three years later, and another sister (Jane) 16 years ago. They lived together; never married, and rarely went out of the place, and no further than Gympie, some 28 miles distant. One of the brothers died 12 years ago at the old age of 78. His sister, Jane, died last year at the ripe old age of 82; she was followed in her grave by her brother, Timothy, eight weeks after her demise. He was 75 years old.'¹⁶

At Oakview there were numerous selectors. Oakview railway station was situated between Kilkivan and Kilkivan Junction (Theebine). Thomas Tennison owned *Oakview Farm*, 2,500 acres (2,000 freehold and 500 acres leasehold), one mile from Oakview station, which was watered by the Wide Bay Creek. Tennison started farming in the district circa 1890 with five hundred acres of leasehold land, later, at various periods, he bought and selected a further two thousand acres. Tennison had arrived at Gympie from Kilkenny (Ireland), in 1874. For the first eighteen months he secured a job as horse driver, which was followed by eleven years of mining at Gympie, subsequently acquiring *Oakview Farm*. In 1877 he married Mrs Mary Houligan (a widow), who had come to Queensland in 1864.

The Kitt brothers, Harold, Henry, George and Herbert, were the owners of *Viviana Farm*, this was composed of 750 acres, including 250 acres of scrub land. *Viviana Farm* was situated one mile from Oakview railway station. Their father, George Kitt, had come from Norfolk, England. He first worked on the Snowy River goldfield subsequently moving to Brisbane where he worked for a while at his trade of baker. He left Brisbane for Gympie at the time of the gold rush, and was reported to have baked the first loaf of bread on the diggings. He secured the first portion of *Viviana*, circa 1891 and died about fifteen years later, leaving the property to his sons.¹⁷

The Oakview School was first established in 1895 and remained in operation until 1914 when it closed due to a lack of pupils. It opened again in 1918 but again closed for similar reasons.¹⁸ In 1937 it was again reopened, its first teacher at that time was Joyce Kemp who, in 1987, wrote a brief account of her experiences at the school:

Turn the clock back 50 years! At the Oakview Railway Siding, the 'Peanut' (Rail motor), pulls up, a young woman alights plus bicycle plus pots and boxes. The teacher, not quite 20, has arrived to reopen the Oakview State School, closed for many years.

The School! Well, a modern miss would not have stayed one day, but to my generation a transfer was an order and one obeyed. That old building (humpy), had 3 doors, none of which locked properly, a rickety window, a lean-to verandah, a tank, some school furniture, 2 blackboards and a pile of shabby, much used books and stores dumped from somewhere else.

I suppose I wept, but there was a job to do, children needing education and I was 'it'. I boarded at the Railway House and rode my bicycle the 1½ miles out to the school near the main road. Thank goodness for that bicycle for I was terrified of the great bullocks that grazed the paddocks. Later I discovered they were only curious as they followed me their great horns weaving. I would hop off the bike, wave my arms and off they would thunder, only to pause, regroup and continue the game.

I think the school opened with approximately 10 children all ages and sizes. They walked or rode to school. Some names I remember well, others evade my memory although I recall their personalities. Noel and Ian Fitzgerald rode their ponies from across the railway line, Herb and Lucy Baldwin from the Home Farm, the Emerson family from the Forestry Station, families of timber workers and share farmers came, stayed a while and disappeared. There was a big lad, cheerful and hard working who 'did the pans' at weekends. There was a special form to be filled in triplicate and sent off before a cheque came to pay the family.

In those early days parents were most helpful. We swept and cleaned, dusted and cobwebbed, made do, begged and demanded stores and equipment from the powers that be. Slowly the school evolved. The District Inspector appeared and made some impressions on the Department as boxes began to arrive with new books and chalk and pencils and the things town schools take for granted.

The little school was very isolated, with not a house in site. If the creeks flash-flooded no one came to school except the teacher. The only passers-by were the sparse traffic on the main road and the timber trucks and local farmers going into the siding for mail and freighted goods.

Once a travelling man came with 2 camels — a very shabby wayfarer. The Fitzgeralds' horses went crazy and so did the children but he made no other trouble and moved away quietly.

Another time some vandals broke in and stole some of my books and wrote on desks and blackboards. Police were thin on the ground in those days but my property was found in a week or so. I guess the local police knew what petty thieves were operating in the area. I took a day off to go to court in Kilkivan and the school had a holiday. Today I would have taken the whole school as an educational experience ...

So the months rolled on, the parents continued to lobby for a 'proper' school building and finally it arrived — overlanded from somewhere 'up the line'. It was a real school, on high blocks with a wind break for protection under the school ...

I boarded with the Marsh family who were very good to me. Mr Marsh always called me Teacher (he had always called the person in charge of the school by that name). It is perhaps worth mentioning that Mr Marsh as a fletcher, had many narrow escapes on that winding narrow line. Trains never ran on time and the noise of his trolley drowned out train noises. Many times he had to jump off and drag his trolley to safety as a train loomed round a bend in the line. The rail motor 'Peanut' was the worst as it travelled faster than the long freight trains.¹⁹

Joyce Kemp (now Ferguson) was educated at the Gympie High School and trained as a teacher at the Teacher's Training College in Turbot Street Brisbane. She taught at Barolin (Bundaberg) Oakview, Yandina and Imbil, later marrying a Victorian soldier and moving to Victoria where she has since remained.²⁰

At Cinnabar, on the other side of Kilkivan there were many early selectors, these included Thomas Standen of *Warrendilla*, one mile from Cinnabar, who came to Australia from London with his parents in 1866. At the age of 15 he went to *Widgee* station as a stockrider and later married Anna Fricker.

William Moessinger of *Roseview*, four miles from Cinnabar, married Ellen Cullinane of Cork, Ireland. Mr Moessinger was heavily involved in railway construction, being one of the bridge pile drivers on the line between Kilkivan and Kingaroy.

H. Barnett Loe of *Gobybagum*, two miles from Cinnabar, had served eleven years in the British Royal Navy as a seaman gunner and diver prior to coming to Australia. He met Mary Muir at *Boonara* station and later married her.²¹

Another Cinnabar resident was Godfrey Adam Moessinger who was born in September 1835 in Germany. He married Mary Ann Davis on 2 December, 1861. After living and working at *Boonara* station for many years, where he was employed as a sheep overseer by G.H. Jones, G.A. Moessinger, with his wife and family, selected land near Cinnabar, moving there in 1878 and naming the property *Rosehill*. There he carried on sheep and cattle production, and, initially at least, constructed a slab house from trees on the property. Moessinger was the first person to introduce angora goats to the district and later bred draught horses. He also obtained the contract to construct the roads over the *Boonara* and *Kinbombi* ranges. He held *Rosehill* until the time of his death in 1904 when the farm was carried on by his widow and family. The property was later sold to W.H. McGill.²²

Settlers in the Sexton region of the shire were also important to the establishment of Kilkivan as an agricultural community. A report of May 1911 described the Sexton region in the following manner:

The Carmyle School, situated at three or three and a half miles from Sexton, was erected five years ago on a joint application to the government from William Brighton Harvey and W. Wilson. The size of the building is 21 x 14, irrespective of the verandah. There is no lack of ventilation, there being no less than six windows and one door. There are sixteen pupils on the roll, under the tuition of Miss Grace Smith, of *Tinana* (near *Maryborough*), who took charge of the school in February last.

Devil's Mountain, a few miles from Sexton railway station, presented thirteen years ago a livelier appearance than today. There were two companies working for gold, one from *Maryborough* and one from *Brisbane*, aggregating thirty-five men. The ore was sent to *Gympie* for treatment, and some of it went as high as 4 ozs. to the ton. Unfortunately, after two years' work, both mines came to the end of the gold, and no attempts have been made since to prospect for more. There is still a miner left behind with his wife and family. He has built a house partly made of bark and galvanised iron, typical of a true pioneer's hut. Mr Sam Roberts, such is his name, works at any kind of odd jobs for the farmers of the district.²³

Joseph McKewen was a ganger living in the Sexton region. He was born at *Mount Perry*, of Irish parents and educated at *Maryborough*. When he left school at the age of fifteen years commenced employment with railway maintenance branch, and worked in the different branches of that department. He subsequently became a ganger for three years with a 'flying gang' before he was finally appointed permanent ganger in Sexton. One of the more important works in which McKewen was connected was the plate-laying of the *Gladstone* jetty erected at the beginning of 1900. McKewen was the youngest ganger on the railways in the *Maryborough* district. Circa 1910 he married Ellen Slattery of *Colton Junction*, near *Maryborough*, whose father also worked on the railways. Ellen worked as the post and station mistress at Sexton.

Robert McKewen, the father of Joseph McKewen, was a lengthsman residing in *Boompa* on the *Gayndah* line. He came from *Tyrone*, Ireland, to Queensland with his wife during the colony's formative years and worked for most of his life on the railways. At *Boompa* his wife was employed as station and post mistress. Patrick Slattery, father to Mrs Ellen McKewen was a lengthsman at *Colton Junction*. He came from *County Clare*, Ireland, and shortly after his arrival married Jane Ross at *Gympie*, who died about seventeen years later. Several years after her death Slattery remarried, his second wife was an Annie Ross (no relation to his first wife), of *Noosa*.²⁴

William Brighton Harvey owned *Wiltshire Vale*, a property of 621 acres, situated five miles from Sexton railway station. Harvey was described as being a grazier and the owner of four bullock teams. Thomas T.K. Harvey, his father, who died at *Wiltshire Vale*, circa 1907, was one of the first settlers in the Maryborough and Gympie districts. He was connected with the timber industry, and was reportedly among the first to open a store in Kilkivan when gold was discovered. He selected *Wiltshire Vale* and other land attached to it circa 1893. His youngest son, William, was involved in the timber industry for many years. He married Miss E.K. Haughton, of the Catharaba district.²⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Thirty-eight

Some Early Selectors in the Kilkivan Shire

1. *The Bush Telegraph*, vol 2 no. 8, 1995, p 46.
2. For further details on this holding see: *Farming and Grazing in the Gympie District, 1903*, p 111, Kilkivan Historical society.
3. M/C. 16 March, 1911, p 6.
4. M/C. 29 March, 1911, p 6.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Correspondence Fabian Webb to author 25 August, 1997.
9. M/C. 29 March, 1911, p 6.
10. M/C. 10 June, 1901, p 2.
11. M/C. 29 March, 1911, p 6.
12. M/C. 10 November, 1919, p 4.
13. For further details of these holdings see: J. Dale's chapter in *Logan*, pp 437–39.
14. For further details on these families and their holdings see: J. Dale's chapter in *Logan*, pp 441–51.
15. M/C. 29 March, 1911, p 6.
16. *Ibid.*
17. M/C. 28 April, 1911, p 6.
18. *Logan*, p 315.
19. *Memoirs of Miss Joyce Kemp*, head teacher, Oakview State School, 1937, Kilkivan Historical Society, reproduced with the permission of Mrs Joyce Ferguson (nee Kemp).
20. Letter to the author from Mrs Joyce Ferguson, 12 June, 1996.
21. M/C. 7 April, 1911, p 6.
22. File: Moessinger/Davis, Kilkivan Historical Society.
23. M/C. 12 May, 1911, p 6.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*

Continued Growth at Kilkivan

By 1911 the country around Kilkivan was rapidly changing. With the opening up of the Boonara lands after closer settlement, and with the arrival of the rail and hundreds of new settlers, the landscape altered quickly and dramatically, as one commentator remarked in 1911: '... The alteration in two years has fairly astonished us. Now one's wanderings are confined between new fences and uncompromising lanes, where, but a short while ago, one could ride with a free rein in all directions. Axe, fire and plough, and the house carpenter have worked their will on the black soil areas with which the creek frontages abound ... The houses are new and substantial and in most cases even ornate and attractive in appearance.'¹

By this time the small township of Kilkivan had grown substantially since those first scattering of miners' huts had been constructed during the gold rush of the 1860s. The town was still the centre of a small mining industry, but more and more the emphasis of progression was on agriculture, especially as the rail had now been established and the costs of carting produce to the various markets had significantly decreased.

In the township itself there were a number of established businesses, including the well known Coleman's store which, it was claimed, was a far better establishment than anything then in business in the much larger city of Maryborough. The Kilkivan Hotel, owned at that time by Mr G.B. Tucker, was possibly the most popular hotel in the town, it was situated on the site of the present children's playground. Close by a Mrs Lines had opened a fruit and fancy goods shop. Mrs Lines, formerly a station mistress at Wooroolin, was well known in the district for her dressmaking abilities. Closer to the railway station Ernest Jones had opened his stock and station agent business, and opposite this establishment was the combined store, newsagency and private dwelling of Robert Craig and his wife. Craig was suffering from ill health in 1911. Shortly before Christmas 1910 his horse had bolted after being frightened by a passing car (a rare sight in Kilkivan at that time). Craig had been struck by the shaft of his buggy and, according to a later report: '... the once active old gentleman has never been the same man since.'² Craig, who suffered a stroke after the accident, died on 22 June, 1913, he was buried the following Monday, his funeral being one of the largest seen in Kilkivan.³

Following his death a friend wrote of Craig: 'For the last year or two the fine old gentleman had been unable to get further afield than his verandah chair, and he suffered severely from rheumatism, but no amount of bodily ills could abate his natural hopefulness of disposition, and there a genial but pathetic figure he continued to entertain his friends until the inevitable claimed him.'⁴

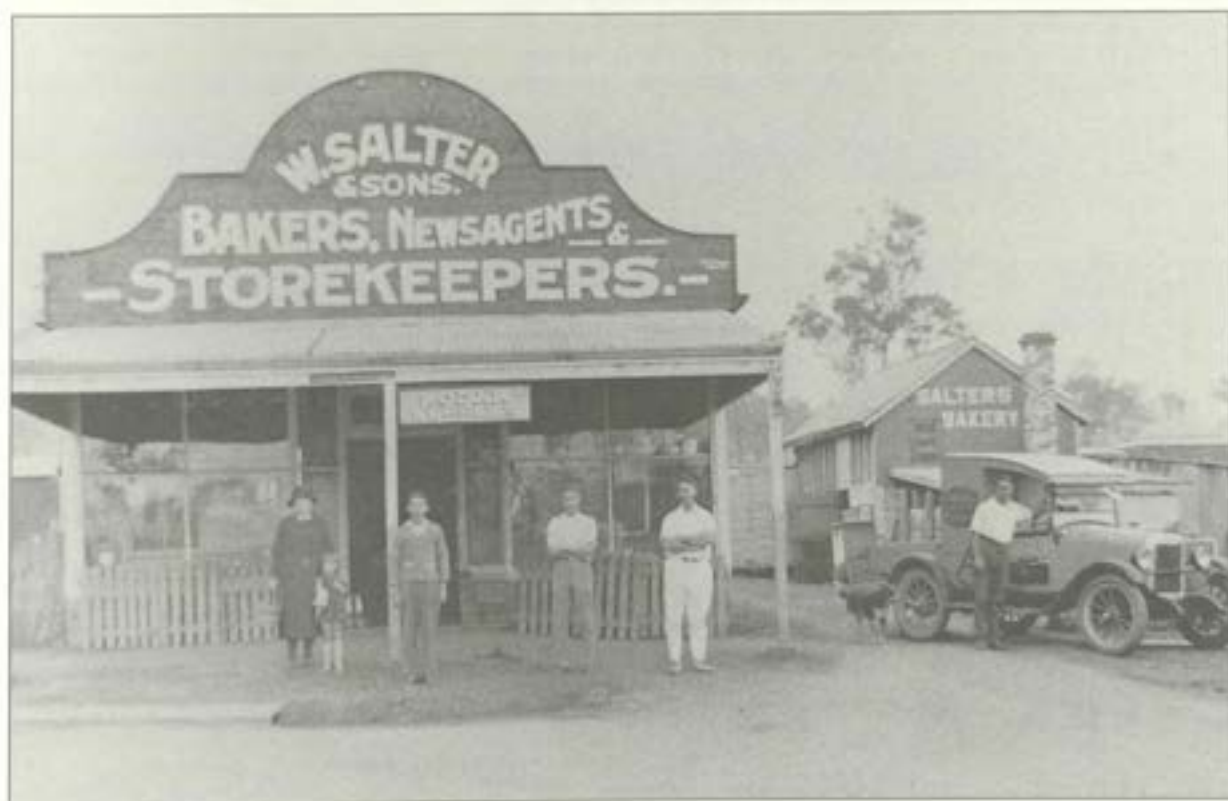
The baker's shop, owned by a man named William Salter, was situated almost opposite the station. Salter was a native of England and his bread and confectionery was said to have been of an excellent quality. Salter came to Australia with his wife and family in 1910, shortly afterwards opening his baker's shop in Kilkivan. In 1920 a fire that broke out in adjoining premises destroyed his property and stock upon which Salter had carried no insurance. However, he managed to rebuild his business. Described as being of a 'retiring disposition' Salter was active in any movement that furthered the welfare of the people of the district. He died in 1934.⁵

Ted Dickenson was the town saddler, he had completed his apprenticeship under Jesse Salter. The Federal Hotel was a single storey building with stables and a hall.⁶



Kilkivan railway station, 1911.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.



Salter's store and bakery.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.



The Kilkivan Mercantile Store, later destroyed by fire. L. to R. Charlie Scheinpflug, boy unknown, Charlie Zahnleiter, Eric McKell, unknown man, Bernie Noffke, Harry Zahnleiter. Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society



Bligh Street, Kilkivan, looking west, date unknown.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society



Federal Hotel, Kilkivan, prior to 1910.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Another popular establishment in the town was the blacksmith's shop of Mr P.J. Colch. Colch was also a coach-builder of considerable renown. Bob Raynor ran a boot and shoe retail business. His business was destroyed by fire in 1922 and Raynor later constructed a new dwelling and shop. He subsequently moved to Goomeri. Bob Raynor had been plying his trade in Kilkivan since circa 1905. His shop was close to Mr Robert Craig's to whom he was related, having married one of his grand-daughters.

A well known settler to the region was Joseph Ray, once reported to have been a wonderful horseman and rough rider, Ray was also a former bullock team driver working a team for Mr G.S. Webb of Black Snake. He was reputed to have been the first man to successfully drive a bullock team down the Widgee Black Snake Ridge. Later he became head stockman on *Stanton Harcourt* cattle station. He married Jane Zahnleiter circa 1876 and in 1885 went to work at *Rosewood* cattle station. In 1897 he returned to Kilkivan, selecting land on Oakey Creek. He subsequently retired and moved into Kilkivan township where he lived until his death, aged ninety-four years and eight months, on Monday 20 March, 1944, his wife having pre-deceased him in 1932.⁷

Arthur Lovell Batts and his wife, Sarah Elizabeth, were among the early residents of Kilkivan. Arthur Lovell Batts was born at Minster Lovell in Oxfordshire — after which he was evidently named. The ancient English village has a somewhat colourful history and is now dominated by the majestic ruins of its manor house, built in the fifteenth century by the Baron of Tichmarsh, and where two macabre events are said to have occurred. The first is that of Lord Francis Lovell who joined an uprising in 1487 and went into hiding when it failed. He hid in a secret room at the mansion and was brought food by a servant. However, when the servant suddenly died, Lovell perished from thirst or starvation, his skeleton was discovered in 1718 with the bones of his pet dog at his feet. The second story is that of a young bride who once hid in a chest while playing a game of hide-and seek with her husband, she accidentally locked herself in the chest and despite a thorough search was never found, her skeleton was discovered years later. The church at Minster Lovell is also an interesting structure, it has a leper squint, a narrow window through which lepers, barred from the church, were allowed a view of the altar.⁸

Arthur Lovell Batts arrived from this pretty and colourful village in 1883, the same year that Krakatau erupted, descendant Mollie Batts of Kilkivan later wrote: 'Arthur said it was dreadful,

darkness and turbulent seas, and the ash came down on the ship. He had a bottle full of it for years.⁹ Having been educated at Whitney Grammar School and trained as a storeman, following his arrival at Kilkivan, Arthur Batts worked for a while at a grocery store in Wondai, catching the train to Wondai each week and returning to Kilkivan every Friday. He married Sarah Elizabeth Gallagher of Gympie on 14 October, 1889, Arthur was then twenty-five years of age and his bride was just twenty. Elizabeth had been born at *Boonara* in 1869, her parents having both emigrated from Belfast, later to run the Brooyar Mail Exchange Hotel. When she was just fifteen years of age both her parents died within months of each other and Elizabeth had to keep the business running until it could be sold.

After their marriage the couple and their family later moved for a lengthy period to Eidsvold, when they finally returned to their home at Kilkivan, a pine dresser had been so badly eaten by white ants that it crashed to the floor as the family entered the kitchen and a treasured dinner set was destroyed. The family later moved to Running Creek where they opened a store. Sarah Elizabeth was an accomplished horse-woman and Arthur was an avid reader who, in later years, became interested in the possibility of splitting the atom. He died in 1945, three weeks before the bomb was dropped at Hiroshima.¹⁰



Bligh Street, Kilkivan — looking west, prior to 1916.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

Richard Macartney Jones and his wife, Agnes, were both early settlers in the Kilkivan district. Richard Macartney Jones was born at Moggill, Brisbane, on 29 May, 1856. He worked as a stockman at *Mount Joseph* property, Biggenden, prior to moving to *Elgin Vale* station and subsequently to *Kinbombi* station. In 1890 he bought a few acres of land on Wide Bay Creek (near the present show-grounds at Kilkivan). A slab home was built and from there he would go to work on the properties in the district. He married Agnes C. Ross on 1 January, 1890. Richard Macartney Jones gradually became blind and died in 1909. His widow, Agnes, married William Spencer in 1910. William died in 1919 and Agnes died in 1945.¹¹

Another early selector was John Fitzgerald who was born in Ireland in 1845 and arrived in Australia at the age of fourteen years. According to Kilkivan Historical Society president and descendant Pauline Fitzgerald: 'He landed at Sydney with only five shillings in his pocket so he had to find a job quickly. His first job was washing sheep — very hard work as the sheep had to

be washed before sheering and it meant standing knee deep in water for hours.¹² John eventually worked his way to Queensland where he selected land at Boowoogum. He married Ephrath Paulovitch at St Patrick's Church, Gympie, on 11 October, 1880, and John constructed a slab home with a shingle roof and calico lining on the walls. Pauline Fitzgerald later wrote:

Ephrath was described in a newspaper article as a scioness of an aristocratic Polish family, and had been a teacher of foreign languages at a young ladies' seminary in Melbourne ...

Life must have been difficult for her. All bread and food had to be cooked on an open hearth with hooks above for hanging pots and kettles. Cattle were killed and the meat preserved in brine casks and butter was made from cream skimmed from large flat milk pans. Ephrath gave birth to eight children.

John established a beef shorthorn herd and had to battle drought and floods. In 1893, a huge flood washed away trees and animals and in 1902 came a terrible drought and cattle, wild animals and birds lay dead everywhere. Then the cattle tick caused the deaths of many cattle from redwater, so a dip was built and is still in use today.

As the family grew bigger, more rooms and a verandah were added to the house, plus a galvanised iron roof, and ornamental trees were planted ...

In 1920 John became ill and died. He was buried on the property on a rise across the lagoon from his home. His grave is surrounded by a wrought-iron fence.¹³

Bernard Eupene and his wife Elizabeth were also early residents of the district, the family was very highly regarded as honest and hard working.¹⁴



Erneton Scott, his wife, Edna Dorothy, and family.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

One of the best reminiscences we have of early Kilkivan was written by Erneton Thomas Scott. Scott, (known locally as Ernie) was born at Erneton Street, Brisbane, on 2 April, 1907, he was the first child born in that street and was therefore named after it. He arrived with his family at Kilkivan in 1913, his father selecting a property which he named *Scotsdale*. Erneton Scott worked originally in the timber industry, carting logs from the scrub, and his ambition was to own his own team; he later returned to *Scotsdale* when his father's eyesight failed. He married Edna Dorothy Dean at the Presbyterian Church Gympie on 16 August, 1932, and had three sons,

Stanley, Bevan and Cliff. The family lived initially on a property at *Glenvale*, and in 1939 returned to *Scotsdale*, moving again in 1944 to *Bymount*. Mr Scott's description of Kilkivan township during that early period, and his memories of the colourful scenes he witnessed as a boy and a young man are important to our understanding of the community as it then was. Mr Scott wrote:

In 1913, when our family came to Kilkivan, the township was then composed of the railway station, police station and post office, primary school, 3 churches, 2 general stores, 2 hotels, bank, bootmaker, commission agent and of course the usual corner school shop, and about half the present number of houses.

All buildings, both public and private, were small, the public buildings now standing are the railway station and a much enlarged and improved post office. There are only one or two of the original houses left, the rest are completely new or greatly enlarged around the town.

At the railway, there was also a detached refreshment room, but no cream shed; it was built in the early First World War years, the only railway house then was the station master's residence.

Just prior to 1913 a lot of land around Kilkivan was cut up into small blocks for dairying. By the war years, a lot of cream was being sent, carted to the rail by horse-drawn vehicles and it was some sight when the main cream train went through at about 10 a.m., with the rail-yard and streets full of horse-drawn vehicles of every description. The only real cream run was from Fat Hen Creek, conducted by Phil Sebbens ...

During the war years, the log timber boomed, a large number of horse and bullock teams were kept busy, hauling logs to the rail, not only to Kilkivan, but also to nearby sidings. There was no permanent sawmill, only a mobile one in the district then.

A lot of cattle were also railed until the bottom dropped out of the meat market in the early twenties. As there was no competition then from road transport, the number of passengers carried by rail was high. It was quite a sight to see the main night passenger train, K9, go through, carriage after carriage fully lighted, gathering speed down past the recreation grounds ...

The war years were busy days for the railways. My brother was at the station when there were seven trains in the yard; a record as far as I know, probably breaking all rules and regulations, but they had to go by the board during the war.

The railway refreshment rooms, which were situated on the west side of the station, was a very busy place (prior to the first restaurant being opened here), serving not only the travelling public but the local residents as well.

In 1913, the post office was on its present site and Miss Jenkinson was postmistress at that time. I don't think there was any more than a dozen telephone lines on the switchboard. But in a year or so, business had increased so much, Miss Jenkinson employed an assistant, Eileen Jones, who remained in her employment until Eileen went with her family to live in Brisbane. Jack McKewen took her place in the post office. In 1925, Miss Jenkinson left to marry Mr Sid Salter and then Geoff McCulloch became postmaster. Soon after he took over, the telephone subscribers were granted a 24 hour service, as a number of new lines, including Fat Hen Creek, had been connected ...

The shire office was then a small two roomed building. David Jones was clerk. There were no other office staff until Charlie Beer was appointed assistant, after a year or so Charlie applied to the council for a 5% pay rise. The council refused, so Mr Jones gave it to him out of his own (pay) packet ...

In 1913, Kilkivan School was one large room, often classes, particularly reading, were held on the verandahs or in the open-sided play shed. Mr J. Carey was head teacher ...

In 1913, the first business premises, taken from the western end of Bligh Street, was Mr P. Colch's blacksmith shop, opposite the railway station. He was a wonderful welder and temperer of steel and he carried on the business until his death. His brother, Albert, took over for a few years until his eyesight failed, when the business wound up. Salter's Store and Bakery was next, situated where Jim Greer's store is now. The Bakery trade was very small then and I can recall Mr Salter telling my father he would sell it for £50. But by 1915, business had picked up so much that when my uncle offered to buy the bakery, Mr Salter was not interested in selling at all. Shortly after, the shop, bakery and the nearby residence were all destroyed by fire but were all rebuilt. The Federal Hotel was then a one storey building with horse stables at the back and the hall on the western side and was owned and

conducted by the Courtman family ... In 1920, the old hotel burned down, and the present hotel was designed and built by Mr (Charles) Truscott ...

Mr Coleman's grocery store was on the opposite corner to the hotel on the site now occupied by the Kilkivan Mercantile Co.; Mr Arthur Batts was shopman and I think he managed the business, Mr Coleman having other interests. Mr Bob Raynor's boot and shoe business, retail and repairs was situated where Jim Choate's shop now stands; his residence was adjoining. In 1922, the whole lot burnt down so he built a new house on the eastern side of Kilkivan and a double shop on the site in Bligh Street. Bob carried on his business in one shop until 1935 when he closed it down here and shifted to Goomeri. In 1924, Mrs P.J. Jones leased the other shop and opened a drapery and dress making business. In 1938, once again, the shops burnt down; also the attached living quarters Jones had built. Mrs Jones did not reopen the business after the fire.

The Union Bank, now the A.N.Z., then operated in a very small building, really only a hut, but soon they built the present building and the staff was increased from one to two ...

The butcher's shop was then in Bligh Street on the eastern side of the present civic centre. Mr Hayes was proprietor. The slaughter yards were on the right hand branch of the One Mile Creek ... The yard was closed in 1918 as a health measure after the tragic deaths of two senior school children ... with typhoid fever. Ned Wason then bought the business and built a slaughter yard at Mudlo. There was then a second hotel, 'The Kilkivan', which was situated on what is now the children's adventure playground. It was owned by Mr Tennerson who also owned the property at Oakview now owned by the Fitzgerald family. The first licensee I can recall was Mr Herb Stewart. During his tenancy, the hotel burnt down. Incidentally the lights were carbide gas with an outside storage tank. During the fire, Constable Tobin, as a safety measure, fired a .303 bullet through it. A new double storeyed hotel was built ... The hotel was finally closed down in the forties ...

Arston (Aronstein) and Davies were also auctioneers and estate agents. They had their office in a building known as the Mart, alongside the Kilkivan Hotel hall, on the Bligh Street frontage. The cattle saleyards occupied the ground where Faints and the Snack Bar now stand, going back to Rose Street. Victor Williams was their clerk, eventually taking over the business. He also branched out as a taxation consultant and he carried on the business until his death ...

The carrying business was conducted by Bill Angel, later by Mr Chris Casey, who sold to Gordon McKell in 1925, who changed from horse to motor vehicle. Gordon was forced to sell to his brother Herb in 1931, because of ill health.

In 1919, new cattle sale yards were built, adjoining the railway trucking yards. Arthur Jones, just before his early death, held the first sale which was highly successful.

Charles Zahnleiter started a general store in a building on the grounds of the present civic centre, apparently on a shoe-string, as he had no platform scales, so corn was measured by the 1/2 bushel in a 4 gallon kerosene tin. He was soon joined by his brother-in-law, Charles Schienpflug. They bought Mr Coleman's store and shifted their business to it. Harry Zahnleiter also joined the firm, which was named the Kilkivan Mercantile Co., and a drapery department was added. In 1943, the business was sold to the Pearson brothers in the building that had been vacated by Harry Zahnleiter and Charles Schienpflug ...

Early in the twenties, the Forestry opened a branch in Kilkivan and built an office on the western side of James McNulty's shop. Mr Albert Euler was the first Factor, and he was followed by Mr Don Fraser. Jack O'Donohue was clerk ...

Up to 1926, Kilkivan only had travelling moving pictures. Paget's visited once a month in a horse drawn vehicle, carrying all their projecting and generating equipment. At first they only had carbide lights. In 1925 Clark McCarroll leased the hall of the Kilkivan Hotel, installed a generator and electric lights and pictures were screened on Saturday nights ... Clark was forced to close down when the 'talkie' pictures came in as the low attendance, partly because of the Depression, did not warrant the installing of the necessary new equipment. Eventually the pictures were again shown in the new hall built by the School of Arts. The last proprietor, Jim Batts, was forced to close down again, through poor attendance, this time mainly caused by the introduction of the home television.

Stockton and Warburton started an auctioneering and real estate business in Hall Street, in 1946, and they held the cattle sales in the council dip yards. When they sold to Jim Ferrier, he built new yards on the Rossmore Road and an office and shop in Bligh Street. When he retired, Gill and Spencer bought the business, then selling to Kempson Faint. The snack bar was built by the Kilkivan Hotel publican, Max Buccanan ...

In 1931, Charlie Jones built, and for a while, managed, a sawmill for Hector Denyer alongside the railway bridge in Kilkivan, Hector running it as a mill until the late thirties, when he sold to Hyne and Sons. The Spencer Brothers also started a sawmill at Oakview in the early thirties and carried on there until the seventies, when George, who had bought his brothers out, joined a consortium of saw-millers and transferred the milling of logs to Gympie.¹⁵

Erneton Scott, the author of this memoir, was an avid reader and was particularly interested in military histories, he was a member of the 5th Light Horse during the 1920s. His wife, Edna Dorothy, died in 1984 and Mr Scott remained at his home at Bymount until 1986 when he was hospitalised. He died at 12.30 a.m. on 25 January, 1987, aged almost eighty years.¹⁶



The post office at Kilkivan, 1931.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Yet the growth of Kilkivan was, over the years, far from dramatic, closer settlement brought an influx of residents to the region but most of these were to live in the country and relatively few actually settled in the towns of Kilkivan or Goomeri. Mining matters had also stagnated, although in 1935, due to an increase in the price of gold, there was another resurgence of interest in gold mining in the Goomeri area, miners reliving the days when Scrub Paddock, Kabunga and Boobyjan had been considered as 'jewellers' shops' of gold. Yet, as we now know, with the low price of gold against rising costs of living, increased taxation and wages, and less working hours, many of these small mining operations became unprofitable and were closed.¹⁷

Kilkivan, Goomeri and other centres such as Woolooga were experiencing the highs and lows of rural Queensland life, enjoying added facilities and services brought about through good weather and crops, but also suffering during periods of low economic growth brought about by poor conditions on the land and other external forces. Woolooga, for example, remained a busy village due to the railway where cream, timber, mail, and other forms of produce were entrained, the community boasting a number of conveniences including a public house, the Woolooga Hotel. This hotel was burned to the ground in November 1936 and a guest, Alexander Nethercote, (also reported as Nethercott) was killed. The event occurred on Tuesday 24 November that year. Nethercote was an Englishman who had been in Queensland for a number of years and was travelling to Goomeri to take up employment there. He arrived at Woolooga that night and booked into the hotel. The fire was discovered by the hotel maid, Miss L. Peters, who, during the early hours of the morning, smelt smoke and upon investigating discovered that a section of the hotel

was on fire. The fire seemed to be emanating from the hotel pantry and was rapidly spreading up the walls and engulfing the rooms above, one of which was occupied by Alexander Nethercote. Miss Peters quickly raised the alarm, the landlord, Thomas Murphy, managed to get his wife and two children to safety while Miss Peters clambered over a verandah railing and jumped to safety from the second floor to a fire escape ladder. Murphy then attempted to warn Nethercote but could only shout a warning as the flames and smoke drove him back. Unfortunately, Nethercote was deaf and could not hear the warning. A bucket brigade was rapidly formed but their efforts were of little use. Within an hour the fire had totally destroyed the hotel, Murphy lost all his furniture and hotel fittings, his stock and £60 in notes. Miss Peters also lost all her possessions including her savings of £20. The neighbouring hall, used as a picture theatre, including the projection equipment which was owned by a man named James Hammer, was also destroyed — although a nearby cafe was saved from the flames through the efforts of the bucket brigade.¹⁸

Service clubs and other associations throughout the shire have all played an important role in the matrix of community development. The various progress associations were formed to ensure that facilities and utilities were laid in place, the Kilkivan Development Board took over from the Kilkivan Progress Association when that association finally lapsed. The Goomeri Chamber of Commerce has functioned to improve business affairs, the United Graziers' Association, the Grain Growers' Association, farmers' unions, dairy organisations, Rural Youth, the Kilkivan Historical Society, lodges, alliances, service clubs and a host of other such organisations have all played their roles in developmental work and many of them are still in existence today.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Thirty-nine

Continued Growth at Kilkivan

1. M/C. 17 August, 1911, p 6.
2. Ibid.
3. M/C. 24 June, 1913, p 8 and 2 July, 1913, p 8.
4. M/C. 18 August, 1913, p 5.
5. Salter file, Kilkivan Historical Society.
6. For details of hotel ownership see: Logan, p 261.
7. M/C. 25 March, 1944, p 2.
8. For further information on this village see: *Minster Lovell, an historical guide to this ancient village, Minster Lovell Hall*, a handbook for teachers, and: *Minster Lovell Hall*, by A.J. Taylor, 1990.
9. Letter to the author from Mollie Batts, December, 1996.
10. Ibid.
11. *Ross Family History and Jones Family History*, by Pauline Fitzgerald, 1996.
12. Letter to the author from Pauline Fitzgerald, dated 16 December, 1996.
13. Ibid.
14. Further details of this family may be seen in Logan, p 270.
15. *My Memories of Kilkivan — 1913 Onwards*, by Erneton Scott, copy of original held at the Kilkivan Historical Society, reproduced with the permission of his family and executors.
16. Obituary of Erneton Scott, written by Li Scott of Monto, Kilkivan Historical Society.
17. M/C. 5 May, 1934, p 6.
18. SBT. 27 November, 1936, p 2 and K/H. 27 November, 1936 p 4.

Local Government at Kilkivan

The regions which later became Divisions One and Four of the Kilkivan Shire Council were originally under the administration of the Widgee Divisional Board, based at Gympie, which came into being in 1879. The first meeting of the board was held on 31 January, 1880.

The Baramba Divisional Board came into existence on 11 November, 1879, it covered a vast region including the present shires of Nanango, Kingaroy, Wondai, Murgon and Divisions Two and Three of Kilkivan Shire Council. The board's headquarters were in Nanango.

Yet the application of local government administration from these two centres, far removed from the gold-mining centre of Kilkivan, was never particularly satisfactory, and it soon became evident that many rate-payers in the Kilkivan region were anxious to form their own divisional board with local representation. In 1885 a petition containing the names of eighty-eight rate-payers was collected. At the same time as a break-away movement was being formed to deal with the issue, the Baramba Divisional Board was also advised that a new board was desired by many of the residents of the Kilkivan district and the case came up for discussion at Nanango on 11 December, 1885. Approval for the severance was given by five votes to three, but the issue was a bitter one. Despite this, the new board was created by Order-in-Council on 1 July, 1886, the notice appearing in the *Government Gazette* on 3 July, 1886.¹

Yet there were serious problems to be overcome, the most prominent of these being the financial difficulties in which the Widgee Divisional Board found itself due to the creation of the Kilkivan Divisional Board. The Widgee Divisional Board had raised loans based upon calculations which included the rates from lands and properties they found they suddenly did not administer. An overdraft granted to the board by the Queensland National Bank had been provided using expected rates that the board could no longer draw upon. The board vigorously protested the difficult situation to the minister for works, and as a result the proclamation of the Kilkivan Divisional Board was withdrawn from 30 July, 1886, the official notice appearing in the *Government Gazette* on 31 July, 1886.²

Following this government decision, emotions among Kilkivan residents ran hot and a special meeting to protest the rescinding of the new board was held at Kilkivan on 31 July. A new petition was drawn up, dated 14 August, 1886, and forwarded to the executive council. A further petition was drawn up in May 1887, the petitioners carefully pointing out the necessity for a new board to be gazetted and especially the state of the roads which were badly needed to be put in order so that mining and other ventures could go ahead. In April 1887 the *Maryborough Chronicle's* correspondent to Kilkivan lamented: 'The not granting (of) a divisional board here is being keenly felt. The state of the road in the proximity of the railway station and the approaches to the station gates and elsewhere about the town is a crying disgrace, they are in a most deplorable state. If the rescinding of this Kilkivan division by the Board of Works had not taken place, it would have been different, as it is at present there are now fifty tons of machinery for Kaboonga, some of the pieces weigh five tons, and there are tons of ore to come down from the mines, but in the present state of the road, when and how it will be removed, God knows. It must be remembered the railway returns are suffering while this sort of thing lasts. It is to be hoped that the minister for works will see that the petition of this district ... is considered.'³

The conditions of the roads were certainly extremely poor at that time, and the lack of a local divisional board was regarded by many as being not only detrimental to progress, but also to safety. The press claiming in April, 1887: 'An accident resulting from the neglect of the divisional board occurred at the crossing of the Wide Bay Creek on the Boonara and Boobyjan road. The

Boobyjan team, after loading up rations, sundries etc for Boobyjan at the railway station, proceeded on its way, and on crossing the creek the team got into a washout from the storm Sunday night, and before the driver knew where he was, horses and waggon were carried down the stream. The horses were rescued with difficulty, but the waggon still remains on the creek. The contents were all carried away. This crossing has always been considered pretty safe — such as the term safe may be estimated.⁴



George Hall Jones, first chairman of the Kilkivan Divisional Board.
Source — Kilkivan Shire Council.

Over the following months, as correspondence and yet another petition were raised and forwarded to the Ministry for Works, the likelihood of eventual success became more apparent. In November 1887 a Kilkivan press representative claimed: 'The Kilkivan Division has again been gazetted at last, and although we have not got the boundaries we asked for, any change can be for the better.'⁵ The new board officially came into being in January, 1888. Donald McFie was appointed returning officer.⁶ Six members and two auditors were elected. Sub-division One was represented by John Hunter, Thomas Rose and John Broadbent, Sub-division Two was represented by George Hall Jones, Francis Henry Davenport and Frederick Power, the auditors were John Coleman and Frank Purser. All the men elected to the new board were prominent local personalities, some had previous experience in divisional board affairs. John Broadbent was a part-owner of *Widgee* station and a former chairman of the *Widgee* Divisional Board, he had worked diligently for the separation of the boards. Thomas Rose was the second husband of J.D. Mactaggart's widow, and manager of *Kilkivan* station. John Hunter was a well known personality who had selected land in the district. G.H. Jones was, as we have seen, the part owner in *Boonara* station and the

first chairman of the *Baramba* Divisional Board. F.H. Davenport had also served on the board and was a selector from the *Manumbar* district. Frederick Power was a powerful local businessman and lawyer, he was a director on the *Kabungga* Gold Mining venture then in operation in the *Manumbar* area. Like all members of divisional boards, these men were not paid for their services.

The first meeting of the newly constituted board took place on 29 February, 1888, at the *Kilkivan* court-house. Donald McFie took the Chair and called for the election of a chairman, George Hall Jones was unanimously elected to become the new board's first chairman. Donald McFie was appointed clerk.

A site was obtained for the future construction of council chambers, this was allotment two of section 10, and was taken up under the *Goldfields Act*. Plans to have a council building constructed began in approximately July 1889 and tenders were called in September. The tender was won by T. Wood for a sum of £225. However, by November 1890 the board was experiencing considerable financial difficulties, public works were halted and many men were retrenched. The poor financial position did not remain a burden for too long, the council building was finished by the early 1890s and men were again employed in public works. Jones was replaced as chairman by J. Broadbent on 25 February, 1891.

Donald McFie remained as clerk until 27 March, 1889, when he was replaced by A. Douglas who held the position for little more than a year, leaving in June 1890. The position of clerk was then advertised and twenty-seven applications were received. The board met on 5 June, 1890,

and selected G.H. Simpson to fill the vacancy. He was appointed as clerk, overseer, returning officer and tax collector, his salary was £150 per annum.⁷

G.H. Jones was again elected chairman in 1894, he remained in that position until 1898 when the position was filled by W.B. Lawless. G.H. Jones died in September 1899 and in 1903 the divisional board became the Kilkivan Shire Council following the passing of The Local Authorities Act of 1902.



Original shire office, Kilkivan, 1914.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Over the years there have been remarkably few shire clerks (now titled chief executive officers). G.H. Simpson was replaced in March 1905 by D.L. Jones, who remained in the post for forty years. Evan G. Keating also served the council for many years, he was appointed in December 1945 and remained until August 1979. Evan Keating was still serving in Bougainville at the end of the Second World War when he applied for the position of shire clerk at the Kilkivan Shire Council, the office staff, upon his appointment, consisted of one assistant and Keating himself. At one time he had to work alone, as clerks were difficult to find — labourers' wages being higher. Upon his retirement the council announced that a small bridge on the Kilkivan-Gympie road would be renamed the E.G. Keating Bridge. Keating was presented with the name-plate for the bridge and a farewell present of a silver tray at a special testimonial dinner held at Kilkivan in August 1979. He was later awarded the M.B.E.⁸

Keating was replaced by John Cuddihy who in turn resigned in March 1986 to take up a similar appointment with the Warwick City Council. Cuddihy left that council in 1995 to pursue a business career. Upon Cuddihy's resignation from the Kilkivan Shire Council his post was taken by Ray C. Currie, the current serving chief executive officer.

In 1996 the council voted to abolish shire divisions, adopting a 'whole of shire' system whereby future councillors would be elected from the shire as a whole rather than from individual divisions. This change was brought about because voting equality was not being maintained due to the rapid growth of Division Four (Widgee and Woolooga) compared to other divisions within the shire.⁹

Council Buildings

Architects Goodsir and Carlyle were responsible for the Kilkivan Shire Council building, opened on 30 May, 1959, and described in the press as: '... a handsome structure' and, 'quite a place.'¹⁰ In January 1965 the council decided to proceed with plans to construct a new shire hall and library, the decision, made at the first council meeting for that year, was made following advice from the Queensland Treasury that various subsidies would apply to the buildings. The Treasury also authorised the council to enter into negotiations to raise a debenture loan for the project.¹¹ The library and shire hall were opened on Saturday 9 December, 1967, by the education minister, J.C.A. Pizy, with more than three hundred people attending the event.¹²

New extensions to the council building were opened by the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen on Thursday 19 March, 1981. The extensions were of matching brick and were situated at the rear of the building originally constructed in 1959. The new section contained a shire chamber and chairman's office and provisions had been made for various other offices.¹³ More recent extensions have also been carried out at the chambers, substantially increasing the working area and incorporating various new offices.

The men who have served as chairmen of the shire council are as follows:

29 February, 1888	G.H. Jones
7 March, 1889	G.H. Jones
8 March, 1890	G.H. Jones
25 February, 1891	J. Broadbent
23 February, 1892	J. Broadbent
7 March, 1893	L.M. Jones
27 June, 1893	G.H. Jones
30 January, 1894	G.H. Jones
27 February, 1895	G.H. Jones
29 January, 1896	G.H. Jones
27 January, 1897	G.H. Jones
2 February, 1898	W.B. Lawless
25 January, 1899	H. Moore
28 February, 1900	L.M. Jones
30 January, 1901	H. Moore
26 February, 1902	A.E. Jones
25 February, 1903	J.P. Voss
4 November, 1903	W.B. Lawless
24 February, 1904	L.M. Jones
3 March, 1905	L.M. Jones
February, 1906	L.M. Jones
30 January, 1907	W.B. Lawless
29 January, 1908	J.A. Slater
24 February, 1909	L.M. Jones
9 February, 1910	T.H. Tennison
8 February, 1911	W.B. Lawless
31 January, 1912	N. Jones
5 February, 1913	I.J. Moore
4 February, 1914	F.S. Schollick
3 February, 1915	L.M. Jones
5 April, 1916	F.S. Schollick
4 April, 1917	I.J. Moore
13 February, 1918	W.B. Lawless
12 February, 1919	F.S. Schollick
4 February, 1920	F.S. Schollick
3 August, 1921	W.B. Lawless
4 May, 1927	J.E. Stanton
May, 1930	R.P. Stumm
May, 1933	J.E. Stanton
May, 1936	T.H. Spencer

May, 1943	C.C. Jones
June, 1949	T.H. Spencer
May, 1958	N. Warburton
April, 1970	A.F. McIntosh
March, 1994	D. Lahiff

Shire Clerks and Chief Executive Officers

D. McFie	29 February, 1888, to 27 March, 1889
A. Douglas	27 March, 1889, to 4 June, 1890
G.H. Simpson	1 July, 1890, to 1 March, 1905
D.L. Jones	1 March, 1905, to 3 September, 1945
E.G. Keating	1 December, 1945, to 17 August, 1979
J.P. Cuddihy	20 August, 1979, to 7 March, 1986
R.C. Currie	8 April, 1986, to date

Some Prominent Personalities of Local Government

The local government authority at Kilkivan has experienced many interesting and colourful personalities, men and women, particularly in the early years of the formation of the shire, who did much to ensure that a sound base was laid for the economic, social, urban and agrarian structural growth of the region.

J.E. Stanton

J.E. Stanton was born at Mudgee, New South Wales, in 1879, arriving at Queensland as a young man and settling at Palmwoods where he married a Miss Fewtrell. He and his wife arrived at Goomeri in 1913 and took up land at Boonara where Stanton lived until his death. He was director of the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association taking up that appointment in September 1933 and retaining it for the remainder of his life. He also served as chairman of the Kilkivan Shire Council for six years and was a councillor for twelve years. Other positions he occupied included president of the Goomeri Show Society, president of the Boonara branch of the Q.D.O. president of the Tansey Telephone Syndicate, president of the Boonara State School Committee and trustee of many public bodies in the region.

Stanton was a keen breeder and exhibitor of Clydesdale horses, and also prided himself on his farm produce. In 1924–25 he won the bronze medal and diploma for the best bag of lucerne chaff at the Wembley Exhibition in London. J.E. Stanton died at his residence on 16 June, 1945.¹⁴

Noel Warburton

Noel Warburton served on the council for about eighteen years at various periods, including his tenure as chairman. However, Warburton is remembered for the work he did in helping to establish the meatworks at Murgon and was its inaugural chairman. Noel Warburton was born at Toowoomba on 2 April, 1912, and was the son of a school teacher in that district. Due to his father's transitory occupation the family moved frequently as transfers occurred, and they lived variously at Cambooya, Charleville, Mount Morgan, Warwick, Rockhampton and Brisbane. After leaving school he began working with the Shell Oil Company but this was during the years of the Great Depression, and when the department in which he worked was made redundant, Noel Warburton found himself without work. He then took to the bush and was well qualified to do so, his family holding extensive pastoral interests on the Sunshine Coast and in the Kilkivan region. He married Vera Rutherford in 1939 and that year he and his father purchased a property at Cinnabar where Noel and his wife lived until 1973 when they sold the farm and moved to Murgon. Noel Warburton was heavily involved in community affairs and was awarded the B.E.M. for services to local government and the grazing industry. When the South Burnett Meat Works Co-operative was formed in 1956 Warburton was elected its first chairman, the factory opened six years later. Warburton retired from that position in 1983, although he remained a director of the board until 1988. In 1990 the couple moved to Sandgate and Noel Warburton died there in August 1991.¹⁵

Alec McIntosh

A man who has devoted his life to the Kilkivan community is Alec Frederick McIntosh. Born on 13 October, 1926, Alec was educated at Kimbombi School until he was about eleven years of age, his parents having a dairy farm in the region. When the school closed due to lack of pupils, Alec transferred to the Goomeri State School. During the Second World War Alec McIntosh left school in order to work on the farm, his parents experiencing difficulties due to the lack of labour. After the war he went to Brisbane for a while where he worked for the tobacco company W.D. and H.O. Wills as a storeman and packer. He married Betty Maud Frances Whatnall in Brisbane on 26 May, 1951, and returned to the South Burnett in 1953 to take over the family dairy farm in conjunction with his brother Donald McIntosh, who also served on the Kilkivan Shire Council for eighteen years.

Alec McIntosh was first elected to the Kilkivan Shire Council in May 1961 and became its chairman in April 1970. In addition to his many other duties, he was later appointed a commissioner with the Local Government Grants Commission, this is the body which each year investigates the submissions made by local authorities for government grants. Alec McIntosh was appointed to replace Councillor Fred Rogers of Stanthorpe who was then retiring. A keen sportsman who was heavily involved in cricket, Alec McIntosh also served on the Wide Bay Burnett Electricity Board and the South Burnett Hospitals Board.¹⁶

In addition to his farming work and public affairs responsibilities, Alec McIntosh also acquired a fuel agency and mail run. In 1980 he and his wife retired from the farm and constructed a motel in Goomeri, remaining there until 1990.¹⁷

After thirty-three years' service to the shire, Councillor Alec McIntosh did not seek re-election in March 1994, and he subsequently moved to Cooroy. For services to local government and the community, Alec McIntosh was awarded an Order of Australia in 1994.¹⁸

David Lahiff

David Lahiff's maternal grandparents were Richard and Agnes Jones, who arrived as a newly married couple at Kilkivan from *Elgin Vale* station in 1890. Richard Jones had been working as head stockman at *Elgin Vale*. They moved onto a block of land adjoining the site of the Kilkivan show-ground.

David Lahiff's father, William Reginald Lahiff, came to Kilkivan from Cloncurry in 1911. He worked on stations as a stockman and also earned a living as a kangaroo shooter. For three years he worked as a contract corn thresher, travelling around the Kilkivan and Gympie districts shelling corn. When the Great War began in 1914 he joined the A.I.F. and served for the following four and a half years. Upon his return to Australia he obtained a horse team and began cutting timber, work he carried on until 1928 when he began dairying at Fat Hen Creek on land he had originally selected in 1911 and which he had named *Glenlyle*. William Lahiff was also well known throughout the region for his expertise in breeding Clydesdale horses, his own horse team consisted of seventeen horses.

William Lahiff married Agnes Emma Jones in 1922, the marriage taking place at Agnes's parents' home near the show-grounds, where the parents had originally settled in 1890.

David Lahiff was born on 23 December, 1934, the youngest of six children, three boys and three girls. He was born at the Gympie Hospital and was brought up on the family farm at Rossmore. He was educated initially at the Rossmore School, where the caravan park was later situated, but when eligible teachers were called up into the army during the Second World War, the school was closed and David continued with his education by correspondence for the following three years. In 1945 he started at Kilkivan School, walking to school each day. He left school in 1948 and went onto the family farm, becoming manager of the farm when he was eighteen years of age, at which time his parents retired and moved into Kilkivan.

David Lahiff married Fay Pearce of Goomeri in 1968, Fay's family were also early Queensland settlers who had been involved in the timber industry in the Yandina region where they operated bullock wagons. David and Fay have six children, two boys and four girls.

In addition to dairying at his Rossmore property, David Lahiff also operated a contract harvesting business, moving his harvester throughout the region — work he carried on for thirty-two years. During the slow seasons he would also work at contract fencing or timber cutting.

David Lahiff first stood for council in March 1976 and was successful in the elections of that year and in successive elections. He resigned from the council in November 1987 due to a disagreement with the then chairman, Alec McIntosh, and the following March he unsuccessfully contested the position of chairman with Alec McIntosh, losing the election by fifty-eight votes. He unsuccessfully stood again during the next elections, but was finally elected to the Chair in March 1994, by fifty-eight votes.

David Lahiff was the convener of the first meeting to form a bowls club at Kilkivan in July 1977, later becoming president of the club. He was treasurer of the polocrosse club from 1986 until its demise, he served on the steering committee created to investigate the formation of a Lions Club at Kilkivan in 1985 and was subsequently appointed charter president of the club. He was fund-raising chairman for the Kilkivan swimming pool for more than five years until the pool was paid for, the pool being opened by the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, on 25 February, 1984. David has been a member of the Great Horse Ride at Kilkivan since its inception in 1986, he serves as the council representative on the South Burnett Local Government Association, chairman of the Wide Bay, South Burnett Local Government Association, president of the Kilkivan Rodeo Committee and past president of the Kilkivan Bush Racing Committee. He currently operates a tyre business in Kilkivan and was re-elected unopposed during the local government elections of March 1997.¹⁹

Ray C. Currie

The current chief executive officer of the Kilkivan Shire Council is Ray Currie.

Ray Currie is the son of Francis Xavier and Mary Jean Adelaide Currie, both of whom were born in 1918. His father, who comes from Irish stock, was a shearing contractor working from Isisford, south of Longreach. He retired during the early 1980s when the couple moved to Rockhampton.

Ray Currie was born at Isisford on 13 January, 1950, the youngest of three surviving sons. He was educated at Isisford prior to moving to the Rockhampton Grammar School as a boarding student. He completed his grade twelve with All Soul's College at Charters Towers.

Ray Currie completed his senior year in 1967, aged eighteen years, and was successful in gaining employment as a junior clerk at the Isisford Shire Council, commencing employment in January, 1968. He remained at Isisford until April 1970 when he was appointed to the Esk Shire Council, also as a junior clerk. He remained in that post until October 1971 when he went to the Mundubbera Shire Council as a cost clerk and on 4 December, 1971, he was married, his wife, Suzanne Brooks, had also originally worked at the Isisford Shire Council.

In 1974 Ray Currie was appointed senior clerk at Mundubbera, holding that position until February 1977 when he transferred to the Boonah Shire Council. Soon afterwards he also enrolled in the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education in order to study for the local government clerk's certificate.

Ray Currie completed his studies at the end of 1982 and was appointed the deputy shire clerk at Childers, taking up that appointment in August 1983. He was appointed shire clerk at the Kilkivan Shire Council in March 1986, replacing John Cuddihy. He was elected to the Divisional Council of the Institute of Municipal Management in 1995 and was re-elected unopposed in 1996. He serves on the board of the Local Government Training Council and the Cooloola Regional Development Bureau. He and his wife, Sue, have had two children, Cameron and Brooke. Brooke Tenille Currie, aged nineteen years, was killed in a motor vehicle accident near Warwick in November 1995.²⁰

Notes and Sources
Chapter Forty
Local Government at Kilkivan

1. QGG Number 2, Vol 34, 3 July, 1886.
2. QGG Number 16, Vol 34, 31 July, 1886.
3. M/C. 22 April, 1887, p 3.
4. Ibid.
5. M/C. 30 November, 1887, p 2.
6. QGG Number 5, Vol 18, 7 January, 1888.
7. M/C. 6 June, 1890, p 3.
8. SBT. 29 August, 1979, p 3.
9. For further details of this decision see: SBT. 23 February, 1996, p 3.
10. SBT. 11 June, 1959, p 9.
11. SBT. 20 January, 1965, p 7.
12. SBT. 13 December, 1967, p 1.
13. *The District News*, 25 March, 1981, p 3.
14. For further details on the career of J.E. Stanton see: M/C. 30 April, 1930, p 10 and SBT. 28 June, 1945, p 4.
15. SBT. 27 August, 1991, p 6.
16. SBT. 17 August, 1983, p 20.
17. Author interview with Alec McIntosh, conducted 30 April, 1997.
18. SBT. 8 March, 1994, p 2.
19. Author interview with David Lahiff, conducted at Kilkivan, 15 November, 1996.
20. Author interview with Ray Currie, conducted at Kilkivan, 15 November, 1996.

Modern Kilkivan

Today the halcyon days of Kilkivan's golden era have long gone, the town is now a small rural community, its economy based largely upon agriculture, although mining still plays a role in its economic development and there is evidently still a significant amount of gold in the district. In 1984–85, for example, the company of West Coast Mines ranked as the largest single producer of alluvial gold in the state and was the fifth largest of all gold producers in the state. During that period they extracted sixty-four kilograms of gold. West Coast Mines had, by then, been carrying out operations in the region for about five years, with work being largely concentrating in Italian Gully. The gold being located varied in size from microscopic to coarse grains, although few nuggets were being retrieved. Mining also still continues on the Black Snake range with ore being brought to the site from Manumbar.¹

There is still gold in the region and this is evident from remarks made by David Lahiff, mayor of the shire, who claimed in 1996: 'There is still a future in alluvial gold, one company named Beaumark came in and worked here for about two and a half years, they mined hundreds of acres on the Rossmore road and took the overburden off with dozers, pumping water from Wide Bay Creek. They were putting about three or four thousand cubic metres of soil through their processing plant every day. This was a Western Australian company. One day I went to see their operation and one of the principals in the business asked me if I wanted to see some gold. He showed me a chute with a rubber matting, this matting was about eighteen inches square and was covered with gold three quarters of an inch thick, it was completely yellow with gold, and that was just one machine, the nuggets were caught elsewhere on one of the jigs.'²

The shire of Kilkivan, with offices at Kilkivan, Goomeri and at Widgee, is now involved in promoting tourism throughout the region and is a member of the Cooloola Regional Development Bureau. Selected tourism sites reflect the region's colourful and diversified history and include the Kilkivan museum, the Prophet mine at Rossmore, the restored Mount Clara copper smelter, Rossmore Park — near the site of the first discovery of gold in the area and on the National Trail — the Brooyar forest drive with Eagle Nest and Point Pure look-outs, the Oakview forestry area and Kinbombi Falls. There are many rest areas throughout the shire including sporting and attractive recreational facilities. One of the features of this tourism drive is the sawmill at Elgin Vale for which the council, confident of strong tourism growth and for the need to record in-depth regional history, have recently published a comprehensive history of the mill entitled: *The Coffee-pot Mill*.³

Since 1986 the Kilkivan Great Horse Ride has attracted thousands of participants and tourists to the region. As we have seen, the ride was the brain-child of Widgee grazier and Kilkivan councillor, Fabian Webb, and is now the largest such event in Australia.

A community health service commenced in July 1993 with multi-purpose centres, and from that date a health service community nurse has been based in the region's two clinics, one in Kilkivan the other in Goomeri. This has been a vital service in an area where there is no longer a functioning local hospital. A free immunization service is offered to shire residents. The council is also progressive when it comes to the care of the aged, pensioners' units have been constructed at both Kilkivan and Goomeri. Educational facilities are provided in the shire through two kindergartens, one at Goomeri and another at Kilkivan, there are pre-schools at Goomeri, Kilkivan and Widgee with six primary schools located at Kilkivan, Goomeri, Woolooga, and Widgee. There are secondary schools at both Goomeri and Kilkivan.⁴

The council is now debt free, a dramatic reversal from 1979 when 83.5 per cent of rates was going to repay loans. This financial position for the local authority places it in a position of strength when it comes to discussions on any future local authority amalgamations, but it also means that the people of the shire can expect and will receive the services that are important to people living in rural centres such as Kilkivan.⁵

As we have seen in previous chapters of this publication, the various councils that now administer local government in the region known as the South Burnett have all worked to ensure that the restoration and preservation of historic sites throughout the district has, whenever possible, been carried out. The sites mentioned in this publication are too numerous to again list, some, such as homesteads, farm outbuildings, industrial complexes, factories, workers' cottages and many others, have been preserved either by private individuals or through the care and work of largely volunteer groups such as historical societies, the Q.C.W.A. etc.

Other works carried out by the Kilkivan Shire Council include the restoration of the impressive copper smelting chimney at Mount Clara. Constructed largely by Chinese miners more than a century previously, the chimney and smelting works serviced the surrounding copper fields in the upper reaches of Fat Hen Creek, east of Kilkivan. Following approval of a National Trust grant of \$15,000, preservation work on the chimney took place in 1980, the chimney was re-packed with mortar and restoration work was also carried out on the smelter and firebox, in charge of the project was shire engineer Ross Chapman. Additionally, a security fence was erected around the site and information boards were set in place.⁶ The council has also become the economic focal point in the region. In 1996 the A.N.Z. announced that its branch at Kilkivan would close and the Kilkivan Shire Council moved quickly to fill the gap, providing facilities and staff for a financial institution to operate from the shire council offices.⁷

In March 1997 Cr. David Lahiff announced that a grant of \$3.2 million had been awarded to the Kilkivan Shire Council in order to upgrade Goomeri's water supply. The initial announcement of the grant had been made by Trevor Perrett, the minister for primary industries, and Di McCauley, minister for local government and planning, during a meeting of the South Burnett Local Government Association. The grant enables the council to substantially upgrade the water supply to improve both its quality and the quantity.⁸

Notes and Sources

Chapter Forty-one

Modern Kilkivan

1. *Alluvial Gold Mining, West Coast Mines, Kilkivan*, by S. Ishaq, *The South Burnett District*. Editor, W.F. Willmott, Geological Society of Australia Inc., 1986, JOL Q 559.432, pp 13–15.
2. Author interview with David Lahiff, conducted at Kilkivan 15 November, 1996.
3. Matthews, Tony, *The Coffee-pot Mill*, Kilkivan Shire Council, 1997.
4. Author interview with Ray Currie, conducted at Kilkivan, 15 November, 1996 and: *Profile of Kilkivan Shire*, Cooloola Regional Development Bureau, 1995.
5. Author interview with Ray Currie, conducted at Kilkivan, 15 November, 1996.
6. SBT. 16 July, 1980. p 2.
7. SBT. 11 October, 1996, p 1.
8. SBT. 11 March, 1997, pp 1 and 3.

The Coming of the Railways

As we have seen in previous chapters, the construction of the Queensland railways system began during the 1860s with the line from Brisbane to Ipswich and later by connecting Ipswich to the Darling Downs. The necessity for railways was profound, and while the lines were vastly expensive to construct and the purchasing of rolling stock was also prohibitively costly, the entire economy of the colony depended largely upon having a comprehensive and efficient rail system in place, a system that would connect the many rural centres and rural industries with the cities, the markets and ports established there for the rural products.

The rail system was also an integral part of closer settlement. When the Queensland government resumed enormous blocks of land and allowed them to be surveyed for closer settlement, one of the inducements to closer settlement was the government promise that these remote regions would eventually be serviced by some form of rail system. This system was imperative to the success of the closer settlement policy. In early Queensland there were no roads, as such, merely bush tracks cut by the bullock teams along trails that had been blazed by the first white settlers. These tracks were rough indeed, dusty and dry most of the year, they became mud-filled bogs during the wet seasons, and the hundreds of bullock teams and the heavy wagons they pulled further deteriorated them.

Getting goods to market was a perennial problem for those early farmers, men and women who had believed the government's promise of fast, inexpensive rail systems. Until those rails arrived, the growth of settlement was exceedingly limited. Farmers could not use their properties to their full potential. Some farmers with six or seven hundred acres of land could only grow crops on about five per cent of that land, just a sufficient crop to cater for the local market and for personal consumption. Therefore, until the rails arrived, much of the rich agricultural land remained idle, and there could be no real prosperity in the South Burnett until the very lucrative markets were opened up through ports such as Maryborough and Brisbane.

There were several distinct phases in the construction of the railway system into the South Burnett region, and for ease of reference the opening of the various lines are listed below.

Theebine to Dickabram: 1 January, 1886.

Dickabram to Kilkivan: 6 December, 1886.

Kilkivan to Goomeri: 1 August, 1902.

Goomeri to Murgon and Wondai: 14 September, 1903.

Wondai to Kingaroy: 19 December, 1904.

Kingaroy to Nanango: 13 November, 1911, (first train arrived), the official opening taking place on 20 November, 1911.

Kingaroy to Tarong: 1 February 1916. (official opening), with the line opened to traffic from 15 December, 1915.

Murgon to Proston: 24 February, 1923.

Murgon to Winderam: 28 March, 1925.¹

Yet the railways system in Queensland was to have a tenuous and difficult start. The Queensland government, during its first few years under Premier Herbert Robert George Wyndam, was not a wealthy one, but the government realised that in order to generate wealth it was necessary to also spend it. With this in view the government did what it could to aid the economy

by generating work through the construction of public buildings and, where it was both possible and expedient, the construction of the rail system. The construction of the railways and the development of a sound rail system was seen as being particularly important by Arthur Macalister, future premier of Queensland and Wyndam's successor.² Macalister realised that Queensland was faced with a host of specific difficulties, including the problems associated with the large distances between the cities and rural centres, the poor quality of the roads — mainly dirt tracks at that time, and uncertainties associated with the particularly aggressive competition for rail services.

Prior to the coming of the railways, travelling in the Queensland outback was difficult, time-consuming, sometimes quite expensive, and frequently dangerous. Travellers had little choice in the matter, they could either travel by horse, dray, coach or on foot. Cobb and Co. was certainly the most well known of all the coach lines, but there were many others in existence, and they grew ponderously especially after the discoveries of gold at places such as Gympie, Nanango and Kilkivan.

In gold bearing regions travelling alone in the bush, or by coach, could be dangerous. As gold was won from the soil and transported to the nearest banks — often many miles away, travellers carrying that gold were sometimes waylaid by robbers. Travelling by coach was not a comfortable and safe form of transport, coach travellers were crammed together in dusty compartments, shaken by the rough tracks, enduring stifling heat in summer, flooded creeks or precipitous trails, and in winter they were frequently frozen and wet as the coaches laboured for hundreds of miles over broken and rocky terrain.

The first organised effort to have a public rail system in the colony occurred with the formation of the Moreton Bay Tramway Company in 1860. Eleven members of the Queensland Legislative Assembly were on the company's provisional committee. This company sought to construct a primitive wooden rail line from Ipswich to Toowoomba, the wagons were to be pulled by relays of horses, it was envisaged that the system would utilize fifty large goods wagons and four passenger wagons. However, the operation was doomed to failure from the beginning. Wracked by financial difficulties and an apathetic public, the company was unable to carry out its ambitious plans, and although the first sod of the proposed railway was turned on 12 August, 1862, by the end of that year the project was before the Court of Insolvency. A similar fate awaited the plans of an ambitious engineering firm named R. and T. Tooth and Company of New South Wales. This company proposed to run a line from Ipswich through Toowoomba with branch lines to Dalby and Warwick. However, their contractual demand of one acre of land for each one pound expended on the project was strongly opposed in parliament, and despite powerful lobbying, the project never got off the ground.

The Queensland government then asked Abraham Fitzgibbons, a highly experienced railways engineer, to provide estimates for the construction of a line to Toowoomba, Dalby and Warwick. Fitzgibbons had originally been contracted by Tooth and Company and was well versed with the problems — although he was advocating a controversial narrow gauge of 3' 6" rather than the wider gauge of 4' 8½" — the gauge of the New South Wales lines then in construction. Over the following months the problems associated with the construction of a rail system in Queensland created enormous difficulties for the government — including a dissolution of parliament and a general election that saw Premier Herbert returned to government and Fitzgibbons given the job of chief engineer. He later became Queensland's first railways commissioner. Fitzgibbons had seen to it that the line which was to be constructed would be the narrow gauge of 3' 6" — the first such main-line railway to be constructed anywhere in the world.

Tenders were called and a quotation from the highly respected English company of Peto, Brassey and Betts was accepted. The first section of the line was a 21½ miles stretch from Ipswich to the Little Liverpool Plains. Samuel Wilcox was appointed engineer. The first sod was turned on 25 February, 1864, at Ipswich, by Lady Diamantina Roma Bowen, wife of the governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen. Lady Bowen had been invited to turn the first sod by the then minister for lands and works, Arthur Macalister. Following the turning of the first sod a salute of guns was fired by a group of volunteers.³

There was never any specific system designed for the construction of a rail system in Queensland, it was a somewhat *pis aller* affair, the rail lines going firstly to those areas of obvious significance, and then extending to meet growing demand. In any case, no specific system could be devised as it was impossible to tell in those early years where that demand would come from.

The discoveries of various minerals, gold, coal, copper and others, would play an important role in the decisions for rail construction, as would the burgeoning regions of agricultural success and the exploitation of other natural resources such as timber.

To carry through the public rail network the government inaugurated a flexible plan. In order to have a sufficient work-force for this construction some two thousand workers were imported from Britain and contracted for the labour. As the government had little money at that time these ambitious projects were to be financed by Agra and Masterman, an English bank with an office in Sydney, which had agreed to an initial loan of £100,000 with further monthly loans of £50,000. The Union Bank was used to provide supportive financing to the government. However, disaster was looming strongly on the horizon. In May 1866 came the London bank crash, Agra and Masterman's bank was one of the casualties, as was Peto, Brassey and Betts — the company contracted to build the Queensland railways system. A temporary solution to the problem was later found, the government introducing Treasury bonds, and Agra and Masterman were able to continue with their financing. Other banks then regained some confidence and assisted with the project. But it had been a difficult time, riots had occurred in the streets of Brisbane and many commercial enterprises simply ground to a halt. Angry railway workers commandeered a train at Helidon and returned to Brisbane to demonstrate their cause, they were given a meal and told that they would receive a weekly payment of £1 and that camps would be set up where they could live until the situation improved.

Over the following years the rail lines snaked out from various centres, although the Queensland rail system was not a centralized one, beginning as it did from Ipswich rather than Brisbane and moving out from Rockhampton and south from Maryborough. The first sod of the line from Maryborough to the Gympie goldfields was turned on 28 March, 1876, the event was followed by a feast for which a bullock was killed and roasted whole on a site facing Kent Street, Maryborough, (where the bowls club now is situated). The engineering firm of Walkers, who would later provide much of the rolling stock for the Queensland rails system, provided the roasting equipment.⁴

The original concept for the rail system into the South Burnett was to approach the region from two directions. To extend the Mount Esk line towards Nanango and then to establish a connection from Maryborough to finally meet the Mount Esk branch. This enormous loop in the main line system was designed to open up that very large tract of land inland from the Esk region up to Maryborough.⁵

Once the Maryborough to Gympie railway line was in place it was only a matter of time — and pressure from the people of the South Burnett region — before a rail link was established to Kilkivan. Even so, this rail link was not brought about without considerable difficulty. It was not until 1882 that plans for such a line were tabled in parliament, the primary reasons for the line being the mineral deposits in the Kilkivan district and the growing need for transportation for the agricultural produce coming from all over the South Burnett. The line from Kilkivan Junction (Theebine) to Kilkivan was approved by parliament on 1 November, 1882, its estimated cost being £6100 per mile. There was considerable debate over the route the line should take and where the terminus should be; some residents, especially the mining community, lobbying for the terminus to be at the site of the Rise and Shine, where the second Kilkivan township had become established, some believed that it should terminate at West Coast Creek, the first mining site at Kilkivan which was then close to being worked out, while others thought that the site should be where a number of buildings had already been constructed, including the first Kilkivan School, two hotels and several cottages — the present (and third) site of Kilkivan, described in official correspondence as the: 'Government township of Kilkivan.'⁶

The documentation regarding the terminus and route of the line is interesting. Kilkivan resident Walter Smith was vociferous in his campaign to have the line terminate at the old gold mining site of West Coast Creek, claiming that in this way the government would save itself £6000, as this was a shorter distance, and that a new township could be surveyed there and the land sold to help recover expenses. Smith claimed that the line would not make a profit for a very long time as the population at the planned terminus was so small, adding: 'If constructed as now surveyed it will prove a great failure, a loss to the country and ruin to the district.'⁷

George Phillips, the inspecting surveyor, countered Smith's claims by forwarding his own comments to the chief engineer in Brisbane. These documents were later tabled in parliament. Phillips wrote:

The surveys of the branch were commenced in 1881, and plans were submitted to parliament in 1882 showing terminus at new township.

I understand that Mr Walter Smith has been a resident of the district for many years, and it appears strange that he should so recently discover that the route selected and approved by parliament is not the most advantageous.

I agree with Mr Walter Smith that the branch is not likely to pay for some time, but do not think that if the old township were made a terminus the chances of its doing so would be increased.

The original instructions were for a survey of a line from the Maryborough and Gympie to Gayndah *via* Kilkivan; and, as the old township had long ceased to exist, the survey was made to the government township, where the court house, police station, post and telegraph office, &c., were situated.

The old township, which, I presume, is Mr Walter Smith's objective point, is only two miles by a fairly good road from the line as surveyed; whilst at the 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ and 25 mile pegs provision has been made for alternative station sites with a view to accommodate the old township whenever required. Considering the time devoted to surveys, and that the line is now under construction, it appears to me quite out of the question to seriously consider Mr Walter Smith's proposal.⁸

Other objections came from David Webster, who, like Smith, claimed that the terminus was incorrectly placed. Yet it was reasonably clear that the terminus selected was certainly the most advantageous to all concerned. The West Coast Creek site was, by this time, almost completely abandoned, and the site of the proposed terminus was close to the Rise and Shine reef where the majority of Kilkivan's population was then living and working.

Replying to Webster's complaint, the chief engineer, C.L. Depree, who, in the capacity of assistant inspecting surveyor, had been involved in the original survey, wrote a detailed report for parliament in which he outlined the reasons for the route of the line and its terminus. Depree claimed:

In the first place, no survey was ever made into the 'old township' of Kilkivan; and here it becomes necessary to enter into some particulars with reference to the 'old' and 'new' townships of Kilkivan. The 'old township', ... is situated on a tributary of Fat Hen Creek, and at the time I commenced the surveys, in December, 1881, consisted of a public-house and store belonging to Mr Mackey. There were then no other buildings of any kind nor any other settlement within sight. This locality had been the centre of an alluvial rush some years before, and the ground having been worked out, the place had been abandoned except by Mr Mackey.

The 'new township', ... is situated on One-mile Creek, a tributary of Wide Bay Creek. It is about two miles from the 'old township'. At the 'new township' — the government township of Kilkivan, also known as the 'Rise and Shine' — there were the 'Rise and Shine Reefs', where some work had always been going on, and also a post and telegraph office, a police station, a school, two public-houses, and a considerable number of cottages occupied by miners and others.

There did not appear to me to be any question as to which place should be regarded as 'Kilkivan', and in making the parliamentary survey I terminated the line in the 'new township' itself, within a few chains of the post office.

I may mention that, judging from what I saw on subsequent visits to the two places up to December, 1883, and from what I have since heard; I have no reason to suppose that there has been any change in their relative importance.

It is correct to state that the old survey (the parliamentary one) kept further away from Wide Bay Creek beyond the 19 mile peg than the permanent survey does, and that it went nearer, though not into, the 'old township', but, as I have mentioned above, the parliamentary survey of this part of the line was made with extraordinary rapidity (at the rate of a mile per day), in order to have plans ready to lay before parliament by a certain

date. Whereas, before the permanent survey was made, there was plenty of time to thoroughly examine the country and secure the best possible route, and great advantages in distance, in gradients, and in earthworks, were attained by keeping generally nearer to Wide Bay Creek. This involved the line being a little further from 'old township', and, of course, from the mining claims to the southward of it; but there cannot be much ground for complaint on this score, as there is provision made on the line now being constructed for alternative station sites near the 25 mile peg, which are only about two miles by a fair track from the 'old township'.

It is also to be remembered that the Kilkivan branch has always been regarded as the first section only of a line, and that it was therefore necessary to so arrange its temporary terminus as to permit of the line being extended without difficulty.

It was originally intended as the first section of a line to connect the Maryborough and Gympie railway with the Brisbane Valley branch via Nanango. Now, a line taken into the 'old township' would be incapable of extension either towards Gayndah or Nanango without crossing the watershed of Fat Hen Creek and One-mile Creek into the 'new township', which would involve a tunnel and other heavy works ...

In conclusion, I may mention that, owing to the absence of any settlement of importance between the Maryborough and Gympie line and Kilkivan, the only considerations which appeared of importance in determining the route of this line were directness, minimum cost of construction, and securing a good get-away for future extension; and these considerations alone have influenced the choice of route.⁹

The authorized extension from the Gympie line to the proposed terminus at Kilkivan was twenty-six miles. This route crossed the Mary River three times and there was a particularly difficult crossing at Miva, a crossing that would see a considerable bridge, the Dickabram bridge, constructed on the site.

By August 1885 construction work on the line was proceeding satisfactorily, the contractors being McDermott and Owen who were, '... being accorded high praise from both official and private sources' for the quality of their work. The contract price for the rail construction was £113,642/13/8d, the twenty-one months' contract having been awarded on 2 September, 1884. By August 1885, the line had been almost completed to the Mary River where two cylinders of the new Dickabram bridge had been sunk and others were in the process of being set into place. Much of the steel, including the girders for the bridge, were brought from London aboard the steamer *Gulf of Carpentaria*. Other ironwork materials, those for the bridge that had to be built across Wide Bay Creek were en-route to Australia aboard the steamer *New Guinea* — due to arrive at Hervey Bay that month.¹⁰

Over the following months the work continued steadily, yet despite regular reports of its progress the residents of Kilkivan were becoming slightly impatient. This impatience was more of a commercial and business nature than a personal one — as soon as the trains could begin carting goods to the markets in Brisbane and Maryborough, then the sooner larger profits could be made. By December 1885 a correspondent at Kilkivan was reporting: '... Work on the railway line is progressing slowly; residents are beginning to ask each other when the line is going to be completed and open for traffic, or whether any show is going to be made towards early completion.'¹¹

By March the following year the bridge across the Mary River was almost complete and the contractors had been using some new and innovative methods in its construction. The structure was seven hundred feet in length, inclusive of all iron and wood works and to prevent damage from floods it had been constructed eighty feet above the normal water level. The ironwork was sustained by two pairs of massive piers lined with concrete and topped with three pairs of girders. All of the iron castings had been ordered through an English company who had sub-contracted the work to a Belgian firm.¹² By the 29th of that month (March) all the cylinders had been erected, the numerous piles and piers were in place and all but one span of the bridge had been finished. Rather than building a temporary wooden bridge to use as a construction platform the contractors had used a low level temporary construction thus saving a considerable amount of time and money. Having completed the two outer spans there remained only the centre span of the bridge to set into place, an opening of some 120 feet between the piers which was approximately one hundred feet high. This gap had to be bridged with two iron girders each weighing twenty tons. A rather excited reporter who witnessed the event claimed:

These massive pieces of ironwork have been put together on the top of the bridge, and the work of launching the first of them across the chasm was attempted on Saturday. On a strongly-built trolley running on rails laid on the temporary low-level bridge, a substantial pillar of scaffolding was erected eighty-five feet high, and this bore one end of the twenty-ton girder, while a smaller trolley on the top of the bridge bore the other end. Perfectly calm weather was necessary for the operation, and this being experienced on Saturday, the trolleys were put into slow motion and the huge girder safely guided in mid-air across the span until it safely reached its destination, and the permanent connection of the bridge from bank to bank was accomplished, rendering the feat of placing the fellow girder also in position comparatively easy. The operation was regarded as one of importance from an engineering point of view ... We may add that the superintending engineer resident at the work on behalf of the government, Mr H. Shuttleworth, was also present, and shares in the honours attached to this fine piece of work.¹³

By May 1886 the bridge had been completed and, as a part of the opening ceremony the first of the government tests took place. The first test was the passage of three locomotives, complete with their tenders, a total weight of some 130 tons. These vehicles were driven onto the newly completed bridge and stopped in the middle of the central span while tests were carried out to ascertain the strain that was being placed upon the girders, in engineering terms, the 'deflection'. When this had been completed the trains were backed off the bridge and were then driven together, at full speed — thirty-five miles an hour — across the structure. Engineers at the scene later pronounced that the structure was safe and the deflection within limits. A description of the bridge written at that time claimed: '... The structure has a most attractive appearance. It has a light elegant style about it which reminds one of the aerial bridges over the old country firths, but it is evidently solidly built and capable of sustaining the heaviest weight that will ever be put upon it. The wooden portion on either end is a picture of honest workmanship, the massive buttresses of timber and tapering superstructure of hardwood logs being a marvel of symmetry and tradesman-like finish.'¹⁴

Following the completion of the official tests the locomotives returned to the eastern side of the river taking with them some, 'local celebrities' who had attended the testing ceremony. These 'celebrities' included Isaac Moore of *Barambah* station and his wife and daughter who were the first two ladies to cross the new bridge. Afterwards a luncheon was served, a reporter colourfully writing: 'A champagne luncheon was then submitted by the contractor to the attention of those in attendance, and the work of testing the corkscrews and sundry toothsome delicacies was undertaken, the 'deflection' in each case being most gratifying. As the sparkling wine circulated, pent up oratory vent and congratulatory speeches were delivered.'¹⁵

By this time, and with the opening of the major bridge at Miva, trains were able to run more than fifteen miles up the Kilkivan extension to within ten and a half miles of Kilkivan.¹⁶

The laying of this line was the most important event since the discovery of gold in the region. Two years under construction and commencing at Kilkivan Junction, it took a south-easterly direction, passing through the Kanyan Scrub near the Kanyan Mountains, through several small selections for approximately three and a half miles when it reached the bridge across the Mary River. After crossing the bridge the line approached *Miva* station, then arrived at Wide Bay Creek, this creek had to be crossed three times as it wound around the country in the general direction of Kilkivan. The line passed through Brooyar following the valley of Wide Bay Creek through a cutting which had created serious engineering and labour difficulties and had been blasted with dynamite. The line then went on to Sivyer's Siding where pine was lying waiting to be transported to Maryborough. At approximately fourteen miles the lines reached Woolooga after which the Wide Bay Creek was again crossed by bridge number two, a construction 381 feet in length built on three concrete piers. There had been considerable problems to be overcome during the construction of this bridge, and the bridge was also the site of a tragedy. A press report claiming: '... Whilst this bridge was in course of construction, great difficulty was experienced in sinking, in order to find bed rock, whereon to erect the third pier. The first there was little trouble with, but the second and third, being situated on the old bed of the creek, a great rush of water had to be contended against. Iron caissons had to be used as coffer dams to prevent the influx of water and a centrifugal pump, worked by a 12 h.p. steam engine, and throwing 100,000 gallons per hour, had to be kept going night and day. Ultimately, the bed rock was found at a considerable depth, and the pier successfully erected. About a month back a man working on the line, fell off this bridge, and was killed.'¹⁷

After crossing this bridge the line wound through the mountain range to the third bridge over the Wide Bay Creek. This bridge was 433 feet 6 inches in length. Then came various cuttings with Mount New Rum (New Rome) rising on the right of the line and soon afterwards the mountains surrounding Kilkivan could be seen. The construction of the line had utilized one hundred horses and drays and kept two sawmills, one at the two mile and another at the six mile, busy cutting sleepers and other timber requirements. Between 600 and 700 men had been employed on the line's construction. The smithy's forge and the offices of the contractors were situated on the Maryborough side of the Mary River at Dickabram, and it was to here that most of the supplies for the railway were brought.¹⁸

The line was officially opened at Kilkivan on 6 December, 1886, and it was a gala day for the people of Kilkivan and district. From early in the morning hundreds of people began arriving at the small township to witness the event, and a special demonstration of local minerals, gold, copper, silver, mercury, nickel and cobalt had been displayed at the court-house. A press report of the opening claimed:

The ceremony of opening the Kilkivan railway line just completed to the satisfaction of all parties by Messrs Macdonald and Owen, seems to have attracted much genuine interest in town, the result being that the special train from Maryborough left with a large crowd of people yesterday morning for Kilkivan to take part in the proceedings.

From early morning on Monday all little Kilkivan was astir to get ready for the momentous event taking place later on in the day. The township was scoured on all hands for chairs, &c., to furnish the banqueting hall, improvised for the occasion out of Mr Mackey's new store near the railway station, and everyone lent a willing hand to ensure its success ...

Shortly after 10, the place began to assume a very lively aspect. The ordinary train from Maryborough meeting the train from Gympie at the junction of the Kilkivan (line), brought the Commissioner for Railways, a large contingent of Gympie folks, and a small number of Maryborough citizens. The Gympie brass band also arrived by this train, and a small procession marched up to the court-house, and made an inspection of the exhibits. Meanwhile, country visitors were pouring in from all the surrounding stations, and buggies and other traps appearing in numbers on the scene, were flying about in all directions. A large and expectant crowd of people assembled at the station to witness the arrival of the special train from Maryborough, and as soon as it had disgorged its human freight, Kilkivan had indeed an animated appearance. The train was composed of four carriages and must have contained nearly eight hundred people, amongst whom were nearly all our leading citizens. A ring having been formed in the station yard, Mr F. Curnow, the Commissioner for Railways, stepped in, and in a few brief words, delegated the duty and honour of declaring the line open to Mr W.G. Bailey, the member for Wide Bay ...

About 150 people, including a few ladies, sat down at the banquet catered for in a good and substantial manner by Mr C. Barbeller, of this town. Mr T. Rose, of Kilkivan, occupied the chair.¹⁹

The enormous benefits the line brought to Kilkivan cannot be overestimated; with the arrival of the rail Kilkivan became the commercial centre of the South Burnett, the one township in the region to which all roads led. Timber was brought from Taabinga and Nanango and other centres, wagons of maize, pumpkins, hides, and dozens of other products were soon wending their way to the small railhead. Activity in Kilkivan became feverish, gone were the days when the town was forced to survive on diminishing mining reserves, now there was a new wealth to exploit. Yet the rail also had its detractors, modernity could not pass by without some complaint. In February 1887 — only a few months after the line had opened, one person wrote: '... I have heard several complaining of the inconvenience in travelling in the railway carriages on account of the smoke. If the door is left open the passengers are almost choked, and if shut the heat is intense. In some (other) parts I have seen canvas screens in front of each carriage, were this done it might have the desired effect.'²⁰

Following the successful completion of the Kilkivan line, it was not long before serious agitation began to have the railway extended to Nanango. This, after all, had been the original plan, and the people of Nanango considered that a start should be made on the line at the earliest possible opportunity. Yet there were problems to be overcome, not least of which was an equally vociferous

public at Gayndah. The people of Gayndah believed that they had the principal right to an extension, and that such an extension should take precedence over Nanango's claims to a line. For a while the matter was debated in the pages of the press and some heated points of view were made. A voice of reason, however, was that of Ezra Horne of Coolabunia, who wrote from Nanango on 23 October, 1887, pointing out that the lines should be extended simultaneously. There were numerous advantages for doing so, not least of which was the highly profitable trade that was carried on between the two centres. Each year the farmers of the Nanango district sent tons of maize to Gayndah, and with a price of one shilling and sixpence per bushel, this was clearly good business and should, if possible, be expanded. A rail link between the two centres would ultimately achieve this aim. Horne also pointed out that a huge amount of timber was being wasted in the Nanango district because of the lack of cheap transportation. Timber was simply being cut and allowed to rot or was burnt in order to clear the land for agricultural purposes. Horne wrote: '... it is a pity to see it destroyed as is the case at present. Within one mile of where I now write three or four small patches of scrub are cut and waiting to be fired, hundreds of splendid pines and yellow-wood logs being destroyed in each patch. This is going on every year, and when we take into consideration that these scrubs are comparatively level and therefore the timber can be easily got out, it is a shame to see this destruction.'²¹

The debate was further complicated by the question of direction. Some believed that the line should be extended up from Esk, while others were convinced that a line to Kilkivan and thus to Maryborough would be the most commercially practical. A large meeting was held in Nanango in July 1889 for the purpose of agitating for the line to be extended from Kilkivan. Walter Scott of *Taromeo* was elected to the chair and he called upon Mr M. Tansey to move the resolution. As a result of the meeting a deputation was formed to wait upon the railways minister with a view to expressing the wishes of the majority of those present at that meeting.²²

Yet despite meetings and deputations such as these and debates in parliament, the people of Nanango were forced to endure a long wait for their rail link — some parliamentarians believing that such a rail line would be uneconomical, they questioned whether the region was producing sufficient goods in marketable quantities to provide the proposed line with adequate revenue.²³

A ministerial visit to Nanango in November 1898 promised action on a future rail service, but little was actually achieved. The ministers, John Murray, J.V. Chataway and J.F.G. Foxton, attended a meeting at the Board's Hall. This was probably the most well attended meeting ever held in Nanango up until that time. Present at that meeting were, in addition to the ministers, James Millis, John Bartholomew, the member for Maryborough, and William John Ryott Maughan, the recently elected member for the Burnett. Discussion revolved around a number of subjects but the question of the rail line received no firm commitment — although the politicians were garrulous with their rhetoric.²⁴ By that time the Nanango Railway Association had been formed, its president was James Millis. The association met in the offices of the Nanango Divisional Board, their aim was to promote the proposed Nanango/Kilkivan line and to induce the state government into making a commitment towards its establishment.²⁵

By the following year there were still no concrete decisions regarding the railways — or even of its route. The Esk to Nanango route was a distance of 64½ miles, the Kilkivan to Nanango route was 59½ miles. Another proposed route from Crow's Nest was 70 miles. Via Esk the centre for Nanango trade would become Ipswich, via Kilkivan, Maryborough would be the trade centre, and via Crow's Nest Toowoomba would receive much of the South Burnett region's produce. The estimated costs (at that stage) were, Esk line, £400,000, Crow's Nest, £345,000 and Kilkivan £300,000.²⁶ Other routes were also on the agenda, although in reality, they stood little chance of coming to fruition, one from Caboolture, the other, very much the outside contender, from Jondaryan.²⁷

While publications such as the *Tropiculturist* in Brisbane were strongly advocating the line to Esk, there was growing support for the Kilkivan line with markets to Maryborough. One Maryborough resident named Vivian H. Oelrichs claimed that in timber returns alone, the people of the Nanango region would reap larger profits from a line to Kilkivan as the sawmills at Maryborough were capable of processing a far greater quantity of wood than were the mills in Brisbane.²⁸ Another Brisbane publication strongly advocating the Esk route was the influential *White Mercantile Gazette*. In March 1899 a leading article in the *Gazette* claimed:

What is urgently needed is definite action, not vague vapouring ... At the present time a deal of attention is being paid to the district of Nanango, and the next means of opening it up. It has been visited once by the Commissioner for Railways, and he is now paying a second visit for further data on which to base an official recommendation. It has been twice visited by the Minister for Railways, who, on his first tour, was so delighted with the fertility (and) of the salubrity of the climate, and the immense timber resources, that his description, glowed with the fire of enthusiasm, and awakened much interest. It so excited the interest of the Governor, that he has recently personally inspected the district. The members for Maryborough and Burrum, we believe, have all been there, and now what is commonly called 'a dead set' is being made on the Railways Department for surveys from Nanango to Kilkivan, with the object of taking all the Nanango trade to Maryborough. But the members of parliament on this side do not seem to realise the danger of all the trade of that magnificent piece of country going away from its proper commercial centre, which is undoubtedly the capital city of the colony. A forcible and pertinent question is — Should not Brisbane, as the metropolis of the Colony, be the recognised commercial and shipping centre for the producing interests of Southern Queensland?²⁹

In March 1899 a petition signed by two hundred Nanango residents was collected, requesting that the Kilkivan/Nanango rail line be commenced. Other petitions were collected at both Kilkivan and Maryborough.³⁰ The following month, (April), Government Surveyor O.L. Amos was instructed to undertake a survey along the proposed route from Kilkivan to Nanango, and Amos, who was acting under orders to proceed, 'with all dispatch' left to commence his survey on the 8th of that month.³¹ This was one of three trial surveys along the proposed routes ordered by the government to help with the decision making process.

Despite these promising signs, there was still no firm commitment from the government, yet the people of Maryborough were strongly behind the Kilkivan line proposal. A meeting held at the Maryborough Town Hall in April 1899 was very well attended by Maryborough people, James Millis, president of the Nanango Railway Association and also chairman of the Nanango Divisional Board was in attendance — as was John Wittmann, also an early resident of the South Burnett. During the meeting a strong resolution was passed by the Maryborough people urging the government to proceed as quickly as possible with the Kilkivan to Nanango line. James Millis gave an eloquent speech telling those present that the people of Nanango were themselves in favour of the proposed route to Kilkivan. He also spoke of the experiences of his colleague, John Wittmann who had done much to open up the wealth of the area — a wealth ready now for capitalisation.³²

The people of Esk were also putting up a considerable fight to have the line extended to that region and an influential deputation comprised of the members of parliament representing metropolitan and West Moreton waited on the premier, James Robert Dickson, to urge the government to carry the line through from Esk. A report of the meeting concluded: '... Mr Dickson, in reply, said he recognised the arguments adduced, but would reserve his decision. He intimated that neither he nor the Minister for Railways was hostile to the line as had been suggested. He had received from the Railway Department three trial surveys, the whole of which went to show that the amount of good land to be opened up from Kilkivan to Nanango was considerably larger and more suitable for settlement than that on the route from Esk to Nanango.'³³

Surveyor O.L. Amos completed his survey of the proposed Kilkivan to Nanango line in late December 1899, the end of the survey placing the terminus opposite the police station in Henry Street, Nanango, yet, as we shall later see, the line would not extend that far, ending near Taabinga Village at the 56 mile peg where Kingaroy is situated today.³⁴

This scrub was certainly one of the richest in the South Burnett at that time, it was described in 1898 as: '... splendid agricultural land which is covered with the densest jungle. Some twenty or thirty families have settled there and have partially cleared their homesteads. At present, although all crops grow most luxuriantly, it is a hard struggle for the farmers to make a living as they have a long carriage to Kilkivan before they get to a railway. The railway to Nanango is a line that must be undertaken as soon as any railway policy is decided on. It would pay handsomely and this wonderful Coolabunia Scrub is room for thousands of families. Wheat grows splendidly, and this last season 2000 bags were sent away, although, of course, with long carriage there is nothing to be made at it. The Coolabunia residents are mainly Germans, I think.'³⁵

In order to solve the problem of where the line should run, the Queensland government appointed a Railway Commission, under the chairmanship of Andrew Henry Barlow, M.L.A., the member for Ipswich, to investigate the matter. Members of the commission, who were also acquiring information on other proposed lines, went north to Bowen in April 1900 and then returned to Maryborough, later travelling south through Nanango and Esk. During these visits they invited submissions and concepts regarding proposed rail policies from the regional residents.³⁶ Members of the Nanango Railway Association — which, by that time had branches in Maryborough and Gympie, immediately moved to collect all the information possible in order to present a positive case to the commission. The commission called for submissions and asked that anyone who believed they had information likely to be of interest should appear at the various towns to give evidence.³⁷

When the commission sat at Nanango in May that year (1900), various influential people gave evidence, including Hector Munro, a licensed surveyor who had worked with Surveyor O.L. Amos on the survey from Kilkivan to Nanango, and James Millis, chairman of the Nanango Divisional Board. A subsequent report of their evidence was published in the *Nanango News*:

Mr Hector Munro stated: I am a licensed surveyor, and have been in Nanango since 1886; I am conversant with the qualities and extent of most of the land that would be affected by the proposed railway from Kilkivan to Nanango; I personally know a great deal of the land that has been selected, and also that which will be thrown open to selection later on as the leases expire and the land is resumed by the Government. I consider that, in the Nanango district, there is a very extensive area of fine agricultural land equal to the best in Queensland. I marked the first route of the survey with Mr Amos, and subsequently, showed him where there was some better land available by a slight deviation; I have in my hand figures of the various leases, totalling 1534 square miles which will expire in this district during the next five or six years; in my opinion fully 100,000 acres of these lands are suitable for wheat growing, and much, beside, is suitable for dairying, maize growing, and other crops; what is called the Coolabunia Scrub extends very much further than the parish of Coolabunia, and at Wooroolin, Yarraman Creek, and other places it is even better watered; 100,000 acres is rather an under-estimate of the rich agricultural land that will become available later ... I support the line from Kilkivan because it can be built more cheaply than the Esk line, because much of the land along the proposed route and on each side of it is either leased or Crown land, because it would serve a larger number of settlers, and because it would promote more close settlement ...

Jas. Millis deposed: I am the lessee of the *Nanango run*, which consists of 2000 acres of freehold and 50 square miles to be resumed by the Government; one-fourth of the area is resumable now, I understand; I have been a resident for 23 years; I came to Nanango in 1879, and I shall give my experience. I have been engaged in pastoral, dairying, and farming in Nanango; have been growing wheat here for ten years past; the yields have been very good; have 150 acres of wheat land now under cultivation, and 100 more ready for the plough, but will not cultivate the latter till there is access to a better market ... The wheat grown in the Nanango district was almost free from rust; the district was very suitable for dairying; (Millis) had run a dairy here with a partner for about a year; the cheese made was of excellent quality, and the yield of cheese per gallon of milk similar to that on the Richmond River, showing that our natural grasses are equal to the cultivated grasses sown in that part of New South Wales; I believe there is a great future for the dairying industry, but owing to there being no railway to truck cattle away, we are at the mercy of the butchers who come to Nanango to buy stock; with a line to Kilkivan it would pay the graziers and the small selectors to truck their stock to Maryborough or Brisbane; a good many cattle are now trucked from Kilkivan to Brisbane; I advocate the Kilkivan route because it is the cheapest to make and it would give us access to the best market.³⁸

From depositions such as these, there was clearly some powerful backing for the Kilkivan/Nanango line and the most powerful pastoralists in the region were strongly favouring such a decision. Yet over the following months the people of Nanango were forced to wait as the commission slowly weighed the possibilities. Those who were depending on the line — and that meant almost all the farmers in the district and a large percentage of the townspeople, were disheartened to learn in late August 1900 that according to press reports the government only intended to make decisions concerning two lines during that parliamentary session, one to the Tweed River and the other to Rockhampton. This news gave the people of Nanango, '... a very bad scare,' but the press reports were subsequently corrected in the House by the premier,

Robert Philp, who said that rather than making decisions on 'two' railways the government would decide upon a 'few' railways. A comment in the regional press later claimed: '... The knowledge that the report of the Railway Commission had still to be presented made some of us suspend judgement and keep our hair on; but others went into despair ... and talked of Government treachery, fooling the farmers, defrauding the new settlers by getting them to buy land under false pretences, and various other high crimes and misdemeanours.'³⁹

Extracts from the report of the Royal Commission were published in September 1900 and it was clear that the line from Kilkivan would be the selected route. The costs of the proposed routes were among the major deciding factors, these were as follows:

Starting point	Miles to construct	Price
Esk	62	£446,000
Kilkivan	72	£287,500
Caboolture	84	£556,600
Crow's Nest	70	£898,750 ⁴⁰

While the Kilkivan route was not the shortest, it was by far the least expensive, this was due to the terrain. The Esk route would have required a considerable amount of heavy work in crossing the Balfour Range, while the Caboolture and Crow's Nest routes also suffered from having to cross difficult country. In their report, the commissioners pointed out that they had early come to the conclusion that it would be unnecessary to take the rail right into the township of Nanango: '... which, in their opinion, is on land of no special fertility, having simply grown up at the meeting place of roads in the early days of settlement.'⁴¹ The commissioners claimed that the major portions of the rich agricultural lands in the Nanango district were the Coolabunia Scrub, covering some 100,000 acres to the north-west of Nanango for between twenty and thirty miles towards Kilkivan. Therefore it was claimed that it would be far more practical to extend the line into the Coolabunia Scrub, rather than Nanango, so that the farmers in that region, allegedly the highest producing region in the district, would have ready access to the rail system and their desired markets at Maryborough. This shorter line would cost somewhere in the region of £180,000.⁴² The final recommendation of the commissioners was to extend the line to the 56 mile peg, where Kingaroy, as a direct result of this decision, would later come into existence. In fact the commission's report did everything but point out that a new township at the 56 mile peg would become the capital of the South Burnett, being centrally located in the heart of that rich Coolabunia country. It must have been a particularly difficult blow for the people of Nanango. The press of the day claimed: '... It may be mentioned in passing that the recommendation of the Commissioners only to carry the line to the 56 mile peg, which will leave the terminus about fifteen miles from Nanango township, has come as a surprise to the citizens, and it has been a hard knock to many who have been making improvements and investing in land and buildings recently in anticipation of the line being brought almost to their front door step ... Now Nanango has been dropped out unless the Ministry decide otherwise in introducing the Bill for the line, and for a greater or lesser period the town will just have to jog along in the old way and hope for better days. It will stop the impending inrush of people, tradesmen, and mechanics for a time, no doubt, and the growth of Nanango will be slower than it has been.'⁴³

Speculators in the region moved quickly to secure real estate. A report of some sales in November 1900 claimed:

The sale of town allotments situated at Taabinga Village, which took place at the Nanango Land Office on Tuesday, was highly successful. Every lot found a purchaser, and the prices realised must be considered not merely good, but high, when everything is taken into account. The land is between two and three miles from the surveyed line for the railway, so that the villagers and others who speculated in these allotments must be credited with some enterprise, as, if a town is to grow up at the terminus (as many aver) it will be a rival to Taabinga; but if this does not happen, the village may develop considerably, seeing that it has the distinction of being the terminus.

I notice in the Parliamentary references to the extension from Kilkivan that it is described as a railway to Coolabunia; but this is rather a poetic stretch of official

imagination, as the 56 mile peg is not at Coolabunia at all, but at Kingaroy. To be of much use to the farmers of Coolabunia (in whose interest the line is specially claimed to have been projected), it should come another six or nine miles. I suppose, however, a trifle of ten miles (more or less) of a mistake in regard to the situation of Coolabunia, especially the portion of it most thickly settled, is not a subject of much concern to the Railway Commissioner, who in a moment of happy inspiration decided to call it the Coolabunia railway (while not extending it so far), as that would sound a lot better on paper than a line to Kingaroy. The Scrub men, I need hardly say, are a bit taken back at the proposed position of the terminus; but as they do not wish to raise any obstacle, and are anxious at all costs to have the line started, 'mum' is the word. The railway is so urgently required by the farmers that they are only too willing to take it by short and easy instalments — a mile or two at a time — rather than face the slow and costly method of sending their produce to market by road, as in the past. Although there seems to be no sense in the proposition of the Commissioner to stop the line before it touches Coolabunia, many of them will regard the odd six or ten miles they will have (to) cart as a minor affliction.⁴⁴

Approval for the line was eventually given in the Legislative Assembly on 21 November, 1900. The minister for railways, John Murray, gave a long speech in support of the extension. He said that he had travelled over the proposed route and that after the rail had gone through, the land, richly timbered and excellent for farming, would soon be thickly populated. His speech was followed by a long discussion with little very real opposition, and the plan was formally carried, the work to be completed by day labour rather than by contract.⁴⁵

The fact that the work was to be carried out by day labour created some problems for the township of Kilkivan. As soon as the news was released that the line was to be commenced, large numbers of men — many of them destitute — began arriving at Kilkivan hoping to obtain work. A report of March 1901 claimed: '... Numbers of men are arriving here daily from all parts of the colony in anticipation of the early commencement of the railway extension towards Nanango. Many of these are totally without ordinary means of subsistence and are already becoming a tax upon householders to whom they appeal for food.'⁴⁶

Over the following weeks the problem was to intensify, and the people of Kilkivan were far from happy with the way the building of the rail line was being conducted. One report claiming:

Matters in connection with the railway works at Kilkivan are in anything but a satisfactory condition. Men are arriving every day from all directions, whilst last week trains brought batches of 25 and 30 specially selected for the work, from Rockhampton and Gladstone. Judge of the surprise of these latter when there was no work for them, after receiving passes and travelling these distances on the distinct impression that they were to go to work the moment after arrival. To endeavour to cope with the difficulty the engineer in charge laid out a quantity of side gripping, and offered it at piece work at the rate of 4d. per cubic yard. A number of men accepted portions and started in to it at once, but at the price it was impossible for any one of them to earn a fair day's wage, so the price has now been raised to 7d., and even then it is very difficult to earn more than tucker. Other portions of the work are spoken of as intended to be offered as piece work. Now the first section of this extension was intended to be an experiment to see how day labour would come out as compared with contract, but if piece work is to be introduced, and that at starvation rates, the experiment as such is utterly valueless. Many men are leaving daily, while others are arriving in even greater numbers. Almost to a man every one of them is hard up, and the acting C.P.S. (clerk of petty sessions) is at present issuing orders for rations to many to help them tide over a few days; but this cannot continue, nor should it be so. There are about 100 men actually at work. The clearing gang has almost completed the first section of five miles, then room will have to be found for them at the earthworks, so there is no prospect of work for any more, or even for all of those now on the ground. This cannot be too widely notified, for men are tramping in here every day, only to meet disappointment when they make application for work ... So far the business-people have only had the pleasure of seeing their goods going out of their premises without receiving the value in cash in return, and as the first pay will not take place for another fortnight or so, this system of doing business will have to continue for that time. It is to be sincerely trusted that when pay day does come round the men will not forget those who have so liberally stood to them in their hour of need, but will see that the little store bill is first settled before they adjourn to the nearest hotel to make merry in the manner supposed to be so characteristic of the navy. Many of the men are very respectable fellows, who have left their families in other parts of the state, and are only too

anxious to knock up a few pounds to send home or bring the 'missus' and little ones over here; but, on the other hand, there are sure to be a few objectionable characters in such a gathering, and a couple, who have had the fortune to appear before the local magistrate, have found, to their cost, that those in authority intend to be very strict and severe upon any who may attempt to disturb the peaceful tenure hitherto enjoyed by this little community.⁴⁷

Kilkivan, at that time, resembled the old days of the gold rush era, tents, gunyahs, humpies, tip-trays, draught horses, barrows, swaggies — and a colourful clutter of humanity. One observer commented: 'They repose upon the roadway, the kerb-stones, they hang on the fences, they garnish the roots of the gum trees, they peep from high casements, they litter the hotel verandahs — and we noticed a plethoric specimen standing on end, in strapped and belted obesity like Dickens' fat boy against a decayed and rotten tree trunk ... (another) leaned at a similar angle upon the opposite side in unkempt and slovenly raggedness, his whole bearing being indicative of departed ambition and present hopelessness.'⁴⁸

In the South Burnett region, and more especially in the Coolabunia area, the change in attitude following the announcement of the impending rail project was palpable. Prior to the arrival of the rail, farmers could only plant and crop a small section of their properties knowing that to grow larger crops would be economically impractical. Twenty or thirty acres of maize or wheat was as much as any farmer could reasonably produce for the small market that was then available to him. Yet after the announcement of the impending rail line farmers were beginning to plant up to two hundred acres of their lands. The methodology of farming also changed almost overnight. Whereas prior to the coming of the rail it had not paid the farmers to use machinery to plant and harvest their crops, now, with larger crops being grown, the entire status of farm management changed almost immediately. The coming of the rail line also meant that farm machinery could be imported to the region with ease, and relatively inexpensively, and the larger crops would more than compensate for this extra outlay in mechanical aids. Confidence came to the region as it had never before existed. There were almost immediate plans for a cheese factory and farmers began to gear up for what they were sure would be a rapidly burgeoning dairy industry.⁴⁹

In the township of Nanango there was something of a land rush. The announcement of the decision to have the rail line completed to the area coincided with the opening of the town common which had recently been surveyed and made available for sale. Speculators moved quickly and there was: '... an eager demand for these blocks.' The portion opened up for homesteads was described as being of poor quality and: '... decidedly the worst of the land,' while the better scrub soil areas were classified as conditional and unconditional farms. There were murmurings of dissent, however, one observer remarking: '... It seems a farce, if not a cruelty, to compel persons in want of a homestead to put in five years' residence on ... sandy soil which is practically fit for nothing but a grass paddock, while land that would support the bona fide homesteader is reserved for the speculator and land shark.' The total area taken up that week at the Lands Court was over 23,000 acres, including one large grazing farm, the proceeds going, of course, to the Queensland Treasury.⁵⁰

Work on the line from Kilkivan could not continue until a final survey had been carried out, this work was also completed by Surveyor O.L. Amos, however, Amos and his party experienced some difficulties — including a severe lack of water which, after completing the survey for forty miles from Kilkivan, forced them to move their semi-permanent camp thus causing a considerable delay.⁵¹ By December that year Amos and his men were camped at the Lakes, Wooroolin, with only ten or twelve miles remaining to survey.⁵²

At Kilkivan the line was progressing only very slowly and there were many instances of complaint — especially from the people of Nanango. One resident claimed that men were being: '... put on and knocked off, and things are kept dilly-dallying for no apparent reason.' There was a fear that the line would take a further three or four years to complete to the 56 mile peg and some contended that it would not reach Nanango until the middle of the century.⁵³ The reason for the delay was undoubtedly the government's decision to use day labour rather than contractors. The day labour system, while comparatively inexpensive, was open to abuse and confusion, and could possibly have resulted in poor workmanship. At a meeting of the Nanango Railway Association held at the Oddfellows' Hall Nanango on the afternoon of 13 February, 1902, a petition

was drawn up addressed to the secretary for railways, Brisbane, requesting that the day labour system be dispensed with and that tenders be called for the completion of the line. The petitioners claimed that the delays were causing hardship among the South Burnett community and while waiting for the line to come through valuable resources, such as timber, were being daily destroyed.⁵⁴

By June 1902 the line was progressing steadily, despite the early fears of considerable delay. That month a traveller wrote a brief but interesting description of the workers' camp, claiming: '... we camped for one night at that point on the Kilkivan-Nanango extension known as the 44 Mile Lagoons and found a ... calico and iron little township boasting of three stores and (as rumour hath it) a ginger-wine mill.'⁵⁵

At this time too there was considerable concern that with limited government funds the construction of the line may have been delayed. The bridge across Barambah Creek was a relatively expensive one, for a branch line, and many believed that the line would be taken to that point and not beyond. However, this was not to be the case, the government continued with its expenditure, the line was being pushed ahead vigorously and by the end of April 1903 it had been completed to Barambah Creek and the bridge was finished. At that time too the mining industry in the Nanango region was experiencing an upturn, of sorts, with the Golden King battery being brought into operation and many believed that Nanango was on the verge of a new golden prosperity. This being the case, some residents were of the opinion that the line should not be terminated at the 56 mile peg but should go directly onto Nanango so that gold-bearing ore from numerous mines could be trucked for treatment to places such as Gympie.⁵⁶

With the early expected arrival of the rail some timber-getters had already started cutting and carting logs to the location of the proposed railhead. A press report of April 1903 claimed: 'Mr Fred Birch and his family have already started. This family are the champion carriers of the district. When they start they mean business. It is expected that by next August the line will be open to the Mondure road. It is stated by some who ought to know that there will be teams by the score hauling timber to the railway. The question will then arise, will the demand be equal to the supply? Maryborough had better be on the alert or the town might get buried under a heap of huge pine logs sent down from this district.'⁵⁷

The movement to have the line extended to Nanango was daily growing stronger, but it was a contentious issue. At a 'monster' meeting held in Nanango in June 1903 to discuss the possibility of having a trial survey made with the object of extending the line to Nanango via Boobie, crowds of people voiced their opinion and several times the meeting, '... almost got beyond control.'⁵⁸

Evidently feelings on the issue were running hot. It was an acrimonious meeting filled with heated words and bitter interjections. At the conclusion of the debate the crowd was so rowdy that one of the speakers, Ezra Horne from Coolabunia, upon attempting to address the people, could not get a hearing and so the meeting was terminated.⁵⁹ By the following month a petition signed by some three hundred residents of the Nanango region was ready to be presented to the minister for railways. A deputation from the Boobie Deviation Railway League, carrying the petition, left Nanango on Wednesday 15 July, 1903.⁶⁰

By June the following year the saga was nearing completion, excellent progress was being made towards the 56 mile peg where, even at that stage, a small township was beginning to 'spring up.'⁶¹

In November that year, following a series of meetings of the Nanango Railway League, at both Nanango and Maryborough, a deputation consisting of James Millis, chairman of the Nanango branch of the league, W. Hamilton, president of the Nanango Agricultural, Pastoral and Mining Society, James Fairlie, president of the Maryborough branch of the Nanango Railway League, P.J. Macnamara, the founder of the *Nanango News*, William Kent, the member for the Burnett, Peter Murphy, M.L.C. and several others waited on the minister for railways, Arthur Morgan, in order to press for the extension of the line from the 56 mile peg to the township of Nanango. Millis informed Morgan that due to the success of the day labour system the cost of the line had been less expensive than the figure voted by parliament, therefore the money left over should be used to continue the line in the direction of Nanango until that money was exhausted. He said it was imperative that such a decision be made before the railway gangs were broken up and sent elsewhere. He added that unemployment in the region was at high levels and the extra work

would help to stimulate the local economy. However, Morgan was obdurate, he stated that there were many other considerations, including the construction of lines to other areas, and that all available money was needed for those lines.⁶²

If the rail line to Kilkivan could be described as the umbilical cord of the South Burnett — giving birth, as it did to that fledgling area of the colony — then the extension of that line to the 56 mile peg was the artery of life, passing through some of the most promisingly productive regions in the district where communities never before envisaged, townships such as Goomeri, Murgon, Wondai and Kingaroy would come to life following the enormous prosperity that rail line would bring.

The official opening of the line to Kingaroy took place at the tiny ramshackle village that was then Kingaroy on Monday 19 December, 1904, the official opening ceremony being performed by Alfred James Jones, M.L.A., the recently elected (August) member for the Burnett. Compared to the opening of the rail line to Kilkivan, some eighteen years previously, the opening at Kingaroy was a modest affair, primarily due to the fact that it was held on a weekday so close to Christmas when the people of Maryborough, who had campaigned long and hard to have the line, and many of the people of Nanango, were busy conducting their Christmas business and could not get away to witness or participate in the celebrations. A delegation of Maryborough people had wanted to attend, but the cost of using a special excursion train was prohibitive and the normal train schedule was not convenient. However, one Brisbane journalist wrote: 'An event of the greatest importance to a vast area of valuable territory took place on Monday, when the extension of Kilkivan branch railway from Wondai to Kingaroy was officially opened for traffic. Wide interest was excited amongst settlers and intending settlers at Mondure, Home Creek, Barambah, Wooroolin, and right through to Kingaroy, Taabinga, and the famous Coolabunia Scrub, and on to Nanango township. Kingaroy, being the site of the new terminus, was the centre of attention. A public holiday was proclaimed.'⁶³

It had rained heavily the day before and the poor condition of the roads prevented many people from attending the ceremony. Even so, the programme included a 'monster picnic and banquet', during which the Lower Burnett Brass Band played enthusiastically, followed by a land sale of Kingaroy township blocks that afternoon. The approaches to the station had been decorated with an arch which bore the inscription: 'Welcome to the Railway, and Prosperity,' and, 'We Rejoice.' The banquet was held in a marquee that had been erected on the selection of early selector Dan Carroll. James Millis, chairman of the Nanango Shire Council and many others gave eloquent speeches.⁶⁴

Within six months of the line being opened to Kingaroy the people of the district were beginning to feel that it should be extended to service the rapidly expanding population of Taabinga, Barker Creek and Tarong. A well attended meeting was held at Meehan's Hotel, Taabinga in May 1905, the object of which was to form a railway league to advocate such an extension, and a petition was later forwarded to the minister for railways.⁶⁵ However, there were detractors, some claiming that as it was only two miles or so from the terminus to Taabinga Village it would be a complete waste of time and money, the farmers could easily transport their goods from the Taabinga region to the terminus. The objectors also claimed that as the lease for half of the *Taabinga* station holding had just been extended for a further ten years — effectively preventing closer settlement on that portion of land — then it was a complete waste of time to extend the line when the best of the land could not be taken up. Kingaroy paddock, the site of present day Kingaroy, was, of course, a part of the original *Taabinga* run, and so objectors to the rail plan claimed that there was no need for any further extension. The best lands in the Tarong region had already been taken up, those lots with water frontages, and so with only scrub country left it was unlikely that the rail would induce further settlement on land that was, essentially, of far less commercial value or use.⁶⁶

It is difficult to know why the Railways Department did not, at that time, extend the line, at least to Taabinga, rather than simply terminating it at a place where there was no substantial settlement, indeed where there was virtually nothing prior to the line being put through. Taabinga at that time was only a village, but it and the surrounding countryside were relatively prosperous regions and the likelihood of those regions becoming more prosperous was quite considerable. The *Daily Mail* in Brisbane echoed these sentiments in August 1905, adding: 'However, Kingaroy was made the terminus and it is now inflated by the results. Quite a number of new buildings have been erected during the past few months, not makeshift premises but substantial structures which would not discredit a much older township.'⁶⁷



Kingaroy railway station, erected in 1904. The first station master was Mr Hooper, who, in the town's early days, also acted as postmaster. The building at extreme left (in King Street), was a boarding house, conducted by Mrs Harwood.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

Meanwhile, in Nanango, there was considerable debate over the question of extending the line into that town, some believed that it was vital to the town's future prosperity, while others were convinced that once the line was completed from Kingaroy to Nanango, much of the town's business would be lost to the quickly burgeoning township at the terminus. Indeed, the press reports of the day were far from comforting in this respect, claiming: '... Kingaroy is a lively centre at present. The buildings are springing up like mushrooms. This is the leading business place in the district. A bank is badly wanted in Kingaroy.'⁶⁸

Without doubt a boom was taking place on the South Burnett. At the end of July 1905 a report claimed:

Since the railway has reached this district it is wonderful the alteration that has taken place. It is only a short time back when (3) three hotels supplied the thirsty part of the population; now it takes (14) fourteen and several applications are being made to put up some more hotels. All the places along the line from Wondai up to Taabinga are flourishing. Nanango township is very quiet; not anything like the busy little town it was some short time back. Kingaroy has taken the lead and is doing more business than any other place in the district ... Anyone requiring farm land, now is their time to come into the district as there are a large number of agricultural farms for sale cheap. Some of the selectors are holding three and four farms which they took up several years ago at a low purchasing price. They are now glad to sell at a low rate a part of their holdings for cash, to enable them to put permanent improvements on the selection on which they reside.⁶⁹

By October a surveyor was carrying out a trial survey of the proposed route from Kingaroy to Nanango so that details of costings could be presented to state parliament, and an engineer was also carrying out investigations regarding the proposed extension through Taabinga and Tarong, although this was not, evidently, an official survey.⁷⁰ Meanwhile there were numerous opponents of the line having been terminated at Kingaroy, some of whom claimed that the decision to do so showed remarkably poor judgement on behalf of the government. One such detractor wrote:

The incongruity of putting the town of Kingaroy in the black mud hole — hardly deserving the name of site — which it occupies, while the ideal one of Taabinga Village exists but 3 miles further on, is one of the first things which must strike the most casual visitor to this country ... Well, if the whole thing be not a bit of political jobbery — and it looks very like it, why not shift Kingaroy, which has as yet not assumed great proportions — on to the

beautiful site ready and waiting at Taabinga Village, and carry on the line over 3 miles of country as level as a book? There were between 70 and 80 allotments sold in the township and about eleven remained for sale by the government. Between 300 and 400 acres of Crown lands pertain to the town, which could have been utilized without money and without price, and which are still in reserve. In addition there are 5½ acres of a recreation reserve and 10 acres for cemetery purposes. Everything desirable as the nucleus of a township was ready and waiting as they still are. In the face of these advantages the government, with a display of asinine stupidity, only explicable on the unworthy grounds of individual influence and corruption generally turn their back on slaughtered Taabinga Village and pay big prices to private individuals for the deplorable site at Kingaroy. Probably on the entire route from Kilkivan there could not have been chosen a worse (site) and the very Chinamen as they pass ask why it is so. We pretty confidently forecast that by the mere force of obvious expediency the line will yet be carried on, and thus some of the criminal bunglers may be hoist with their own petard, but all too late to return to a violated Treasury the squandered money of the Queensland tax-payer. Notwithstanding the further criminal bungle of extending the *Tarong* lease for 10 years, the extension of the Kingaroy line is still justifiable in view of the splendid agricultural lands — both scrub and forest — which are available on either hand of the 21 miles of route which the line would take via Taabinga Village.⁷¹

Despite the enormous benefits the rail brought to the South Burnett there were, occasionally, complaints regarding the, at times, trying and inhospitable conditions of rail travel. Noted journalist *Justitia*, who, as we have seen, had always confessed a profound dislike for anyone other than of British stock, wrote in September 1906 that he took offence to travelling with: '... Hindoos (sic), Chinamen or kanakas.' *Justitia* added: 'We have always considered it a scandalous shame that white women of straightened means should be obliged to travel cheek by jowl with such human rubbish, and the people show but little self respect by tamely putting up with it. Why not a separate truck for such cattle — well behind the dog box? Then look at the state of the second-class carriages on the Kingaroy line where there is a large population to be served. We, some time ago, during very cold weather, got into a second class carriage attached to the 5 a.m. train from Kingaroy. The floor was littered over with orange peel, newspaper and mud of all shades and consistencies, the whole being thoroughly but disgustingly lubricated by the copious excretions of former occupants.'⁷²

Over the following years the debate concerning the line extensions continued. In late May 1908 the minister for railways, George Kerr, paid a visit to the Nanango region and was waited upon by two delegations, one advocating an extension through Taabinga and the other to Nanango. Kerr made no promises on either count, only stating that he would present the Taabinga option to parliament and would visit Nanango at a later stage to make a closer judgement.⁷³

Yet pressure from the people of Nanango was finally successful and the first sod of the rail link from Kingaroy to Nanango was turned on Friday 10 June, 1910.⁷⁴

The turning of the first sod of the Kingaroy to Nanango line was something of a gala event, a special train carrying the then minister for railways, Walter Trueman Paget, and his entourage, arrived at Wondai on the morning of 10 June, 1910. They were met by the chairman of the Nanango Shire Council, James Darley and enjoyed a large breakfast before going on to Kingaroy where another large breakfast had been prepared for them. The press claimed: 'The turning of the first sod of the Kingaroy-Nanango railway took place at noon. Punctually at 12 o'clock, Mr Paget took off his coat and with his wheelbarrow, pick, and shovel proceeded to the spot where the work was to be done. Many were inclined to offer advice but all soon recognised that the work was in dexterous hands and was quickly and neatly accomplished. The minister was afterwards presented with a neat silver-mounted model of a wheelbarrow ... On receiving the presentation the minister thanked the givers for the token which he said he would preserve in memory of this pleasant function ... Shortly after the ceremony of turning the first sod had been completed the invited guests of the chairman of the Nanango Shire Council sat down to an excellent luncheon to which the bracing air enabled them to do full justice.'⁷⁵

It was quite evident by this time that such an extension, in fact many further extensions, were urgently required to cater for the huge increases in productivity then being experienced right throughout the South Burnett and indeed in Queensland. During the previous fifty years the

population of Queensland had increased from approximately 28,000 to around 600,000 and during the course of the next fifty years an even greater increase was anticipated. Exports from Queensland at that time were in the vicinity of £4 million per year, the largest export figure, *per capita*, of any country in the world. Immigrants from overseas were still flooding into the state and the demand for land was huge. At the *Burrandowan* land sales that had taken place only a week or so prior to the turning of the first sod on the Nanango line, there had been 922 applications for just 138 portions of land, the deposits generated from that sale alone had netted the state government £35,000. In order to meet this growing thirst for selections, the government had sent further notices of resumption to the owners of *Tarong* and *Taabinga* and surveyors were even at that moment working on *Boondooma* station. An example of the huge railways construction programme in Queensland may be seen from the comparisons of rail constructions in other states at that time. According to W.T. Paget, the minister for railways, in six years Queensland had constructed 670 miles of railways, Tasmania had constructed just one mile, New South Wales 441 miles, Victoria 79 miles and South Australia 151 miles. Clearly Queensland was leading the way in opening up the interior to agrarian expansion.⁷⁶

Work on the line to Nanango progressed quickly, a report dated July 1910 claiming: 'The railway extension to Nanango has become an accomplished fact. Clearing has been done for about five miles and the turning of the second sod about one mile from Kingaroy. Notices have been served on owners of property at home, on top of a dray load of produce or in the street. Stations are to be at Edenvale ... and at Coolabunia. Dynamite seems to be the main factor in shifting stumps, and enough is used on one stump to shift 1000 tons of rock. The main (construction) camp and office is about one mile from town (Kingaroy), and judging by the tent-shaped cottages a stay will be made here for some time.'⁷⁷

Another extension local people were lobbying for at that time was a branch line from Wondai to the newly developing area of Proston, an area rich in natural pine and cedar forests. Yet there was an element of caution. Over the previous years, since the arrival of the rail at Kingaroy, so many trees had been felled and sent to the mills at Maryborough that the people were becoming concerned over the issue. The *Kingaroy Herald* claimed in July 1910:

These (proposed extensions from Nanango to Blackbutt) have a priority claim (over Proston) by reason of spreading the greatest benefit to the greatest number, but following close upon their heels is the claim of the extension now being urged for a line out from Wondai to serve the big settlement recently completed on the Proston areas. Such a line has great things to recommend it, for the first 20 miles will be but the first section into a vast area of what is known to be first class scrub and forest country, identical in character with the areas which have made the South Burnett famous. The opening up of such a territory means increase of settlement and production in the section of the State where it will be of the most practical benefit, because of contiguity, to marketing facilities. It is said too that there are large quantities of timber offering attractive freights, but in this matter we certainly think it is time the people of the South Burnett insisted on the embargo being placed on the wholesale marketing of timber from what scrubs remain to us. The encouragement of settlement and the support of secondary industries is to be commended and stimulated, but not at the sacrifice of a great natural advantage. If there are great pine scrubs in the Wondai-Proston area, the people of the South Burnett should insist on adequate reservations being made, so that a system of afforestation could be established to operate for all time to provide timber for not only the needs of the locality, but a surplus for other parts of the State.⁷⁸

In the years that followed, while the link from Kingaroy to Nanango was being completed, the rail extensions continued to expand. In May 1911 the relatively new premier, Digby Frank Denham, visited Wondai and received a deputation from the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce. One of the delegates of that deputation was Archibald Blue, editor of the *Kingaroy Herald*, who was to be killed at Kingaroy just a few years later. Blue asked the premier when the people of Kingaroy could expect an extension of the line from Kingaroy to Tarong. However, Denham claimed that the issue was a complex one, he said that the extension to Nanango, which had yet to be officially opened, had been a mistake, and a costly one, and that the extension should have been put through from Yarraman Creek to Kingaroy, as the Nanango line did little, if anything to serve the people living in the Tarong region.⁷⁹



Arrival of the first train at Nanango.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.



Opening of the Nanango railway.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

The first train to travel from Kingaroy to Nanango arrived at Nanango on 13 November, 1911, although the official opening of the Kingaroy to Nanango line did not take place until a week later on 20 November, 1911 — almost a year and a half after the first sod had been turned at Kingaroy. The line was opened by the minister for railways, Walter Trueman Paget, who also received a

deputation from Kingaroy, led by Archibald Blue, expressing disappointment that the Tarong line had not received official sanction. The minister stated that the land around Tarong was excellent country, that it should be properly serviced and that the people of Kingaroy should leave it to him, at which the deputation was apparently satisfied. After officially opening the line, and with a band playing enthusiastically, the minister then drove an engine through an arch of flags and greenery bearing the inscription: 'Advance Nanango.' The driver of that first train was Mr W. Bennet, his guard was Mr D. Galway. For the minister, however, there was to be no respite from the lobbying for further rail services. As soon as he stepped down from the train he was presented with a petition, signed by around two hundred Nanango residents, requesting that the line now be completed to Yarraman Creek, thus linking Nanango with the Esk route to Brisbane. Members of the delegation claimed that the market at Maryborough was too restrictive, too prone to becoming glutted with goods which, in turn, forced prices down, and that the opening up of a route to Brisbane would obviate these problems.⁸⁰

There was now also intense speculation that the line should be extended to Yarraman to meet the line coming up through the Brisbane Valley route from Esk, Linville, Benarkin and Blackbutt. The eventual completion of that line would bring the markets of Brisbane closer to the producers of the Blackbutt area and would be especially beneficial to the many sawmills operating in the Blackbutt, Yarraman and Benarkin regions. Extending that line through to Nanango would, Nanango residents claimed, make more readily available the Brisbane markets for a variety of products, including Nanango timber. The line through Benarkin and Blackbutt to Yarraman was completed in 1913 but the much vaunted extension from Nanango to Yarraman was never completed, despite a Royal Commission and years of public agitation.⁸¹

The policy of building rail systems was, of course, not only a method of opening up the lands to closer settlement, but also a financial investment by the government. Rail charges were cheaper than those applied by the old bullock teams, and the passage of freight was certainly faster. Yet passenger charges were not inexpensive. In 1911 it cost 19/11d for a first class single fare from Maryborough to Coolabunia.⁸² Second class carriages were around forty per cent cheaper but there were problems in travelling in this way. One passenger claimed in April 1913:

There was but one second class carriage attached, which was apparently constructed to accommodate about 20 passengers. As the train proceeded, passengers kept dropping in at every station and siding en-route until eventually the congestion assumed such proportions that, while the comparison of sardines in a tin might more or less adequately describe the state of things ... 'pigs in a pen' would be the more appropriate expression, when the crush, the cram, and the reek and odour of tightly packed and sweltering humanity was taken into account. There were men, women, and children, and suckling infants in that one crowded carriage. When standing room became insufficient on the end platform, men perched upon the rail until there remained not so much as perching room for a barn-door rooster. At this stage a weak-looking man entered, and after casting one hopeless look around he in sheer exhaustion collapsed upon the dirty carriage floor, and leaned his back against the door of the lavatory. At one stage of this endless journey there were no less than 32 adults and sixteen children on (we don't say 'in') this awful second class carriage run on the first day of Easter excursions from Kingaroy. Four men placed some baggage in the centre of the gangway and played a noisy and endless game of cards. Women who frequently wished to take their children to the lavatory had to 'beg pardon' on all sides and drag themselves and their progeny across this barricade on each occasion and draw general attention upon themselves. And when the lavatory door was even partially opened — oh, well! it had been better that all and sundry had been born with the olfactory department completely omitted. Needless to say, that to vacate one's seat for one moment was to lose it, and hence the following position, which was the writer's unhappy lot throughout the long, hot, and tortuous day. As bad fortune had it, we sat with our back to the sun, and we soon made the discovery that by no amount of coaxing would the window-grid stay up. Our next neighbour suffered nearly as much from a similar cause. We wedged it up with a folded newspaper. The window forced it down, and jumped up and down upon it in derision ... Eventually we gave the thing best and allowed the blazing sun to beat upon the back of our unprotected cranium, and the result was a ten days' headache.

Just so long as the travelling public do not complain, nor call attention to these things, just as long will they be treated as animals, but they must be full-paying animals. There were full-payers on that train who stood the entire journey, and there were others who sat upon the back iron, at the imminent risk of being knocked off by one of the violent jars which are by no means unknown.⁸³

What was almost certainly the first serious accident on the South Burnett rail system occurred in August 1913 when the axles of two wagons broke, derailing the train at the Barambah Creek bridge. According to a report written by a press correspondent at Murgon, the accident occurred on the Wondai side of the bridge to a train travelling from Kingaroy. The guard on the train was J.E. Baker and the driver was T. Costello who was aided by a fireman named Campbell. The train was apparently travelling at a moderate pace and rounding a curve approaching the bridge when the guard noticed that one of the trucks was derailed. He immediately applied the brakes but the momentum of the train carried it onto the bridge. Three loaded wagons telescoped and toppled over the side of the bridge and for a while it looked as though the consequences could have been serious. There were several passengers aboard the train, however, all escaped without injury. The crew of the train was later commended for the way in which they had coolly handled the emergency; had the axles broken a minute earlier, the train would have been thrown over the bridge into the bed of the creek and the consequences could have been far more severe — especially in terms of loss of life or injury. In addition to the wrecking of the three wagons the railway lines were considerably damaged, the sleepers being torn up and the rails badly twisted. The press claimed: 'The smash is the most serious that has occurred on this branch and it caused a great sensation locally.' Large numbers of people soon flocked to the scene of the accident, most coming from nearby Murgon.⁸⁴

The accident was the talk of the South Burnett for several weeks, until other events overshadowed it. At that time there was growing agitation for a new line from Goomeri to Proston, and with a large reserve of pine to be harvested in the Proston region it was believed that such a line would quickly pay for itself. A meeting was held at Boonara on 4 September, 1913, to plan for the impending visit of the minister for railways who was to inspect the region before considering placing the proposal before parliament. At that meeting W.B. Lawless of *Boobyjan* was appointed representative of the Goomeri/Proston Railway League, and would present a petition to the minister.⁸⁵

In November 1913 there was a rather tragic occurrence concerning a train carrying timber from Kingaroy to Maryborough. According to a subsequent magisterial enquiry, held firstly at Kilkivan and later at Maryborough, a man named George Bell (also reported as George Hilton) was killed after the train struck him not far from Theebine on the Nanango line.

Edward James Ambrose, a fireman of the Railways Department at Maryborough, gave evidence at the enquiry. He claimed that at about 6 a.m. on 18th October that year he was about 5 miles from Theebine on the Nanango line, firing on the engine of the train. The driver's name was William Luchterhand and the guard was James Murphy. At the scene of the incident there was a curve in the line with an embankment on one side, about three feet high. Ambrose told the enquiry: 'I saw a man some 40 or 50 yards ahead on the middle of the line. I told the driver, who blew the whistle. The man walked off the line, on to my side, but walked back again to the driver's side of the line. The train still kept going, and soon after the driver put the brake on and stopped the train about 20 yards from where the train was when I last saw the man. The driver signalled the guard, who came up on the train stopping. I got down off the engine and saw the man underneath the tender of the engine, between the rails. The wheels of the engine and the front wheels of the tender had gone over him. One leg was severed from the body above the knee, and the other leg just hanging on by a piece of skin. There was an injury at the back of the head, probably caused by the cow-catcher. The man, who was thus cut about was the man I had seen previously on the middle of the line. He was groaning, but never spoke. The engine had to be eased back to get him from beneath. We covered the body and the severed leg with a tarpaulin, placed them in the van, and proceeded to Miva, where Constable Tobin, of Kilkivan, boarded the train, and took charge of the body. I do not know if the man was alive or dead.'

The train carried on to Maryborough, arriving there about 9.30 in the morning. William Luchterhand, the engine driver, claimed: 'When I was within a few yards of the man he turned with his back to the rails, partly got down on his haunches, and threw himself backward across the rails with his head towards the fireman's side. It gave me the impression of a deliberate case of suicide. When I saw the man throw himself over the rails in front of my engine, I applied all the power at my disposal to stop the train, pulling it up within 20 yards; but in the meantime the engine and part of the tender had run over the man.'

Michael Brosnan, senior-sergeant of police, gave evidence which supported the theory that the man had: '... committed suicide while temporarily insane, which was apparently brought on by the excessive use of alcohol.' The enquiry closed with this verdict.⁸⁶

In December that year a fresh deputation met with the railways minister, Walter Trueman Paget, requesting that the workmen who had recently completed the rail line to Mundubbera should be transferred to Kingaroy so that the Tarong extension could be started. By this time the rail line had been approved, it had been tabled in parliament on 30 April, 1911, and had passed parliament on 12 December that year.⁸⁷ Delegates told Paget that the rail was badly needed, some farmers had to travel distances of up to thirty miles to get to the rail head, and as there was a serious drought at the time, the arrival of a rail extension could have meant the saving of a considerable number of stock. Fodder could be brought to the farms and stock could be more easily transported. Paget, however, told the deputation that he could do nothing until the Treasury had allocated funds for such a rail project.⁸⁸ Despite this somewhat frosty response to their requests, by February the following year (1914) news came that work on the line was soon to be commenced. The residents, more especially the business-people of Taabinga Village, were disappointed that the engineers' and workers' camp was to be situated in Kingaroy rather than at the village, as the establishment of the camp at the village would have dramatically increased trade there.⁸⁹

The first sod on the line was turned in March 1914 by the minister for railways, Walter Trueman Paget, the press recording: '... Mr Paget, in workmanlike manner, picked up the earth and filling the barrow, wheeled it along a plank and emptied the load amidst great cheering.' Paget was later presented with a miniature silver pick, 'suitably inscribed' to mark the occasion. Following the official ceremony, Paget, accompanied by a small parliamentary party and some local dignitaries, enjoyed a banquet in a marquee that had been erected at the scene. Large crowds of people were picknicking nearby. After the luncheon and inevitable speeches, Paget received two deputations, one requesting that a grain shed be constructed at Kingaroy station and another asking for an early link with the Brisbane line.⁹⁰

As with all other line constructions, the news that a line was being built brought more workers to that particular area. One man who came to the South Burnett to obtain work on the Tarong line was Joseph McGinley. McGinley arrived at Kingaroy with a horse and dray in late April 1914, he was twenty-six years of age. He saw the railway work's overseer and was employed as a labourer on the line. While making arrangements to start on the following Monday, McGinley found a dead horse in a waterhole. He entered the water intending to tie a rope around the dead animal's head and then drag it out. However, after being some time in the water, passers-by noticed that he made a desperate attempt to scramble to the bank of the waterhole. He stumbled and sank and did not reappear. The alarm was raised and a number of railway men ran to the scene, yet they could do very little and it was two hours before McGinley's body was recovered. Efforts made at resuscitation proved futile. McGinley's family was contacted and his father and brother travelled by train from Greenmount to Kingaroy. McGinley's body was subsequently buried at the Taabinga cemetery.⁹¹

The contentious issue of a link to the Brisbane market was now growing into a considerable debate. Some argued that there was a question of integrity, the rail line to the 56 mile peg had been established with the aid of the people of Maryborough who had formed themselves into committees and leagues and had strongly advocated the construction of the line, therefore the people of the South Burnett owed their allegiance to the port of Maryborough. However, Maryborough at that time was stagnating, larger vessels capable of carrying enormous cargoes, had outstripped Maryborough's limited port facilities, the river was too shallow for these newer vessels to navigate. An investigation of the river's potential had been carried out and had found that to dredge the river to a suitable depth, and to straighten many of its sharp bends would be a vastly costly exercise. Brisbane, on the other hand, where the river was regularly being dredged, was still capable of accepting these new and larger vessels, vessels that would allow overseas markets to come within reach of the South Burnett. This was now especially important, the dairy industry was growing strongly with a large market in London, and refrigerated meats to overseas markets, especially England, were seen as having enormous potential for regional capital growth. In order to capture some of this trade, the people of Maryborough were in the process of constructing a pier at Urangan, Port Maryborough as it was to become known, so that shipping could take on such cargoes, not only from the South Burnett, but also to export many other

commodities from the Wide Bay, especially sugar and coal. Yet, as we now know, the construction of this pier was never to prove the boon to the Wide Bay and Burnett as had once been believed. The port was opened on Saturday 3 March, 1917, and a few ships certainly visited the pier, but for years it languished without even a ship visiting the facility. Clearly, the opening up of a rail line to the port of Brisbane was going to serve the people of the South Burnett far better than transporting goods to the largely unused pier that became known as Corser's Folly, a reminder that it was the brain-child of E.B.C. Corser, then M.L.A. for Maryborough, who had been championing its cause since about 1910.⁹²



Opening of Tarong station.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society

Meanwhile, work on the Kingaroy to Tarong line progressed swiftly. By 12 April, 1915, the rails had been laid to Taabinga and it was (incorrectly) forecast that by July that year the line would be completed to Tarong.⁹³ A few days later a press report written at Taabinga claimed: 'The arrival of a number of men on the railway construction has put a little life into our usually drowsy township. Plate laying is being rapidly proceeded with. A few mornings ago villagers were startled by the appearance of the iron horse, which celebrated its first appearance here by blowing off steam to the mingled delight and consternation of those juveniles to whom the locomotive is a *rara avis*.'⁹⁴

The line was officially opened to Tarong by the minister for railways, John Adamson, on 1 February, 1916, although it appears that trains must have been running to the terminus from 15 December, 1915. According to a letter written by the deputy commissioner for Queensland Railways, dated 18 March, 1982, the terminus was opened for traffic on 15 December, 1915.⁹⁵ However, according to the *Maryborough Chronicle* of 2 February, 1916, the line had been officially opened the previous day, ie. 1 February, 1916. A special train of eleven carriages left Kingaroy that morning, picking up passengers along the way, so that by the time the train arrived at Tarong the carriages were severely over-crowded. The driver of that train was E.J. Kelly, of Gympie, his fireman was J. Jamieson and Mr C. Cowley was the train's guard. The ceremony of cutting the ribbon was then performed, Councillor John King of Nanango Shire Council and Councillor Ernest Lord of Esk, holding each end of the red, white and blue ribbon. With the Kingaroy band playing the national anthem, John Adamson then climbed onto the engine platform and the train was driven forward until the ribbon was broken. Scores of people rushed forward to cut souvenir pieces from the ribbon. Adamson then addressed the large crowd that had gathered to witness the event. Afterwards the train was driven a few miles back to the Brooklands siding where, amidst a large number of people, '... a successful basket picnic was held.' The press claimed that the hillsides around the siding were: '... dotted with innumerable picnic parties,' although the official party enjoyed a lavish luncheon in the shade of a marquee.⁹⁶



John Adamson.

Source — Labor Government of Queensland Brisbane 1915, Page 37
John Oxley Library print number 125340

Meanwhile, the decision to link Murgon and Proston by rail had been made by the state government and the first sod on the line was turned by the minister for railways, John Adamson, in January 1916. The official party arrived by train and were taken in a motorcade around some of the rich farming regions of the district. Returning to Murgon, the ceremony then took place. The press reporting:

The site of the ceremony of turning the first sod was situated a few hundred yards from the town of Murgon. Bunting was displayed from trees in the locality and the large attendance of the public, many of whom had travelled long distances despite the intense heat, created quite an animated scene. Councillor P. Pearson, in introducing the Minister for Railways, said, as he (Adamson) was aware, this railway was promised to the English settlers at Proston some years ago, but owing to financial and other considerations the Government of the day was not in a position to proceed with the line. The matter, however, was not lost sight of, and some two years ago a trial survey was made with the result that it was decided that the line should be commenced at Murgon, and proceed to Proston, and that a branch line should be built to Winderera. Unfortunately, however, the construction of the line was now being interfered with by reason of the war, and they all knew that the calamitous conditions that prevailed at the present time necessitated the Government postponing at least practically all public works. They only hoped that the war would shortly end in a complete victory for the Allies and as soon as conditions became normal he felt sure that the railway would be one of the first to be built.⁹⁷

Without doubt this small branch line was to be one of the most difficult lines ever to be constructed in the South Burnett. It came at a time when the country was locked in a foreign war, man-power shortages were a constant problem as was the shortage of materials, especially steel.

Meanwhile, the considerable debate concerning the extension of the line to open up the Brisbane markets was continuing. Now that the line had been completed to Tarong, some South

Burnett residents believed that a link from Tarong to Yarraman would be the best route, while the people of Nanango were pressing for a link from Nanango to Yarraman. The question became the subject of a Royal Commission which delivered its findings in July 1917. The report claimed that a thorough inspection of the country in the vicinity of Yarraman, Nanango and Tarong had been carried out, sixty-four witnesses had given evidence on oath, and the commission finally recommended that the best method of linking up the South Burnett rail system with the Brisbane Valley was to construct a line between Nanango and Yarraman — a rail distance of approximately seventeen miles. One of the primary reasons for this decision was the fact that in the history of railways construction in the South Burnett, the system had resulted in lines ending only in small rural termini.⁹⁸

By 1920 railway construction had stagnated somewhat. A synopsis of the year's achievements published in December 1920 gave a desultory outlook, claiming that the year had been the poorest since railway construction had first commenced in the state. Many lines were simply waiting financial approval — which seemed a long time in coming — and the much maligned Murgon to Proston line was still in its embryonic stage, reportedly due to a lack of steel, and had not gone beyond a few crumbling earthworks.⁹⁹

The settlers of the Proston district were bitter that the government had abandoned them. As we shall see later in this history, many had come to Proston from Britain to subsequently take up selections with the promise that if they settled the lands of the Proston region their labour would be well rewarded with the provision of a new rail system to take their produce to market. A report of 1921 claimed: '... These men (and women) have proved themselves a fine class of settler and have brought a large area of the splendid Proston scrub lands under cultivation and dairying, thereby carrying out to the letter their part of the (contract). But they have looked in vain to the government during all these years to carry out its part by constructing the promised railway.'¹⁰⁰

As we have seen, parliamentary sanction for the line had long been approved and the first sod for the work had been turned in January 1916 — five years previously. Since that time embankments, cuttings, bridges and culverts had been completed over almost the entire route to Proston. The sleepers had been cut and stacked and hundreds of tons of rails had been unloaded at Murgon. The total cost of this work had been approximately £100,000. However, without warning, the settlers of the region were dismayed to discover that early in 1921 the rails were being removed, the first four truck-loads were shifted in February, some to Toowoomba and others to Enoggera. An anguished report of these events claimed: 'This definitely makes clear the hostile attitude of the present government to the outback settler. It is indeed a sorry spectacle to see the Premier touring Australia talking of new emigration schemes when such treatment is being meted out to settlers already here.'¹⁰¹

The long delays in continuing with the construction of the line had seen many of the embankments being washed away, but despite representations made to the government, producers were forced to continue carting their produce by road.

In 1921 a Proston farmer named G.W. Seymour wrote:

I wish to say a few words in regard to the Murgon-Proston railway, etc., and the difficulties under which we live out here. Last year, several farmers here cleared and ploughed large areas and planted potatoes and maize in anticipation of the early opening of the line. My potatoes yielded eight tons per acre, without any manure. The line did not come along. Potatoes went down to about £5 per ton, so that they were not worth carting from here to the nearest railway station. I sold a few locally, and had to throw tons of them away. Now, I am harvesting a splendid crop of maize. I have 125 acres altogether, and if the line is not finished before next November, and maize goes no higher than at present there will be a very small margin left for us after paying expenses. Apart from pulling, we have to pay 1/6 per bag for threshing, and from 3/- to 4/- per bag for carting them, and then freight and commission on top of that. I have also a nice crop of cotton growing on rich black soil, and have counted 100 bolls on one plant. The government is urging us to produce, but without the early construction of the line, production here is impossible. We are from 30 to 43 miles from the nearest railway ... We have no roads here, only roadways. They are mostly as nature made them ... In conclusion, I would like to impress on the government the fact that this vast and rich agricultural district cannot progress and develop anything like it should do without a railway, or even a permanent road.¹⁰²

The Queensland government at this time was experiencing a particularly serious funding problem, so much so, in fact, that the premier, Edward Granville Theodore, had gone to England and America in March 1920 with the intention of obtaining investment monies. The period of Theodore's premiership (22 October 1919 to 26 February 1925) was marked by crises, and one of his more controversial policies was the Land Act Amendment Act that was to enable him to increase the rents of rural leases by more than fifty per cent. The issue created a political storm but was finally passed by the Upper House in February 1920 and almost immediately dubbed the 'Repudiation Bill'. When Theodore went to England the following month, his government was desperate for money. However, he had been preceded by the now well known Philp delegation. The delegation was headed by Sir Robert Philp, founder of the Burns Philp Company. Other delegates included Sir Alfred S. Cowley, chairman of directors of the Bank of Queensland, and an influential solicitor named John A. Walsh. These men were successful in creating an atmosphere of tension in London financial circles, warning the potential London financiers that the Theodore administration had lost the trust and respect of the people through their 'Repudiation Bill'. Rejected by the British capitalists, Theodore went to America where he was forced to accept a far smaller and much more costly loan from U.S. financiers. The money was certainly not sufficient to carry through the many public works that had been promised during the previous few years, and Queensland, without the added stimulus of these much needed public works, slipped quickly into a depression. Theodore made the loan failure affair a campaign issue and called an election for October 1920. He was returned to government, but amidst claims of gerrymandering his government's majority was reduced from twenty-four seats to just four.¹⁰³

It was in such a tense political climate that a deputation of Proston men waited upon Premier Theodore in April 1921, but the premier, while admitting that the deputation had made a good case, said that the construction of the Proston line could not be continued due to lack of funds. Theodore told the delegation that with the limited funds at his disposal he was attempting to finish the north coast line to Mackay, after which he would finish the line to the Bowen coalfields.¹⁰⁴

With the state in such a depressed condition, it is little wonder that a Nanango deputation to the Railways Department in June that year should also meet with grim rejection. The deputation claimed that it was time a new rail link was provided between Nanango and Yarraman. Mr C. Kelly, a member of that deputation and also member of the Nanango Chamber of Commerce, stated that



James Larcombe.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 68211

rather than spending money on relief and allowing the men to remain idle, the government should be paying that money into wages and pressing on with railways construction. A report of his statements claimed: '... He (Kelly) was told that morning that at Nanango there was an oatmeal bag full to the top with relief coupons. Such a state of things was disastrous as the government got nothing in return. He added that one of the largest sawmills in the state at Nanango would be closing down on Saturday throwing 150 men out of work, and if they had to leave Nanango they might drift into the cities, thus adding to the number of unemployed already there.'¹⁰⁵

By the following year the situation had improved sufficiently for the line from Murgon to Proston to be completed. It was opened by the minister for railways, James Larcombe, on Saturday 24 February, 1923. This was a gala occasion attended by some 1800 people. The festivities began that morning at Murgon with the arrival from Maryborough of a special train, the V.I.P.s being conveyed aboard a luxurious Pullman coach. After the arrival of the train a magnificent banquet luncheon was provided, and that afternoon two heavily laden trains left for the terminus at Proston.

These trains were so densely packed with people that one of them had to be split into two divisions so that it could climb a long gradient. A press report of the opening of the line claimed:

The Murgon-Proston line was officially opened, at Proston, on Saturday afternoon by the Hon. J. Larcombe, Minister for Railways, in the presence of a big concourse of people, which included representatives from all parts of the South Burnett and the cities directly affected by this new railway feeder into a rich agricultural, dairying, and pastoral country. The new line is approximately 26¼ miles in length. The first sod was turned about 7 years ago, at a moment when many gallant sons of big-hearted settler parents were treading the sod of foreign shores with the Empire colours; at a time, too, which saw the dawn of a critical financial period in the State's affairs ... The fight for the Murgon-Proston line past, a new battle opens for an extension of the line to tap the magnificent scrub lands, some 72,000 acres, in the Boondooma area, and the rich agricultural and dairying lands of the Lawson district, quite apart from lateral feeders to the equally rich Windera district ... Deputations have already urged these proposals on the Minister ...¹⁰⁶

There was never, of course, an extension of the line into the Boondooma region, but the opening of the Proston line was not without a mild piece of controversy. When it came time for Bernard Henry Corser (M.L.A. for the Burnett) to speak, the event resulted in a wordy confrontation between him and the minister for railways. Corser pointed out that the rail line could have been completed at far less expense because the rails and sleepers had already been on location, but to take them away and then finally replace them so that construction could re-commence had been a futile and expensive exercise. Several members of the audience 'good-naturedly' heckled both the speakers as they exchanged views on the matter. The minister, James Larcombe, referring to the financial boycott Premier Theodore had received in London stated: 'You want to justify the boycott. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, really.'

Corser replied: 'We are not here on any political mission.'

'I think you are,' Larcombe answered, 'and it is most discourteous of you.'

Corser then said: 'Without any discourtesy at all I must refer to that. Whatever boycott there might have been I hope that the conditions of Queensland in the future will not permit of the great British financiers having to boycott us again.'¹⁰⁷

Following the opening of the line the two trains returned firstly to Murgon and then to Maryborough and other stations with various connections. For those who were travelling on the trains it was a long journey, some of them not arriving home until 3.30 the following morning.

An amusing account of the return journey from Proston to Murgon, compiled by a man who had travelled to Proston for the official opening on the second train, was published the following month under the title: *Night in a Jibbing Train*:

Dedicated to the memory of these 1400 who rode in the second division on the homeward bound trains from the opening of the Murgon-Proston railway.

Scene: Proston — One half built railway station and house, a lot of trees, two long trains at a dead end, 1508 persons looking for something to eat and somewhere to go, the bright background being the Ministerial coaches (especially viewed through the carriage windows).

Time: 6 p.m. Station master in an official voice (I still wonder where he lives) 'No more can get on this train; plenty of room on the end division, leaving ten minutes after this one.' Such was the command we, the stragglers, to get on the first train, obeyed. We cheered the first train out, carrying the lucky ones, and the Ministerial party, and then resigned ourselves to a '10 minutes wait.' Ten minutes isn't long in Murgon, but they reckon time differently out there, at the dead end. My watch ticked off 30 minutes before the train gave a grunt and a jerk, and we had started on our homeward course accompanied by a cheer from 120 voices — 280 were so crushed that they couldn't open their mouths. Everything went merrily under the crushed, stuffy, and sooty conditions till someone suggested we might 'get stuck on this hill.' Almost immediately we heard the engine in trouble. Would she do it — No. She stopped. I never realised until then what an overcrowded profession the engineers and engine-drivers were, because in our carriage alone 24 out of 30 gave the correct way the driver could have got her over the hill. It seemed feasible too, although I don't know anything about it. One will always find a nark on any train, and in this case his

voice came from the corner: 'Why don't you tell the driver that and save him a lot of trouble.' Silence reigned supreme until one of the 'engineers' remarked 'You can't tell those darned red tape Government officials anything.' It seemed a pity to be hung up on account of red tape. However, we ought to be right now as we had gone back a mile and a half and were coming at the hill with a rush, the engine snorting beautifully. Would she, or would she not? The odds were even, when she stopped. Nothing to eat since 3 o'clock, hot and stuffy, the pathetic cry of the kiddies for water (not a bag could be found on the train). Our spirits were sinking fast with the deep fall of night. Even the trees seemed to jeer at us. Something was happening now. They were, so the 'know-alls' said, dividing the train and taking the first half to Jaumbill (Hivesville). Oh, glorious Jaumbill!

There is a 'pub' somewhere inland from there. The deed was done — off went the first half. Stop, 'Where are we?' rang out along the train. Looking right into my carriage was a half built cream shed with 'Mobbill' written in chalk on a board. The writing on the wall struck terror into our hearts. An hour here, sure, and not even a tank to get a drink of water from. Yes, they were doing it shunting our carriages on to a dead end to wait until the engine returned with the other half. We climbed out into the glorious night, fresh after the stuffy carriage. We agreed that those mysterious sounds of the bush at night were fascinating ... The night's softness and, the silence of the bush began to lose its fascination. A cool lager, a good dinner, and the Murgon pictures, seemed now things of another generation — 'The Wonders of Luxor' so to speak. A drink of cold water out of any old cup, and a place to rest our weary and sooty heads was the height of our ambition. Murgon — I wondered if the aboriginal meaning of the name 'Murgon' had any reference to Paradise. I thought it had.

The second half is here, and after a lot of shunting we are ready to continue our journey ... Anyhow I had got past caring ... We expected the worst, and we got it — 7½ miles from Murgon, and the engine water ran out, the closest 'fill' being Murgon. 'What are they going to do?' was the leading question asked of those mysterious figures that moved about outside our carriages and spoke in hushed voices — the deciders of our fate. Their decision caused six carriages of human freight to be left behind for another hour and a half until the engine got her 'fill' and returned from Murgon. Let me pass swiftly over that time — it is unthinkable. In due course the lights of Murgon appeared. Was that a cheer. Yes, husky, but still human, Home! But what about our Maryborough friends who had to complete their journey. God be with them till we meet again.¹⁰⁸

During James Larcombe's visit to Murgon he received another deputation from the Windaera Railway League. Members of the delegation pressed him to consider extending the line from Murgon into Windaera. They used the same arguments that all other successful delegations had used — that the extension of the line would open up more land to free settlement and bring the potential wealth of the region to more easily accessible markets. Larcombe promised to place their request before the cabinet the following Tuesday.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, the minister's visit to the region was a busy one. In addition to the Windaera deputation, Larcombe received a number of other deputations, including one from the Murgon Shire Council regarding some buildings on the line, one from Mondure regarding the construction of a weigh-bridge at Mondure siding, another from the settlers of Boondooma requesting the extension of the rail to that area, and lastly one from the Goomeri Progress Association to request a line from Goomeri to tap the rich timber lands of Manumbar. For those requesting additional lines, Larcombe could only state that the surveying parties were already exceptionally busy and that their requests were possibilities he would consider at some time in the future.¹¹⁰

Larcombe's promise to have the Windaera line considered by cabinet was kept and the line was approved that month. There were sound financial reasons for this, not least of which was the large rail construction contingent already in place. Murgon Shire Councillor Robert J. Webster went to Brisbane on 26 February, 1923, in order to interview the minister and premier over the matter and he was delighted to be informed that the plan to carry through the line had been passed. He immediately sent a telegram to Murgon to advise the council of the cabinet decision.¹¹¹

The resident engineer's office and workers' camp for the Windaera extension was later moved to that point on the Proston line where the extension would commence, this site was approximately six miles from Murgon. A small township quickly sprang up there complete with offices, a government store, sheds, calico accommodation for the men, stables and huts. As the site was close to Barambah Creek, piping was laid to the creek so that water could be pumped up for

domestic use, two five-thousand gallons tanks were erected on a hill overlooking the camp. The press later claimed that the construction of the line was being pushed quickly ahead, the acting resident engineer, Mr H.J. Brown, stating that the clearing of the land to the Windera terminus was being carried out.¹¹²

The branch line to Windera was opened by Alfred James Jones M.L.A., on Saturday 28 March, 1925. The line, extending through the tiny station of Warnung, was described as travelling through some of the most picturesque country in the state. Like many other opening ceremonies, a large number of people had flocked to the region to witness the historic event. The minister drove the engine through a ribbon held by two women, a Mrs Webster and Jones's wife. Small detonators on the track were exploded and as the last of them was discharged the crowd gave, 'spontaneous cheer'. During Jones's opening speech it started to rain but this did not dampen the good spirits of the crowd.¹¹³

The station at Proston was one of the most modern in the region at that time, a report dated April 1923 claimed: 'A feature that strikes the eye at Proston is the splendid cement or concrete station which has been built. This type of building appears to be a vast improvement over the old wooden structures. Very comfortable railway employees' quarters are also built, a fair sized goods shed and a spacious station master's dwelling. Other buildings are in course of construction, something like 40 men being employed on the work. Cattle trucking yards are being erected and shortly a public hall is to go up, a store, a refreshment room, and if the residents will allow, an hotel, and last, but not least, a butter factory.'¹¹⁴

One of the stations along the line between Murgon and Proston was Hivesville, a small village soon sprang up there, even as the line was being constructed. There was initially some confusion concerning the name of the station. At first it was given the title of Prostonville, however, the Railways Department claimed that it should be called Jaumbill, a local aboriginal name, and indeed it appears that that name was placed on the railway station. However, as the following item, printed in 1923 shortly after the line had been laid, states: 'But such an insipid name did not appeal to the public and an effort was made to have it altered again, this time to something English that all could pronounce, and "Hivesville" was decided upon in honour of Mr Hives who was a prominent person and successful grazier of the district. The Railway Department agreed to pull down the ... (sign) and have Hivesville in its place.'¹¹⁵

Meanwhile there was also work being carried out at the Murgon railway station, the station itself was about to be enlarged and new refreshment rooms had been added, these rooms, some fifty-four feet in length, consisted of a supper, tea and bar room with attached three bedrooms, a kitchen, bathroom and pantry. Miss V. Barlow, was appointed the first manageress of the rooms.¹¹⁶

One of the small villages that sprang up as a result of the extension of the line from Murgon to Proston was at Byee, now hardly more than a few houses, it once was the centre of bustling rail activity. A report of Byee, written in 1924 shortly after the line had been extended to Proston, gives us an interesting insight to that tiny community:

Byee, the second railway station on the Murgon-Proston line, about 7½ miles from Murgon, is determined that it shall be recognised as one of the leading districts on the line. Although the line has only been opened for traffic about a year, quite a fair amount of progress has been made at Byee, and the railway business which goes and comes from there, is stated to be equal to all the business of the different stations along the line, put together. Byee is situated on what is known as the Five-Ways roads leading to the railway station from Wheatlands, Mondure, Silverleaf, Cloyna, and Murgon, and is surrounded by the best of agricultural, dairying and grazing land ...

With commendable foresight, some of the settlers in the district have realised that Byee should become a centre worth living in, and near the railway station, a fine big shop, with residential quarters, has been erected by Mr A. Rickert, a pioneer of the district. The shop has been leased to Messrs Wrigley and Co., of Murgon, and will almost immediately be opened as a trading concern. Mr W.J. Wrigley, who will be in charge, has also been appointed postmaster at Byee, and a public telephone and telegraph office has also been installed at the store ...

A piece of ground on the corner of the Five Ways has been reserved by Mr A. Rickert as a stand for an hotel, and it is understood that two persons have already applied for this ground, and are trying to get an hotel license. There are also two more building blocks between the store and railway residence. A blacksmith shop is to be started almost immediately opposite the railway station by Mr P. Holznagel, for whom a residence has already been erected, but which is at present in process of renovation ...

The district itself from the railway station has the appearance of being most prosperous. Farmers' neat residences can be seen all round, the farms being owned by some of the best agriculturists in the State, while not far distant is the sawmill, owned by Mr Rickert, which has been responsible for cutting most of the timber used in the erection of the residences referred to.¹¹⁷

By July 1923 the people of Goomeri and several other regions were also pressing hard for a line to be extended to Manumbar. On 31 July a deputation comprising of representatives from Maryborough and Bundaberg Chambers of Commerce, the Goomeri and Manumbar Progress Associations and the Kilkivan Shire Council waited upon the minister for railways at Parliament House. They again pressed for the construction of the line to Manumbar, claiming the line would open up the 120 million super feet of pine timber that was available for logging, that soldier settlers and other settlers would benefit, and that such a line would make available some 192,000 acres of prime land. However, the minister could make no promises, only to state that he would present the case to cabinet.¹¹⁸ The Maryborough Chamber of Commerce later received a letter from the Goomeri and District Progress Association which claimed that two forestry engineers had recently visited the Manumbar region and had stated that if the Railway Department was not prepared to construct a line to the pine forests of Manumbar, then the Forestry Department would construct a line tramway. Even so, this was certainly the poorest of the options and even the officers from the Forestry Department admitted that the heavier rail line would be far more acceptable. They even claimed that their department was willing to offer concessions to the Railway Department as an added inducement to build the line.¹¹⁹

The pine forests at Manumbar were certainly impressive, being described as one of the two largest such reserves in southern Queensland. The letter to the Maryborough chamber continued, '... and the (forestry) service has decided that under a scheme of reforestation alongside rail construction, this enormous supply backed by systematic planning of growth and cutting will be an important factor in the future activities of the Forest Service.'¹²⁰

Economics were still high on the agenda but there were allegations of waste. For example in August 1923 there were approximately 34,000 sawn railways sleepers stacked at the Murgon government sleeper mill. Some three thousand sleepers had recently been sent by train to Mundubbera and Eidsvold, but the remainder were simply left to rot. Also at the mill was: '... one very fine traction engine valued at about £800 and six big timber wagons.' The press claimed that these items were exposed to the weather, '... being right in the open, and it appears to be nobody's business to put them to some use; or if the government does not know what to do with them, surely they could be sold and private enterprise could avail itself of them.'¹²¹

Another crash in the South Burnett rail system occurred at Goomeri in January 1926. The accident occurred at approximately eight o'clock in the evening when two trains, K19 from Proston and K12 from Gympie, collided near the Goomeri railway station. This was a head-on collision but apart from a few minor injuries no-one was hurt. A report of the accident claimed:

A good deal of damage was done to rolling stock, the two engines being badly knocked about, and several trucks were smashed to pieces. Inquiries from railway officials failed to elicit any information as to the cause of the smash, a 'hush' policy being adopted by all. However, a number of people who were on the station at the time of the accident were interviewed and our correspondent was informed that the Proston train was carrying out the usual shunting operations. It was out on the main line preparing to shunt into the loop, when the up-train from Gympie came round the bend and crashed right into the Proston train ...

The place where the accident took place is on the curve of the eastern side of the station, and the siding is not observable to the driver of an incoming train, making it most necessary to have adequate lighting of signals and warnings to approaching trains.

The sound of the impact of the two engines was the first intimation that people in the vicinity had that anything was wrong, and a rush was quickly made to the scene of the accident. It was noticed that both engines had suffered severely from the impact, the cow-catchers and stays being ripped off and one engine was derailed. The drivers and firemen were fortunately able to get clear. The waggons, however, suffered much more severely, the third and fourth trucks on each train being telescoped. The passenger carriages were fortunately at the rear of the train, and the occupants thus escaped serious injury.¹²²

By 1929 agitation was still continuing to have a line constructed between Nanango and Bell, a line that would bridge the gap to the Darling Downs. In August that year a strong delegation comprised of representatives from Dalby, Bell, Nanango and Maryborough waited upon the then minister for railways, Godfrey Morgan, at Brisbane. However, Morgan told them that due to financial restrictions there was no possibility of having such a proposal pass through parliament during that financial year. Morgan told the deputation that he would liaise with the Development Migration Commission to investigate the possibilities of the scheme, but its eventual approval would rest upon whatever opportunities may be opened up to providing settlement to overseas migrants.¹²³

Since its inception, the rail system throughout the South Burnett has been relatively safe and free from serious accidents, although, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, there have been several accidents on the line. In March 1958, for example, cattle worth approximately £600 were killed or later destroyed when a railway wagon being trucked away from the Murgon railway yards during shunting operations collided with a Gympie bound train approximately one and a half miles from Murgon. The press later reported: 'Horrible scenes were witnessed at the point of the collision where people who were on the scene soon after the mishap found dead cattle draped over the front of the Murgon bound engine and strewn along the track. Cattle which were not killed outright were shot by police and Department of Stock officers from Murgon.' The shunter and the assistant station manager at Murgon, both of whom were on duty at the time of the accident, were later suspended pending an enquiry into the affair.¹²⁴

Over the following years there were several dramatic changes to the rail system, including the introduction of diesel engines. The last coal-fired engine left Kingaroy for Gympie in September 1968, bringing to an end an era of steam travel on the South Burnett that had commenced in 1886.¹²⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Forty-two

The Coming of the Railways

1. Deputy Commissioner of Railways, letter dated 18 March, 1982, Maidenwell file, Nanango Shire Historical Society, and N/N. 26 November 1936, p 2.
2. Macalister was premier from 1 February, 1860–20 July, 1866, 7 August, 1866–15 August, 1867, and 8 January, 1874–5 June 1876.
3. See details of Queensland's rail history in M/C. 25 October, 1958, p 2.
4. For further details see: M/C. 4 April, 1916, p 6.
5. M/C. 3 May, 1886, p 3.
6. M/C. 14 August, 1885, p 3.
7. Letter from Smith to the Hon W. Miles, works minister, reproduced in M/C. 14 August, 1885, p 3.
8. M/C. 14 August, 1885, p 3.
9. *Ibid.*
10. M/C. 11 August, 1885, p 2.
11. M/C. 9 December, 1885, p 3.
12. M/C. 3 May, 1886, p 3.
13. M/C. 29 March, 1886, p 2.

14. M/C. 3 May, 1886, p 3.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. M/C. 18 December, 1886, p 6.
18. Ibid.
19. M/C. 7 December, 1886, p 3.
20. M/C. 10 February, 1887, p 3.
21. M/C. 2 November, 1887, p 3.
22. M/C. 20 July, 1889, p 5.
23. For an example of such a debate see: M/C. 7 November, 1897, p 2.
24. M/C. 8 November, 1898, pp 2-3.
25. M/C. 28 November, 1898, p 3.
26. M/C. 19 January, 1899, p 2.
27. Extract of the report of the Royal Commission appointed to investigate the possible routes, extracts published in M/C. 8 September, 1900, p 2.
28. M/C. 19 January, 1899 p 2 and M/C. 30 January, 1899, p 3.
29. Reproduced in M/C. 14 March, 1899, p 3.
30. M/C. 13 April, 1899, p 2.
31. M/C. 8 April, 1899, p 2.
32. M/C. 19 April, 1899, pp 2-3.
33. M/C. 28 April, 1899, p 2.
34. M/C. 27 December, 1899, p 3.
35. M/C. 2 June, 1898, p 3.
36. M/C. 30 April, 1900, p 3.
37. M/C. 25 May, 1900, p 2.
38. Reproduced in M/C. 6 June, 1900, p 3.
39. M/C. 4 September, 1900, p 3.
40. M/C. 8 September, 1900, p 2.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. M/C. 11 September, 1900, p 3. See also the comments published in the *Ipswich Times*, reproduced in M/C. 13 September, 1900, p 3.
44. M/C. 20 November, 1900, p 3.
45. M/C. 22 November, 1900, p 2.
46. M/C. 5 March, 1901, p 5.
47. M/C. 5 April, 1901, p 3.
48. M/C. 20 April, 1901, p 3.
49. M/C. 2 April, 1901, p 3.
50. M/C. 22 April, 1901, p 3.
51. M/C. 5 July, 1901, p 3.
52. M/C. 20 December, 1901, p 4.
53. M/C. 28 December, 1901, p 2.
54. M/C. 14 February, 1902, p 2.
55. M/C. 10 June, 1902, p 3.
56. M/C. 25 April, 1903, p 3.
57. M/C. 27 April, 1903, p 2.
58. M/C. 18 June, 1903, P 2.
59. For a detailed report of this meeting see: M/C. 18 June, 1903, p 2.
60. M/C. 22 July, 1903, p 3.
61. M/C. 24 June, 1904, p 3.
62. M/C. 12 November, 1904, p 4.
63. M/C. 21 December, 1904, p 2.
64. Ibid.
65. M/C. 23 May, 1905, p 3.
66. M/C. 1 August, 1905, p 2.
67. Reproduced in M/C. 1 September, 1905, p 3.
68. M/C. 7 July, 1905, p 3.
69. M/C. 28 July, 1905, p 4.
70. M/C. 17 October, 1905, p 2.
71. M/C. 30 July, 1906, p 3.

72. M/C. 27 September, 1906, p 4.
73. M/C. 6 June, 1908, p 8.
74. M/C. 9 June, 1910, p 2.
75. M/C. 13 June, 1910, p 6.
76. Ibid.
77. M/C. 29 July, 1910, p 6.
78. Reproduced in M/C. 25 July, 1910, p 3.
79. M/C. 18 May, 1911, p 3.
80. M/C. 21 November, 1911, p 4 and letter from deputy commissioner, Nanango Shire Historical Society, Maidenwell file.
81. For details of this proposed line see: *The Saga of the Shire*, by Robert (Bob) Morris, pp 68–73.
82. M/C. 23 July, 1912, p 2
83. M/C. 30 April, 1913, p 8.
84. M/C. 8 August, 1913, p 5.
85. M/C. 9 September, 1913, p 5.
86. M/C. 14 November, 1913, p 8.
87. M/C. 3 February, 1916, p 8.
88. M/C. 18 December, 1913, p 5.
89. M/C. 18 February, 1914, p 8.
90. M/C. 24 March, 1914, p 5.
91. M/C. 2 December, 1914, p 8.
92. For further details on the construction of this pier, see: Matthews, Tony, *River of Dreams*, Vol 2, 1995, pp 406–411.
93. M/C. 15 April, 1915, p 8.
94. M/C. 22 April, 1915, p 8.
95. Letter from deputy commissioner, dated 18 March, 1982, Nanango Historical Society.
96. M/C. 2 February, 1916, p 6 and 3 February, 1916, p 8.
97. M/C. 2 February, 1916.
98. For a detailed discussion on this subject see: M/C. 13 July, 1916, p 3.
99. M/C. 31 December, 1920, p 2.
100. M/C. 17 February, 1921.
101. Ibid, p 2.
102. M/C. 21 March, 1921, p 6.
103. M/C. 31 December, 1920, p 2.
104. M/C. 14 April, 1921, p 2.
105. M/C. 10 June, 1921, p 2.
106. M/C. 26 February, 1923, p 4.
107. Ibid, p 6.
108. M/C. 3 March, 1923, p 3.
109. M/C. 27 February, 1923, p 6.
110. Ibid.
111. M/C. 28 February, 1923, p 7.
112. M/C. 16 August, 1923, p 2.
113. M/C. 30 March, 1925, p 4.
114. M/C. 16 April, 1923, p 2.
115. M/C. 15 May, 1923, p 2.
116. M/C. 4 September, 1923, p 2.
117. M/C. 14 February, 1924, p 2.
118. M/C. 1 August, 1923, p 4.
119. M/C. 20 November, 1923, p 5.
120. Ibid.
121. M/C. 16 August, 1923, p 2.
122. M/C. 18 January, 1926.
123. M/C. 17 August, 1929, p 8.
124. SBT. 27 March, 1958, p 1.
125. SBT. 2 October, 1968, p 1.

Goomeri and District — an Early History

Like most other regions of the South Burnett, the township of Goomeri owes its existence to specific issues of historical importance including the coming of the railways. However, of primary importance to the region was the opening up of the old pastoral and grazing stations of *Boonara*, *Boobyjan* and *Barambah*, stations that did much to bring the region to prominence during the colony's formative years.

Goomeri was chosen for the name of the railway station which gave access to these areas from the name of the parish, Goomeribong, reportedly an aboriginal word for 'broken shield' or alternatively, 'speared on shield'.¹

The transition of the Goomeri district from a grazing area to agricultural farming was spread over an extensive period of years, however, from the early months of closer settlement literally hundreds of small homes appeared in the bush within a few years.

Among the earliest settlers of the Goomeri district was the Maudsley family, Roger, his wife Martha (nee Short), Richard, his wife Maria (nee Walker) and Thomas and his wife Elizabeth (nee Brassey).

The Maudsley family was originally comprised of the father, Richard (Fardy), his wife Agnes and their seven children. They had emigrated from England aboard the vessel *Queen of the Colonies*, arriving in October 1866.

In January 1920 Richard Maudsley (senior) died suddenly after a short illness, he was ninety-seven years of age and was interred in the Murgon cemetery. Maudsley had led an interesting life, his obituary providing the following information:

The late Mr Richard Maudsley, Sr., was born on 14th December, 1822, at Morecambe, Lancashire, England. He received his education at a private school, and at the age of eighteen his father, who was a gamekeeper, sent him to Demerara, West Indies, to gain experience in sugar growing. Finding the climate unsuitable for his health, he returned home after three years' absence and started farming in England. He came to Queensland under engagement by the Cotton Growers (Board) of Pimpama, in the ship *Queen of the Colonies*, and arrived at Moreton Bay in October 1866. He and his family made the journey from Moreton Bay to Pimpama in a small cutter, which was the only way of reaching the place at that time, the journey taking two days. Here, he remained for a period of three years, during which time he had many adventures with the hostile blacks, having at all times to carry firearms for protection. On leaving Pimpama he took up cotton growing on his own account at Oxley Creek.

When the Government abolished the cotton bonus, the farmers went out of the industry and took up general farming. Here their troubles commenced in marketing their produce which was carried by small boats on the Brisbane River to Ipswich ... Mr Maudsley was one of the first committee-men of the Oxley Creek School, at which place most of the family received their education. After eight years' farming on Oxley Creek, he sold out and decided to go in for grazing, selecting a grazing farm at Welston, but being unsuccessful he went to Dugandan and once more took up farming with his two sons, Thomas and John but after a few years he retired from work on his own account and spent the remainder of his life living with his sons and grandsons. His wife predeceased him twenty-seven years ago.²

Richard's children grew up in the Ipswich/Wacol regions until 1880 when Roger took up his property *Margoo* in the Goomeri region, a resumption of *Boonara*, although the family did not move to the selection until some time later.



Undaban.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.



Trinity.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

Richard (jnr) and his wife took up *Undaban* and Thomas and his wife selected *Trinity*. These three properties raised cattle and sheep, and horses bred on *Trinity* were sold as remounts for the Indian Army. The Maudsleys are reputed to have been the first to plough the land in the region and reportedly grew the first maize crop, they also reared pigs and went in for dairying, the cream being taken initially to Tiaro and later to Kingaroy. The family was instrumental in building the first Anglican Church in the area at Boonara, they also constructed two provisional schools, one at *Margoo* and the other at *Trinity*, a teacher taught at each of these schools on alternate weeks.³ *Trinity* homestead, near Crownthorpe, was moved for preservation and display to the grounds of the Murgon Dairy Museum in 1989.⁴

With the coming of the rail in 1902 until the line was extended, finally, to Kingaroy, Goomeri was an important centre, although there were few buildings apart from a couple of stores and, for a while at least, a hotel run by J.A. Slater. The hotel was situated on land leased from L.M. Jones, however, upon the expiry of the lease the hotel closed down. From 1902 until 1911 when the Boonara land sale took place, the region's importance was based on the timber being taken to the railhead at Goomeri from the many forest scrubs at places such as Elgin Vale and Manumbar. Other produce such as maize, pigs, pumpkins and wheat, produce that had once gone to Kilkivan from the thriving agricultural centres such as Coolabunia, were also taken to the Goomeri railhead for onward transportation to the markets. With the coming of the rail line, Goomeri became a bustling community, despite the lack of permanent constructions. A calico township of workers' tents, teamsters' camps and a host of other travellers and workers could be seen at the site, not yet a town, but an important centre nonetheless. A colourful eyewitness account of Goomeri, written in February 1903, claimed:

This place has a painfully new appearance as yet. Stores and hotels remain innocent of such superfluities as verandahs, &c. Men sit, spit, smoke, yarn and loaf, upon piles of sugar, gin cases, or anything that comes handy. Their language is crisp and free, and their habits generally unconventional to a degree. Earthen floors are the rule, and when the evening has slightly waned, Bill, Tom or Jerry, after taking a circular turn or two, just like his faithful canine comrade, curls himself up under a dray, sheet of bark, a strip of calico or nothing at all for that matter and is thereafter gently ushered into the land of dreams to the accompaniment of the teamsters' musical horse-bells as the animals contentedly depasture on the richly grassed flat adjacent. Human and equine nature are at Goomeri alike happy for the night. Once every day the scene is somewhat vulgarised by the scream and rumble of the arriving or departing train, but when it has gone, perhaps the only things which look out of place and foreign to the rustic picture are the formally ugly government buildings connected with the line, evidences of progress.⁵

The town's first stores were opened in 1902 by John Coleman and Mrs E. Perrett, Coleman's store was situated on the site which later was occupied by the cream shed in Moore Street. Mrs Perrett's store was located where the Goomeri police station was later constructed. There was also the usual plethora of tradesmen on the site, butchers, blacksmiths and saddlers. A butcher's shop was opened by Jack Moreland in 1911. However, the catalyst for the region came with the now well known Boonara land sale of March 1911, a sale that opened up more than thirty thousand acres of rural allotments and many town allotments and brought hundreds of buyers to the region within a very brief period.

The land was owned by Llewellyn Mander Jones (*not to be confused with Richard Jones of Barambah station, there is, apparently no connection between these two early South Burnett settler families*) who, after the various resumptions that had been taking place since the 1870s and 1880s, sold what remained of Boonara station to a Melbourne business group, the Goomeri Land Company.

Prior to the Boonara land sale of 1911, the period generally acknowledged as being one of the most important events in the history of the small town, there was considerable migration to the region due to the foundation of the rail line and the opening up of lands for closer settlement. Among those who came to the district at that time was Jacob Stumm, a former resident of Gympie where he was part owner in the *Gympie Times*. Stumm selected Coongan from Boonara station. This property was at first run as a dairy, however, over the following years as more land was added to the holding, its usage was altered to grazing. Jacob Stumm was born on 26 August, 1853, at Frankfurt-on-Main, Germany. He arrived in Australia with his parents in 1855 and was educated at Toowoomba State School, later being articled to Maryborough solicitor, E.B.C. Corser. He subsequently became the federal member for Lilley, a position he retained until 1917. Jacob Stumm died on 23 January, 1921.⁶

Sam Heathwood was also a selector of land from Boonara prior to the land sale of 1911. Heathwood took up his holding in 1909. That same year Aaron Davis who had been working as a stockman on Barambah, took up a holding on Planted Creek Road, having previously held land at Cinnabar. He later became a member of the Kilkivan Shire Council. Thomas Euler, A. Euler, A. Spry, E.C. Spry, W.T. Williams, and A.J. McIntosh were also among those to have selected land prior to the 1911 sale. Selectors in the Manumbar and Barambah regions included James Henry Gentry, selecting land in the Johnstone region, and Friedrich Theodor Franz, a tailor from Germany who took up land in the Manumbar area.

The Reid group settlement was comprised of a number of young men from Sydney led by R. Reid, an 'interlocking draughtsman' with the New South Wales Railways Department. The other members of the group were G. Reid, a shipping clerk, W. Herwig, an architect, W.M. McIvor, and H.H. Silburn who both worked for the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage. The group was formed in 1910 and its members travelled by ship to Brisbane then to Manyung where they were met by another member of the group and with luggage and stores loaded onto a horse set off for their holdings. This was one of the last group settlements in the state — thirteen blocks having been opened up for the new settlers.

Other selectors in the Kilkivan/Goomeri region included August Euler, a carpenter by trade, of *Sunny Hill*, who was heavily involved in cattle and horse breeding. August Euler had been just twenty years of age when he arrived in Queensland. He worked for three years at *Barfield* run in the Banana district and in 1858 began work at *Boonara* as a shepherd. He took up his own selection, *Sunny Hill*, in 1880. On 17 April, 1862, he had married Anna Cathrina Mergard who, at the age of fourteen years, had arrived in Queensland from Germany with her parents. The family went to live at *Boobyjan* where Anna's father was employed as a shepherd. Anna Euler died on 31 December, 1892, and was buried at *Boonara*. August Euler died on 23 November, 1922, and was buried beside his wife.⁷

Another early selector, Daniel Lobegeier of *Glen Vale*, approximately nine miles from Goomeri, was born in the Boonah district. He married Bertha Kratzmann of Clifton. His brother John also lived close by on a three hundred acre selection.

With the exception, perhaps, of the coming of the rail line, the Boonara land sale of 1911 was, without doubt, the most important single feature in the early history of the township. Managing the sale was the long established Brisbane firm of Isles Love. The land had been surveyed and subdivided by Harry Raff of Brisbane. A staff surveyor for Isles Love, H. St. John Wood, had inspected the *Boonara* estate and reported: 'The *Boonara* estate as a whole is extremely well watered by large creeks and lagoons which contain a plentiful supply of apparently permanent water. There is a large percentage of land fit for agriculture ... The agricultural land varies from brown to a deep black soil of great depth in the majority of cases and is well grassed. The flats are suitable for lucerne and the ridges, generally speaking, for wheat production and other grains ... All portions are within easy access of railway communications ...'⁸



Goomeri railway station and post office, 1910.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

There were many advantages and attractions offered to those who wished to take up lands from the original *Boonara* station. By that time the rail service was running through the area, a butter factory was proposed, there were three other butter factories in close proximity and many of the blocks fronted Nangur Creek. The auctioneers had waived survey fees and there were no conditions of residency such as those that existed on selectors' blocks. Terms were being offered over twenty years with just five per cent deposit and with no payments, except interest, for 2 years — generally sufficient time for the industrious farmer to obtain a few crops, build a modest home and become a little more financially secure.⁹

The auction beginning 6 March, 1911, was something of a gala event, executives of Isles Love had advertised the sale extensively and had even promised to have coaches and cars waiting at the railway station to take prospective buyers to the various farms or allotments. A huge marquee was erected for the occasion and communal accommodation was provided in a large hall. The Royal Bank had made arrangements to have their temporary offices within the marquee, and were available for business during the auction.¹⁰

The town allotments were sold off on 6 March and received prices higher than had been anticipated. Many of the purchasers were local people wishing to either live in the new township or to establish businesses there.

Shortly after the event the press reported:

The long expected and long-looked-for sale of the *Boonara* lands began at Goomeri on Monday, when the township allotments were first put to the hammer.

For the past three months the sale of the estate has been advertised in a most extensive way in all parts, from South Australia to North Queensland. There was hardly a newspaper of any standing that did not publish the comprehensive advertisements. The auctioneers, Messrs Isles Love and Co., of Brisbane, carried out their plan of disposal in other directions in quite the same big design. Some time ago one single block was sold to Mr J.J. Murphy for the building of an hotel, and every other application for preference was firmly refused. Mr Murphy built a big hotel.

The next move in the plan of operations was made since the beginning of the year, when the land seekers began to arrive from the South. Several motor cars were placed in commission at Goomeri, and the prospective land buyers were whisked swiftly to all parts of the country which is now being sold. The heavy rain during February, an abnormal fall it must be confessed, interfered largely and caused a very considerable amount of flooding in the many creeks which abound on the estate, but despite these drawbacks a large number of people have been shown over the land. The result of all this big planned enterprise was that on Monday the trains vomited at the present small wayside station at Goomeri a concourse of about 300 people.

The valuable business sites brought from £110 to £160 for quarter-acres, and in one instance a strategical corner was run up to £405, but that was business competition purely on a choice situation. Good residential areas ran about £30 for quarter-acres and the far suburbs down to £7.

There was enough allotments sold to supply a township with an established and prosperous population of about 1000, and the capital invested in this speculation, before there was one genuine settler secured by the purchase of an estate block, amounted to the big total of somewhere about £8200.

During the sale Mr Love, the auctioneer, announced that the directors were pledged to build the butter factory and pointed to the building in course of construction, also that an area had been set apart for show-grounds and would be granted to any local show society for three years free of rent and the society afterwards agreed to purchase at a price to be agreed.

The school would be arranged with the Education Department.

Regarding the church site, it was put up to competition, and after spirited bidding was sold to the Methodist Church for £32, and then, on behalf of the company, Mr Love returned half the purchase money.¹¹

The facilities for the show grounds mentioned in the above report were important to the community, every rural community needs to be able to show its produce and Goomeri was no

exception. However, while the land had been set aside, it was not until 1925 that a meeting of farmers and residents moved to have a modest showing of flowers and vegetables at Goomeri and this show proved to be quite successful. Encouraged by this success, organisers went on to plan a larger event and the following year a full show was opened.¹²

The following article, published in 1930, just nineteen years after the township came into existence, also gives us some valuable historical background to one of the region's foremost settlers, T.M. Wise:

No name is better known in Goomeri than that of Mr T.M. Wise ... Mr Wise is a native of Victoria. In January, 1915, in company with his brother, Mr F.G. Wise ... he purchased the business of Mr John Coleman, with branch shops at Kilkivan and Goomeri. Mr Wise managed the business at the Goomeri end while his brother was in charge of the Kilkivan branch. Then in 1916 he enlisted for service, and from that time the business was carried on solely at Goomeri, under the management of Mr F.G. (Frank) Wise. After the war Mr Wise again returned to Goomeri, but owing to the failing health of his brother, their business was sold to Messrs Higgins and Bourne in 1925 ...

Although he retired from active business life, Mr Wise had not had one idle moment, for his work in connection with public bodies keeps him ever on the move. Perhaps one of his greatest efforts has been in connection with the erection of the Hall of Memory. From the very inception of the movement to erect the hall he fulfilled the position of secretary. Much of the organising work naturally fell on his shoulders, and it was successfully carried through. Mr Wise is now secretary of the trustees, in whose care the hall is placed, and he was one of the main movers behind the movement which a few years ago raised the sum of over £900, and freed it of debt.¹³

In fact there were three brothers, Frank, Terence and William Wise. Frank had died only the months before the above report was published in the *Maryborough Chronicle*. The *South Burnett Times* in April that year reporting that Frank had experienced failing health, including the loss of his sight and this had forced the brothers to sell out to Higgins and Bourne. Some time later Frank had become seriously ill and had been taken to the Holyrood Private Hospital in Brisbane where he subsequently died, aged fifty-five years.¹⁴

Other early residents in the town and region included Tom Irwin, who started to make plans for the construction of his house on the day after the land sale in 1911. William McIvor was a farmer, businessman and councillor. Michael McGrath, R.P. Stumm, William Glasgow, George Wieland, Albert Sadler, Harry and Jacob Eisentrager, Harry Dahlke, John Zwilser, Hans Nissen, W.F. Bandidt, and many others.¹⁵ Fred Anderson was the owner of *Braeside*, his wife's name was Nina, she later became heavily involved in the Red Cross during the First World War. Fred Anderson died in 1954 and Mrs Anderson continued to live on the property, with her son, Gordon William Anderson, until her death, aged eighty-six years, in June 1973. At that time she had lived at her property for sixty-two years.¹⁶ The original *Braeside* homestead was destroyed by fire on Wednesday 30 March, 1966. There was no-one in the building at the time of the fire, Gordon William Anderson was working with two other men in a paddock away from the house when suddenly they were startled by a loud explosion. The explosion also alerted neighbours who called the fire brigade, the explosion was thought to have been caused by a kerosene refrigerator in the homestead kitchen. The men on the farm and the fire brigade could do nothing to save the historic home which had been preserved in its original state, however, the out-buildings were saved.¹⁷

One of the most important aspects of Goomeri and district development has been the large influx of migrants to the region and immigration such as the group settlement of German nationals at Tansey has been vital to that region's growth. The migrants came primarily from the coal mining district of the Ruhr Valley and sailed aboard the immigrant vessel *Cassel*, in 1912, having paid a nominal fee of £10 for their passage. Upon their arrival at Brisbane they were met by Apostolic priest Frederick Keune who was to become the group's spiritual mentor and leader. The group moved firstly to the Cedars, near Bundaberg, where they were employed in the sugar industry, taking the place of South Sea Islanders. This was not an ideal situation, the work was extremely hard and the wages were poor, some of the immigrants left the region to seek employment at other centres such as the coal mining district on the Burrum River near Maryborough.¹⁸

A 1930 report of this group settlement stated:

Then they instructed one of their number, Mr F. (Frederick) Keune, who could speak English, to search for suitable land for them. Mr Keune travelled to various places, and finally he selected Goomeri. After the Boonara estate was cut up and sold in 1911 some of the blocks were still unoccupied. Mr Keune inspected these and was greatly impressed. There was ample water and the country was ring-barked, although the stumps and dead trees were still standing, making clearing easier.

Negotiations were commenced with Mr James J. Lawrie, the representative of Isles Love and Coy, who had charge of the sale of the land for the Goomeri Land Company. The immigrants were practically penniless, but Mr Keune was able to secure for them about £10,000 worth of land. The conditions of the sale were that one-tenth was to be paid in cash, and the balance over 20 years. The group was really financed by the company, and an arrangement was come to, whereby one-twentieth cash deposit was accepted, the payments still to be spread over 20 years.

Many amusing incidents are related regarding the arrival of the newcomers. A special train was secured, and one noticeable thing was that tables were turned upside down and netted wire stretched round to accommodate the poultry. Language difficulties were among the first troubles to be encountered. They could not make themselves understood, and Mr Keune had to act as interpreter. The wonderful thrift of these people was noted from the first day of their arrival. Twenty-one families comprised the group, but more came later, bringing the total to thirty.

Their first move was to build houses. To accomplish this Mr Keune was able to purchase from Ross and Company's sawmill a large quantity of what is known as second class timber, but this was not sufficient and more had to be obtained. This completed, they then set about preparing the farms, clearing the grounds, fencing and sowing the crops. Twelve months was spent in this way, but at the end of that time it was found that they were able to pay their full cash deposit of one-tenth of the purchase price, instead of one-twentieth as had been arranged.¹⁹

The man who helped to established this settlement, Frederick Wilhelm Keune, settled with his wife at Glenora. Mrs Keune was born at Minden, she married her husband in 1897 and they lived at Lockyer until 1912 and afterwards at Bingera where they joined their group of German settlers. She was described as a kindly woman who would always help those in need. She died, aged fifty-nine years, at the Wondai Hospital on Tuesday 16 June, 1936, leaving her husband, six children and eleven grand-children. The press later reported that: 'A very impressive funeral service (in German) was conducted at the Glenora Church by the Rev. E. Zielke.'²⁰

The area where Tansey became established was originally known as Sandy Creek. A school was opened there in 1916 and it was given the name of Tansey after Michael Tansey, an early settler who took up a property named *Lakeview*. A hall was constructed at Tansey and opened in July 1926. This became the social centre for the district and was used for church services, the meeting rooms for the Q.C.W.A. and picture shows were later held there. The cheese factory was established during the First World War, but following the war and the decline in the demand for cheese this was later closed.²¹

Some of the settlers to acquire land after the historic sale of 1911 included the Lehmann family at Tansey, Max and Gus Kuhnell who had come from the coal mines at Howard to join the German settlers at Tansey. James Baillie, Tod Macaulay, S.A.W. Owens, Victor Albert Essam, Bill and Tom O'Mara and Bert Hatton.²²

Facilities and services in the new township of Goomeri progressed at an average pace. The first police station was constructed in Laird Street and in 1929 this was replaced by a more substantial building in Moore Street. Two cheese factories were commenced in the town's formative years, the cement slabs could be seen many years later, one in Jones Street, the other opposite the site of the completed Goomeri cheese factory. There were three hospitals, all private, the first began operating circa 1919 in McTaggart Street, this was merely a modest building, a private home converted to accommodate a few beds. For over twenty years a Matron Mackay conducted hospitals in Moore and Hodge streets, and later another cottage hospital was opened by Matron Hendersen in Tansey Street. The most major hospital was still a small cottage hospital, this was situated in Dahlke Street in a building provided by the R.S.S.A.I.L.A., it was opened in September 1951 and run by the friendly society.²³

One of the first selectors of the Goomeri-Kinbombi district was Francis Edgar Eales. Eales was born at Maryborough on 10 May, 1879, and served during the Boer War of 1898–1902. He married Mary Taylor circa 1907 and the couple spent the first few years of their marriage in the Childers region. In 1922 Eales and his family moved to the Kinbombi district where he was engaged in the timber industry. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge, and, as a war veteran, also a member of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. Eales died following an illness of a few weeks at the Wondai Hospital on Saturday 12 June, 1943, he was buried the following Monday after a service at the Goomeri Methodist Church, the last post being sounded over his grave.²⁴

The first Lutheran Church service held in the Goomeri district took place at the home of Wilfred V. Christiansen and his wife. Christiansen was born at Laidley on 20 December, 1892, the second son of Niels Henry Christiansen. When he was eight years of age, the family moved to the South Burnett, settling firstly at Coolabunia and later at Wooroolin. Wilfred Christiansen was one of the first pupils at the Bethany Lutheran Church at Edenvale. He later took up land in the Goomeri district and married Marie Bertha Rackemann at Bundaberg, the wedding ceremony being performed by Pastor M.G. Reuther on 18 October, 1917, after which the couple made their home in Goomeri. Wilfred Christiansen played an active role in the development of the town, he served on the Kilkivan Shire Council, the hospital board, the show society and local school committees. When Pastor Reuther was seeking a place to hold Lutheran services in Goomeri, Marie Christiansen placed their home at the pastor's disposal and the first service was conducted there on 25 September, 1923. In May 1940 the family moved to Kingaroy where they resided for the remainder of their lives. On the afternoon of Saturday 1 December, 1951, while tending his garden at Red Hill, Kingaroy, Wilfred Christiansen collapsed and died, aged almost fifty-nine years.²⁵

In April 1930 a report of many of the facilities and history of Goomeri was published in the *Maryborough Chronicle*. This information is interesting as it was written soon after the township had been first established, it allows us access to some of the community's primary functions and personalities. The following is an edited version of that report:

Since the *Boonara* estate was subdivided into agricultural farms in 1911 the settlers have been carrying on dairying in a small way, and large size herds have naturally been built up through the course of years, until today large quantities of cream are being sent to the surrounding butter factories ... A tour through the district, however, soon reveals the fact that stud herds are conspicuous by their absence. As a general rule the dairy stock consists of the common class of cow, but some of the younger breeders are alive to the fact that it pays to keep only pure-bred animals, and several of them are now starting on the right lines and building up dairy herds well worthy of the names.

Among the more notable of these breeders is Mr W. Pearce, of *Fairview*, who is the proud possessor of a small herd of quality A.I.S. stock. He early realised that to make a success of the undertaking, blood animals were necessary, and over 10 years ago he commenced to build up his herd on sound principles. He has been on the present property at *Fairview* for the past seven years ...

In the Manumbar Area

A good deal of dairying is also being carried on at that section of *Manumbar* station which was cut up for selection in 1870, and cream is now being supplied to the Nanango factory from there by about 20 settlers. Mr A. Porter, who has one of the biggest holdings in that area, until about five years ago, was carrying on both grazing and dairying, but finding that dairying was the better proposition, he now confines his activities solely to that industry ... It is estimated that about 800 gallons of cream go to the factory daily from Manumbar ...

J.E. Anderson

Mr J.E. Anderson, produce merchant, specialises in lucerne chaff, and many hundreds of tons pass through his hands annually. Mr Anderson has had a long experience in the growing and handling of lucerne, he for many years being one of the largest and most successful growers of lucerne on the famous *Boonara* flats. Mr Anderson was also one of the first settlers to grow lucerne in the Goomeri district, and won the prize in 1913, donated by the Goomeri Land Co. for the best crop of lucerne to be grown within two years of the opening for selection of the *Boonara* estate. A few years ago Mr Anderson opened business in Goomeri ...

The Growth of the Settlement

New settlers began to arrive and it was about this time that the late Michael Tansey selected *Lakeview*, comprising about 35,000 acres. The *Oakfields* estate was taken up about the same time by Henry Phipps, whilst Malcolm Dickson, present crown land ranger at Gympie, went on to a place called *Intalla*, on *Boonara* ... The year 1884 saw the introduction of Dutton's Land or Grazing Farm Act, and under it no holding could be taken up as freehold tenure. *Weivehurst* station came into being under this Act being taken up by Mr Theo. Simpson, but eventually it passed into the hands of Mr O.C. Fleming.

Another station of note today, *Kimbombi*, which is about eight miles from Goomeri, was selected as a grazing farm of 10,000 acres at this time by Mr W.T. Chippendale, of Gympie, and was stocked with nearly all horses and cattle. *Kimbombi*, after a period of years, changed hands, Mr O.C. Fleming, a wealthy Englishman, who for many years was a resident of Toowoomba, being the purchaser. He greatly improved the holding and some of the Kilkivan land adjoining was secured, making the total area of the estate somewhere about 15,000 acres. The ownership again changed, this time the estate being bought by a man named Ralston, who, at one time, was manager of a branch office of the Q.N. Bank in North Queensland. He eventually sold out to the late Mr J.C. Mayne, whose name will go down to posterity as one of Goomeri's greatest public benefactors. Mr Mayne was a native of New South Wales, coming from Rothbury ...

In 1916, the late Mr J.C. Mayne of *Kimbombi*, purchased the *Leamba* estate of something like 3500 acres through Mr G.E. Jones. Some of the *Kimbombi* leases were commencing to fall due, and in order to consolidate his property Mr Mayne appointed Mr Jones as agent. As exchange was effected with the government, Mr Mayne getting one acre of *Kimbombi* back for every one and a half acres of *Leamba*. *Leamba* estate is now called Cinnabar soldier settlement ...

In the early days of the settlement postal facilities were provided at the railway station, but the demands on the time of the railway staff were so great that the department informed the post office that it would have to make other arrangements for the handling of its business. A small shop was then rented in Jones Street, where for two or three years the work was carried on. The first postmaster was Mr H. Bristow, a very capable and courteous officer.

The needs of quicker communication were also making themselves felt and telephones were installed. Three well-known citizens, Messrs W.B. Lawless, J.C. Mayne, and G.E. Jones, acted as guarantors for a continuous telephone service, but they were never called upon to meet their obligations, there being sufficient business from the start to fully cover the guarantee. Goomeri was also one of the first country towns to introduce the party system of telephonic communication. Ten houses, with a code ring for each, were allowed to each line ...

Again, about 1925 it was found necessary to erect new and more commodious postal premises in the main street, and a ... residence for the postmaster was also provided ...

The business men have also shown their confidence in the district by erecting the latest types of buildings, with modern frontages. Messrs Wise Bros were the first to launch out, constructing a fine reinforced concrete building, at present occupied by Messrs Higgins and Bourne. Mr W. McIvor followed with modern brick premises, whilst Mr T.H. Spencer was responsible for the erection of a concrete building for a garage. Two fine banking buildings, the Q.N. Bank and National Bank of Australasia Ltd., have also been completed in addition to many others. Further hotel accommodation was also found to be necessary, and the Grand Hotel, a fine commodious structure, was built by Messrs Jones Bros., whilst the Boonara Hotel, Goomeri's first building of note, has been added to on two occasions.

G.E. Jones

Mr G.E. Jones is a descendant of one of the original owners of the *Boonara* estate on which Goomeri now stands. His father was Mr G.H. Jones, who with his brother, Mr D.M. Jones, were sons of Mr David Jones, of the well-known Sydney firm, and took over the *Boonara* estate. Mr G.H. Jones represented the Burnett district in the Legislative Assembly in Sir Thomas McIlwraith's government.

Mr G.E. Jones was born on the *Boonara* estate, and he has grown up with the district. He was sent to Sydney to be educated, and he returned to *Boonara* in 1882. He then worked on the station for eight or nine years. Mr Llewellyn Jones, the present holder of the remaining portion of the *Boonara* homestead, went to England for a trip, Mr Jones was left in charge of the sheep on the station, while Mr Ernest Hillcroft was in control of the cattle.

Mr Jones later managed the *Kilkivan* estate and was in charge of numerous properties in the Burnett, including *Europa* and *Barfield*. After spending a number of years in the Burnett, Mr Jones returned to the old homestead at *Boonara*, which in later years was cut up for closer settlement. During the last twelve or fourteen years, Mr Jones has carried on business in Goomeri as a livestock salesman and commission agent ...

Mr Jones worked *Boonara* as a grazing area until some twenty-two years ago when, realising that the era of closer settlement was setting in, he sold the property to the Goomeri Land Company, the original owner retaining only the homestead block where he resided until his death. He served for many years on the Kilkivan Shire Council acting as chairman for several terms.²⁶

A police station was first established at Goomeri in February 1918, the police officer in charge was Constable J.J. Burke, who remained there from February until May of that year. He was succeeded by Constable J. Barber until April 1923, when he was also transferred, his place being taken by Constable M. Forry. Although a police service had been available from that time, any business requiring the services of a clerk of petty sessions or any court work had always to be taken to Murgon. This practice, owing to the rapid growth of the township, was found to be inconvenient, and an agitation was commenced for the construction of a court house at Goomeri. The attorney-general, John Mullan, paid a visit to the area, and later, upon the recommendation of Mr J. Landy, P.M., who made extensive inquiries as to the business available, he agreed to the construction of a court-house. The old police station was situated on the police reserve in Laird Street, and when it was found that the department intended to proceed with the construction of the new buildings on that site a request was made that a more suitable position be selected closer to the town area. Again the department agreed, and land was obtained in Moore Street close to the business area. The construction of the new court house and police residence and office combined was then commenced by the Public Works Department, only local timbers being used. The official opening ceremony was performed by the then attorney-general, Neil Macgroarty, on Friday, 11 April, 1930, the day being a gala one in Goomeri. The under secretary of the Justice Department Mr G. Carter, Mr J. Landy P.M., the first magistrate to hold a court in the building, and Mr F. Power, solicitor of Gympie, were amongst those present, while the residents of Goomeri and district turned out in force for the opening.²⁷

Some businesses at Goomeri have included that of Miss A.E. Beer who ran a shop selling fruit and vegetables. Butler's boarding house was operated on the site where the swimming pool was later constructed. Coleman's store was one of the more popular businesses, as we have seen, it was sold to Terry and F.G. Wise in 1914. A shop was operated by the Seccombe family, T.H. Spencer, the timber merchant with extensive sawmill interests, owned and operated his garage in Boonara Street. J. Sears and Co. were stock and station agents, G.E. Jones also operated a stock and station agency, and Sealy Perrett owned a butcher's shop. The South Burnett Cordial and Aerated Water Works was owned by W.E. Parke. There were several cafes in Goomeri, these included the Goomeri Cafe and Boonara Cafe. Arthur Kopp and William Toop were builders, the first pharmacy in the town was that of D. Scott Hyslop. Bob Raynor moved his boot and shoe business to Goomeri from Kilkivan, as did Ted Dickenson who moved his saddlery business. C.A. Wimberley owned a grocery store in Moore Street, Roy Florence also operated a grocery store. A. Theodore began an ice works in Boonara Street and E. Eisentrager owned a barber's business, operating from a room at the Boonara Hotel. S. Gatfield was a solicitor, operating from 1932 until 1942.²⁸

Head stockman on *Boonara* for many of the years during the tenure of Llewellyn Mander Jones was Frederick Nissen. Nissen was born in Denmark and emigrated to Queensland in 1866 landing with his parents at Brisbane on 17 September that year after a voyage of seventeen weeks. Although he was only twelve years of age at the time, he quickly found employment with Carl Zietz, a cordial manufacturer at Gayndah. Later he worked at driving horses for the copper mines at Mount Perry. After leaving this employment he took charge of the coach horses at Degilbo and subsequently worked as a stockman on *Degilbo* station. In this work he covered most of the state at various times and later moved to *Boonara* where he worked as Jones's head stockman for approximately twenty-five years. The press later reported of him: "Though a man of few words he sometimes told some very interesting stories of the early days. He was an exemplary character and never touched strong drink or tobacco and was always ready to give a helping hand

to those in need.' He married Mary Anna Kost in 1887, the daughter of a Gayndah settler family. He died on 2 August, 1939, aged eighty-seven years and eleven months.²⁹

Llewellyn Mander Jones died on 16 March, 1933, his obituary stating: 'By the death of Mr L.M. Jones which took place at *Boonara* on Thursday ... after a short illness, Queensland loses one of the oldest of that band of pioneers who have done so much towards the building up of the pastoral industry of the state. Mr Jones had reached the age of seventy-five years and his life was probably unique inasmuch as he was born at *Boonara* which was his home during his long and useful life, and died and was buried in the station cemetery.'³⁰

Mr J. Grieve was one of the region's early residents, his parents having come to the district during the early 1890s to take up *Ettrickdale*. J. Grieve's father was widely believed to have been the first person to introduce Hereford bulls directly from England. J. Grieve had a tragic death. On Saturday 7 October, 1933, Mr Grieve, his wife and son, attended a sports meeting at *Boobyjan*, driving to the meeting in their car. While returning home they had to cross *Boonara* Creek but while doing so the car stalled. Mr Grieve got out to crank the car which lurched forward and pinned him beneath it. Mrs Grieve went to his aid while Grieve's son rushed off to find help. Mrs Grieve had great difficulty in keeping her husband's head above water and it was clear that he had been badly injured. He died soon afterwards and was interred at the Goomeri cemetery.³¹

Another of the region's first settlers was Francis Hunt who owned a property called *Glenrock*. Hunt was born in Somerset, England, in 1855, and came to Australia aboard the sailing vessel *Mary Pleasant* with his parents when he was just two years of age. On its return journey the *Mary Pleasant* was lost at sea. The Hunt family settled at Ipswich where Mr Hunt senior was engaged in cotton farming and where he also owned vast tracts of rich coal bearing land, unfortunately he sold this land before the coal deposits became valuable. After completing his education, Francis Hunt lived and worked in many places, he travelled to Western Queensland where he worked on the Roma rail line and then went to Mount Abundance where he drove bullock teams, later moving to the central west where he was engaged in drawing wool for a number of sheep stations. After working at a variety of other positions and marrying a Miss McEwan at Monseldale, Hunt selected his land in the South Burnett where he became heavily involved in the production of Hereford and Shorthorn cattle. He died at the Nanango Hospital, aged eighty-eight years, on 23 October, 1943, his wife having predeceased him six years previously.³²

The growth of the township from those first jubilant months following the 1911 sale was very strong, primarily due to a variety of reasons, excellent agricultural growth following the taking up of so many farms in the region, and the demand for timber which, during the first decade of the century, was also very strong. An example of this powerful agricultural growth may be seen in the fact that by March 1912, just twelve months after the *Boonara* sale, approximately three hundred and fifty gallons of cream were being sent from the Goomeri region to the various butter factories each week.³³

A visitor to the town in August 1911, five months after the *Boonara* sale, stated that the most notable sign of progress lay with the construction of the *Boonara* Hotel, the new sawmill, J. Coleman's general store, the butter factory, butcher's shop, two blacksmiths, two tinsmiths, trucking yards, a 'mammoth' boarding house and a vast baker's oven.³⁴ J. Murphy's *Boonara* Hotel as described as: '... an exceedingly attractive and new two-storey structure and built throughout with the most careful attention to both comfort and strict sanitation. The fine 12ft wide balcony verandah is not the least of its many attractive features, and the yards, stabling and out-buildings are each and all indicative of the good and foreseeing management by a master mind. Airiness combined with the most immaculate cleanliness even to the smallest details, are conspicuous features.'³⁵

The first major house fire in Goomeri occurred at approximately midnight on 22 December, 1912. The house was owned by a man named Mark Higgins who was away on business in Wondai at the time of the fire, having left a relative to look after the residence. This young man, twenty-two years of age, was sleeping in the house at the time of the fire, and indeed, was still asleep when the house was ablaze from end to end. He was only awakened when a tin of gunpowder stored in the house suddenly exploded, and he managed to make his escape through a nearby window. The

residents of Goomeri were soon on the scene, being awakened by the crackling of the fire and the blast of the gunpowder explosion, however, there was nothing to be done for the building, there was no water supply with which to fight the flames and the house was totally destroyed.³⁶

Despite accidents such as this the community continued to grow. As we have seen, the Goomeri State School, replacing the old provisional school, was opened in January 1913. The school was to have been opened by the local M.L.A., Robert Hodge, but as he could not attend, various addresses were given by people such as Mr J.J. Murphy, chairman of the school committee and Mr L. Clark the honorary secretary of the same committee. Approximately two hundred people attended the opening and the Goomeri band gave a performance. The afternoon was filled with sports and games activities and money was collected for the construction of a school fence.³⁷

Notes and Sources

Chapter Forty-three

Goomeri and District — an Early History

1. SBT. 19 June, 1936, p 7.
2. M/C. 30 January, 1920 p 3.
3. SBT. 30 March, 1988, p 22.
4. SBT. 8 March, 1989, p 2.
5. M/C. 21 February, 1903, p 3.
6. Waterson, p 174.
7. Copy of the marriage certificate of Andrew William Euler, the son of August and Anna Catherina Euler, dated 19 June, 1894, Kilkivan Historical Society and letter to the author from Marjorie Batts, great-granddaughter of August and Anna Euler.
8. Isles Love advertisement, Kilkivan Historical Society.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Reproduced in SBT. 26 October, 1961.
12. For further details see: Logan, p 341.
13. M/C. 30 April, 1930, p 5.
14. SBT. 7 March, 1930, p 2.
15. A listing of buyers, originally published by the K/H. may be read in Logan, pp 182-83.
16. SBT. 13 June, 1973, p 23.
17. SBT. 6 April, 1966, p 2.
18. *The Burnett Bush Telegraph*, May, 1994, pp 2-3, 40-41.
19. M/C. 30 April, 1930, p 5.
20. SBT. 3 July, 1936, p 2.
21. For further details on businesses at Tansey see: Logan, pp 297-99.
22. Some details of these families may be seen in Logan, pp 232-36.
23. SBT. 5 November, 1959, p 10.
24. M/C. 19 June, 1943, p 3.
25. SBT. 13 December, 1951, p 8.
26. SBT. 24 March, 1933, p 6.
27. For further details of this opening and a report which also details many of the businesses then operating in Goomeri, see: M/C. 30 April, 1930, pp 5-14.
28. Further details of these businesses may be seen in Logan, pp 273-89.
29. SBT. 11 August, 1939, p 2.
30. SBT. 24 March, 1933, p 4.
31. SBT. 13 October, 1933, p 7.
32. For further details on the life of Francis Hunt see: K/H. 11 November, 1943, p 3.
33. M/C. 23 March, 1912, p 10.
34. M/C. 24 August, 1911, p 3.
35. Ibid.
36. M/C. 31 January, 1913, p 8.
37. For further details of the opening see: M/C. 31 January, 1913, p 8.

The Hall of Memory at Goomeri

One of the most significant building projects in the history of Goomeri, and certainly one that brought the community together as no other building project had done in the region, was the construction of the Hall of Memory, which was opened in July 1926 and is now owned by the Kilkivan Shire Council.

The construction of this impressive hall had taken approximately three and a half years. It was decided to construct the hall when it became evident that the existing hall, a small structure adjoining the Boonara Hotel, had become inadequate to serve the growing community. The local sub-branch of the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' League convened a meeting on 7 October, 1922, which received enthusiastic support, a committee of twelve people was appointed, this was comprised of six Goomeri residents and six returned soldiers. J.C. Mayne was elected chairman and T.M. Wise was appointed secretary. Through the generosity of J.C. Mayne, well known for similar gestures, an exchange of blocks of land was effected and the hall committee subsequently became the owner of the block of land on the corner of McGregor and Boonara Streets where the hall would finally be constructed. The committee also purchased under auction at the Gympie Land Court the adjoining quarter acre allotment in Boonara Street. The town was canvassed for donations and there were several public functions held in order to raise money, these included military balls.

The well known and highly respected architect, P.O.E. Hawkes, attended two public meetings and submitted two sets of plans for the hall. He also suggested that the hall should face Boonara Street and this suggestion was adopted by the committee.

When the fund reached the sum of approximately £600 the committee approached several banking institutions for a loan but was rejected on every occasion. However, a Brisbane building company offered to advance the required capital of a further £800 with the provision that the company be awarded the contract to construct the hall and that all materials for its construction be obtained from that company. At around this time the chairman of the committee, J.C. Mayne, suddenly died, and committee meetings temporarily ceased. However, J.E. Stanton was later appointed chairman and once again the project was revived. A large hall in Nanango was put up for sale and members of the committee visited that town on two occasions to inspect the building and finally to arrange for its purchase. The building contractors, William Toop and Arthur Kopp, were appointed to remove the hall, and, with the help of dozens of volunteer workers, to reconstruct it at Goomeri. Volunteers excavated the site and all the holes for the stumps were sunk by voluntary labour, a party of twenty-five men with four motor trucks removed tons of soil from the site. A crow's ash floor was purchased at a cost of £112, and in addition to the main stage there was an orchestral stage fitted with brass railings. There were two dressing rooms, and a piano was donated by Mrs J.C. Mayne. The hall was leased to Mr A. Rich who installed: '... an up to date electric lighting plant with alternate red and blue bulbs around the proscenium.' This proscenium circled the stage and was: '... handsomely covered with Wonderlich moulding picked out in colours of cream, gold and blue.'

The hall was opened by the state commandant, General Foote, on 28 July, 1926. A large crowd had gathered at the scene and a guard of honour was drawn up in front of the building. Afterwards, the official party enjoyed a 'sumptuous luncheon', followed by a sports carnival at the sports ground, and that evening a concert was held in the hall, the press claiming: 'The day's proceedings were brought to a close with a concert in the hall. Large as the building is, it was quite inadequate to hold the crowd that had gathered. Seating accommodation had been provided for 800, but this was not nearly sufficient, over 200 having to stand.'¹

Another memorial to those who served their country from the Goomeri region is the clock tower in the centre of town. The clock was constructed by George Klumpp and was unveiled by the state president of the R.S.L. Mr R.D. Huish, on Friday 8 November, 1940, the cost of the memorial and clock was £675. It was erected by the Kilkivan Shire Council with money coming from a variety of sources, including loan moneys granted for town improvement, the proceeds of a sports day and dance held on 6 June, 1939, Anzac Day service collections and rates from Division Two of Kilkivan Shire.²

Notes and Sources

Chapter Forty-four

The Hall of Memory at Goomeri

1. M/C, 31 July, 1926, p 6.
2. *The District News*, 12 May, 1980, p 9.

Progress and Set-backs in Goomeri

By 1927 Goomeri was showing every evidence of a prosperous rural community. Most of the businesses had been expanded and new dwellings were being constructed at a rate that had: '... kept builders working at full pressure.'¹

Many of the town's new buildings were quite prestigious affairs. The National Bank, for example, constructed by a builder named McArthur and designed by an architect named M. Stanley, was described as having many silky oak fittings and even the counters were of silky oak.

Banking in the small town was one of the area's most important functions. As we have seen, the first land sale at Goomeri could not have been carried out without the participation of the Royal Bank of Queensland.

On 1 March, 1911, the Royal Bank of Queensland, later, through mergers, to become the National Bank, sent two bank officers from its Nanango branch to investigate the possibilities of establishing a branch at Goomeri. The press later reported: 'The first banking business ever done in Goomeri was transacted in a tent situated ... near Moore Street. This occurred at the time of the sub-division sale of the *Boonara* estate. Mr W. Moffat, of the Royal Bank at Nanango, visiting the area to treat the business of the sale. Afterwards small wooden premises were secured, and Mr H.L.C. Clarke became the manager. Under different managers, the bank was carried on for years, until eventually (1917) the Royal Bank merged with the Bank of North Queensland to form the Bank of Queensland. Under this name the bank continued to function, and then another merger took place, and it became known as the National Bank of Australasia, Ltd. Today this bank has erected modern reinforced concrete premises. An interesting fact is that Mr Moffat, who commenced the branch, in after years rose to the position of general manager of the Primary Producers' Bank of Sydney ...'²

This report gives Mr W. Moffat as the bank's first manager, however, according to documentation obtained from the National Bank's Group Archives in Springvale Victoria, the first manager of the bank was D.S. Forbes, who only remained in that position from the opening of the bank on 1 March, 1911, to 23 March that year. In 1914 Forbes joined the Queensland National Bank and rose to become its general manager. Upon the union of the Q.N. and the National he was appointed a member of the head office board of directors and was also chairman of the Queensland Board of Advice.³

Thus the branch has moved from humble beginnings through a range of accommodation. Security in that early tent bank must have been something of a concern to the first bank officers. A safe was established in the tent, having been sent by rail to the fledgling township, and the tent offered little in the way of protection against robbery.⁴ The Goomeri branch of the Queensland National Bank was established in January 1926 when brick premises were constructed. Reginald Robertson was its first manager. He was succeeded by C.M. Lloyd in 1927.⁵

A report of the bank's operations later stated:

Incidents, humorous and otherwise, are associated with the branch's existence, one of the tales that old-timers of the town love to tell being the one about the accountant who was tarred and feathered. The reason for this rough treatment of a bank officer has become obscured with the passing of time, but it appears that this particular officer was anything but popular with the local element, and that the tarring and feathering took place at the old cheese factory which once stood on a site near the present cordial factory in Jones Street.

There were the managers with leanings towards horse flesh, those who were noted for their musical accomplishments, and others who (give a dog a bad name) are still referred to as 'lousy coots'.

The honour of being the first customer of the branch goes to Michael J. McGrath, forerunner of many who were to make the Royal, and later the National, their bank. Mr A.E. Heers, who was manager from 1929 to 1935, is credited with being associated with Goomeri chemist Mr A.E. Wright in the construction of the Goomeri golf course. Mr Heers was followed by Messrs A.H. Hodgson (1935–1941), E.R. Heers (1941–1946), A. Mizen (1946–52) and L.M. Crowe 1952–59.⁶

A receiving office of the bank was opened at Tansey in 1947, this was closed in 1970.⁷

Another impressive building in Goomeri was Bourne's Emporium, a reinforced concrete premises in Boonara Street. The building was described as having large British plate glass windows with lead lights overhead, the interiors featured many maple fittings and some 350 tons of rock had gone into its foundations. Other new buildings included the Hall of Memory, new Q.C.W.A. rooms, various other shops such as a pharmacy, butcher's, cordial factory and many more like the Grand Hotel which was described incredulously as having: '... electric light throughout.'⁸

A disastrous fire swept through some of these relatively new buildings in January 1926 when the block of buildings which included H.F. Seccombe's general store, refreshment rooms and residence, together with two other shops, the property of a Miss Rich, were totally destroyed.⁹

In December the following year the most disastrous fire to that date occurred when Anderson and Hoskin's new public hall was destroyed. Also destroyed were Anderson Brothers' garage, the blacksmith's shop occupied by J. Ridley, the produce store depot and the tailor's shop of H.F. Ramsey (which was owned by W. McIvor). On the previous night an entertainment evening had been held at the hall, this was a children's display of eurhythmics, the hall being cleared out at 1.30 a.m. An hour later the fire alarm was raised by Mrs T.E. Kelly who had awakened to see the glare of the flames reflecting on her bedroom wall. Nothing could be done to save the buildings which were destroyed within minutes, the press later reporting: 'Viewed on Monday the ruins presented a scene of desolation, heaps of blackened and twisted iron with heavy timbers still smouldering in a number of places, twisted parts of motors, iron, electric equipment ... the hall was a fine structure ... and the proprietors had spared no expense in fitting it. A conservative estimate of its value would be £1500, whilst a piano, seating, scenery and other furnishings were worth at least a further £300. Joined to the hall by the supper room was the garage. Here three motor cars were incinerated ... also two motor bikes.'¹⁰

One of the most spectacular fires in Goomeri occurred during the early hours of the morning of Monday 22 July, 1927, when the cordial factory was burned down. The building was owned by the Wise brothers and operated as a cordial factory by Stewart and Sawtell. At around 2.30 that morning Mr C. Murphy, an upholsterer who worked and slept in a building adjoining the factory, was suddenly awakened by the sound of falling bottles in the factory. He investigated and saw that the interior of the building was in flames. Murphy immediately began to move his stock from the shop, and succeeded in saving all of it, the cordial plant and all its stock were, however, destroyed, as those who attended the scene of the fire were unable to enter the building. As the flames devoured the factory a considerable sensation was created by the explosion of two gas cylinders which threw pieces of metal in all directions and damaged several buildings. Some of these pieces of metal were up to three feet in length. One piece became embedded in the roof of a garage, another passed through the window of a nearby office, while a third landed in a lane-way between the Grand Hotel and the store operated by Higgins and Bourne, the flying scrap metal gouged out a large hole in the ground. The damage bill for the fire was estimated at around £3000.¹¹

The Grand Hotel was also to be the subject of a fire, in December 1939, the worst fire in the history of the town, during which eight people were to die. Among those who escaped was a baby girl, just seven months of age, who was thrown by her mother, Mrs Gladys Edwards, to some spectators below. The mother then turned back to the hotel in order to aid a friend,

Eileen Eisentrager, however, she too was overcome with smoke and flames and was killed. Forty years later the widower of Mrs Edwards, Frank Edwards of Bridgewater, Victoria, recalled that his wife had been particularly fond of dancing and had gone to the hotel that night to attend a dance that was being held there. Fred and Gladys were friends of the owners of the hotel, John William Parker and his wife, Mrs E. Parker, both of whom also died in the blaze. Frank Edwards recalled that he had been working late cutting timber at Dadamarine Creek and had decided not to attend the dance and therefore was not at the hotel on the night of the tragedy.¹²



The Grand Hotel, Goomeri, destroyed by fire in December 1939.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

Arthur Boyce was one of heroes of the night, he had been staying at the hotel and only managed to escape from the fire by jumping down from the rear of the hotel, a sudden exit which sprained the ligature in his left foot. However, after hearing the screams of a woman from the balcony, Boyce clambered up the fire escape ladder, broke a wooden blind across the fire escape which lead from the front balcony, and shouted a warning to those people who were still in the hotel and may not have been aware of the blaze. Despite these attempts, Boyce received no reply and soon afterwards the smoke drove him back.

The alarm was raised by Mrs Dulcie Cheshire and some friends and relatives including Freda Schulte and Miss Una Dunn. These women had attended a dance at Murgon that night and returning at around 1.30 a.m. they went to bed at the hotel. About two hours later they were awakened by loud crashes which, at first, they believed was thunder. Mrs Cheshire later stated: 'Clouds of smoke pouring into the room when we opened the door told us what had happened, we were lucky in being able to run out through a small passageway to the back. The blaze seemed further over in the direction of the lounge.'

The only woman to escape from the first floor was Eva Buchanan, who jumped from the balcony, receiving injuries to one of her feet as she did so.

During the fire the post office adjoining the hotel was also completely destroyed, however, due to the quick action of the postmaster, J.M. Dean, and his wife, most of the mail at the office was saved and a young man named Leslie Hall who was working at the exchange was also saved. The press later reported: 'Mr and Mrs Dean removed their two sons to safety and, running across barefooted in pyjamas to the post office, got Hall out of bed. It was impossible to save the office, and they removed office records and valuables. Two men, Arthur Wimberley and William Toop, assisted in the saving of ninety-five per cent of Christmas mail and parcels. An empty linesmen's shed, at the rear of the post office site, has been converted into a temporary post office.'¹³

One of the men to survive the fire was Richard (Dick) Collard, a well known and highly respected timber truck driver working at Manumbar who later became manager of the Wilson Hart sawmill at Elgin Vale. Collard, who was originally booked into the Boonara Hotel but, 'under a misapprehension', had slept in the lounge of the Grand that night, later stated: 'Crackling awoke me, and I saw flames coming in the fanlight. I could not reach the door because of the flames and smoke pouring into the room. Suddenly I saw reflections in a window, and I smashed through it into the dining room. The heat was terrific, and I could not get my breath. I managed to reach a window, crashed through it, and fell on my back on to the footpath.'¹⁴

At that moment Collard heard the cries of Gladys Edwards as she desperately attempted to get the attention of anyone who could save her baby. Collard shouted that she should jump with the baby in her arms, however, she refused and dropped the baby from the first floor into Collard's arms, shouting as she did so: 'Wait a minute,' before disappearing back into the flames and smoke. She was not seen again. The baby, seven months of age Marie Edwards, was almost unharmed during her ordeal, she suffered only a bruise to the cheek and was taken to the hospital at Wondai.

The barman at the hotel at the time of the fire was Peter Bendel, who also lived at the hotel. He was awakened by the screams of the women, however, the smoke was so thick that he collapsed and was only saved by some fresh air drifting through an open window. He later stated: 'I went right out to it, the next thing I remember is a breeze through the window. That had revived me. I staggered to the window, and dropped out, I fainted again as soon as I hit the street.'¹⁵

Arthur Boyce had also survived the smoke and flames. He too had been awakened by the screams, he ran out into the hall but the smoke was so thick that it drove him back into his room. He managed to get to a window, climbed through and jumped to the street below. He later said: 'Bob Rickson (also reported as Rixon) was in the next room and it was not long since we had finished our yarn and said good-night. His window was in a less favourable position. He did not have a chance.'¹⁶



The site of the Grand Hotel, Goomeri, following the fire of December 1939 during which eight people were killed.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

Volunteers could do little to save the hotel, although a bucket brigade was quickly formed and their work prevented the flames spreading to the Boonara Hotel just opposite, or the postmaster's residence which was also across the street from the burning hotel. The hotel was owned by Corser and Co. of Maryborough. It had been purchased just over a year previously in August or September, 1938. The seven years' lease to the hotel had been purchased by J.W. Parker, also in 1938. The victims included: John William Parker, 40, licensee, who actually managed to escape from the building, but later died from burns and shock; Mrs E. Parker, 41, his wife; Gladys Edwards, 24, a hotel guest; Pearl Frahm, 25, a barmaid; Eileen Eisentrager, 30, a clerk-typist; Allen Gordon Carter, 35, who had booked into the hotel on the previous day; Robert Rixon, 23, of Grafton, a timber-cutter; and another man named George Eddie who was employed as a farm hand by G. Hooper, of *Booinbah*.¹⁷

An enquiry into the fire was begun in the Goomeri court-house in January the following year, the press reporting: 'Pitiable scenes were witnessed in the Goomeri court-house on Thursday ... (during) the inquiry into the fire at the Grand Hotel in which eight people were burnt to death on the morning of December 23. As evidence was given of the sufferings of the victims, people in the public section sobbed, and women had to be escorted outside.'¹⁸

One of the primary witnesses in the case was Sergeant H.H. Eiser. He told the court that he had been awakened by the telephone ringing at 3.30 on the morning of the fire. Looking through his window, he could see the glare of the fire and smoke rising into the night sky. From his home he could actually see the hotel and the smoke pouring from the verandah of the building. He rushed to the scene where he met another man, a local butcher named J.E. English, who shouted: 'Thank God you have arrived and can take charge, there's a woman at the end of this verandah and we can't get her out.' By then the top portion of the hotel was ablaze, as was the corner of the lower back portion of the building. A woman could clearly be heard screaming. With English, the sergeant went to the end of the verandah where they found Arthur Boyce on the escape ladder. The police officer shouted to Boyce, instructing him to smash the wooden window blind in order to get the trapped woman out. Boyce immediately smashed the blind and thick black smoke poured from the window. Another person, Andrew Mann, also a local butcher, attempted to get in through the window but was forced back by the flames and smoke. By then the woman had stopped screaming. English now turned to the sergeant and told him that there were many other people in the building but that rescuers could not awaken them. He began shouting and banging on the walls of the hotel but received no response. English also said that three women who had been sleeping in the lower portion of the hotel had all escaped, these were Una Dunn, Dulcie Cheshire and Freda Schulte. The sergeant testified:

I could see then that it was impossible to save any person from the remainder of the building as the smoke was coming through every portion and the whole building was ablaze. This was only about three minutes after I arrived. I hurried out into Boonara Street and saw the Boonara Hotel was in danger, and told a man named (Dick) Collard to go through Boonara Hotel and waken everybody who may be asleep there. A man named Douglas Gorden came up and said: 'Come here, Jack Parker (the landlord) is in a terrible mess.' I went with him into the yard at the rear of the building, and saw Jack Parker lying at the side of a drain in the railway yard. He (Parker) said: 'Sergeant, take me away from this terrible heat, I smashed my leg and my ankle's broke.' He was groaning in terrible pain. We carried him away and asked him where Mrs Parker was. He replied: 'She is in there', indicating the burning hotel. 'She woke me up and then she went mad, and I could not get her.' He appeared to be terribly burnt and had no clothing on. I placed him behind a pine log out of the heat. While carrying him across the yard I saw Assistant Station Manager John Hickey and called him to ring for the Murgon ambulance. He replied: 'I can't get Murgon yet, they don't answer.' ... I said to Hickey: 'Go and tell Fred Wickham to come here.' I know he had first aid experience. I then saw a man named Clifford Gorden running across the railway yard and told him to go and bring the doctor.

I returned to Boonara Street and organised a bucket brigade which saved the Boonara Hotel, postmaster's residence and shops on the eastern side of the post office. The Boonara Hotel caught fire but was extinguished.¹⁹

After this the sergeant put out fires in the nearby garage, both doors had been almost burnt off. The post office was on fire as only about ten feet separated the burning hotel from that building.

One of the reasons why many of the people had been unable to escape from the fire was the fact that some of the wooden window blinds had been nailed down and could not be raised. One of the survivors, Muriel Buchanan, testified that she had come to Goomeri on Friday night, 22 December, and had checked into the Grand Hotel. That evening she had attended the picture theatre in Goomeri, later returning to the hotel where she occupied room eight. She then went to a dance. After returning from the dance she went to bed. The next thing she remembered was the sound of a woman screaming. She could smell smoke and she climbed from her bed and walked onto the verandah facing Boonara Street. She saw fire and smoke coming from one of the bedrooms. In room fourteen she could hear a man snoring. She later stated: '(I) saw Mrs Edwards on the verandah facing Boonara Street, leaning over the verandah with the baby in her arms. Mrs Edwards said to the men on the ground take the baby, and she dropped the baby down. I said: "Come with me" and caught her by the arm intending to take her down over the rail where I got down. She wrenched her arm away and went to the other end of the verandah. I climbed over and dropped to the ground, the only injury I received was that I jarred my foot. On Friday afternoon (the day before the fire) I had a conversation with Mrs Edwards on the verandah of the hotel, the blinds were down. I tried to pull the blinds up but could not, they were all nailed down with pieces of wood.'²⁰

The barman, Peter Bendel, later testified that the blinds, which he described as being: '... of boards, about an inch thick,' had been nailed down when Parker had taken over the hotel from the previous licensee.

John Sears, a commission agent who had run his business from a shop on the ground floor of the hotel, stated that the blinds on the upper widows, in addition to preventing the trapped people from reaching the fire escape, would have bottled up the dense smoke within the hotel. The reason why the rescuers had been unable to get any of the trapped people to the fire escape was because those trapped inside had been unable to get onto the verandah to reach it.²¹

This was not the first tragedy associated with the hotel. Approximately six years earlier, in April 1933, when the hotel had been managed by Mr F.A. Mitchell, his daughter, Maud Mitchell, had been killed during a motor vehicle accident. The accident had occurred while she, her sisters and her parents had been travelling to Brisbane to attend the wedding of her sister, Blanche. After the accident Maud was taken to the Nanango Hospital where she subsequently died. She was buried at Nanango in April 1933.²²

Despite tragedies such as these, the growth of Goomeri continued throughout the 1930s. On 11 April, 1930, additions to the school were completed and opened, and, as we have seen, at the same time a new court house and police station were opened by the attorney-general, Neil Macgroarty, the press remarking that: '... the day marked another step on the road to progress as far as Goomeri is concerned ...'²³

One of the men present at this opening was Thomas Herbert Spencer, who represented the Goomeri Chamber of Commerce. Spencer was a polemical figure and stands prominent in Goomeri's history. During his life he was deeply involved in the business life of Goomeri, he served on the local council at Kilkivan, was a timber contractor, stock and station agent, sawmill owner, garage proprietor and real estate speculator. Today there are people in Goomeri who both liked and disliked him.

Spencer was born in 1885 at Rosedale, near Bundaberg the son of English immigrants. He was educated at nearby Avondale.

T.H. Spencer was a powerful figure in Goomeri who, at various times, employed large numbers of people and was therefore responsible for helping to support many Goomeri and district families. He owned the sawmill at Elgin Vale, having moved the machinery from his mill at Sefton in 1926. The Sefton mill had run short of logs and that year Spencer had contracted to purchase ten million super feet of logs from the Elgin Vale region to supply his new mill at Elgin Vale. The mill at Elgin Vale was costing approximately £12,000 to build.

However, the move to Elgin Vale, while in the long term it was certainly a sound one financially for Spencer, was also one steeped with initial problems. Due to the general down-turn in the timber industry at that time the mill was forced to close for a while and was purchased by

Wilson Hart of Maryborough in 1927. Spencer was contracted to continue supplying the mill with timber and, according to the reminiscences of Donald Gibb McIntosh, who worked at the mill, was made manager by Wilson Hart and paid £10 per week for his services.²⁴

Spencer later purchased a large property at Elgin Vale and ran it as a dairy, milking over four hundred head of cattle. He moved his business operations into Goomeri where he constructed a garage in Boonara Street, living in a somewhat pretentious house directly opposite. His wife's name was Ethel, they had two children, Larry and Valmai. Larry became a doctor in Sydney and Valmai, after qualifying as an architect, married an officer of the Royal Naval Reserve in 1945 and moved to England where she is still resident.

Spencer served on the Kilkivan Shire Council on several occasions. His terms of office, firstly as a councillor and later as chairman included from May 1927 to May 1930, from May 1936 to May 1943, from May 1945 to May 1946 and from June 1949 to June 1958. He was first elected as chairman in May 1936 and again in June 1949.

Spencer's contribution to public life was acknowledged by the Kilkivan Shire Council in 1958 when the council honoured him by naming a bridge after him.²⁵

Spencer had many friends and just as many enemies, people, mainly contractors, who accused him and still accuse him of short payments for logs and other suspicious business practices. Spencer's main enemy, and it was an almost legendary adversity, was another prominent Goomeri businessman and Kilkivan Shire Council councillor, Percival Marmaduke Perrett (not to be confused with Sealy A. Perrett who also served on the Kilkivan Shire Council). The cause of their acrimonious relationship appears to have been a letter or some other kind of publication distributed by Perrett prior to a local government election. The defamatory remarks in that publication led to a bitter court case, charges being laid in 1952. Thomas Herbert Spencer was the plaintiff, Percival Marmaduke Perrett was the defendant, although the case did not appear before the Supreme Court in Brisbane until 1956.²⁶

Spencer died, aged seventy-seven, just six years later following two consecutive strokes.²⁷ His death occurred at the Goomeri Hospital in late 1961, he was cremated at Mount Thompson Crematorium in Brisbane.²⁸

Notes and Sources

Chapter Forty-five

Progress and Set-backs in Goomeri

1. M/C. 25 February, 1927, p 6.
2. For a comprehensive copy of this report which also details many of the businesses then operating in Goomeri, see: M/C. 30 April, 1930, pp 5-14 and also M/C. 25 February, 1927, p 6.
3. N.A.B. Group Archives.
4. Ibid.
5. M/C. 30 April, 1930, pp 5-14, M/C. 25 February, 1927, p 6 and N.A.B. Group Archives.
6. *Queensland Digest*, Winter 1961, N.A.B. Group Archives.
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8. M/C. 25 February, 1927, p 6.
9. SBT. 8 January, 1926, p 2.
10. SBT. 16 December, 1927, p 2.
11. M/C. 23 July, 1929, p 4.
12. SBT. 20 September, 1989, p 11.
13. S/M. 24 December, 1939.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid, and SBT. 19 January, 1940, p 2.
18. SBT. 19 January, 1940.
19. Ibid, p 2.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid, p 3.
22. M/C. 2 May, 1933, p 8.
23. For full details on the opening of the school, see: M/C. 12 April, 1930, p 11.
24. Letter to the author from Milton Smith, 7 January, 1996.
25. See letter advising Spencer in, State Archives of Queensland, file S, 1950–1959.
26. State Archives of Queensland, file S, 1950–1959 A 21200.
27. Author interview with H.C. Spencer, 31 December, 1995.
28. For a detailed history of T.H. Spencer and his operations at Elgin Vale, see: Matthews, Tony, *The Coffee-pot Mill*, Kilkivan Shire Council, 1997.

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Education at Goomeri

By 1930 there were eleven schools in the Goomeri district where twenty years previously there had not been one. A 1930 report gave the following details:

A provisional school was opened in Goomeri on February 15, 1912, and on the first day 24 scholars attended. The number increased during the first year, and at the end of the period it was found that the average attendance over the 12 months had been 24. A new school was built to accommodate the children, and in January 1913, it was ready for occupation. That school, which stood on the present site of the school residence, was originally built to accommodate 48 children, but the district continued to advance to such an extent that on March 3 in the following year the enrolment had reached 66; and the average attendance was 53. Thus in the short space of one year, from the time of the opening of the school, the attendance had already outgrown the size of the school.

In 1916 the present school building without the recent additions, was constructed, and the children were removed to that building in the month of April. All through the war years, the number of children attending the school continued to grow, in 1920 the number of the roll was 117, and the average attendance was 103. Then the Education Department commenced to build new schools in the outlying parts of the district. Every time a new school was opened it affected the attendance at the base school at Goomeri, a certain number of scholars leaving on each occasion. Each time the Goomeri School again built up, for the district continued to prosper, and last year (1929) the enrolment reached the 164 mark, with an average attendance of 131. The accommodation was again taxed to the utmost, and only a few weeks ago additions were again made to the school to relieve the congestion. These comprise a large airy school room and a new headmaster's office.¹

In 1962 one of the first teachers at the Goomeri School, J.E. Heath, wrote the following important reminiscences of the school and its history:

The March night in 1917 when Anne Gallant arrived at the South Burnett township of Goomeri it was raining hard — had been for two days — and the task of picking her way up from the railway station along the dimly lit main street was no easy one. Miss Gallant was young — a teacher setting out on an adventure — but the introduction to her new life was not exactly an inspiring one. Lugging her port she reached a spot where Raymond's Store stands and with a sigh of relief started to cross the road to Butler's boarding house.

The passage of drays and bullock teams along the dirt road had reduced it to the category of a morass and Miss Gallant had taken only a few paces when the cloying mud sucked her court shoe from her foot. Warily she retrieved it and trudged across to the boarding house ... and the beginning of a life as teacher at the Goomeri State School ... I was at Goomeri before Miss Gallant arrived, and have been in the South Burnett district ever since. I've watched it grow and prosper, I've joined in its triumphs and failures. I stayed on at the school for 35 years ...

The Boonara land sale took place in March, 1911, and during the same year, the men who had purchased land, began to arrive with their families and a request for a school was made to the Department of Public Instruction. Mr Joe Murphy, the proprietor of the then recently erected Boonara Hotel, offered the hall connected with the hotel to the residents, as a temporary building for a school. Consequently, a provisional school was opened in this hall on February 5, 1912, with Miss C. Robertson as the teacher in charge. The hall stood on the ground now occupied by the offices of Mr S.A. Perrett. Twenty-one children were enrolled on the first day and three more were enrolled a fortnight later, bringing the total of 24.

The building of a new state school was underway before the end of the year and was opened in January, 1913. That school stood on the site now occupied by the school residence. It was built to accommodate 48 children. However, the attendance had increased so rapidly that in the same year, 1913, an assistant was sent to help Miss Robertson. This lady was Miss E.C. Wagner, from Brisbane.

By the beginning of 1914, the school had grown considerably and the department decided to appoint a male head teacher and I was the fortunate person selected. I arrived in Goomeri on March 2, 1914, and Miss Robertson was transferred, as head teacher, to a school near Warwick. Miss Wagner was left as my assistant. I found the condition of the school a credit to Miss Robertson and Miss Wagner. How Miss Robertson maintained such a high standard, working, as she had done, next to an hotel for twelve months, I will never know.

Miss Wagner did not remain long with me and was transferred back to Brisbane. She was followed by Miss A.L. Bowen, from Gympie, who also proved herself a very capable teacher and was keenly interested in the flower garden. The attendance still continued to mount rapidly till by the end of 1916, difficulty was experienced in seating the children. Meanwhile, the department had decided to build a new open air school on its present position with three rooms, capable of seating 120 children. It was intended to open this school in January, 1917, but difficulty was experienced in obtaining building materials, through the war, and it was not opened until April, 1917. Miss Gallant arrived in March, 1917, to assist in the new school, but was compelled to take part in the confusion caused by overcrowding in the occupied school.

When I arrived in 1914 the following gentlemen composed the school committee: Messrs L. Clark (chairman), W. Doggrell (secretary), H. Dahlke, J. Zwisler, W. Ross, S.A. Perrett and F.W. Klumpp ...

At that time the school grounds contained a large number of dead trees, some of which were huge. For the first few years the committee and the children, combined in clearing up the grounds. This committee would employ a man to fell the trees and chop off the branches. The children would then roll the branches and smaller logs against the trunks and stumps of the larger trees and gradually burn them ... In spite of all the clearing that was going on, the children found time to form a flower garden, which, in 1916, won first prize in the department's school garden competition for that particular class of school.

When heavy rain fell, the railway dam overflowed, and the water poured over the road and through the school grounds so that the school was cut off from the township. The lady teachers got to school in the following way: the boys used to roll up their trousers, carry beer cases into the stream, hold them down so the water would not carry them away, while the teachers crossed the stream by stepping from case to case ...

After the grounds were cleared of timber I was seized with the desire to make the Goomeri School a model of what I considered a country school should be ... To raise funds we held a series of triennial fetes, five in all, between 1919 and 1931 from which we raised well over £1000 ... With the funds raised we built the tennis court, bought a piano, sunk a well, erected a windmill and water system, so that in the driest of seasons our flower gardens and experimental plots still flourished ...

After we had occupied the new school and the old school had been removed to Goomeri West, we grew cotton in the area now occupied by the school residence. Most of the crops were very successful and we raised up to £30 a year from the sale of the cotton produced. The money from the sale was spent chiefly in buying sporting material for the children ...

In 1927, we had the misfortune to lose most of the school seats when Mr J.E. Anderson's new hall was burnt down in a mysterious fire. Mr Anderson had offered us the new hall for an eurhythmic display. The hall had just been completed, but there were no seats, so we took the school forms for the night. We suffered some inconvenience, but the churches and everyone who had a form in the house came to our assistance, until we could get new forms from Brisbane...

In 1930 the head teacher's office, residence and an extra room were built. Later a second room was added and the staff room was built...

I must mention the first pupil-teacher who completed his training in the school. I refer to Reg Ridley. Reg came to the school after receiving the whole of his education from the correspondence school in March, 1915, but left again in June of the same year. He returned to the school in October, 1919. I was so struck by his ability that, when I was instructed to nominate a pupil-teacher for the school at the beginning of 1920, I submitted his name although he was only a Grade 5 pupil. To become a classified teacher in those days a

pupil-teacher had five examinations to pass; the first being equivalent to Scholarship standard of that time. One has to remember that a pupil-teacher then had to teach all day and do his study after school and in the morning. Reg passed his first examination and then after that he never failed to get 100 per cent in at least one subject in the four remaining examinations...

During World War II when thousands of troops were stationed in and around Goomeri, the school was used by the officers, for planning the New Guinea campaign which was put into effect many months later. No one was allowed near the school at night, and a ring of guards saw that no one got near it. Even I could not approach my office without being challenged. I am sorry to say that many of the soldiers who were trained in this area, lost their lives in the fighting in New Guinea.²

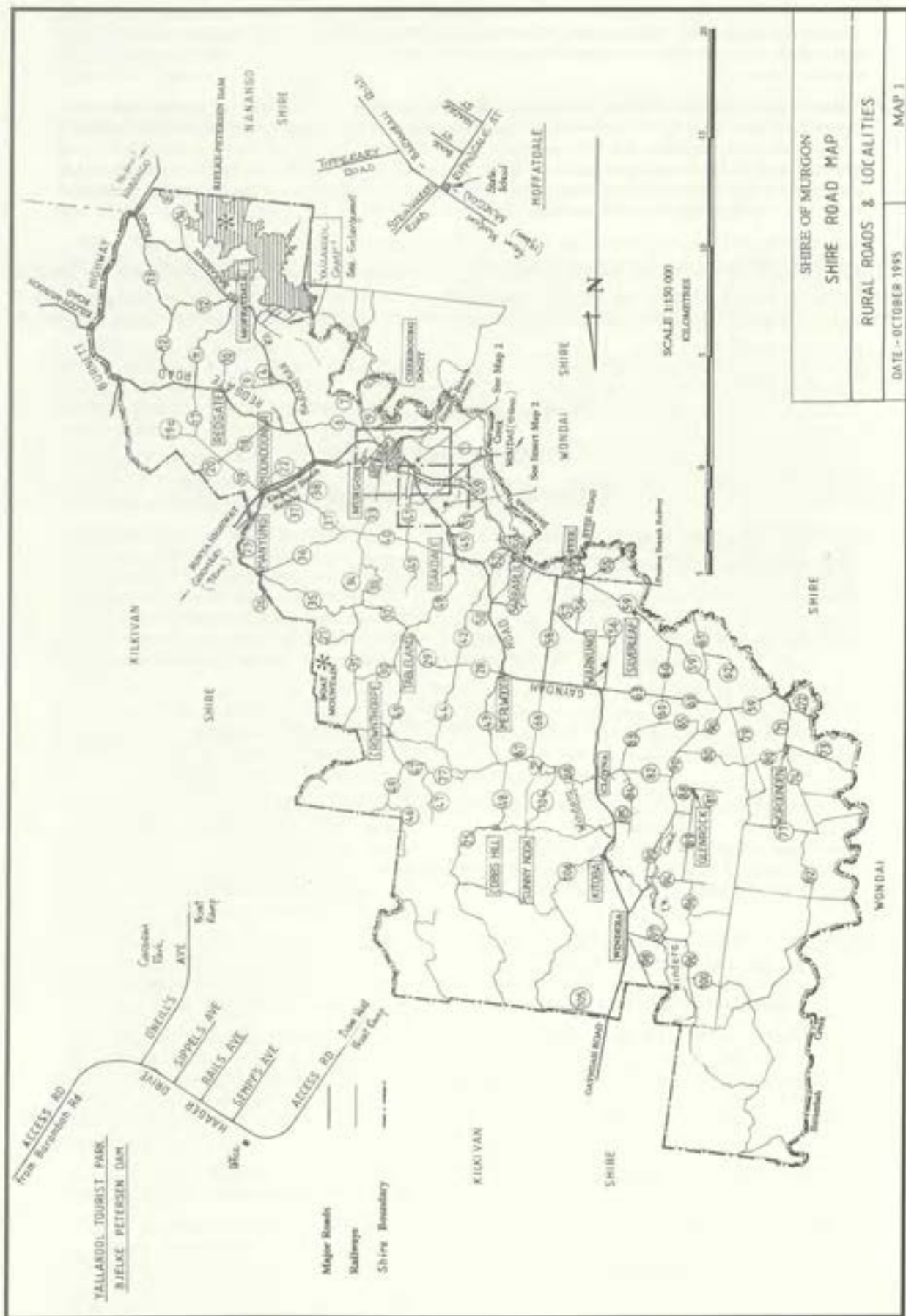
Today Goomeri remains the service centre for the region that once comprised *Boonara* station, it has become well known for its produce, particularly its lucerne and stud cattle and the town is complete with many businesses all of which reflect the success of agrarian measures in the region.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Forty-six

Education at Goomeri

1. M/C. 30 April, 1930, p 10.
2. *South Burnett Times magazine*, 14 June, 1962, p 1.



Murgon and District — the Years of Pastoral Development

As we have seen in previous chapters, the South Burnett district was first settled by the squatters who rode north and west with their massive flocks of sheep to establish enormous land holdings such as *Burrandowan*, *Tarong*, *Taromeo*, *Taabinga*, *Kilkivan*, *Manumbar*, *Barambah* and others. Yet it was not until closer settlement became a reality that the land really started to be opened up and its wealth exploited. This, in conjunction with the laying of the railway lines, was certainly the case in the Murgon region.

Other centres in the South Burnett, principally Nanango and Kilkivan, were able to flourish in later years due to their geographic locations, situated as they were at road and rail junctions which facilitated the transportation of goods. Prosperity also came through the exploitation of the mineral deposits found within those regions, but at Murgon the early years were dominated by pastoral development that led finally to a powerful agrarian ascendancy.

The country which comprises the region we now know as the South Burnett was devoid of European habitation until the closure of the Moreton Bay penal settlement and the subsequent rush to gain land by the wealthy squattocracy. The site where Murgon was later to become established originally formed a part of historic *Barambah* station, first settled by John Stephen Ferriter and Edmund Uhr in about 1843, although no records of this first settlement appear to exist. John Stephen Ferriter was an officer of the Royal Navy and in 1854 served as a Queensland immigration agent.

The holding was originally comprised of ten blocks, these included:

<i>Barambah</i>	25 sq miles
<i>North Barambah</i>	25 sq miles
<i>East Barambah</i>	16000 acres
<i>Barambah Range</i>	16000 acres
<i>Brisbane Range</i>	25 sq miles
<i>Charleston</i>	20000 acres
<i>Cherbourg</i>	16000 acres
<i>Johnstown</i>	16000 acres
<i>Murgon</i>	16000 acres
<i>Stephenton</i>	16000 acres

There are a number of theories concerning the origin of the name of Cherbourg and how it came to be applied to the region, some published reports such as that in *Wilderness to Wealth* (page 238) claim that it was named after the French port, yet C.M. Bancroft, a grandchild of Richard Jones — one time owner of *Barambah* station, wrote in 1949: 'Cherbourg is certainly a misprint for Cherburg, at which village in Shropshire was born in 1786 Richard Jones, who, together with his brothers-in-law, John Stephen Ferriter and Edmund Uhr, took up *Barambah* ... If it be at all possible, for the sake of accuracy, the correct word Cherburg should be substituted for Cherbourg.'¹

The land hunger following the closure of the Moreton Bay penal settlement and the opening up of the colony to squattocratic settlement was driven by the demand in Britain for a fine quality wool. Ever since the Middle Ages when spun clothing forged a thriving wool trade in England,

that country had sought first class wool supplies at the lowest possible prices. At first wool was imported into England from Spain and later from Saxony, sheep farmers in Saxony producing a fine quality wool at inexpensive prices that saw the cost of wool drop from 2/6d per pound in 1815 to 1/6d per pound in 1820. The plunge in price continued until 1927 when wool could be purchased for as low as 9d per pound.² This Saxony wool could only fill a percentage of the British market requirements and manufacturers were soon looking to supplement their short supply with wool from British territories. As the demand for wool in Britain increased, so too did the number of sheep in Australia, and people such as Stephen Ferriter and Edmund Uhr were determined to aid in filling Britain's needs for wool. Yet, generally speaking, land holders such as Ferriter and Uhr were hopelessly unprepared for the tasks they had set themselves, most were inexperienced, they had little understanding of the difficulties of breaking in virgin scrub in order to make it both habitable and profitable, they dreamt of founding a squirearchy in typical English tradition with thousands of acres of land coming under their domination and with 'peasant' workers dependant on the type of archaic land system then still in force in their home lands.

Yet wool production was an expensive business, the land had to be leased, stock purchased, shepherds employed and stores and provisions provided for lengthy periods. Additionally, there was a requirement for the construction of buildings, station homesteads and, perhaps more importantly from a financial perspective, wool-sheds had to be built so that the sheep could be shorn and the wool sent to market. Initially at least, these wool sheds were primitive affairs, usually little more than bark and canvas huts with canvas sheeting spread over the floor in order to keep the wool clean. These outlays were made with no guarantee of a financial return, and ventures such as those made by people like Ferriter and Uhr were both problematical and highly speculative. Sheep were affected with a variety of diseases, some were lost through natural attrition, others were speared by the indigenous people for use as food. Footrot caused serious losses, the sheep caught the disease from being placed in damp rich pasture, infected sheep would become lame and would spend most of their time lying down, they would not eat and subsequently died. Other problems included speargrass and scab. Shepherds were difficult to obtain, especially in the formative years of the stations, many men and their families were reluctant to live in virtual isolation and constantly under threat of aboriginal attack.

Edmund Uhr appears to have sold his holdings to Richard Jones who, like Ferriter, had other pastoral interests, and the management of *Barambah* was left largely in the hands of Thomas Jones, Richard's son. Richard Jones had come to Sydney in 1809 where he established himself as a merchant in the company of Riley Jones and Walker. Following the opening up of Moreton Bay to free settlement he brought his family north to settle on the Logan, later acquiring *Barambah*.³

According to the Register of Runs, Richard Jones acquired the station in 1852 although he evidently had an interest in the station prior to that date as the following case of trouble with stockmen, dated 1847, clearly indicates.⁴

Like almost all other stations in the South Burnett, *Barambah* suffered from all the problems of early settlement, the indigenous people greatly resented this invasion of their traditional lands and put up what defence they could, spearing sheep and shepherds, although the *Moreton Bay Courier* of 16 January, 1847, (five years before the Register of Runs shows Jones as acquiring the lease) claimed that both Ferriter and Jones were experiencing trouble with some of their white stockmen who were falsely claiming that the aboriginal people were making attacks against some of the station's cattle. For example, in January that year a stockman named William Wilds was brought before the magistrates charged with having committed a breach of agreement by disobedience of orders and neglect of duty. On 27 December the previous year Wilds and two other stockmen had gone to the homestead at *Barambah* and told Ferriter that they had been attacked by hostile aboriginal men who had: '... pelted stones on the roof of their hut and threatened to take their lives.'⁵ Ferriter had investigated the incident, examining the station and speaking with an aboriginal boy who told him that no such attack had been made. Soon afterwards the same stockmen burned the hut to the ground and blamed the aboriginal people for the crime. The *Moreton Bay Courier* later reported:

It has since come out, that these men, and others leagued with them, have industriously circulated reports, to the effect that the natives are constantly attacking the stations on the Boyne River and its tributaries, with the malicious intention of terrifying the timid, and

deterring others from proceeding to those localities. That there are no grounds for such reports we feel certain; and we take this opportunity of stating that the settlers there, up to the present time, have not had the slightest fear for the safety either of themselves or their properties. We resided in that neighbourhood for some time ourselves; and can bear testimony to the amicable feelings of the natives in their intercourse with the whites, on every occasion; and we feel satisfied that if they are treated with mildness and discretion, no danger need be apprehended.⁶

Yet there were, of course, attacks from indigenous people who resented the intrusion of the white men onto their traditional lands and sometimes even killed aboriginal people who helped and in other ways aided the settlers. For example, on 14 August, 1847, the *Moreton Bay Courier* bitterly reported: 'It is our painful duty to record another diabolical murder committed by the natives in the neighbourhood of the Boyne River. We are informed that three of the blacks who were the ringleaders of the party that put to death Wyamba, the black boy, at Messrs Ferriter and Uhr's station, on Baramba Creek, a short time ago, proceeded to the station of Messrs Humphreys and Herbert, with the intention of taking the life of the first white man they might find unprepared to resist their murderous attack. It appears that a shepherd named John Rogers was found dead on the run, about three weeks since, with two dreadful wounds in the head, apparently inflicted by a tomahawk. It is conjectured that while he was tending his flock, the villains treacherously deprived him of life, as his gun was found loaded, not far from the spot, where the body was discovered. We understand that no steps have yet been taken for the capture of the murderers. Of course no inquiry will be instituted, as the victim was only a white man.'⁷

Life on the holding was certainly no different from the other holdings then established in the South Burnett. For those early squatters there were difficulties to be overcome but there were also great pleasures to be enjoyed. The residents at *Barambah* were largely isolated from the more populous communities at places such as Maryborough and Brisbane, from where most of the station's supplies were drawn and to where the station's produce was sent. This isolation created difficulties with transportation, the supplies coming in once or twice a year by bullock team and the hides, tallow and wool being sent to the coast, usually Maryborough, by the same method. *Barambah* residents experienced the problems with the lack of facilities, there were, for example, no medical facilities in the region, the closest hospital was in Brisbane, a hospital at Maryborough was not established until 1859 and that was merely a cottage hospital with very few facilities. Injured station hands or members of the family who became ill had to be treated on the spot with traditional remedies, and these frequently proved to be insufficient. Other facilities lacking in that early settlement at *Barambah* included a postal service, mails had to be taken to Maryborough or Brisbane until a service was instituted through Nanango, roads were virtually non-existent and water was a problem to those first settlers and remained so for the settlers who came after the leases were opened up for closer settlement. Yet there were entertainments, horse racing was still regarded as one of the more gentlemanly sports and races were held at Nanango, Jacob Goode, the owner of Goode's Inn, providing suitable refreshments on site. Squatters also enjoyed entertaining each other, sometimes in rather a grand style reminiscent of the English aristocracy whom they frequently went to great lengths to emulate — even to the point of constructing their homes in grand English style.

Scab diseased many of the sheep at *Barambah*, and at one time approximately 1500 had to be destroyed, their carcasses boiled down for tallow. Until the passing of the Diseases in Sheep Act of 1860, holders of disease infected sheep had to shoulder the burden of this loss alone, however, after the act came into force they received some government compensation.

According to the Register of Runs, Thomas Jones bought his father's share in the property in 1854 and he later travelled to England.⁸ However, while he was away the station declined rapidly and John Stephen Ferriter is reported to have sold his portion to George Clapperton, then owner of both *Tarong* and *Nanango* stations, although there is no record of this transaction in the Register of Runs at the Queensland State Archives.

When he returned from England Thomas Jones vainly attempted to make *Barambah* a going concern once again, however, ill health prevented him doing so and he is reported to have sold his holding to George Clapperton in 1871, and while this may well have been the case, once again, there is no record of the transaction being made in the Register of Runs.

According to the Register of Runs the ownership of the station from 1852 was as follows:

1852:	Richard Jones.
1854–66:	Thomas Jones and J.S. Ferriter.
1866–67:	Executors of J.S. Ferriter's will and Thomas Jones.
1867–86:	Bank of New South Wales.
1886:	Isaac Moore, Hugh Moore and William Baynes. ⁹

Thomas Jones died 1874, and the press subsequently published: 'The deceased gentleman and his family have been long resident in this district, and by his kindly and unassuming disposition, Mr Jones had gained for himself the regard and esteem of all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance.'¹⁰

Contemporary sources, both published and unpublished, claim that Hugh and Isaac Moore purchased the station, reportedly from the estate of George Clapperton in the mid 1870s, shortly after Clapperton's death. J.E. Murphy in his book *Wilderness to Wealth* gives the date as August 1875, but again there is no record in the Register of Runs of this transaction. Murphy makes the additional error of claiming that the property was purchased at that time from the estate of George Clapperton, however, in August 1875 Clapperton was still alive, he died in December that year. Clapperton died intestate and in some of his legal papers his address is given as 'Baramba'. The station was certainly placed on the market after Clapperton's death. The *Brisbane Courier* of February 1876 published:

Preliminary notice. First class cattle station with 6000, more or less, very superior cattle, *Baramba* in the unsettled district of Burnett, Queensland, by order of the mortgagees. Mort and Company will sell by auction at their wool sale rooms Sydney, on Tuesday April 11 at 2 o'clock p.m. that highly improved and very favoured property known as *Baramba* containing ten blocks of first class cattle country, richly grassed and well watered in all seasons, of which 17,900 acres are freehold, together with 6000 more or less remarkably quiet and well bred cattle, also about 270 head of choice breeders, comprising a stud herd running with two imported pure bred Durham bulls.¹¹

Mort and Co. again advertised in April 1876, claiming that the station was to be auctioned in May that year.¹² The station was sold by Mort and Co. in May, the cattle fetching £5/1- each (there were six thousand head on the station) and the freehold land 15/- per acre. The total amount of the sale, including other livestock totalled £45,000. The station was purchased through Mr Hamilton Scott of Brisbane who was acting on behalf of Isaac and Hugh Moore. This sale is not listed in the Register of Runs.¹³

As can be seen from the listing in the Register of Runs, William Baynes apparently bought into the venture with Isaac and Hugh Moore in 1886, but when he died in 1901 his portion was purchased by the Moore brothers. The owners spent considerable amounts of money improving the station and increasing its carrying capacity to approximately 20,000 head of cattle. The station also reverted once again to sheep production and at times carried up to 20,000 head of sheep.

Resumptions of land from the station commenced in 1877 substantially reducing the leasehold of the holding. Isaac Moore retired in 1901, handing his portion of the property over to his two sons, Isaac J. Moore (Jnr.) and Hugh Moore (Jnr.) the following year. Isaac (junior) then became the manager of the property.

At the turn of the century the Barambah Aboriginal Reserve was created from the station. (See Chapter 5). In 1905 the imposing *Barambah* homestead was constructed and over the next few years, following the deaths of his uncle, father and brother, I.J. Moore (Jnr.) became sole owner of what remained of the station in 1909. I.J. Moore later married, his wife became a partner and the firm of I.J. and M.S. Moore was registered. Moore died in 1939.¹⁴

In 1930, while Moore was still in charge of the station, a press report claimed:

Barambah Cattle Station is, perhaps, one of the best known cattle-fattening properties in Queensland today. It has established a reputation for the quality of its stock that would be hard to equal, and seldom a year passes that its name has not appeared on the prize list at the Brisbane National Exhibition. Many noted blood horses have also been bred at *Barambah*, some of which are well known on the race tracks at the present day.

Barambah station is ideally situated as far as railway communication is concerned. The Kinbombi railway station is only about eight miles from the eastern portion, while Goomeri and Nanango are each 11 miles from the homestead, and Nanango railway station is 19 miles from the southern boundary. The property was taken up by Messrs Ferriter and Jones in 1850 or thereabouts (sic), and was managed by Mr C. Mason, whose death occurred in 1867. Thereafter Mr Jones himself managed the property successfully for many years. At that time the owner of *Tarong* and *Nanango* stations (George Clapperton), which adjoined *Barambah*, bought out Messrs Ferriter and Jones, and on Clapperton's death the station was sold by auction in Sydney to Hugh and Isaac Moore ...

In the year 1877, a large area of the lease was resumed and thrown open for selection. At this time the late Sir William Baynes became a partner, and the firm was altered to Moore Bros, and Baynes, and was continued so until Mr Baynes died in 1901. His interests were then purchased by Moore Bros. Mr Isaac Moore managed 1875 to 1900 when he retired from active life, leaving his sons, Messrs Hugh and Isaac J. Moore, to manage ... In 1923, the station again changed hands, the present owners being L.J. and M.S. Moore. Mr L.J. Moore was the principal remaining partner of Moore Bros., and he now resides in Brisbane. For the past 15 years the station has been under the management of Mr Les Hall, who has also taken a big part in the public affairs of the district.

When Mr Isaac Moore, senior, took over the management of *Barambah* it was practically unimproved. Marsupials were in thousands, brumbies were to be counted by the score, and scrub cattle infested the forest country bordering on the boundaries of the holding. Men were immediately set to work to ringbark and clear the property to improve its capacity, and buildings were erected. Today marsupials are scarce, and the last of the brumbies and scrub cattle were wiped out about 1902.

When *Barambah* was purchased it was considered well stocked with 7000 cattle, but with the extermination of the pests, and by fencing and ringbarking, the carrying capacity was so greatly increased that in the sixties 18,000 to 20,000 cattle and a considerable flock of sheep were depastured. The expense of improving the country was very great, but that it was money well spent was proved by the fact that country which previously only carried one beast to 25 acres, would now carry one beast to six acres. Mr Moore and his sons in the course of time added another 40,000 acres freehold to the 17,920 acres acquired when the station was originally purchased making its area over 60,000 acres freehold and about 7000 acres leasehold ...

The *Barambah* homestead is a particularly fine building having been erected in 1905. Many distinguished visitors, including Governors, have been guests at *Barambah* on shooting expeditions, etc., and have been favourably impressed by it. The present manager, Mr Les Hall, also finds time to give his services to many public bodies in Goomeri, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Show Society. He is also a trustee of the Hall of Memory, while, when racing was at its height in Goomeri, he was secretary of that club.¹⁵

The coming of the railway line and the continued government policy of closer settlement spelled the end of wide scale pastoralism on *Barambah* station. The third subdivision of the estate was offered for sale in December 1913, the press reporting: '... the third subdivision of the famous *Barambah* Estate, containing about 9000 acres will be submitted for sale by public auction at Murgon in December next ... *Barambah* is without doubt the pick of Southern Queensland.' Selling agents were Winchcombe Carson in Brisbane, McDougall and Co., in Warwick and P.B. Chauvel in Murgon.¹⁶

The railway lines to Murgon brought with them a vast influx of selectors who rapidly took up the many blocks thrown open to free selection. As we shall see in the following chapter, the arrival of those early farmers began with a trickle which steadily increased in flow and momentum, creating the genesis of Murgon and the many industries and businesses associated with them.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Forty-seven

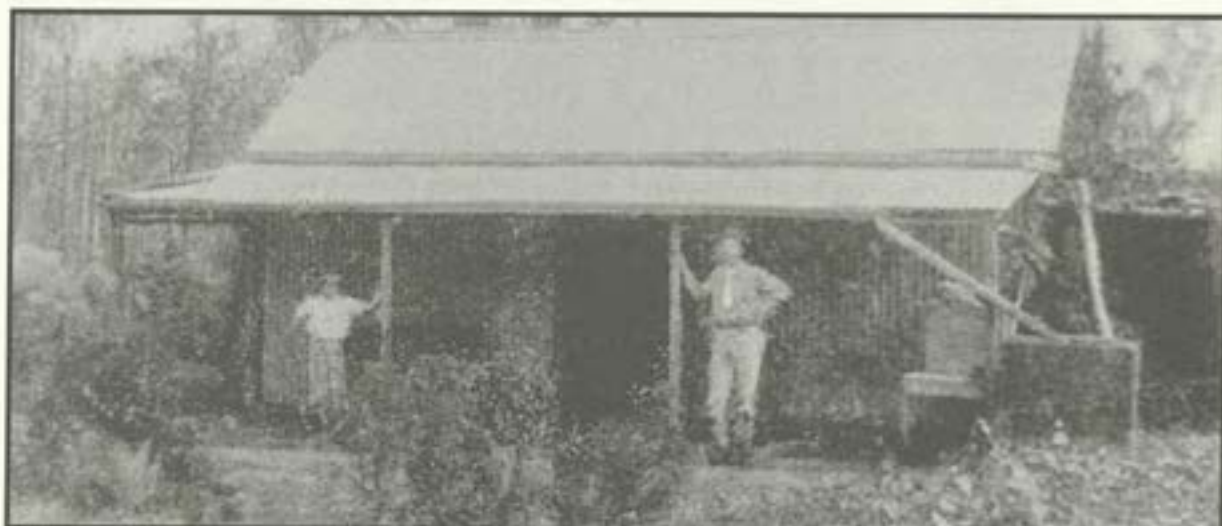
Murgon and District — the Years of Pastoral Development

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14. QCL. 23 April, 1959, p 5.
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16. N/N. 10 October, 1913.

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Closer Settlement in the Murgon Region

A part from a logger, Jack Carey, and his wife, who were also operating a bullock team in the region, the first permanent selector in what is now known as Murgon was a British migrant named George W. Nutt who selected three blocks, each of 320 acres in 1902 at two shillings and sixpence per acre. Nutt's son, V.G. Nutt, recalled in 1948: 'I lived there (Murgon) in June 1902, we drove from Kilkivan in a horse and buggy.'¹ G.W. Nutt called his holding *Castra*. It was a brave move; in 1902 the land was still suffering from the terrible drought of 1901/02 and any selector taking up land under such conditions knew that if the drought should continue or return, then there would be little chance of making a success of any such agricultural endeavour.



Above: George Nutt's home in Murgon.
Below: G.W. Nutt and his two sons, Douglas and Granville.

Source — *Widerness to Wealth*.

Nutt and his family began farming at *Castra* with approximately three hundred head of sheep and some cattle, erecting firstly a crude tin hut and later constructing a more substantial house. It must have been a primitive existence, food supplies had to come by wagon from Kilkivan or Nanango, there were no methods of communication and no facilities whatever. (Nutt's house, later owned by Cliff Krebs, was offered to the Murgon Shire Council by Mr Krebs in 1979 when the building was still in a fairly good state of repair.)² Other selectors soon began to join Nutt, each taking up their holdings in the region, these included W.G. Armstrong, (who was to become the first chairman of the Murgon Shire Council), James Crawford, Tom Lancaster, (also on the first council), J. Herterick, W.T. Maddison, William Lancaster, M. Brown, H. Clark, J. Petersen, A. Mulhearn, F. Farley, Steve Hack, Harry and John Shelton, W. Borchert, G. Dowse, Gus Richter, Joe Willis and many others. These men were accompanied by the multitude of teamsters who worked through the region, cutting and carting timber for the mills at places such as Nanango, Kilkivan and Taabinga. The logs came from a variety of areas including picturesque Boat Mountain which was particularly rich in pine.

One of the richest sources of wealth in the South Burnett was its timber industry. Initially the early selectors to regions that became known as Oakdale, Merlwood, Moondooner, England, Boat Mountain, Cloyna, Cobbs Hill, Sunnynook and Crownthorpe, were primarily concerned with clearing the scrub, including the wealth of trees that existed on their properties, in order to plant their first crops of maize or pumpkins. As we have seen earlier in this history, this clearing process saw the destruction of thousands of precious trees that were simply cut down or ringbarked and left to rot. Later, as the rail system developed, it was quickly realised that these forests of trees could be harvested and sent to the mills at places such as Maryborough and Brisbane and even to the mills in Sydney. Timber became the first industry of any great importance in the Murgon district, with logs being hauled to the rail yards in their tens of thousands reaping enormous rewards for land holders, timber carriers and, mill owners, and providing employment for hundreds of mill workers thus generating a powerful local economy.

Bringing logs in from places such as Boat Mountain was sometimes a difficult task, the teamsters grinding their way down the precipitous track which was particularly dangerous during the wet season, brake failure on the descent could be disastrous with teams and logs being propelled over the edge of the track occasionally accompanied by fatal consequences.

As with most other South Burnett centres, the genesis of Murgon came with the laying of the railway into the region. As we have seen in previous chapters, the line extended firstly from Theebine to Dickabram on 1 January, 1886, from Dickabram to Kilkivan on 6 December, 1886, from Kilkivan to Goomeri on 1 August, 1902, and from Goomeri to Murgon and Wondai on 14 September, 1903. The railway siding at Murgon was, initially at least, nothing more than a temporary affair with a tarpaulin structure that served as a shelter for passengers and railway staff. The first station mistress was a Mrs Eästerby who also served as the post mistress. The first permanent structure appears to have been a shed constructed to store meat, this building later served as the town's first post office.³

Before long the small township of Murgon was growing as rapidly as was Kingaroy and Wondai, with hotels, shops, churches, schools, police barracks and roads all being constructed to provide the necessary infrastructure needed to complement the trade the railways brought to the town.

The embryonic months and years of Murgon were similar to those one would find at mining camps of that period, as the rail line was laid the work brought many labourers and their families who lived in tents or somewhat squalid bark shanties. With the opening of the railway line more settlers arrived adding to the population explosion, these people had to be housed and fed amid the general confusion and disorganised days of a new community straggling to life. Farmers were arriving with their wagons loaded with tools, food and other equipment, bringing with them their flocks of sheep or herds of cattle, they would initially camp in the immediate vicinity of the rail head until they could orientate themselves, purchase what added supplies they required before moving out onto their selections. Murgon at that time was a busy, sometimes muddy and often dusty village of tents and shacks with businessmen selling their wares from the backs of their wagons and butchers killing and cutting the meat in the streets. Those streets were filled with hawkers, children, dogs, cattle and sheep, and a wide eyed group of new settlers eager to learn what the immediate future would bring them in this fresh, young community.



Some Murgon district early settlers, 27 February, 1938.

Back row: L. to R. Messrs N. Waldock, W.D. Davidson, H.G.H. Cooper, W.F. Zander, J. Petersen, R.N. Gray, J.H. Pringle, Cowan Keys, R.O. Cooper, C. Brighton, F.W. Brighton, R.W. Nutt.

Second row: Messrs G.C. Angel, B. Kruger, S. Tunstall, R. Short, L.G. Holmes, R. Mandsie, Sam Bellotti, D. Bellotti, T.A. Bellotti, P.C. Price, H. Schonknecht, J. Herteriek.

Front row: Messrs H. C. Eisenmenger, W.J. Eisenmenger, G. M. Dowse, Morgan Jones (Murgon first station master), L. Pringle, G.H. Houghton. Insets: J. Shelton, W.R. Gray, E. A. Hancock, H. Shelton, N.F. Osborne.

Source — Murgon Shire Council.



Railway station, Murgon.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

Each day saw the arrival of bullock teams carrying food, stores, tools, seed, beer and spirits, nails, ropes, saddles, buckets and a plethora of other items all vital to the survival of the early settlers. These teamsters were an integral part of daily life at early Murgon, and while they certainly realised that the way of the bullock driver was on the decline, now that the rail line had been laid through to the region, they were instrumental in supplying those items that were either too expensive to be sent by train or too bulky. At night the teamsters tended to gather at three designated locations within the new village of Murgon, these were located at the Fifty-two Mile, near Sawpit Creek, another on Barambah Creek and the third on Murgon Creek. Here the bullocks could be rested and watered, hobbled for the night while the teamsters lit their fires and cooked their meals. At night residents could hear the bells of the bullock teams as the animals wandered around looking for fresh grass.

The combination of closer settlement and the introduction of the railways was to prove, as it would in all other regions of the South Burnett, the catalyst that changed forever the future of the region. Yet closer settlement itself created many problems for those early selectors, many of whom were attempting to obtain parcels of land at fair and reasonable prices. The land was certainly available, but it was the quality of the land that counted. Some of these pieces of land being opened up to selection were abysmally poor, with no permanent water, innutritional grasses and in particularly inaccessible areas. Many of the potential selectors were annoyed that the wealthy landholders, those who had originally taken up the vast leases during the colony's formative years, were manipulating the system in order to retain the best parcels of land for themselves. In 1903 one potential selector stated:

It is high time that some alteration was made in the administration of our Land Acts, and that the Government showed the country in a practical form that they are the friends of the selector, whether grazing farmer, agricultural farmer, or squatter, and that they are sincere in their intention to settle a prosperous people on the land. They tell us frequently in their speeches that they intend to do so, but when we go into the country to find a suitable selection, and fail to do so, we come back disgusted with what we have seen. In ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, the land suitable for close settlement is either locked up in the squatter's lease, or withheld from selection with the intention of selling it by auction, which means that the squatter will get it at ten or twelve shillings per acre, while the poorer, drier back country is thrown opened to selection at from 25s. to 35s. per acre, as witness the *Barambah*, *Chainyholes* country, which is being opened to selection today, and will probably be selected at that price, no other land being available. In that case the Government will no doubt say that the land is worth the money, otherwise the selectors would not take it up. But the fact is, no other land is available; it is either take that or nothing. At the present time I have a thoroughly good knowledge of the southern portion of the Burnett district, and I unhesitatingly say that this land is not worth what the Government are asking for it. The unfortunate selectors who get a selection will find that they have undertaken a very big order and for many years to come they will only be able to meet their payments by the strictest economy and close living, bordering on starvation. I maintain that this is a very undesirable state of things to be brought about by any Government who are sincere in their endeavour to settle a prosperous people on the land. Let me say here that the Government could do nothing better to help the Labour party in the country districts than they are doing, in allowing the squatters such concessions as they get and making the poorer people pay such an exorbitant price for the land. Never did a better opportunity present itself to a Minister for Lands than presents itself today to show the country that he is sincere in his intention to settle a prosperous people on the land, and that he is master of the situation. To do so, I maintain that he will have to throw open to selection good land — and there is plenty of it at very much lower price than at present. He must also see that the information he gets from his officers is thoroughly reliable, and not influenced by the squatters who wish to keep the price of land very high, so that it may not be selected, and that they may still hold it under occupation licence at a few shillings per square mile. I know several persons who have been for several years waiting for land in fair sized blocks to be thrown open in the Burnett district, and so far have not been successful in getting one piece, although they have seen thousands of acres that would suit them, if available, in suitable areas, say of 640 acres, and at a reasonable price. There is plenty of money now lying idle in the country that would soon get into circulation if land was opened to selection at a fair price. That would mean work to many of the unemployed in fencing, building, etc., and increased trade to the business people in town, as wire, timber, rations, and other material would be needed to put the selection in working order. It would also help the Government, as they would get much more money from the selectors in rent than they do from the present holders, beside increased revenue to the railways. I do not write the above in a hostile spirit, and I hope it

will be read in the spirit it is written. In conclusion, I hope that any resumptions opened to selection in the near future will be in larger areas, and at a much lower price than those opened of late.⁴

These comments were a fair and reasonable assessment of the situation at that time, there were certainly many areas of land waiting to be selected but the practice of 'dummying' the land and the natural resistance put up by the squatters often prevented bona fide selectors from settling on land that was both viable and economical. Land speculators created considerable anguish among bona fide selectors, these people could afford to ballot for land they had no intention of working and, if successful in the ballots, were able to hold the parcels of land until the prices rose and then to sell at considerable profit. This was certainly the case prior to the rail lines coming through, speculators were able to take rapid action to obtain land at reasonable prices, and once the lines had been laid those prices escalated tremendously. Yet by and large the process of selection was fair and reasonable, most of the land went to bona fide farmers at prices they could afford, and while some of that land was certainly not of a choice quality, being either lacking in water or of a type unsuited to agricultural production, the selectors were, over the years, able to make a decent living through the introduction of opportunities such as butter factories and later, meatworks, all of which provided important markets for the rural produce.

The lack of water was a perennial problem for many of those early selectors, only the very best of selections fronted onto creeks or rivers and for those who were unfortunate enough to obtain land with no evident water source, their only option was to construct dams or to sink wells, a time-consuming, difficult and frequently dangerous task with no promise of success. The lack of water, the difficult terrain, the ravages of drought, isolation, unfamiliarity with farming techniques, coupled finally with the decimation of crops by animal and insect pests frequently saw those early selectors abandon their holdings. In addition to these problems the selectors were faced with the lack of facilities, no medical care, few postal services, bush tracks for roads, and many of them were also battling to survive economically, having to abide by the terms of their selection, to improve their properties, grow crops that frequently failed, fight the insidious onslaught of prickly pear and then to meet bank payments. Little wonder that there was a significant incidence of selection abandonment.

Yet selections abandoned were quickly taken up by other farmers and such selections did not remain vacant for lengthy periods. Evidence of this was the growth of Murgon, for the rail line alone did not provide the wealth upon which the town was based, it provided only a service to the farmers whose produce and endeavours made possible the success of the fledgling township. Strong growth within the township was simply a reflection that the farmers were also succeeding, despite their many problems.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Forty-eight

Closer Settlement in the Murgon Region

1. Letter from V.G. Nutt to the Nanango Centenary Committee, dated 22 November, 1948, Historic Homesteads file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
2. SBT. 7 February, 1979, p 12.
3. WW. p 254.
4. M/C. 17 July, 1903, p 3.

Growth of the Town of Murgon — Early Townspeople and Selectors

As we have seen, the first selectors in the region needed a railway before true prosperity could be achieved. With the coming of the rail link so the town of Murgon grew dramatically, one correspondent writing to the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* in 1906 commented: 'Every week now new settlers are arriving. Many improvements in that once quiet place called Murgon Siding are rapidly being pushed on. On Saturday night between 40 and 50 assembled, it being considered town night. There is no town there yet I'll admit, but in the very near future it will approach a centre. Mr (W.R.) Gray has nearly completed his store (a lone tin shed). It will be in working order in the course of a few days. Too much space would be required in your valuable paper for all the names of those brawny settlers who have completed yards, boundaries etc.'¹

The store referred to in this correspondent's letter was owned by an early businessman of Murgon named W.R. (Bob) Gray, the store was, in fact, the first commercial building within the township, but it was a somewhat flimsy affair. Even so it served as the lifeblood of that fledgling community, prior to Gray opening his store selectors had to travel to Kilkivan or Nanango for their requirements. Gray later sold the store and selected land at Redgate, near the township.

What appears to have been the first butcher's shop was operated by Joseph (known originally as Jost) and Martha Angel, the first sales being made from a tent. Meat was railed daily from the Angel butcher's shop at Kilkivan.



Martha Angel, 1935.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.



Joseph Angel born 1851, died 1935.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

According to their marriage certificate, Joseph and Martha Angel were married at St Paul's Church of England, Maryborough, on 5 May, 1886. Joseph's occupation was, at that time, given as a miner, he was thirty-five years of age. Born in Germany, Joseph was the son of a stonemason named George, his mother's name was Catherine, he and his family, including a brother named Jacob, then ten years' old, arrived in Queensland in the early 1860s, settling at Ipswich, Joseph was then nine years of age. The *reise* pass (travel pass) issued to George Angel (originally Engel) was signed at Marburg on 22 October, 1861, so the family probably arrived in Australia in 1862. George Angel was described as being thirty-three years of age with brown hair, five feet five inches tall and blue eyes, his wife, Catherine, was also thirty-three years of age, four feet seven inches tall with blond hair and brown eyes.² Joseph later moved to Kilkivan, lured there by the promise of gold, where he selected land at nearby Oakview. He began butchering in 1901 and the business evidently prospered, for by 1906 he had customers from as far away as Kingaroy. Martha was twenty-one years of age at the time of her marriage to Joseph, she was born at *Burrandowan* on 4 April, 1865, (although the marriage certificate shows that she was born at Gayndah, where registration would have taken place) the daughter of a bullock driver named William Waldock and his wife Frances Mary, (nee Roberts).³

The family, Joseph, Martha, and their eight children, moved to Murgon from Kilkivan circa 1906. Their children were Beatrice, Catherine, George, Grace, David, Samuel, Ivy and Joseph William (more commonly known as Bill).



Angel's drapery and butcher shops. L. to R. George Keating, Catherine Keating (nee Angel), Mary Kreach (nee Learoyd), George Angel.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

The first permanent Angel's store was established in 1907 the subsequent drapery store was operated by Catherine with Beatrice acting as the book-keeper. Afterwards a cafeteria was added to the chain of businesses. These shops were known as the Railway Stores as they were cleverly situated directly opposite the railway station where they would attract the most business. In 1910 the shops were converted from timber to brick using local limestone, and the centre became known as the Universal Providers, customers could purchase a variety of items from these stores including food, clothing and hardware.⁴



Martha Angel standing between two gentlemen on the right. Early 1912. Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.



Office and drapery staff of Angels, 1935-39. L. to R. Ivy (Parkyn) Bellotti, Daphne (Acutt) Kettle, Beatrice (Angel) Leitch, Pat (Daly) Raetz, Olive (Forshaw) Zerner, Daphne (Davidson) Dowdle, Shirley (Waldock) Mickan.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

In 1958 during the store's golden jubilee celebrations (which were celebrated a year late due to family problems and illness) the press claimed:

The business originally consisted of a grocery and drapery store, a butcher's shop attached. Mrs Angel was assisted in the running of the stores by her two sons, George and David, and her two daughters, Beatrice and Catherine, who later became Mrs A. (Alexander) Leitch and Mrs G. (George) Keating respectively. After the business was established, they ran a four-horse wagon to Merlwood, Cloyna, Windera and Boat Mountain to supply new settlers with groceries and beef. From a bore, 100 feet deep, surmounted with a windmill, they supplied water free to settlers in times of drought. The customers used to bring their 100 or 200 gallon tanks to be filled, when they came for their meat or groceries.

When the present brick buildings were built, the bricks were made on the premises by Arthur Cooper of Gympie, and the plaster for coating the bricks was obtained from the present lime crushing works situated about three miles from Murgon.

From a humble beginning the business has grown into a self contained shopping centre and now includes a garage, furniture and fancy goods store, butcher's shop, grocery, drapery and hardware stores.

In 1923 Mr W.J. Angel took over the management of the business from his mother. As time went on he bought the shares of other members of the family, until today he, with his two sons and daughter, are the owners of the whole of the premises.⁵

Joseph Angel died in May 1935, aged eighty-four years. There is no doubt that Martha Angel was one of the region's foremost and forceful early residents. When she died in October 1936 her obituary read:

Coming to Murgon from Kilkivan Mrs Angel commenced business some twenty-nine years ago, and that business, from its small beginning as a branch butcher shop grew with the progress of the district to its present dimensions as one of the largest business concerns in any country town in the state. During all these years ... (Mrs Angel) was the recognised head of the business and, with the members of her family conducted it, successfully met the strong competition which has been so manifest in recent years.

During the pioneering stage of the district, when the farms were being developed, Mrs Angel's store carried many selectors through the transition period when the only source of revenue was the maize crop, and later on through bad seasons, customers of this establishment could always depend on being supplied with the necessities of life until the crop came in. As was to be expected many bad debts and heavy losses were incurred, but the business weathered the storms of adversity and reached its present dimensions as probably the largest business concern in the South Burnett.

Mrs Angel as patroness of the Murgon Show Society had been annually re-elected to that position. As a prominent member and supporter of the Presbyterian Church her loss will be severely felt, and the community in general will feel her loss in a great measure.

Deceased, who had reached the age of seventy-one years, was pre-deceased by her husband, Mr Joseph Angel.⁶

At the time of her death Martha Angel was a wealthy woman, she left an estate valued at £29,152 which was willed to her children.⁷

The emporium which was established by Martha Angel and her family survives today. When the business celebrated its golden jubilee in 1958 Mrs Cleo Goodchild, a grand-daughter of Martha Angel, iced a special cake which was an exact replica of the store as it stood at that time, including garage, furniture store, cafeteria, butchery, drapery, grocery and hardware. The store was portrayed in great detail, right down to the petrol bowsers and the old smoke-house behind the butchery where blood wurst was originally made.⁸

The first blacksmith shop in Murgon was owned and operated by Mr F. Witt. His shop, a rough slab building also housed the first meeting of the Murgon Progress Association in 1907. The first hotel owner was Mr W.T. Maddison (also reported as Madsen and Maddson) who obtained land at the site of what later became Tiernan's Building for £20 (also later reported as £22), although a previous attempt by Maddison to obtain a licence for a hotel had been refused.⁹ Maddison was an

enterprising businessman, in addition to his hotel he also owned an auctioneering business and he constructed the first sale-yards in the township, the press reporting in 1907: 'The first of a contemplated monthly series of auction sales was held at the new yards of Mr W.T. Maddison on the 11th inst (December), and if the initial effort of this enterprising auctioneer may be regarded as the criterion of the amount of sound business to be expected with an ever increasing population and at regular intervals, then, in the stock line at least, the commercial future of Murgon may be assured.'¹⁰ The new stockyards were described as being roomy, handy and convenient, and that first sale attracted a large number of interested persons, although there were few buyers. Most of the people had come to witness the first sale and to gauge the prices for stock.¹¹



Royal Hotel, Murgon.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 165054.

Maddison later sold the Royal Hotel, reportedly for £900, and it was sold to Patrick James Tiernan for a reported £5,500 in 1918.¹²

Cooper's boarding house was the first such establishment in the town, a building that was badly needed as many people who arrived at the fledgling community had nowhere to stay. A cabinet and furniture making business was opened by Mr R. Haigh, Arthur Gutteridge carried on a transport business with his horse and cart and later operated the town's first hire car service. A description of Murgon as it then was claimed: '... In this township, as in the surrounding country, everything is painfully new, and many people live in tents whilst engaged in the building of more permanent structures.'¹³

Timber was arriving at the railway yards in fair quantities, although not in the vast quantities then being received at Kingaroy or Goomeri. The railway station was hardly worthy of that name, there was no platform and no permanent railway official. Unclaimed parcels were left in an unlocked shed overnight and were: '... at the mercy of anyone who cares to have a look in for a handy article in passing.'¹⁴ The fact that the station had no station master was cause of some complaint, people wishing to catch a train had to find the train guard in order to purchase a ticket. The only real construction at the station was the new cream shed which, however, many people did not use, preferring to leave their cans next to the line.¹⁵ Indeed, the lack of facilities at the station was a problem with which many of the new residents were concerned. The progress

association meetings held in the provisional school were frequently heated affairs and a deputation was later sent to the minister for railways in Brisbane demanding the construction of a storage shed to hold the maize crop. The association was active in many other aspects of the community's progress, for example, at around the same time it sent a delegation to Brisbane to meet with the acting postmaster-general and demand the construction of a post office in the town.¹⁶

Very few permanent houses had been completed by late 1907, although there was an air of permanence and also a feminine aspect to the small rough community. This feminine aspect was described as manifesting itself in: '... the few flowers in the hollow stump ... the wild young figs planted too closely ... the incongruous but neat attempt to window curtains ...'¹⁷



Murgon personalities. **Back row:** Lou Nielson, Jack McCarthy, Jim Murray. **Front row:** Bob McKewin, Tom Fielding, Eli Town, Dick Beattie.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 147366.

While the fledgling community may have been somewhat rough and lacking in the social graces, there was a social life, of sorts, at Murgon in those formative months and years. One of the most popular pastimes, surprisingly, was lawn tennis, one visitor, evidently not an advocate of the game, despairing: 'Oh yes, they have got it and got it bad. Lawn tennis has discovered them at Murgon, right down to the infant in arms. Courts are everywhere and the disease, which is bad enough in itself, is likely, as usual, to lead to matrimonial complications ... They play it about Murgon by daylight, moonlight, starlight, lamplight, candlelight, match-light and with slush lamps and torches. The girls go a milking with a bucket in one hand and a racquet in the other.'¹⁸

One early selector to the district was E.H. (Ernie) Goodchild. He and his family arrived at Murgon in 1907, settling on land at Redgate. He volunteered for the armed forces during the First World War and served in the A.I.F., although an injury forced his discharge and he later played an active role in the Returned Soldiers' League. He again saw service in the army during World War Two, was secretary of the Murgon Show Society and also a foundation member of the Murgon Bowling Club. Mr Goodchild was well known in cricketing circles and he held every executive position with the Murgon Cricket Association. He died in July 1970.¹⁹

In December 1907, shortly after E.H. Goodchild first arrived at Murgon, a visitor to the new community gave a wonderful description of the town and its residents. He wrote:

It is not quite two years since we last visited Murgon, and reported upon it in these notes. At that time the population consisted virtually of one (settled) family (the Nutt family) and

a few scattered timber-getters. The line had been but a little while constructed, and ... things were in about the most primitive condition imaginable. The level crossing of that same line was girth-deep in black soil, and it was no unusual occurrence for letters, parcels, and papers to be thrown from the train in passing after dark, which sometimes the consignees hunted for with matches if it happened to be calm, or pursued on horseback towards the distant horizon if there was a bit of a breeze blowing. It was just at that time that the land became available for selection, and consequently there was a heavy influx of the earth-hungry of all grades, classes, occupations, and degrees from far and near and every corner of the Commonwealth.

We met, conversed, and jogged about on horseback with dozens of them, and when two such parties met thus, it was amusing to note how cunning was covered by apparent frankness as they compared notes and mutually agreed, with many shakes of the head and shooting out of lips, that 'the bally land was not worth having as a gift.' This in all cases was only a dodge to bluff the 'other fellow,' so that competition would not be so strong at the approaching ballot. So they threw dust pleasantly in one another's eyes during the day, and at night put in their applications — to a man. The result of all this we are looking at today. We have had rare opportunities of marking settlements in these districts since the beginning, but in no locality that we have known has the rapidity of selection and permanent settlement struck us with such surprise as that which has taken place about Murgon within two years. The contrast between then and now is almost incredible. As though at the wave of a magician's wand, home and homesteads have sprung into being in every direction ... These alluvial flats and pockets by the creeks or waterholes, then but a wilderness of rank grasses, affording harbourage for vermin and reptilian life, now in an astonishing number of cases have had their savage irregularities sliced and levelled with mathematical precision by disc plough and spring-tooth harrow.

From the amount of work already done, most of which required an expenditure of ready money, it is very evident that the great majority of new Murgon settlers are of the very class so much desired by all who wish those districts occupied by small capitalists. It, of course, goes without saying that everything pertaining to settlement here is of brand new appearance, dwellings and outhouses, fences, gates, &c. The smell of newly-split or sawn timber meets one at every turn of the road, and miles of bright yellow lines indicate the course of new and substantial fences that run athwart hill and valley, creek, water-hole, and black soil flat in a hundred different directions. Galvanised wire, plain, and barbed is used so far as we have seen, to the total exclusion of the old dark steel variety, and on many a broken ridge, and in the rudely broken solitudes of erstwhile silent scrubs, the consignment tag still hangs bright and fresh on the wire of the completed fence ... There is nothing half-hearted about the start of the Murgon settler. He has come to stay ... It is abundantly evident that many of these people have come from big cities and towns of the south, and they would probably feel surprised if informed of the trivial 'signs and tokens' that betray the fact to the person long observant of the old-time 'cocky.' The wrapper of a newspaper idly dropped on the track, the marker's name on a saddle, the bicycle on the slab verandah, the stylish boots now substituted for 'bloomers', the woman who calls a billy 'a can', and in the open paddock reminds you that your pencil has fallen to 'the floor' ... It would be difficult to give anything like an exact estimate of the present population, but inclusive of all ages and both sexes, they would probably number 500 or 600 souls. The number already on their holdings is truly wonderful, and the amount of good solid work accomplished is more than surprising. There remain, however, a lot of selections which will receive their owners in the near future, and taking one thing with another it is evident to the dullest understanding that with such a desirable nucleus as already exists the Murgon of the future will be a town to be reckoned with.²⁰

As a part of this population explosion to the newly settled area, 1907 also saw the arrival of the Shelton family, John and his brother Henry, from the family property at Milora near Boonah. These two men arrived at Murgon with their families, some cattle and a few possessions to find the township very much in its embryonic state. They were skilled farmers having previous experience in the production of maize, cotton and in dairying. The brothers initially set about building a slab barn across the perimeter of their two properties where the settlers lived for a while, later constructing more substantial homes on blocks they had selected nine miles from Murgon. John Shelton named his holding *Merlwood* and Henry called his block *Woodmerl*. John Shelton was born at Redbank, Queensland, in 1859, he married in 1900 and was described as being a quiet man with a 'retiring disposition'. He was a lay preacher with the Methodist Church and died at the age of seventy-four years. His brother, Henry, was also heavily involved

in the church and was a director of the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association. He died on 3 February, 1938, aged seventy years. His wife, Mary Anne Shelton, lived until the age of ninety-four when she died in 1977, the press subsequently reporting of her: 'One of her achievements was to bring up three families in her life. Her mother died when she was 13, leaving her to rear the family of six. She brought up the family of her husband's deceased first wife, and then her own large family, a total of 21 children.'²¹

Another early selector in the Merlwood district was W.J. Zander, a plumber and tinsmith, who arrived in the Murgon region circa 1909. He acquired a 180 acres farm which was situated two miles from the Merlwood School where he expected to exploit '... good marketable timber in the forest ground (and) a large quantity of white claypipe in quarries.'²²

In fact, during the formative years of the Merlwood settlement, the region was not particularly well regarded — especially by visiting members of the press, one of whom, in 1911, had reported:

The first portion of the land between Murgon and Merlwood is of inferior quality, dry, clayish or sandy, with no available water, but a few miles from the school there are patches of very deep chocolate soil, suitable for anything and everything, provided there is a good rainfall, which unfortunately is not always the case — quite the reverse. The Merlwood School, built about 12 months ago on high blocks, well lighted and ventilated and very spacious, leaves nothing to be desired. A small flower garden in front of the school enhances the beauty of the latter. It is situated at about eight miles from Murgon, and is in charge of Miss Wilson.

There is a Progress Association in Merlwood, which I think meets every month to discuss topics of local interest. Many cases of dengue fever and typhoid fever have made their appearance in the district, but so far I think no fatal issue has occurred.²³

Other settlers in the Murgon district included Michael Brown and his wife who was killed by a black snake while hunting for wild honey and is reputed to have been the first white woman to die in the Murgon region.²⁴ Per (Peter) Pearson was a prominent local identity, the first chairman of the Murgon Show Society, he too experienced a tragic end and was killed by a falling tree while scrub clearing on his property. W.F. Zander and Tom Richards were early selectors, the first marriage between whites in the district was reputed to have been that of J. Herterick and Miss A. Richter which was celebrated at Shelton's farm at Merlwood. H. Clerk, A. Posnein and A.P. Mulherin are reported to have been the first to complete their scrub clearing while Sam Latham was the first to undertake contract threshing in the district.²⁵

Heinrich Goschnick and his wife Bertha were among the early selectors at Boat Mountain. Mrs Goschnick was born on 1 December, 1871, at sea, near Tasmania, the daughter of Christian Sempf and his wife. She lived at Alberton and later at Waterford in the Logan district and subsequently moved to West Moreton where she married Heinrich Goschnick. The couple lived at Tarampa for a while until they moved to the Murgon region in 1914, acquiring their property on Boat Mountain road. Five years later Heinrich suddenly died, aged forty-seven years, leaving Bertha and her young family to manage the farm as best she could. The press later claimed: 'She had a hard life but faced it with determination. She died quietly in her sleep, aged seventy-six years, in July, 1948, two sons and a daughter having predeceased her.'²⁶

Carl Schimke came to Murgon in 1926 when the region was well established, but he was one of Queensland's early immigrants. He was born in Germany on 9 October, 1867, the second son of Wilhelm and Caroline Schimke. He emigrated to Australia with his parents in 1871, sailing aboard the vessel *Reichstag*, the family then settled at Redgate. Carl Schimke married Amanda Grosskopf on 14 November, 1889, his wife died on 22 January, 1922 and two years later Carl remarried, his new bride being Emilie Caroline Band. The couple moved to Murgon in 1926. Carl Schimke died, aged seventy-nine years, on 24 January, 1947, and was interred at the Murgon cemetery.²⁷

All of the first settlers in the Murgon region were aware of the importance of establishing a local show society that could work to promote agrarian endeavour. This society came about in 1920, the press later reporting: 'From the minutes of a meeting held in the School of Arts on October 2, 1920, it is gathered that, at a public meeting held on 4 September, 1920, it was decided to form the Murgon Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Society. Records of that meeting of 2 October appear to be the first authentic record of the Society ... Officers appointed were:

president, Mr P. Pearson; patron, Mr I.J. Moore; vice-presidents Messrs J.A. Heading, A. Braithwaite, E.F. McSweeney, and E.W. Witton; treasurer, Mr L. Smith; secretary, Mr T.M. Stephenson. Several meetings were held and the site of the ground, and buildings decided on. The first show to be held on 11 and 12 May, 1921. At a meeting held on February 5, 1921, the tender of H.W. Kratzmann for erection of the pavilion at a price of £554/10/- was accepted; also that of J. Kahl at £267 for erection of cattle stalls and bullock pens.²⁸

The E.W. Witton mentioned in the above report was Ernest William Witton, a prominent member of the early Murgon district community. He arrived on the South Burnett from Victoria circa 1909 and, initially at least, selected land on the old Goomeri-Redgate-Murgon road, later acquiring a parcel of land near Manyung. The press subsequently reported that: '... the Witton homestead at Manyung railway siding (is) one of the most conspicuous landmarks on the railway line, with its fine residence, extensive milking yards, pigs pens etc and a large herd of cows evidencing an air of prosperity.' Witton died in the Wondai Hospital on 10 October, 1945, and was interred at the Murgon cemetery, his wife having predeceased him about six months earlier.²⁹

Francis William Caswell operated the first permanent sawmill in the Murgon district, it was opened circa 1912, the plant having come from Mount Perry. The mill operated with pine brought primarily from the Boat Mountain region. This mill was vital to the formative years of the town and it provided the basic building materials from which many of the residences and business houses of Murgon were constructed. There were, of course, other sources of timber in the district, travelling mills operated throughout the South Burnett and in the earlier days there were sawpits where hand cut timber was available. Mills were operating at Taabinga and Nanango and so sawn timber could be brought to Murgon by bullock wagon at a relatively low cost, but at Murgon it was vital to the town's growth that builders and settlers had a convenient, reliable and comparatively inexpensive supply of timber, Caswell's sawmill was ideally situated to supply this need and did so until 1932 when it finally closed.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Forty-nine

Growth of the Town of Murgon — Early Townspeople and Selectors

1. M/C. 2 November, 1906, p 4.
2. *Reise* pass, Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.
3. Marriage certificate of Martha and Joseph Angel, and family history, Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection, and letter to the author from Cleo Goodchild, dated 3 July, 1996.
4. SBT. 5 August, 1987, p 12.
5. Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection and letter to the author from Cleo Goodchild dated 3 July, 1996.
6. SBT. 6 November, 1936, p 5.
7. Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.
8. *Ibid.*
9. M/C. 18 December, 1907, p 2.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. SBT. 10 December, 1953 p 9.
13. M/C. 18 December, 1907, p 2.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. M/C. 26 March, 1908, p 4.
17. M/C. 18 December, 1907, p 2.
18. *Ibid.*
19. SBT. 8 July, 1970, p 2.
20. M/C. 5 December, 1907, p 4.

21. Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection and *The District News*, 21 January, 1981, p 6.
See also the *Burnett Bush Telegraph*, June 1994, pp 8–9.
22. M/C. 21 April, 1911, p 6.
23. Ibid.
24. WW. p 250.
25. WW. p 252.
26. SBT. 22 July, 1948, p 5.
27. SBT. 6 February, 1947, p 5.
28. SBT. 2 September, 1938, p 6.
29. SBT. 18 October, 1945, p 8.

Early Education in Murgon

Like many other burgeoning centres throughout the South Burnett, it soon became evident, following the establishment of the rail line, that with a vastly increasing population it was of vital importance to provide the social structure and facilities needed to support the community, this entailed the provision of services such as medical care, government and very importantly, education for the children of the settlers.

Until the provision of a school, children at Murgon were forced to do without any kind of educational training — other than what little could be supplied by the parents themselves — and all too frequently this type of training was woefully inadequate. Thus the provision of a school at Murgon came about, as it did in almost every other rural centre serviced by a school, through the agitation of concerned parents and other residents. On 10 September, 1906, George Arnell wrote to the Department of Public Instruction in Brisbane — the fore-runner to the Department of Education — requesting information concerning the exact procedure to be adopted to have a school established at Murgon. The relevant forms were sent to Arnell, a school building committee was formed and this committee suggested a site. Ten acres of crown land were selected as the site for the school, a school inspector visited the region to report on the viability of the project and, following a favourable report, approval was given for the construction of the school. Parents had to find one fifth of the cost of construction with the other four-fifths coming from the state government. Tenders were called and the successful tenderer was the building partnership of McKewan and Wood. The building was commenced in 1907 and completed by November that year.

Initially a teacher named Arthur Greer was appointed to the position of the school's first head teacher, Greer was then teaching at Stonehenge, near Longreach, his father had a selection at Murgon. However, due to illness he was unable to take up the appointment at the beginning of the school year in 1908. The school was opened on 24 February, 1908, with Sarah Matilda Farquharson as head teacher. Sarah Farquharson remained head teacher only until December 1908 when she was replaced by John Joseph Quinlan who served until June 1912.¹

Among the school's first children were Charles and Freda (Alfreda) Fick. The Fick family had arrived at Murgon Siding in 1906, their mother having selected land near Barambah Creek. Initially the family lived in a tin shed near the creek, but this was shifted on three occasions to get closer to the water. In 1971 Charles Fick told the press that the closer they got to the creek the more populous the snakes became. The members of the family who resided at the small holding included Bill, Alf, Fritz, Charles, May and Freda Fick. They carried on dairying, carting their modest amount of cream to Murgon where it went, initially, to Tiaro. They left the farm in 1911 and moved to Murgon where Mrs Fick opened a small shop. In 1915 her son-in-law constructed a large home for her which she converted to a private hospital.²

Other schools were constructed and opened throughout the region when and where demand was the greatest, there were schools at Redgate, Oakdale, Wooroonden, Barlil, Silverleaf, Manyung, Boat Mountain, Crownthorpe, Sunny Nook, Merlwood, Glenrock, Windera, Cloyna and Moffatdale.

With all these schools the necessity for their construction came about through local demand and the rise in population, the formation of concerned citizens into building and school committees and representations to the Department of Public Instruction.

For example the Sunny Nook School was opened in 1927 to provide an education to children who had previously walked or travelled to the school at Merlwood, its first teacher was a young

man named Gordon Shelton who had previously been teaching at Merlwood. The Sunny Nook School followed the path of operations of almost all other rural schools in the region, its attendance numbers fluctuated with social conditions, including weather patterns which, of course, affected farm successes or failures, and following a slow but steady decline in student figures it was forced to close in 1945. The building was later moved to Cloyna to become a part of the Cloyna School complex.³

The Crownthorpe School was opened in 1914, and was named from the crown lands upon which it was placed coupled with 'thorpe', meaning a small English village. Its first teacher was a Miss Bell. A later report of the school described it as: '... a weatherboard construction 20 feet by ten feet ... Winter meant cold draughty days scarcely warmed by the small ineffectual wood stove.'⁴ The school was finally closed due to a drop in attendance and the building was sold for removal in 1953.⁵

Oakdale School was constructed in 1916 and opened on 10 August that year, it was situated near the junction of the Gayndah and Tableland roads some three and a half miles from Murgon. Its first teacher was Mary Pilcher. It was closed in 1941, dismantled in 1947 and removed to a site near Elgin Vale.⁶

The school at Manyung was constructed less than a mile from the Manyung railway siding in 1912. The first head teacher was Alice May Meddleton. It was re-sited in 1921 and finally closed in 1963.⁷

Other known opening dates include Redgate, opened in October 1908 with Anna Margaret Gultzow as its first head teacher, Wooroonden in 1917, Barlil, 1925, Silverleaf, 1912 and Boat Mountain in 1915.⁸

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifty

Early Education in Murgon

1. *Murgon State School 75th Anniversary, 1908-1983*, M/C. 26 March, 1908, p 4 and SBT. 23 February, 1983, p 9.
2. SBT. 28 July, 1971. For a detailed list of early pupils see: *Murgon State School, 75th Anniversary, 1908-1983*.
3. *Murgon State School 75th Anniversary, 1908-1983*.
4. SBT. 23 February, 1983, p 9.
5. *Murgon State School 75th Anniversary, 1908-1983*.
6. *Murgon State School 75th Anniversary, 1908-1983* and SBT. 23 February, 1983, p 9.
7. *Murgon State School 75th Anniversary, 1908-1983*.
8. *Ibid.*

Continued Progress at Murgon

By May 1908 the straggling township of Murgon was slowly growing — but not without its teething problems. The railway goods shed had still not been constructed and at a meeting of the progress association held on the 11th of that month, an emergency committee was delegated to meet with the minister for railways to demand some action. The timber industry was brisk, the railway yard was filled to capacity with logs, although there seems to have been a lack of railway trucks to take these logs away and this was creating problems for the bullock drivers whose, '... vocabulary is being quaintly enriched in consequence.' During that week of 11 May W.R. (Bob) Gray's store and agency was sold to Martha Angel.¹

Representations to the railways minister must have been successful for, on the 18th of that month, the press reported the arrival at Murgon of the contractor who was to build the long awaited goods shed at the railway siding. His arrival had: '... dispelled the look of anxiety which was threatening to become chronic.'²

A passing correspondent wrote of the town in December 1908: 'Since my last visit to Murgon a church (Methodist) and a pub have been added to that township. The hotel (the Royal) is owned by James Tiernan, (storekeeper Gympie and Murgon), licensed by a Mr Stephen Hack and managed by Mr O'Neil. Mr Robert Moore (late of Brisbane) is now manager of Mr Tiernan's general store in Murgon, and is assisted in his duties by our old acquaintance Mr George Nolan. Mr Keating, the late manager, has taken charge of Mrs Angel's local store. Mr Joe Murphy, owner and licensee of Murgon Hotel is still making a roaring trade, a new hand has been added to his personnel.'³



The residence of George and Eliza Waldock, Gore Street, Murgon, circa 1912.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 72772.

By August the following year the progress of the township was still remarkable. The Royal Hotel had been completed, its proprietor was Mr B. Gillett. Murphy's Hall had also been completed and had hosted many meetings of the Salvation Army and other religious bodies. A combined newsagent, tobacconist and barber's shop had been opened, and opposite this business in the main street stood another general store. Mr G. Noble had purchased Tierman's general store and there had been many other changes in the township. However, there was still considerable condemnation over the running of the railway, one person stating: 'The Government ... (is), of course, (as usual) the very last to recognise ... (its) obligations to the public, the consequence being that the local railway station remains a huffer-mugger sort of contrivance wherein one man is expected to perform miracles in responsible work.'⁴

The single room provisional school was by this time proving to be too small for the growing township, in 1909 additions to the building doubled its original space and in 1917 a new building was constructed which featured glazed folding partitions that provided divisions for three classrooms. The building also had a verandah and staff-room.⁵

Some of the early residents of the township and district were included in the writings of a local visitor to the region in 1911. He wrote:

Mr James Hampson, Murgon, (is) stationer, newsagent, confectioner, fruiterer, fancy goods, tobacconist, cutlery, &c. and is agent for the *Chronicle* and the *Colonist*. Established 18 months, Mr J. Hampson was born in Toowoomba, reared in that city and remained in it until six years ago. Fourteen years ago he bought his father's business (soap manufacturer), sold it six years ago, and selected 3000 acres in the Warra district (west) for cattle grazing. Stayed there one year, sold his selection, and with the proceeds purchased a dairy farm in Crow's Nest; sold the latter with profit two months ago. In the meantime two years ago he purchased a quarter allotment in Murgon township. The frontage being large he built four shops or offices on it, irrespective of his own — namely, chemist shop, bootmaker's, produce merchant's and solicitor's office. In addition, he bought a few weeks ago another quarter-acre town allotment in Murgon for private residence. He has been his own builder and carpenter. Eleven years ago he married Miss M.E. Shipley, of Warwick, and has three boys and one girl ... Mrs Hampson's father (Abraham Shipley) has been chief engineer and draughtsman of the Warwick Waterworks for the past 27 years — in fact, since their erection. Mrs Hampson is also a descendant of Captain Webb, the champion swimmer of the English Channel.

... Mr John O'Connor, Royal Hotel, Murgon, 18 months; late of the Royal Exchange Hotel in Gympie, which he kept for 2½ years. Previously to that he was manager and shareholder of the Phoenix Golden Pile gold mine in Gympie for thirty-six years. Has been forty-three years in Gympie, and had to leave the management of the Phoenix owing to bad health. The service of the Murgon Royal Hotel is attended to by Mr O'Connor's two daughters, one son, a cook, and a billiard marker. One table only for meals. The two daughters are kind and courteous, and I could not speak too highly of the bar and of the table.

William Wall, bootmaker, has been two years and four months in Murgon. Removed to the present premises (Mr J. Hampson's buildings) six months ago ...

Morgan Jones, the popular Murgon station-master, has been nineteen years in the railway service. He started first as a porter, next as night officer in Howard and Helidon; assistant station-master at Corinda and Indooroopilly, and finally station-master for the past two years in Murgon. It is only by dint of hard work and careful attention to his duties that Mr M. Jones has risen to the position of station-master.

Sidney Emanuel Browne, late of London, has been five years knocking about Queensland for colonial experience, his last job being groom at the Murgon Australian Hotel (J. Reilly, proprietor), which duties he fulfilled for six weeks during the momentary absence of the permanent groom, Mr James Atkinson, of South Gippsland, who has been with Mr Reilly upwards of three years. The latter has found him very attentive and obliging and popular with the local lads, who were constantly enquiring when 'Skinney' was coming home. Mr S.E. Browne during his short sojourn in Murgon also gave satisfaction. He is going stewarding on one of the coastal steamers for more colonial experience.

Leber Bros., *Summerley*, 130 acres, all scrub, chocolate soils and almost flat, six miles riding and eight miles driving to Murgon, milking sixteen cows, next year thirty. *Summerley* was purchased on the 16th April, 1906. In addition, Leber Bros. own another 320 acre selection, on which a well 75 feet deep has been sunk. There is also a spring on that farm. Their father (William Leber) is manager for James Campbell & Son, timber merchants, Brisbane.

R.W. Nutt, 800 odd acres, one mile from Murgon; four years in the district, and proprietor of the Murgon perambulating sawmill (established three years), trading as Nutt & Geck, travelling throughout the district with a bench and engine and requisite cutting timber on the premises for building purposes.

K.J. Campbell, 157 acres, was selected by ballot (three competing) eighteen months ago; mostly scrub land, out of which thirty acres are under corn. Situated about two miles from Murgon township. Just started dairying. Mr K.J. Campbell came from Scotland three years ago; worked in different places in N.S.W. and Queensland, and finally settled down in Murgon eighteen months ago.

Joseph Hassall, Junr., was born in Rockhampton. He has been knocking about the west, shearing and working on stations, came from Longreach with his wife and family ten months ago, and has since been working for his father, who came from Yandina two years last March and selected Mr A. Lane's farm (three miles from Murgon), which had been forfeited. In addition, Mr Hassall Junr. looks after the bore and windmill erected by the Municipal Council on the side of the road, opposite his father's. He married seven years last January Miss Mary May Hamilton, of Isisford (Blackall, in the Central West), with the result of three boys and two girls. Mr Hassall intends to settle shortly on the land.

August Beitzel, 210 acres (3½ miles from Murgon), is in partnership with his brother William dairying and farming, all scrub land, with the exception of twenty acres of forest. Milking sixteen cows at the time of my visit. Both brothers are married and came from Roadvale in the Fassifern district four years ago. Mr August Beitzel first bought a 112 acre farm in Wooroolin, sold it six months after, and, in conjunction with his brother, William, bought the present farm 18 months ago from John Shepherd.

Gardner Brothers, *Box Hill*, 220 acres ... they intend to go in for dairying later on. *Box Hill* is situated at about four miles from Murgon. It was selected first by Mr M.C. Fox, forfeited and re-selected two years ago by Gardner Bros. The latter hail from Warragul (Gippsland), in which district they were born, reared and worked until they selected *Box Hill*.

Mr J.W. Draheim, *Lindlay*, 220 acres, almost all scrub, first-class chocolate and deep brown soil (four miles from Murgon); dairying (22 cows) and farming, including 50 pigs and about 200 fowls. *Lindlay* was purchased from Charles Greville about twelve months ago. At the time of my visit there were 42 acres under corn, and 50 or 60 more acres will be ploughed in time for next crop. Last year every acre yielded an average of sixty bushels of corn. Close by the homestead a well with windmill attached to it was sunk to 66 feet deep, with an abundant supply of fresh water. Mr Draheim owns another 78 acre scrub land farm in Roadvale (Fassifern), which he leased about 12 months ago. He was born in Walloon, and later on followed his parents to Fernvale when he was a boy, and subsequently to Roadvale. In 1889 he married a Miss Annie Hartwig of that district. Mr J.W. Draheim is also a carpenter by trade, which trade he followed when he was residing in Roadvale; and before he removed from the latter place with his wife and family for good he built in Murgon for Mr R. Cuthbertson's son (of Roadvale) a two storey house (including a draper's shop and residence), which was subsequently purchased last Christmas by Messrs Fisher and Hilton, drapers, &c. On the evening of my visit one of the young ladies of the house, Miss Mary, played a few selections of music in a very expressive manner.⁶

There were, of course, many other settlers in the region, including William John Borchert and his family. W.J. Borchert was born at Rosevale on 14 April, 1876, and early in life became intensely interested in animals and veterinary work, this interest led him to employment with well known stud breeders of the day during which he was able to increase his knowledge of animal husbandry.

In 1900 he married Ann Charlotte Lobegeier of Mount Walker, and the following year he, his wife and an infant child, arrived at the fledgling settlement of Taabinga where he selected a property. No rail link had then been laid to the village and food and other supplies were brought in by horse and dray from places as far distant as Toowoomba. Despite frequent bad weather which created enormous difficulties on the early roads of the state, Borchert was well known for always getting his team through to his destination.

He and his family settled in the Murgon region in 1905, taking over a property on the Redgate road. Soon afterwards a daughter was born, reputed to have been the first white girl in the district. The press later wrote of Borchert: 'On this new property ... he bred blood horses of high standard for the show ring and race track. He bred a complete team of grey horses and this gave him added interest in the cultivation of the rich black soil lucerne land. Later he bred and

exhibited beautiful Clydesdales. He was greatly sought after for veterinary work, many animals being saved by his skill ... His team brought in from his own properties many of the sleepers for the rail links, flag pole and electric light poles. Being a great lover of music he played his violin and other musical instruments for the many dances in the early days, but after a severe accident to his hands he was forced to put his music aside.⁷

Borchert's name has become synonymous with the provision of the first flagpole in Murgon. Another early Murgon resident, Mrs L. Kapernick, who knew Borchert well, later stated: 'Shortly after World War One Mr Borchert made sure of its (the flagpole's) safe delivery after cutting down the tree on his own property, snigged the tall sapling up to town himself. He was a proud man that day. He had done something for his flag and town, Murgon. He was equally proud many years before when Dr Ellen Woods, the town's first medical officer, rode up on her big and spirited black horse and gave him the good tidings. A daughter had been born to the Borchert family, the first white baby girl to be born in Murgon.'⁸

The first white baby referred to in this account was Maude Borchert (later Mrs Max Renecker. The press later published an account of this incident, stating:

On St Patrick's Day 1907, the first child — Maude Borchert — was born to the Murgon pioneers. No doctors, no nurses, and above all, no women were there to assist Maude's mother, Anne. Anne's father, Grandfather Lobegeier, was the only other person in the house. He was a veterinary assistant in Germany and he watched over her, but men did not involve themselves in confinements. Anne confined herself, then got up to attend to the child. To be up at once was considered certain death in those times. But Anne, born at Mount Walker near Rosevale, had raised four children from the age of six on the death of her mother. Anne and William Borchert bred Clydesdales and blood stock on their mixed farm on Murgon's outskirts until 1938. Maude was born on the property, now Alan Benson's, in a two-bedroomed, slab and shingled cottage. The cottage with its broadaxed floor was beautifully constructed by Grandfather Lobegeier. It stood until after 1955.⁹

During the last few months of his life William John Borchert underwent a number of: '... severe surgical operations', he died at the Brisbane General Hospital, aged seventy-seven years, on 14 May, 1953, and was interred in the Hemmant Park cemetery.¹⁰

Borchert's friend, Mrs Kapernick, was a woman with a deep, lasting and sometimes humorous memory of Murgon's earliest days. She once wrote: '... the story is told to this day how a bullock team and wagon completely disappeared in the mud. It was then a current story of a stranger who was puzzled at the phlegmatic regard with which the locals surveyed the spectacle of a seemingly demented teamster flailing an apparently imaginary team in the main street. When asked what the teamster could possibly derive from this action came the dry reply: "Whip wherever you see the bubbles".'¹¹



Waldock's blacksmith shop, circa 1913.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 72768.

Among some of the early business people of Murgon were E.L. Standen, who ran a general store and operated as a produce merchant. R.E. Dargen was a newsagent and also sold fancy goods, photographic supplies and items such as silverware, toys and even confectionery. The South Burnett Metal Works was owned by C. Duffey. Cunningham and Mills operated a produce business, circa 1923 they purchased a large grain shed in the railway yard, the *Brisbane Courier* later reporting: 'This has proved to be a very valuable asset to the firm's general business. Every hour of the business day a constant stream of motor lorries, waggons and drays is coming and going, loading or unloading produce of every kind which is stored or

entrained, the bulk going to Northern markets. Both Mr Cunningham and Mr Mills are interested in public affairs.¹²

The motor company of Waldock and Zerner originally commenced individually, Waldock was known as a blacksmith and coach-builder while Zerner was an expert mechanic. The two businessmen formed a partnership in 1923, they occupied a garage on the corner of Lamb and Macalister Streets. They were agents for Ford, Essex, Hudson, Oakland and Rugby vehicles and International harvesters.¹³



Waldock's, Lamb Street, Murgon, circa 1915.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 72777.



Waldock and Zerner, Murgon 1930.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 72778.

Another early business to be established in the town was that of the drapers and mercery operated by two partners, Andy Stewart and Colin Thompson. These two men began their business after they arrived from Ipswich in 1929. The store they selected for their business was owned by James Tiernan (senior), and when they first opened for business in December that year there were no shop fittings or floor, the partners were forced to accept Tiernan's offer of some trestle tables and hurricane lanterns, although the business was evidently destined for success as they took £15 that Christmas Eve and night. During the years of the Great Depression the partners took to the road, hawking their goods around the farms and towns of the South Burnett. They at first drove an ancient Ford, later converting to a truck.¹⁴ Andrew Stewart was the son of Andrew and Mary Stewart, he was born on 28 September, 1903, at Airdrie, Scotland, later emigrating with his parents aboard the steamship *Ophir*, leaving Britain on 1 November, 1910. The family arrived in Brisbane on 14 January, 1911, and Andrew Stewart, a fruit and vegetable merchant by trade, began working as a fettleer with the Queensland Government Railways. In February that year they arrived at Roma where Mary Stewart soon became station mistress. The family moved frequently after that, Gore in 1913, Gatton in 1914 and finally to Ipswich in 1916.

Colin Thompson was educated at St James Christian Brothers School in Boundary Street, Brisbane. In 1919 the city experienced an outbreak of bubonic plague and most of the schools were closed. Colin then went to work in the country department of Finney Isles, one of the largest drapery businesses in the state. After working in this business for approximately eight months he moved to Ipswich to take up a position with Fifers. It was here that Colin met Andrew Stewart who was also working for Fifers, and the two became close friends. Colin later left Fifers to move to Mackay where he worked with Marsh and Webster in charge of their winter dressing department, a position he held for three years. Afterwards he returned to Brisbane, working for Barry and Roberts for nine months, later returning to his old store at Ipswich, by then owned by Bayards. The friendship between Colin Thompson and Andrew Stewart then re-commenced and having heard that there was a store being offered at Murgon they decided to investigate the possibilities. They took a week off work, without pay, and travelled up in the train, known in those days as the 'Peanut'. They stayed in Murgon for a few days and finally decided to open their business together. After moving to Murgon both men lived at the Australian Hotel from 1929 to 1935.¹⁵



Bank of New South Wales, Murgon, circa 1921.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 23726.

The first bank in the town was that of the Bank of New South Wales. A report of this bank's activities and history, published in 1959, stated:

On January 5, 1909, Mr Lionel E. Barter, of the Murgon Progress Association wrote to the Bank of New South Wales at Gympie saying: 'I am instructed by the association to forward a requisition from the residents of Murgon for the establishment of a branch of your bank at Murgon.' Attached to Mr Barter's letter was the requisition signed by 55 residents of the district. The Gympie manager, Mr E. Park, passed the request on to the bank's head office, but his accompanying letter was not very enthusiastic about the prospects for a bank. 'It is a promising and growing district and in a year or two might be worth consideration,' Mr Park said. At the time of Mr Barter's letter, Murgon was at the end of a 6½ hour train journey from Gympie. The township consisted of two stores, two hotels, two butchers, a blacksmith, several churches, a state school and about 10 houses, but the town lacked a bank. However, less than four months after Mr Barter's letter, the Gympie manager again visited Murgon and in a glowing report of the district's growth and future prospects, recommended to the bank that a branch be opened there adding that 'no time should be lost.'

On May 25, 1909, the general manager in Sydney telegraphed to the Queensland administration of the bank in Brisbane — 'Opening agreed to.' The Gympie manager proceeded forthwith to Murgon and on May 28, telegraphed Brisbane to say that he had secured suitable premises and had opened the branch.

Five years later the Queensland National Bank opened a branch and this was followed in 1950 by the Commercial Bank of Australia Ltd., and in 1955 by the Commonwealth Bank.

When the 'Wales' branch was opened, there were between five and six hundred people in the district engaged in farming, timber getting, scrub cutting, team transport and business in the town. 230 farms had been taken up in the district and Gympie manager reported to the bank that he had inspected most of them: '... and can safely say that they are the finest agricultural properties that I have seen for years in Queensland.'

The first premises occupied by the bank were at the corner of Stephen and Gore Streets and were rented from James Tiernan at 5/- per week. On September 1, 1909, the branch was moved into premises situated on the present (1959) site of the branch in Lamb Street. These premises were owned by J.J. Murphy and in 1912 the bank purchased them for £620. The branch building was destroyed by fire in 1916 and the present premises were erected in 1918 at a cost of less than £2000.

The first permanent manager was Mr Keith Graham and he arrived from Townsville branch to take charge of Murgon on June 8, 1909. Successive branch managers were: 1913, E.W. Thompson; 1916, C.T. Faunce; 1930, F.R. Skyring; 1934, H.C. Burbidge; 1943, C.C. Northcott; 1950, R.S. Derrington; 1955, J.P. Morgan; 1957, Colin Bain. Mr Burbidge recently retired from the bank's service at Nambour branch and Mr Derrington and Mr Morgan are branch managers at Stones Corner and Dalby.¹⁶

Banking and postal services were, like any other small rural community, vital facilities for which local residents worked hard to establish. The postal service at Murgon has a colourful and diversified history. The coming of the rail line altered, forever, the carrying and receipt of the mails. Hitherto the mails had been carried by lone mail carriers, riding long distances over lengthy periods, sometimes through appalling weather conditions and facing many dangers — including the danger of attack from bushrangers. However, the rail system dramatically changed that mode of delivery and upon the arrival of the rails at places such as Murgon residents in the bush were treated to regular and reliable receipt of their mails.

The first post office in Murgon was simply a receipt office, it was opened in September 1904 at the railway station. The first unofficial postmistress in the town appears to have been a Mrs Greer, followed by Miss G. Nutt, the daughter of the town's first selector. Miss Nutt was followed by W.G. Caswell and his daughter Miss F.G. Caswell. In 1907 the press reported: 'The legal post office is ably presided over by Miss Caswell, but as it is some distance from the cream humpy (at the railway siding), the young lady obligingly meets all mail trains and sings out the names of recipients ... It's not a half bad plan either as it saves addressees trouble and herself a lot of thankless work also.'¹⁷

In June 1908 the receiving office was officially elevated to that of a non-official post office which, in addition to the receipt and despatch of mails, also handled postal notes.

Three years later (1911) there was considerable concern over the siting of the post office which was about to be removed to a portion of the township that many residents believed was an inaccessible area, the press claiming: 'Two and a half years ago it was kept by Mr Caswell senior at his private residence, later on it was removed to the railway station and kept by the station master or one of his employees, 7 or 8 months ago it was once more removed close to its former place, Miss (Eve) Whitney and staff in charge. Now an attempt is being made to perambulate it to a deserted place ... Why not select the aboriginal mission four miles from Murgon?'¹⁸

The Commonwealth government purchased land on the south east side of the railway line on 3 June, 1911, and a new post office was constructed through the 1913/14 period, this was a simple, single storey structure with quarters for the postmaster. Also in 1914 the non-official post office was elevated to that of an official post office. The first official postmaster was A.G. Wilson who had R.W.D. Webb as his assistant. The telegraph messenger was H.R. Kay who was appointed on 13 April, 1914.¹⁹

The building used by Caswell as the town's post office was removed from its original site in 1921, the press claiming: 'Last Saturday an old Murgon landmark was removed when Mr W. Wright removed the weatherboard building owned by him and which has stood in Gore Street Murgon almost since the inception of the town ... The premises were first occupied by Mr W. Caswell who at that time conducted the post office by contract and the building was used by him as a post office. It was practically the first post office in Murgon and old residents will recollect going to the little unpretentious building for their mail. The building was removed by Mr Wright for the purpose of using it as a motor garage at the residence recently erected by him for Doctor (Ellen) Wood.' The site referred to in this editorial was evidently in Macalister Street, for in the same edition Dr Ellen Wood advertised that she had: '... removed to her new premises in Macalister Street, next to the recreation ground.'²⁰



Post office, Murgon.

Source — Murgon Shire Council.



Lamb Street, Murgon, circa 1920.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 125547.

The selectors and other residents coming to the region originated from a wide diversity of areas, many were Australian born but just as many were newly arriving immigrants, unused to the harsh Australian climate, ignorant of its dangers and untrained in agricultural matters. Some of these immigrants came from the heavily industrialised centres of England, the cotton factories of Yorkshire, the coal mines of South Wales, the Cornish tin mines or London's slums. When they first arrived on the South Burnett the scene that greeted them was, seemingly, a primitive one, few roads, poor facilities, a small population, little in the way of medical care or other essential services and the country they settled in was a hostile one, harsh bright dry summers, cold winters, little rain when it was needed and then too much when it finally came. There were no transport facilities, few bridges and even travelling from one destination, through unknown countryside, could, in itself, be a dangerous undertaking. For example, in 1911 the newly appointed Salvation Army officer, Captain Tunstall, of the Murgon corps experienced a dangerous creek crossing which, as he did not know the countryside, almost cost him his life.

The drama was enacted in January that year while Tunstall was en-route to Murgon. Heavy rain had recently fallen and Barambah Creek was in flood. A short time before Tunstall arrived at the creek two men named Cross and Woodall, driving a light buggy, had arrived at the creek and knowing the creek well and realising that the water was too deep to attempt a crossing unaided, they felled a tree across the creek which, with the help of a rope, they used to cross to the opposite side. One man remained with the horse and buggy, the horse was unharnessed and using the rope as a safety harness was swum across the creek. The buggy was then attached to the rope and this was dragged across the creek.

Several minutes after these two men had re-harnessed their horse and continued with their journey, Captain Tunstall arrived at the same creek crossing, he was driving a sulky, in harness was a pony, a foal was also tied up to the side of the sulky. At first Tunstall was concerned by the condition of the flooded crossing, but seeing that there were buggy tracks leading into the water and from the water on the opposite bank, he decided that someone had crossed that way in a buggy only minutes previously and therefore the crossing must be safe. Urging his horse forward he drove into the creek but both he and his sulky were swept away. His cries for help were heard by James Laurie of Murgon, who was riding close by, and galloping up he saw the captain with

his head only just above the swirling water, the pony and foal apparently drowning. He shouted to Tunstall to abandon the sulky and to swim for the creek bank. At first Tunstall was unwilling to leave the sulky but eventually he was persuaded and he struck out for the bank. By this time the cries had alerted the two men who had previously crossed the creek. Returning to the crossing Woodall courageously went to the aid of the pony and foal, cutting the harness and enabling them to escape. Later the sulky was retrieved from the creek. The incident prompted the press to call for the construction of a bridge over the crossing, or failing this, at least post markings to show the depth of water in the creek.²¹

As we have seen from previous chapters, one of the most important tasks of the selector was to clear his land ready for planting. To do this vast numbers of trees had to be felled and (usually) burnt, the stumps then had to be dug out by hand or, less frequently, using dynamite to blast them from the ground. However, the first demonstration of the use of gelignite for such work in the Murgon region was given by W. Armstrong of Redgate, approximately four miles from the township. This was such an unusual occurrence that Armstrong himself posted notices around the township informing residents that the experiment was to take place at his property on 20 November, 1912. On the appointed day a large crowd of people arrived at the property to watch the proceedings, one witness recording: 'Mr Armstrong's work was watched with deep interest, not altogether free from a trifle of apprehension as he handled his gelignite, his fuses and his caps with all the seeming indifference of a youngster playing with sweetmeats.'²²

After boring holes beneath the stumps in the paddock, Armstrong set his explosives and fuses and the spectators raced for cover, the same witness recalling: '... the effect in an upward direction was indeed remarkable. The lifting power exerted was truly enormous. Heavy clouds of black soil were sent soaring hundreds of feet aloft as from the crater of a volcano ...'²³

By 1913 the new Murgon High School had been completed and was under the charge of Herbert Steer, '... a man of wide attainments and big reputation in Southern scholastic circles.' The School of Arts library had been completed, some six hundred books had been purchased by a special purchasing committee. The books included works by some of the world's leading writers such as Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde, there was even a volume by Karl Marx. The gymnasium at the School of Arts had also been completed and was being well patronised by local athletes, although the School of Arts had then not been officially opened.²⁴

The official opening of the School of Arts took place on Friday 29 August, 1913. The celebrations were preceded the previous day by a gala fair, the fair featured stalls and markets which, according to press reports, '... did a roaring trade.' The construction of the hall had been something of a major event in Murgon. It had been designed by a Brisbane architect named Price who gave his services free of charge. The building contractor was J. Vance of Maryborough, and Mr J. Turner was the works overseer. Timber for the building had been supplied by the Murgon Sawmilling Company, the joinery and other building materials came from Negas Ltd. in Maryborough. The total cost of the building and its furnishings amounted to £1174. It included fencing and a gas generator. An Australian Beale piano had been installed at a cost of eighty-five guineas, the books for the library had cost £43. The structure was 120 feet in length, 36 feet wide and contained a large hall, a stage, two ante-rooms, the library and reading room and two offices. The building was opened by the governor, Sir William MacGregor. Sir William and his A.D.C., Captain Foxton, arrived at Murgon by rail that morning and were taken to the Royal Hotel for breakfast, the press reporting: '... Considerable adverse comment on the absence of the member for the district and the chairman of the Wienholt Shire was heard in the crowd.' All parliamentary representatives of the entire region had been invited to the function but not one had put in an appearance and this was considered a great affront, the press claiming: 'In many instances not even an acknowledgement of the committee's invitation, sent out in plenty of time, was vouchsafed. In view of the importance of the occasion to the people of the district ... the discourtesy seemed most marked and inexplicable.'²⁵

One man who served a tenure as the secretary, librarian and caretaker to the School of Arts was Victor R. Smith. Smith was born in France of English parents and arrived in Australia with his parents when he was just nine years of age. In later years he resided at a number of places including New South Wales and New Zealand. He acquired property in Murgon during the 1920s and for approximately four years up until the time of his death in February 1934 was the secretary and librarian at the School of Arts.²⁶



School of Arts, corner Lamb and Gore Streets, Murgon, later to become the Hanlon Hall at the showgrounds and eventually being replaced by the sporting complex.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.



Macalister Street, Murgon, 1914.

Source — Bill Roberts' collection.

By 1915, as the Australian fighting spirit was being forged on the scree-laden slopes of Gallipoli, Murgon was continuing to rapidly grow. One visitor remarking: 'While all the new towns in the Nanango district have within the last 12 or 14 years developed from wilderness in a manner somewhat startling, there is, to our mind, nothing more astonishing than the sudden emergence of Murgon in less than ten years from nothing whatever to its present imposing condition. About that period we had the good fortune ... to discover two men who were in the act of putting in the first block in the foundations of the first small hotel, which is now an immense one ... there was one, and only one, settler in the entire locality, Mr Nutt, and in passing, we may say that we very much regret on our present visit to find that this fine old 'Father of Murgon' is confined to his verandah and in by no means a good state of health. The town seems, in the first place, to have been most intelligently laid out on modern lines.'²⁷

By 1923 building work in Murgon was still being carried out at a rapid pace. In March that year the new Queensland National Bank was in course of construction, although a fire that had destroyed several shops in the C.B.D. had left '... an ugly gap in the street.'²⁸ The Murgon branch of the Queensland National Bank had first been opened on 27 January, 1914, and the new brick premises at 90 Lamb Street were opened in 1923. The first manager of the 1914 branch was G. Humphreys who served until 1915. Receiving offices of this bank were opened at Proston in 1935 and a branch agency at Boondooma Dam in 1981. The Boondooma agency closed in 1982.²⁹

Also by 1923 the long awaited rail service had begun to Proston and the Murgon railway station had, in consequence, been raised in status, its station-master was appointed to a higher grade and an assistant station-master was also appointed.³⁰ A year later, in February 1924, final arrangements had been made for the opening of yet another bank, the Commercial Banking Co. Ltd. Its premises were situated in Lamb Street, between Mr W. Wright's block of brick shops and a bakery owned by Mr W. Grant.³¹



Queensland National Bank, Murgon.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 125546.



Lamb Street, Murgon, early 1920s.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

By 1928 the township was continuing to progress rapidly, new roads were being constructed, the butter factory was increasing its output and there were many new constructions underway. The butter factory in particular was one of the town's most important industries (see Chapter 97 for details of this factory). By September 1928 it was undergoing some massive changes, a modern factory was in the course of construction and the output was growing steadily, approximately sixty tons of butter were being produced each week and with the improvements being made this was likely to increase dramatically.³² Other improvements in the town included the construction of the new Royal Hotel, a brick building in Gore Street, the owner being Mr J. O'Hara. Dwyer and Hutchins of Brisbane were the contractors and Mr G. Campbell-Wilson was the architect. The estimated cost of the building was approximately £7350, the press claiming: 'The liberal dimensions of the bar room, dining room and coffee room and the splendid accommodation provided in the 22 bedrooms upstairs at once place the building in the front rank as far as hotels on this line are concerned.'³³ Additionally, the Railways Department had added to the station's buildings, with the provision for extra staff it had become necessary to enlarge the men's quarters. A water reticulation system was in the planning stage by the Murgon Shire Council, the water to come from Barambah Creek.³⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifty-one

Continued Progress at Murgon

1. M/C. 18 May, 1908, p 4.
2. M/C. 23 May, 1908, p 3.
3. M/C. 8 December, 1908, p 4.
4. M/C. 28 August, 1909, p 6.
5. SBT. 20 October, 1960, p 10.

6. M/C. 21 April, 1911, p 6.
7. SBT. 4 June, 1953, p 10.
8. SBT. 31 December, 1959, p 17.
9. *The District News*, 16 June, 1980, p 3.
10. SBT. 4 June, 1953, p 10.
11. SBT. 31 December, 1959, p 17.
12. B/C. 7 October, 1924.
13. Ibid.
14. SBT. 19 December, 1979, p 36.
15. Ibid, p 39.
16. SBT. 28 May, 1959, p 5.
17. M/C. 18 December, 1907, p 2.
18. M/C. 21 April, 1911, p 6.
19. *An Australian Post Office History*, Public Relations Section, Australian Post Office, Brisbane, 1971.
20. SBT. 2 August, 1921.
21. SBT. 28 January, 1911, p 2.
22. M/C. 29 November, 1912, p 6.
23. Ibid.
24. M/C. 17 June, 1913, p 6.
25. M/C. 1 September, 1913, p 5.
26. SBT. 23 February, 1934.
27. M/C. 21 May, 1915, p 3.
28. M/C. 13 March, 1923, p 2.
29. *Outlet History*, N.A.B. Group Archives.
30. M/C. 13 March, 1923, p 2.
31. M/C. 14 February, 1924, p 2.
32. M/C. 1 September, 1928, p 7.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.

Some Selectors of the Murgon Region and their Holdings



P.J. Tiernan's store in Gore Street. This was extended to become 'sample rooms' and meetings were also held in these rooms. Tiernan's motel was later built on this site.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

Recording the names and biographical details of all the selectors of the Murgon district would be an impossible task, many came and departed leaving little impact on the community. Others lived for long terms and died without leaving any information concerning their lives, where they had come from, or what they did once they had settled on the South Burnett. However, we do have some remarkably accurate and detailed information regarding several of those early Murgon district selectors.

Among them was Donald McInnes, a farmer who was born to Scottish immigrant parents at Taree, New South Wales. He came to Queensland, reportedly at an early age, and was married in North Queensland in 1902. He arrived at Murgon circa 1913 and selected land at Merlwood where he lived with his family until 1936 when he sold the farm and moved into Murgon. Donald McInnes died, aged seventy-six in the early hours of Tuesday morning, 6 October, 1936, only three months after leaving his farm.¹

Joseph McLucas was also an early settler in the district and served on the Murgon Shire Council. There is no doubt that this man was a forceful personality within the Murgon region who did much, both socially and economically, to improve the district. Prior to coming to the South Burnett he was manager of *Milray* station in the Charters Towers region. He arrived in the

South Burnett with Andrew McLucas, who served on the Wondai Shire Council as its chairman on two occasions. Joseph McLucas was one of the guarantors of the Murgon School of Arts when it was first constructed and was a successful dairy farmer, he donated land for the show-grounds and moved to Roma in 1934 where he also held property. As a result of ill health he moved to Pialba and died there on 29 December, 1938.²

Carl Wissemann was another well known selector of the Merlwood district. Wissemann was born on 29 January, 1889, at Teviotville in the Fassifern district, the youngest child of Carl Wissemann (snr.) and his wife Mathilda Augusta. On 19 April, 1911, when he was twenty-two years of age, he married Margaretha Klewe at Tallegalla, the service was performed by Pastor J. Frank. The first four years of his married life were spent on the couple's small farm at Hoya. He and his family moved to Merlwood on 10 April, 1915, but due to a sudden illness his life was soon to be altered forever, the press later stating: 'His stay on the farm lasted but about 18 months when his sickness compelled him to relinquish farming and to reside in Murgon. During the long ten years of suffering that followed he was compelled to lead a life of idleness and misery. Medical aid was sought everywhere and at considerable expense, but there was no help for him.'³

At 2.15 on the morning of 12 August, 1926, Wissemann suddenly died, his death was due to cardiac failure and bronchial asthma, he was only thirty-seven years of age. Following in his father's footsteps, who had predeceased him fourteen years earlier, Wissemann had been a strong supporter of the Lutheran Church and for eight years played the organ at the Hoya Lutheran Church. He was described as being '... a man of the courage of his convictions, honest and friendly.' He was buried at the Murgon cemetery on 13 August, 1926, Pastor Albert Ewald Reuther officiating at the church and grave-side.⁴ Carl Wissemann's mother Mathilda, survived him for another twelve years, dying, also at Murgon, on 16 March, 1938. Mrs Wissemann was one of the *ancien régime*, she was born in 1855 at Hoffstaedt, Germany, the daughter of F.W. Fritz and his wife Emilie (nee Afelt). She emigrated to Queensland at the age of eighteen and married Carl Wissemann (snr) on 21 May, 1874, at Ipswich. They lived at Sandy Creek near Ipswich for five years before settling at Hoya. Carl (snr) died on 7 January, 1912, at the age of sixty-six years and in September 1915 Mrs Wissemann arrived at Murgon to live with her youngest daughter, Mrs A.C. Zerner.⁵

One of the first residents of the Merlwood region was Luke Pringle, a man who lived to become one of the region's legends. Pringle was born on 14 February, 1850, and when he was one hundred years of age he was guest at a special dinner held in his honour at which James Alfred Heading, M.L.A. presented him with a tam-o-shanter, a pair of slippers and a dressing gown. Luke Pringle epitomised the difficulties and the craftsmanship of those early settlers to the Murgon region, and, in addition to the harsh times he experienced, two of his sons were killed in the Great War. A special commemorative publication later stated:

Born the eleventh son and the fourteenth child of John and Ann Pringle of Amble, Northumberland, Luke Pringle today, this fourteenth day of February, is 100 years old and hereby is saluted and honoured by his contemporaries of this century and year. His father was a contractor in Amble and he and his wife lived to be octogenarians. Mr Luke Pringle says of his early days that he can remember his parents talking of how his father's mother was 101 and able to get about very well. At that age she was thrown out of a cart and broke her leg. The doctor set the leg and the old lady recovered to walk again. The doctor was jubilant about this, for rarely does the bone of an elderly person knit. The good lady, however, fell later on and Mr Pringle says that the doctor was stamping mad about it, but the old lady did not recover. His mother's father was a survivor of the siege of Gibraltar and many a tale was told of those 'good old days.'

There were no qualified school teachers in Mr Pringle's school days. The village teacher was usually some incapacitated person, perhaps one who had lost a limb and so could not do other work. If he understood the 'Rule of Three' he was quite capable of guiding the destinies of the children of 1855. Things improved, however, in 1875 when teachers were brought from Scotland.

When he grew too big for the school Luke Pringle began to learn the trade of bricklayer, but at the age of 18 found himself with too much lost time. Building could not proceed in the winter nor in wet weather, so his mother suggested that he seek a job where he could be sheltered from the elements. So at 18 years of age Luke Pringle was legally indentured to a

blacksmith who was to teach him that trade. The indentures in themselves are remarkable, being made on parchment and still in Mr Pringle's possession. The apprentice was bound by the indentures to serve his master and obey him, to conduct himself in his private life in a manner described in the Indentures all for the sum of £12 in wages. This was to be spread over four years, the apprentice to receive the sum of three pounds each year in half-yearly instalments ...

When the apprenticeship was completed, Luke Pringle was now a mechanic and received the rate of pay for that position — 5/- a day. The wage for a labourer was then 2/6 and 3/-. The mechanics were content with their wage until 1875 when the employers decided to lower it by 6d a day. Many mechanics throughout England 'struck' and numbers left England for fresh pastures. Among these latter Luke Pringle booked his passage for Australia and left on the good ship *Surrey* on April 26, 1875. He considers he was quite justified in striking against such treatment.

The papers regarding the voyage are still intact and reveal that for the sum of £5/10/- the person shall receive passage, and be victualed, any government dues and head money if any were included in the amount. Our emigrant was quartered on the first deck and says that all slept in hammocks which had to be slung at 9 o'clock each night. After that hour anyone wishing to move along the deck was compelled to crawl on hands and knees. Compared with today, the conditions seem hard.

The ship arrived in Sydney on July 19, 1875, and after three weeks in quarantine the 'new Australian' went to Newcastle and worked there at his trade until 1880, when he took up a selection at Cooranbong where he married the daughter of the school teacher, and Mr and Mrs Pringle remained for 27 years. Here too, the children of the marriage were born ... (including) Luke (junior) and George, who were killed in 1914-18 war.

In 1907 Mr Pringle selected land at Merlwood, now known as *Pringle's Hill*, and the family moved in to settle, one of the first to go to that area ...

Merlwood grew and the settlers gathered at an old bragalow log in what is now Merlwood School ground to discuss various matters, more particularly a school for the children. In the winter months the first to arrive would light a fire at the end of the big log and this would provide light and warmth for the meeting. It served this purpose for many years. Mr Pringle was a member of the first school committee at Merlwood and recalls many happenings regarding the building of the school.

Strict regard for health made Mr Pringle study the human body and its ailments and in this regard much suffering was alleviated and lives were saved by his knowledge. There are many today in the South Burnett and in other parts of Australia who owe much to Mr Pringle's skill and some too owe their lives to his knowledge. On one occasion his daughter cut her finger through, and after her father had attended it the finger grew together again. In epidemics of typhoid in the early days in New South Wales his treatment saved many lives, and this was the case too in Queensland.⁶

Also in the Merlwood region one of the earliest residents was Emil Holzwart. Holzwart was born at Templin in the Boonah district, on 12 October, 1887, the eldest son of Johann Christian Holzwart and his wife Maria, (nee Renz). When he was about eight years of age he and his parents moved to Walloon, and in 1910 he joined those who became the first settlers to select land at Merlwood where he lived for the remainder of his life. On 16 October, 1912, he married Emma Margaret Bick at the residence of Miss Bick's parents at Cloyna. They were married by Pastor T. Frank. Emil Holzwart was a foundation member of the Cloyna Lutheran Church, he served the church as its secretary, church elder and Sunday School teacher. He was parish secretary and later chairman of the parish, and also a justice of the peace. During the last few years of his life he suffered a long illness and on the morning of Friday 13 April, 1945, he was admitted to the Wondai Hospital where he died, aged fifty-seven years and six months, at seven o'clock the following morning. He was survived by his widow, three daughters, one son and his mother.⁷

One of Holzwart's contemporaries was Henry Charles Eisenmenger who was born at Haigslea in the Marburg district on 16 January, 1889, the second son of Friedrich Karl Eisenmenger and his wife Margaretha (nee Kluepfel). In 1908, at the age of nineteen years, Henry Charles settled on a farm at Merlwood which his father had selected two years earlier. He married Mina Maria Zollner on 13 January, 1915, and the couple remained on their property for the rest of their lives. Henry Eisenmenger was one of the foundation members of St Luke's Lutheran Church at Cloyna. A week before his death H.C. Eisenmenger was taken to the Wondai Hospital and he died there

on Thursday evening 17 October, 1946, aged fifty-seven years, a large cortege of eighty-seven cars followed his funeral which took place on the morning of Saturday 19 October that year.⁸

The Bick family were also early residents of the region. William Bick came to Murgon from Englesbury at the age of thirteen, arriving by horse with his father and brother after a week's travelling via Rosewood, Lowood, Esk, Moore and over the Blackbutt Range on the old coach road, through Nanango and Wondai. The family settled at Cloyna where they had to walk twelve miles to Murgon for rations and almost two miles for water. Their first living accommodation was simply a tent pitched in a scrub clearing. They grew maize, harvesting by hand and selling it for 9d per bushel, later cream was sent to Tiaro and the family received 6d per pound for butter fat.⁹

James Adler was a well known selector of the Merlwood region, he was born on 29 October, 1856, at Warnambool, Victoria, the fifth son of Johann G. Adler and his wife Christiane (nee Uebergang).

When he was twenty-seven years of age, James Adler married Marie A. Schaeche, the ceremony being performed by Pastor Hiller. They came to Queensland in June 1897, residing firstly at Pittsworth and later Toowoomba. They arrived in the Murgon/Wondai region in 1910 and finally obtained a farm on the Merlwood road in 1915 where they remained for the rest of their lives. James Adler suffered a severe attack of typhoid fever circa 1924 and he never fully recovered, he was released after being treated in hospital for thirteen weeks but the disease had left him with a legacy of a weak heart. On Thursday 27 July, 1933, he was taken to the Graham Private Hospital at Murgon and on Monday 31 July he died there.¹⁰

What was known as the Bellotti Group was established in the Murgon region by selector Thomas Bellotti. Born in London on 29 April, 1845, Bellotti was twenty years of age when he arrived in Queensland aboard the immigrant ship *Flying Cloud*, landing at Brisbane. After a short time in what was then simply the small township of Brisbane, Bellotti travelled to Ipswich where he worked on the construction of the first railway line in the state — the rails running from Ipswich to Helidon. He lived in Toowoomba for several years, moved later to Gympie during the era of the gold rush, returned to Toowoomba where he became a cattle dealer — travelling extensively throughout the country areas purchasing cattle for the Brisbane markets and driving them himself to Brisbane by road. At that time cattle coming to the city from the Downs had to swim the river from Kangaroo Point to a site near the Howard Smith Wharf. In 1870 he married Miss M.A. Loveday and subsequently went into partnership in the butchering business of Mr E. Loveday. Later he moved into the area of sales, travelling for the confectioner E.L. Eldridge, and subsequently starting his own business as a manufacturing confectioner, a business he built up over several years and which employed a large number of people. In 1902 he and his wife returned to England for a while and in 1906 they retired from business. It was then that he came to Murgon, arriving at the fledgling community in 1907, selecting land and, as the press later claimed: '... he and his family took their share in the pioneering work of developing that portion of the South Burnett district.' Thomas Bellotti died at Murgon on 14 January, 1936, and was interred in the Murgon cemetery.¹¹

One man who was responsible for the spiritual well-being of many of those early pioneers, and who, subsequently, performed their grave-side services, was the Lutheran pastor, Albert Ewald Reuther. A.E. Reuther was born at *Bethesda Mission* station on Coopers Creek in central Australia, the third son of pioneering missionary J.G. Reuther, he was confirmed in 1904 when he was twelve years of age. A.E. Reuther was educated at Immanuel College, Point Pass, from 1905 to 1908 and in 1909 he travelled to Bavaria to attend the mission seminary at Neuendettelsau. He graduated from that seminary in 1912 aged twenty years and seven months. He was initially appointed as an assistant pastor to Alsace-Lorraine, in December 1912, but his appointment there was short lived, only serving for four and a half months. He was ordained in Zurich by pastor K. Wagner in July 1913. A.E. Reuther sailed from Genoa on board the *S.S. Zieten* in July 1913, arriving at Fremantle on 21 August that year. He served in the Home Missionary, West Australia, for eighteen months and finally arrived on the South Burnett on 8 May, 1915, conducting his first services at Cloyna and Mondure on 9 May and Taabinga on 11 May, 1915. Pastor Reuther was an avid diarist and kept many records of his service to the church. When he retired in 1963 he wrote a book detailing the history of the church on the South Burnett. In his book, he claimed that during his service he had performed 1343 baptisms, attended 970 confirmations, officiated at 432 marriages and 265 burials. In total he had also conducted 6444 church services.¹²

During a speech he gave at Cloyna in 1940, Pastor Reuther stated:

I arrived with Pastor F.O. Theile at Murgon, then a small town. Never will I forget that day when Mr E. Holzwart took us in a light spring dray over the rough creek road to Cloyna where we lodged that night with the late Mr W. Kuhn. Next morning, on Sunday, May 9, Pastor (F.O.) Theile introduced me to the congregation at Cloyna and in the afternoon to Mondure, centres which had then been established some four and three years respectively. That night we spent in the hospitable home of Mr J.G. Schorback, where I resided for the first six years of my stay in the district. On the following Tuesday, May 11, I was introduced to the preaching place at Taabinga in the Kingaroy district. After procuring a bicycle, my first means of conveyance, we returned to Murgon. As a young man aged 23 years, I was now to begin the Home Mission work in the South Burnett, placed in charge of two congregations and one preaching place. A fortnight after my arrival Murgon was started as a preaching place, where, in November of the same year a congregation was organised. In the first month Stuart Valley and in October Boobie in the Kingaroy district were added to the preaching places ... It is a cause of much satisfaction to me to notice today, that after twenty-five years our church's work has been so richly blessed that three pastors are now serving eleven congregations and two preaching places, with some thousand souls under their care and influence. During this period under review a four-acre block of land was purchased at Murgon, on which the first church was erected in 1920 at a cost of £530. A residence was bought in town for £500, which was sold later and a modern house erected adjoining the church at Murgon, costing £720. Four years ago, on the adjacent block of four acres, Murgon built a new church costing some £888, the old church since then serving as a hall. Taabinga built a church in August 1921.¹³

One aspect of early Queensland history which has been largely overlooked is that of the role of women during the state's formative years and there were many such female settlers in the Murgon district. All too frequently the role of women settlers and women who pioneered many aspects of colonial society has been neglected, their male counterparts remaining at the fore of what was certainly a joint venture of the sexes.

As we have seen, the colony of Queensland was opened up to settlement originally through the endeavours of the relatively wealthy squattocracy, taking up enormous stations and stocking them with tens of thousands of sheep. These men brought with them their wives and families, they also brought employees and their families to be engaged in a number of important roles that were filled by both males and females. Later came the resumptions from those stations and the land was opened up to closer settlement. These resumptions and the coming of the railways brought tens of thousands of people, husbands, wives and their children to take up the small selections, usually just 160 acres, which created the wealth and prosperity to enable the townships such as Wondai, Kingaroy, Murgon, Proston and many others to grow.

On those selections the women worked as long and as hard as their menfolk. Additionally, the women, after spending the day ploughing or hoeing or doing any one of a host of other farming jobs, were required to maintain the family home, clean and feed their children, cook for their husbands and wash their clothes, iron, do the housework, tasks that men rarely shared. While the man of the house may have enjoyed his evenings sitting near the fire with his pipe, few of the female settlers had time for that comfortable privilege.

The romantic notion that it was the men who carried out all the dangerous and arduous assignments must be strongly challenged. For those early immigrants from places such as Britain, Germany and other European countries, the dangers began almost the moment they left their homes. Immigrant ships carrying passengers from those countries varied in quality and safety, some were airy, roomy and reasonably comfortable, the owners stocking the vessels with good and adequate food for the long voyages to the antipodes. However, many of the vessels were squalid, rocking-horse little ships that weathered the seas badly and caused seasickness or accidents amongst almost all the passengers. These vessels had poor ventilation, appalling toilet facilities, rancid and insufficient food and uncomfortable sleeping accommodation. The voyages themselves were exceedingly dangerous, many immigrant vessels were lost with all hands, some experienced virulent outbreaks of deadly diseases that decimated the passengers. One such ship was the infamous *Sultana*, which left Liverpool for Maryborough on 4 November, 1865. Soon after the voyage commenced an outbreak of scarlet fever began killing the passengers, mainly the women

and children. By the time the vessel anchored at Hervey Bay in February 1866, seventy-eight passengers had died.¹⁴

Women in early Queensland worked at a variety of occupations. In the small towns and villages they frequently set up their own businesses and some of these were by no means small affairs. Women owned and operated hotels, stationery shops, produce stores, and a wide range of millinery, mercery, drapery and grocery stores. Some women managed large stations; for example, when George Clapperton the owner of *Tarong*, *Barambah* and *Nanango* stations, died in 1875, his wife, Annie, took control of all his business enterprises and was faced with extremely heavy debts. In the Murgon region some of the women who have been to the fore of female endeavour include Martha Angel and Doctor Ellen Woods.

The early selectors, as we have seen, were faced with great difficulties in making their properties pay sufficiently to earn a reasonable living. Those settlers cleared their land, planted maize between the stumps of the trees, bred a few pigs, grew pumpkins with which to feed the pigs and later commenced dairying. All this work was frequently done by hand and alone, but the settlers in the Murgon region, and indeed in many areas of the South Burnett, were aided in their endeavours through the use of aboriginal labour supplied from Cherbourg. As we have seen in the first chapters of this history, the residents of Cherbourg, then known as Barambah, functioned as a labour force, organised through the department which controlled the settlement, and contracted the residents of Cherbourg to various farming holdings who wished to pay for their labour. The pay was poor, perhaps necessarily so, as most of the farmers themselves had little in the way of financial backing, but the role the aboriginal people played in the establishment of the white agrarian success cannot be underestimated. Aboriginal men and boys worked long hours clearing the scrub, mustering, branding, fencing and doing a wide range of other farming duties. Aboriginal women and girls were employed as domestics, general servants and even maids, in the houses of those people who could afford such luxury, the young aboriginal women were popular at hospitals, (when they later became established) where they were frequently given the more menial tasks, but they also found ready acceptance with Murgon businesses, the proprietors of which employed them as cleaners or general servants. In his book, *Wilderness to Wealth*, J.E. Murphy records that the settlers at Murgon and especially the children, integrated well together, the indigenous inhabitants teaching the newcomers the arts of boomerang making and hunting. Yet Murphy also adds that it was because of an altercation between the white and aboriginal communities which led to the establishment of the first police station at Murgon, controlled by a Constable J. Clare, this station was situated in a building then owned by George Keating.¹⁵

Other services provided at Murgon included the Q.A.T.B. formed in 1922 and the fire brigade, formed during the Second World War to deal with fires that might occur through bomb damage. Medical care was scant, particularly in the formative years, but as we shall see later in this history, the region was serviced initially by two private hospitals and subsequently by a maternity and public hospital.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifty-two

Some Selectors of the Murgon Region and their Holdings

1. SBT. 9 October, 1936, p 5.
2. SBT. 6 January, 1939, and author interview with Lilian Stein, recorded 9 September, 1996.
3. SBT. 20 August, 1926, p 7.
4. *Ibid.*
5. SBT. 1 April, 1938, p 3.
6. *South Burnett Centenarian Honoured*, Murgon Shire Council archives.
7. SBT. 19 April, 1945, p 4.
8. SBT. 31 October, 1946, p 7.
9. *The Beacon*, 15 May, 1970, p 8.

10. SBT. 11 August, 1933.
11. SBT. 7 February, 1936, p 5.
12. SBT. 21 August, 1958, p 5 and 12 September, 1963.
13. SBT. 7 June, 1940, p 8.
14. For further details on this voyage see: M/C. 4 April and 7 April, 1866.
15. WW. p 248 and 256.

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The Cloyna, Windaera and Other Rural Districts

Agrarian development was at the very heart of Murgon's existence. Without the rapid growth of a rural economic structure, Murgon, unlike centres such as Kilkivan and Nanango — both of which were greatly enhanced through mining development — could not have become the successful centre it is today. The planting of maize and pumpkins the raising of pigs and, to a lesser extent, cattle, and far more importantly, the establishment of a sustainable dairy industry, were vital to the financial evolution of the district. For this development to evolve it was necessary for the closer development scheme to work effectively, that meant laying the foundations of an infrastructure that would attract settlers and provide for their needs. This infrastructure included, as its most important aspects, the provision of rail lines and a good road system. When this infrastructure was in place it was not difficult to attract farmers to take up holdings in what were, essentially, somewhat remote regions, as the farmers realised that with the rail and road system in place, they could now get their produce to markets in places such as Maryborough and Brisbane.

Group settlement was a feature of Murgon's early agrarian history, with groups such as the Carter Group, a gathering of Seventh Day Adventists who selected parcels of land on Boat Mountain. The Thompson Group took land at Windaera, the Bellotti Group of Brisbane, all these and others saw the possibilities of selecting land in this newly opening country.



German wagon and bullock wagons loaded in the Murgon railway yard, 1912.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

Situated on the Windera branch railway some fourteen miles from Murgon, Cloyna was once described as being the most important township in the Murgon region, outside the 'capital city of Murgon itself.' Cloyna was once the railway and dairying centre of that region, although originally the area's major disability was the lack of a permanent water source. The railway line to which Cloyna owed its growth, was a spur from the Murgon to Proston branch line that had been opened in 1923. It extended from the junction at Barlil, six miles from Murgon, past Cloyna, with Kitoba Siding midway to the Windera terminus, and was opened on 28 March, 1925. The costs of the two lines, that from Murgon to Proston and the spur to Windera was £202,316. Cloyna was also fortunate in having a good road system and much of the produce of the region was brought into Murgon by road, in fact the road was responsible for the railway line to Windera running at a loss. However, such facilities had been sadly lacking in the early years of settlement. The region was primarily selected between the years 1906 to 1910, at that time there was no road system, only bush tracks. The Murgon Shire Council, however, took advantage of the terms offered under the Main Roads Act of 1921 and the Murgon-Gayndah road was gazetted circa 1922. Construction began almost immediately.

Water was always one of the major set-backs for the farmers in both the Cloyna and Merlwood regions, most having to resort to artesian bores, the press once reporting: 'A major disability of Cloyna-Merlwood district is its comparative shortage of water supplies. Subartesian bores have met with the widest possible variation of results, some settlers having obtained good supplies at shallow depths whilst adjoining properties have been perforated so as to literally resemble a colander, with no useful result.'¹

On most properties there were dams but many were not successful. An attempt was made to have a communal dam constructed at Dowse's Corner, but even with reasonable rainfall this dam was also never very successful, the water often being too brackish even for cattle to drink.

A 1911 description of the region concluded:

A school in the same stylish and comfortable style as at Merlwood was opened here about two months ago. It is situated about twelve miles from Murgon, and thirteen miles from Wondai. Mr W.L. Harris is the local school master. There is also a Progress Association in the district, which meets every month at the school. There are a few waterholes in the district, and the Windera Creek also runs in the vicinity. A large area of plain land can be found in the district well adapted for wheat growing. Plains as a rule are timbered here and there with clumps of brigalow trees, also scrubs of same kind of timber, and as brigalow generally carries with it prickly pear, farmers could not be too careful to do away with that noxious weed as soon as it shows itself on the surface. I came across many spots of that pest in the district, and especially on the sides of the road, and as the Government has issued strict measures to new settlers for the destruction of prickly pear on their land, members of Municipal Councils should be the first to obey the law.²

A.J. Casten was reported in the press of 1911 to have been the first resident in the Windera district, the report claiming: 'Mr A.J. Casten, *Cedar Plains*, composed of 586 acres, half scrub, half forest, selected two years next September. He came direct to live on the place with his family. He was the first resident in the district. About forty acres under cultivation ... (The) homestead is a quarter mile from Windera Creek ... Mr Casten, who is a carpenter by trade, married eight years ago a Miss E. Stozenburg of Lowood.'³

Among the region's early residents were the Zeith brothers of *Plainland*, 309 acres with a frontage to Windera Creek. These brothers were working in partnership as bush carpenters. A 1911 report of their activities concluded: 'Both brothers came from the Lowood district and have been working in the Murgon district, their last job being Mr F.W. (Frederick William) Kratzmann's barn.'⁴

Frederick William Kratzmann and his wife, Adina, were among the region's foremost settlers. Adina was the daughter of August C.H. Lobegeier, she married F.W. Kratzmann on 4 February, 1910, and the couple lived for twelve months at Boonara, later moving to Windera where they acquired their holding, *Rose Hill*. Adina Kratzmann suffered a seizure on 30 January, 1953, and died shortly afterwards.⁵

Frederick William Kratzmann was the brother of Charles Kratzmann who had also selected land in the district, calling his 130 acres property *Plain View*, this property was described as being: '... All forest, with first class plain land. The best situated farm on the banks of Windera Creek, plenty of deep water almost all through, in which eels, jewfish, perch etc can be found. Dairy and farming. *Plain View* is situated sixteen miles from Murgon and twenty miles from Wondai.' Kratzmann was born at Clifton of German parents, he married a Miss E. Frahm of Clifton.⁶

One of the Kratzmann family later suffered a tragedy in the district, the events centred around the suicide of Mrs Gertrude Kratzmann, twenty-four years of age, whose husband was the mail contractor at Windera. The press later gave details of the events, claiming:

Her husband ... left home at 4 o'clock on Saturday morning to attend to his day's work. On returning at night fall, a ghastly spectacle presented itself within the house. In the bedroom, across the bed lay the lifeless form of his wife, whose head bore a large gaping wound. Beside her prostrate form lay a service military rifle, to the trigger of which was attached a piece of string, 10 ft long, one end being fastened round a mirror, and the other end grasped in her hand. Apparently, the unfortunate woman had used the mirror as a lever, by which to release the trigger and thus had ended her life.

The terrified husband immediately communicated with the Murgon police, and Dr Randall and Constable Jahnke left without delay for Windera. Here the details of the tragedy were investigated. It was found that the bullet had passed through the head, emerging at the base of the skull, which was completely shattered. The bullet had also penetrated the pillow a blanket, and a thick hardwood board.

The body was conveyed to Murgon, where a post-mortem examination was held. Medical opinion was that the wound was self inflicted.

The late Mrs Kratzmann who was 24 years of age, had only been married seven weeks, and had been despondent of late.⁷

E.F. Voss selected *Bottle Tree Farm*, 508 acres next to A.J. Casten's property, and reportedly took up the holding shortly after Casten had taken up his. Voss was originally a tanner and worked for several years in Brisbane prior to moving to Walloon to begin general farming. He was married to Elizabeth Horton of Ipswich.⁸

In the small township there was, by 1939, evidence of continued prosperity. Among the buildings there was a Baptist Church, this was the first building constructed after the arrival of the railway. The main businesses included a general store belonging to Mr and Mrs C.J. Cobb, who worked such long hours that the press once claimed: 'Mr and Mrs Cobb work hours that would make a union organiser shudder, in providing for the diversified wants of a widespread community in the nature of groceries etc.' Next to Cobb's store was the butchery business of Mr A.V. Shepparson. The small community also boasted a bakery, run by Mr E. Eiby, the blacksmith was Alf Johannessen, the carpenter and plumber was Allan Flewell-Smith and the general carrier was Mr R. Bellotti. The community had a public hall with a, '... commodious dancing space,' it also featured a supper room, kitchenette and a modern electric lighting plant.⁹

The school at Cloyna was opened in February 1911, its first teacher was Leslie Ward Harrison who later joined the A.I.F. and served during the Great War. The construction of the railway line between Murgon and Windera in 1924 and 1925 brought large numbers of railway workers to the area as the railway gangs and their families camped at Cloyna, this increase in children led to the appointment of an assistant teacher to the school, however, when the line had been completed the numbers of students dropped dramatically and the school once again reverted to a staff of just one teacher. The highest enrolment in the school's history was during the 1950s when sixty children attended the lessons delivered by its teacher Mr E.D.B. Lane.¹⁰

Another of the early selectors was William Henry Hinchsliff who selected *Murraydale* at Cloyna. Born at Hull, England, on 19 May, 1865, he completed an apprenticeship in marine engineering at Hull and London. Hinchsliff arrived in Australia with his parents at the age of seventeen years and soon found employment with the firm of Suttons at Kangaroo Point, later being transferred to a similar position at Bundaberg. While in Bundaberg he married Agnes MacMurray in 1885. Working for one of the region's sugar mills he remained in Bundaberg for

several years, went subsequently to Brisbane and eventually to New Guinea where he became a personal friend of the governor. In later years he took a position as chief engineer with the Ipswich Water Works, serving there for eleven years. In 1910 he arrived on the South Burnett where he and his family selected land at Cloyna, the press later claiming of him: 'As one of the pioneers he experienced with others the hardships of those early days, and by hard work, grit and determination became one of the successful farmers of a district that is second to none. With his knowledge of the engineering trade his services were greatly in demand throughout the whole district, his tools were loaned freely to whoever required them and his workshop was constantly in use in the service of others.' Towards the end of his life Hinchsliff suffered a long illness, his wife and other members of his family taking care of him, however, he died at his property, *Murraydale* on 31 March, 1942.¹¹

Settlement in the Windera district was taking place at the same time. The name of Windera allegedly comes from the aboriginal name, meaning 'Big Water', the title given to the site of the large lake on *Windera* station, settled by the Lawless family. The first school was opened on 24 May, 1920, with twelve first day pupils, that number rising to twenty-five during the first year. The Windera Hall was constructed on land donated by early settler, Mr F.W. Kratzmann and was opened by J.P. Lawless in August 1926. Like so many other small regional community halls, the Windera Hall became the social and religious centre of the district, it was used for a variety of purposes, dances, parties, church services, the showing of travelling picture shows and for public meetings. The original school was replaced by a larger facility in 1926 and the first school in the district was then moved to Glenrock.¹²

The Lutheran Church at Cloyna, one of the earliest churches in the district, was opened in June 1922 and dedicated under the name of St Theodor's Lutheran Church by Pastors J. and T. Frank, a father and son. The press later reported of the church:

When the Murgon district was opened for settlement ... members of the Lutheran religion from Fassifern and the Lockyer Districts were among those who first selected land in the rich scrub country in and about Cloyna.

The first Lutheran service in their midst was conducted by Pastor Theo Frank, of Maryborough, in the home of G. Dowse in 1910. These services were conducted at six weekly intervals.

The need for a place of worship was felt and by September 14, 1910, the date on which a group of 32 members (their names have not been recorded) decided upon the erection of a church building. Thirteen more meetings were held before the contract to build was finally accepted and building operations commenced. Erected by G. Dowse and Wenzel ... the building measured 22' x 30'. The acre of land on which the building stands was presented to the church by G. Dowse.

There is no exact date to declare when the members of St Theodor's constituted themselves a congregation. The first record of an officially elected church committee dates back to July 30, 1911. From this committee, a chairman, secretary and treasurer were named on August 3, 1911. During the years from 1910 to 1913, St Theodor's was served by Pastors Theo Frank, E. Hiller, A. Hiller, R. Monz, E. Gutekunst, R. Rhode and M. Millat. From 1913 to 1915, the congregation was under the care of Pastor M. Wittig. It was during the ministry of Pastor Wittig that a number of members left St Theodor's to organise and found 'Redeemer' Lutheran Church at Mondure.

Pastor A.E. Reuther was inducted as successor to Pastor Wittig in the Home Mission Field of the District on May 8, 1915.

The mission field then comprised the centres of Mondure, Cloyna, Taabinga Resumption and others. Pastor Reuther began his ministry to St Theodor's on May 9, 1915, and continued to serve the congregation until September 25, 1963.

Numerically, St Theodor's continued to grow. A Sunday School was organised on June 20, 1920, and the Cloyna Lutheran Youth Society, once one of the largest Lutheran youth societies in Queensland, was formed on May 30, 1929.

Membership growth of the Congregation being maintained, it was decided on January 31, 1933 to enlarge the church building to accommodate the number of worshippers. Ten meetings were held to carry the plan of enlargement of the church building into effect. Under F. Beduhn, building contractor, the building was extended by 17 feet and an altar niche attached.

The enlarged St Theodor's building was re-dedicated as St Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church on June 28, 1933, by Pastor Reuther, then president of the Queensland District of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia, assisted by Pastor F.H. Schmidt and E. Wiencke ...

Three years after the re-dedication ceremony, St Luke's celebrated the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the church building. At the end of the same year, 1936, St Luke's numbered 216 souls, 146 communicants 22 Sunday School pupils, and 58 members in the Lutheran Youth Society.

After fifty years, St. Luke's Golden Jubilee celebrations were held on October 1, 1961. The Jubilee address was delivered by Pastor F.H. Schmidt, district president of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia, Queensland District.

With the retirement of Pastor Reuther from the Murgon Parish in 1963, St Luke's was served until the close of 1967 by Pastor H.P.V. Renner, and since 1968, by Pastor R.A. Schmaal.¹³

Among of the foundation members of this church and therefore the very early selectors at Cloyna were Emma Friedericke Anna Rewald and her husband Ferdinand Gustav Rewald. They came to the Murgon district in 1909, settling at Cloyna, but moved to Merlwood in 1911. Emma Rewald was born on 3 January, 1881, at Klein Carzenburg, Pomerania, Germany, the second child of Carl Christian Frederick Bratz and his wife Johanna Caroline Christine (nee Voss). She was just nine years of age when she emigrated with her parents to Australia and settled at Templin, near Boonah. She was married in the Lutheran Church at Kalbar by Pastor Theodore Frank on 19 June, 1901. The Rewald family lived on their farm at Merlwood until November 1942 when Ferdinand Rewald died. Mrs Rewald then moved in with her son, Wilhelm, and in 1948 she moved to Bell Street Murgon. She died on 16 August, 1970.¹⁴

Moffatdale and its Tragedy

Moffatdale, south of Redgate, on the south-eastern side of Cherbourg is another small rural community with a scattering of farm holdings that once relied heavily on dairying and pig production, although later the region, like so many others in the South Burnett, turned from dairying to producing crops such as peanuts, grains and navy beans. In 1944 Moffatdale was the scene of a tragic event when a local farmer named Otto Goschnick was discovered dead at his home, apparently after being shot. The long sequence of events leading up to his death is complex, but according to reports published after the events it appears that Goschnick had been fond of drink, and when in an intoxicated state, was capable of becoming violent — so much so that the safety of his family was frequently threatened. Goschnick and his wife had been married in 1917 and were the parents of eight children. Their home was subsequently described in the press as being 'nice' with a 'well cultivated' farm.¹⁵ Following the discovery of the body by the police, Goschnick's twenty-years' old daughter, Constance Myrtle Goschnick, admitted to having shot the farmer on 22 June, 1944, and in a statement to the police she claimed:

This morning I got out of bed and went to the cow yard, and when I came up for breakfast at about half past seven mum told me dad had been out of bed and had a drink of wine out of a bottle which was on the kitchen table, and he had gone back to bed again. After we had breakfast mum and I went down to chip onions and Ivan was down on the tractor. Mum and I came home for dinner about midday, and dad was lying on the verandah asleep. There was a bottle beside him about three parts full of beer. After we had dinner mum and I returned to the onion patch and came home about three o'clock. Dad was standing on the landing and he said to Mum: 'Are the second lot of onions up yet?' Mum said: 'They are just coming through.' I then went to mind the cows on the lucerne near the pig sty, and when I was putting them out I saw mum running down past the shed and I sang out to her: 'Come down here, mum,' as I knew what was wrong. She told me dad was after her with the rifle, and to come back to the house, Mum ran towards the creek. I was returning to the house when I met dad near the pig sty. I said: 'What's the matter with you?' He said: 'I want the bottle of methylated spirits.' I said: 'Come back to the house and I'll give it to you.' Dad had the rifle all the time. I returned to the house and went up into the bathroom to get the bottle of methylated spirits. While I was there dad went under the house and put the rifle away and then came up into the kitchen and asked me to get him a glass, which I did, and he filled it three parts full of methylated spirits and drank it. He then went out on to the landing and I

went over to the wood heap, and while I was there he went under the house and got the rifle and took it upstairs with him. I came back with an armful of wood and said: 'What have you got the rifle for?' He said: 'I'll get that b... b... some time tonight.' (meaning mum). He then came into the kitchen and had another drink of methylated spirits and said: 'I'm going to bed,' which he did. I continued walking about the house. This was about four o'clock. I could hear him mumbling and talking to himself, and all I could understand was 'I'll get that b... some time tonight.' I went into the bedroom where he was lying with his back towards me. He was talking and mumbling to himself and I saw the rifle standing against the wall near the bed. I walked round and picked it up and walked back into the hall-way and dusted it and cocked it and saw there was a bullet in it and walked back into the room and held the rifle over the bed and pointed it at his neck and fired.¹⁶

Constance Myrtle Goschnick was acquitted of the murder of her father at the Criminal Court in Brisbane in August 1944, the verdict evidently being found in her favour due to the protracted abuse she and her family had experienced at the hands of her father.¹⁷

Despite incidences such as this, Moffatdale was a thriving community with a scattering of farms and other buildings. The social centre of the community was at the hall where dances and other social functions were frequently held. One of the more prominent personalities of Moffatdale was Kathleen O'Neill (nee Rail), who was awarded an O.B.E. in the 1974 New Year's Honours List for her services to the community. Mrs O'Neill was one of the early settlers in the district. Kathleen Rail arrived at Moffatdale with her family in 1915. In 1919 she married Harry O'Neill and moved onto her husband's farm — also at Moffatdale. Harry O'Neill was described as being: '... a great horseman.' Mrs O'Neill was a patron of the Murgon Show Society and was a luncheon booth worker for many decades. She was active on a number of committees including the Murgon Hospital Auxiliary, the Church of England Guild and the Q.C.W.A. She was the first Girl Guides district commissioner at Murgon and the first president of the Girl Guides Local Association. In addition to these associations she served on the Murgon Ambulance Committee and the R.S.L. Women's Auxiliary.¹⁸

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifty-three

The Cloyna, Windera and Other Rural Districts

1. SBT. 15 September, 1939, p 6.
2. M/C. 21 April, 1911, p 6.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. SBT. 5 February, 1953, p 6.
6. M/C. 21 April, 1911, p 6.
7. M/C. 1 July, 1924, p 4.
8. M/C. 21 April, 1911, p 6.
9. SBT. 15 September, 1939, p 6.
10. SBT. 7 May, 1988, p 41.
11. SBT. 9 April, 1942, p 3.
12. *The District News*, 10 December, 1980, pp 1 and 3, and 17 December, 1980, p 3.
13. *The Leader*, 9 December, 1970, p 1.
14. *The Leader*, 16 September, 1970, p 4.
15. SBT. 17 August, 1944 p 4.
16. SBT. 6 July, 1944, p 3.
17. SBT. 17 August, 1944 p 4.
18. SBT. 9 January, 1974, p 3.

Pioneering Pyrotechnics — Murgon's Early Fire Hazards

Despite the considerable progress Murgon made during its first twenty or thirty years of its existence, the town was subjected to an unusually large number of devastating fires, fires that set back the building progress considerably.

Murgon's first large scale fire occurred at 2.30 a.m. on the morning of 28 November, 1916, when a block of four shops and other buildings were destroyed. The outbreak started in a shop owned by a hairdresser named Hogan. The flames quickly spread to the adjoining buildings, all of which were destroyed. These included Carrodus' drapery and general store, a branch of the Bank of New South Wales and the Salvation Army Hall, all the buildings were reported to have been covered by insurance. For a while it was believed that the fire may have been lit deliberately in order to obscure a bank robbery attempt, however, after the fire the safes of the bank were found intact.¹

The next serious fire at Murgon occurred during the early hours of the morning of Friday 28 July, 1922, when two shops were destroyed, the fire broke out in a shop occupied by Mr H. Bennett, a second-hand dealer. With the aid of a young man named W. Christie, the police roused the township and a bucket brigade was quickly formed. However, despite the efforts made by these men, the adjoining building, owned by Mr E.M. Armstrong of Brisbane and occupied by Mr S.C. Coppard as a fruit shop and refreshment room, also caught fire. The fire-fighters were successful in preventing the flames from destroying another building, also owned by Armstrong. This building was separated from the shop in flames by a narrow lane-way. All the stock, furniture, fixtures and fittings in Bennett's shop were destroyed and part of Coppard's stock also went up in flames. Both shops and all the stock were insured.²

Seven months later Murgon experienced another serious fire, the press reporting: 'Shortly before going to press this morning we were informed by telephone by a resident of Murgon that late last night a very destructive fire originated in a four-roomed cottage owned by Mr B.J. Goan and occupied by Mr C. Lake. The fire, it is stated, spread rapidly and caught the adjoining premises owned by Mr Wright and occupied by Messrs McSweeney, Barron and Roberts, solicitors. Later the flames spread to the shops occupied by A.J. Avens, photographer and J.P. Scurr, draper, both of which were totally destroyed.'³

When another large fire broke out in the township, less than two months later and affecting many of the people who had also been affected in the previous fire, questions started to be asked as to the causes of such rapidly occurring conflagrations — especially so as the fires all appeared to be occurring during the hours of darkness. At 3.45 on the morning of Saturday 31 March, 1923, another huge fire broke out in a block of buildings in Lamb Street, the buildings were rapidly destroyed. As the following report indicates, many of those who suffered damage from this fire, had also suffered during the fire of February 1923:

At 3.45 o'clock this morning a fire broke out in a block of buildings in Lamb street, completely destroying the premises occupied by W.R. Clark, stationer; J. Johnston, solicitor; W. Richardson, saddler, and two new buildings recently erected for Mr Scurr, draper, and W.R. Clark, stationer. The new buildings were to have been occupied on Monday, April 2nd. The fire quickly spread and the Australian Hotel, adjacent, was only saved by partly dismantling the kitchen and as a result of the work of the bucket brigade. The hotel premises miraculously escaped total destruction. The building adjoining, owned by Mr David Reid and occupied by McSweeney, Barron and Roberts, solicitors, was badly scorched and charred, but a smart save was effected. The block of buildings destroyed was owned by Mr Joseph Murphy, Old Sandgate Road, Brisbane.⁴

An enquiry into the fire was held in Brisbane in May 1923, Mrs Murphy, the wife of Joseph Murphy, stating that some of the buildings had been insured, others had not.⁵

Another fire occurred at Windera, near Murgon, on 5 February 1924, although there were no suspicious circumstances involved. During a subsequent enquiry held before Mr M.J. Hickey, J.P. at Kingaroy on 25 February, the owner of the destroyed property, dairy farmer William Charles Smith, stated that at the time of the outbreak he had been in his milking yards nearby and that no one else had been on the farm. Smith stated that in his opinion the fire had been caused by a spark blowing from the kitchen fire into the wood-box. Smith's son, Neil Smith, and the investigating police officer, Constable F. Jahnke, corroborated this evidence.⁶

On Wednesday 18 August, 1926, once again during the early hours of the morning, another fire broke out, this time in Lamb Street, during which four businesses were completely destroyed. The fire occurred in what was known as Lunn's Block. The businesses destroyed included the tailoring establishment of Mr T. Lunn, J. Ingram's furniture emporium, the office of solicitor J. Johnston (who was also a victim of one of the previous fires), and Mr J. Copsen, the boot-maker. All the shops had been owned by Mr Lunn with the exception of Johnston's office which was owned by Mr J.C. Clare. One of the premises had not been insured and Mr and Mrs Lunn, who had been asleep at their shop, escaped in their night attire. The total damage bill was estimated at £3000.⁷

The largest fire to that date, with a damage bill estimated at around £10,000 occurred at mid-day on Monday 16 January, 1928, a report of the incident claiming: 'At mid-day an employee of James Tiernan's grocery and drapery business, in the main street of Murgon, was carrying a bottle of benzine, when the bottom fell out of the bottle and through some means the spilt contents ignited. The flames quickly spread, and very soon the store was a mass of flames. The two-storey Royal Hotel next door to the store quickly caught fire, the flames being fanned by a strong wind. In 45 minutes, after a period of intense heat, which caused the scorching of walls and breaking of windows in the School of Arts building and the premises of the Bank of New South Wales situated opposite, the buildings were totally destroyed. A billiard saloon was included in the premises.'⁸



Royal Hotel before the fire.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.



Destruction of the Royal Hotel at Murgon, 16 January, 1928.

Source — Murgon Shire Council.



Saving furniture and barrels of beer during the fire at the Royal Hotel Murgon, 16 January, 1928.

Source — Murgon Shire Council.

The official enquiry into the fire opened at Murgon before J.E. Landy, P.M. on 9 February, 1928. John Alfred Claus told the enquiry that he was an employee of Tiernan's, and on the morning of the fire he had been serving in Tiernan's shop, which was attached to the hotel. He said that in the shop at the time were a number of customers, including James Spillane and Thomas G. Armstrong. Armstrong asked for a bottle of benzine and Claus went to the far end of the shop to get it. Claus testified: 'I picked up a bottle and it broke in pieces in my hand. I held the neck and the remainder

fell on the floor. Immediately it hit the floor it burst into flames. I got hold of a bag and tried to stop it, and Mr O'Neill came to my assistance. I was unable to extinguish the fire and the flames spread up the wall ... Water was thrown on without result, and the whole back portion of the shop was quickly in flames. I was badly burnt ...⁹

Tiernan also gave evidence during the enquiry, he described the hotel, stating that it had been a two-storey building with fifteen bedrooms, a dining room, coffee room, two sitting rooms, two bar parlours, a bar with a detached kitchen, a sample room, billiard room and a barber's shop. There had been a number of shops attached to the hotel, the shops all fronted Gore Street with the hotel also fronting Lamb Street. Tiernan said that he was conducting business from the shops and that he had sold the lease of the hotel to Michael Higgings. In addition to the destruction of the hotel and shops the outbuildings and electric lighting plant had also been destroyed. He said that after the insurances for the premises had been paid he would be approximately £3000 out of pocket.

Michael Higgings stated that he had leased the hotel from Tiernan for a period of five and a half years at a cost of £5500. He told the enquiry that on the morning of the fire he had heard someone calling out that the shop was on fire, he immediately rushed out the rear of the hotel to see the building in flames. He returned to the hotel and warned everyone to vacate the building. During the fire he and his wife lost all their personal belongings, his stock, furniture and clothing, but he had managed to save the money from the safe and cash register.

George B. Fraser, the barber whose shop was also destroyed during the fire, told the enquiry that he was renting his shop from Higgings at £2/15/- per week. He had heard one of Tiernan's employees calling out: 'The place is on fire,' and he rushed out to see the whole of Tiernan's store in flames. Soon afterwards the conflagration spread and destroyed his shop and all his stock and fittings.

Herbert W. Lange, the police constable stationed at Murgon stated:

On 16th January at 11.15 a.m. I was on the court house verandah, and noticed smoke coming from the back of Tiernan's store. I and Constable Murphy proceeded there and on arrival saw a lot of people about, and the whole of Tiernan's store was on fire. I immediately rushed upstairs through the hotel and told everybody to get off the premises. There were only a few things saved from the hotel. A bucket brigade was organised to save Scurr's shop and the Bank of New South Wales, and everything possible was done to prevent the fire from spreading. The efforts were successful and only the walls of the bank were damaged to the extent of about £93. The School of Arts was scorched and suffered £50 damage, and the insurance companies are in each instance repairing these buildings. I made careful enquiry of James Spillane and Thomas G. Armstrong (who were in Tiernan's shop, when the fire started), Tiernan's employees, J.P. Scurr (who occupied the adjoining premises), Mr Bostorn, manager of the Bank of New South Wales, and Mr Kerr, secretary of the School of Arts. Spillane and Armstrong corroborated Claus' statement. Tiernan's shop was well stocked, and he was doing a fair business. If the insurance is paid all connected with the fire, Tiernan, Higgings and Fraser, will be losers. I am satisfied there are no suspicious circumstances in connection with the fire.¹⁰

The Royal Hotel was re-built soon afterwards. In August 1928 the press reported:

Rapid progress is being made with the construction of the new brick hotel in Gore Street for Mr J. O'Hara. Messrs Dwyer and Hutchins, of Brisbane, are the contractors, and Mr G.T. Campbell-Wilson, architect. The liberal dimensions of the bar room, dining room and coffee room and the splendid accommodation provided in the twenty-two bedrooms upstairs places the buildings in the front rank as far as hotels on this line are concerned. There may be others larger but none more up-to-date or so well laid out. The bar and dining rooms are three parlours, the main hall and the office. The dining room measures 31 ft. x 20 ft., and the coffee room 22ft. by 20 ft.; this opens on to a smoke lounge. A commodious kitchen is conveniently situated. Excellent lavatory accommodation is provided on the top floor and there are three fire escapes and a 12 ft. balcony. Being constructed of brick throughout, with the exception of durabestos ceilings and linings the danger from fire is considerably minimised, and, judging by present appearances and the quality of the accommodation provided, the new proprietor, Mr J. O'Hara, should be able to command a large share of the trade. Estimated to cost £7350 complete, it will be a fine building externally and internally and one of which the town will be proud.¹¹

The Tiernan family's holdings in the township and elsewhere were quite extraordinary and included the Australian Hotel and a number of other businesses. A concept of this business enterprise may be gauged from the following report detailing some of the family's business enterprises. In 1953 the *South Burnett Times* reported:

Murgon real estate man, Mr B.D. Pratt, negotiated one of the biggest property deals in South Burnett history, when ... he finalised arrangements for the transfer of the lease of the Australian Hotel from the Tiernan family to Mr Colin Doohan, late of the Urangan Hotel, Hervey Bay.

Owned by the Tiernan family since 1922, (in fact the sale of the hotel was made on 2 February, 1927) the Australian Hotel is steeped in the traditions and colourful history of the rich South Burnett district, and during the years, the Tiernans have enhanced the prestige of the hotel to such an extent that it is now one of the most widely known, and best appointed hotels in the country districts of Queensland.

Mr Jack Tiernan stated in Murgon when interviewed, that the family had sold the lease to Mr Doohan only after careful consideration, and he said that Mr Doohan was a man of wide experience who would maintain the hotel at its present high standard.

He disclosed that the family had purchased the freehold of the Crown Hotel at Rocklea on the Ipswich-Brisbane road, and that the new lessee would take over at Murgon on January 10th next year.

The family has also sold the freehold of various business premises in the hotel block, and to the present, have disposed of the two shops occupied by Stewart & Thompson, H. Shorten's butcher shop, and the Blue Bird Cafe. All these premises have been sold to the present tenants.

Here again, the Tiernans declined to divulge any information as to the purchase prices, but Mr Tiernan said that the amounts had been high in all cases.

Murgon people had their first introduction to the Tiernan family when the late Mr James Tiernan bought into the Royal Hotel in 1918, and later took over the Australian in 1922 (sic). Since that period the hotel has been constantly occupied by the family, and since James Tiernan died in 1932, and his wife in 1939, the licence has been held by the present Mr James Tiernan on behalf of the family, who share the estate under the will of their late father.¹²

While aspects of the above report are certainly correct, in fact James Tiernan purchased the Australian Hotel from a widow named Ida Murphy of Clayfield, Brisbane, on 2 February, 1927, the purchase price was £6000.¹³

There is no doubt that James Tiernan (snr) was a powerful figure in the early history of Murgon, but his wife Mary was also an early resident who worked tirelessly to further the progression of the town. Mary Tiernan (nee Cooney) was born in Tipperary, Ireland circa 1876 and came to Australia as a young girl, landing at Brisbane. She later married James Tiernan and for a while they lived at Indooroopilly where James carried on a successful grocery business, later moving to Murgon. After James Tiernan's death on 11 September, 1932, Mary and her family carried on the hotel business in Murgon, although for several years prior to her death she suffered from poor health. Mary Tiernan was visiting her daughter in Brisbane when she suddenly became ill and was admitted to the Mater Hospital. She died there on Monday 4 September, 1939.¹⁴

Another of Murgon's more prominent personalities was T.E. (Ted) Hanley who, in addition to operating a soap manufacturing business in the town and serving on the local council, was also a main roads contractor who had carried out a large volume of road-works for the Main Roads Department. Hanley was a keen supporter of the Labor movement and was an enthusiastic member of the Australian Labor Party, he acted as campaign director for many Labor parliamentarians including F.M. Forde who became the minister for the army. Since its inception he was the president of the Murgon sub-branch of the Demobilised Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Association and took a keen interest in the welfare of servicemen from both world wars. Hanley spent the last few months of his life at the Wondai Hospital, was subsequently moved to the Brisbane General Hospital where he died on Tuesday 8 February, 1949.¹⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifty-four

Pioneering Pyrotechnics — Murgon's Early Fire Hazards

1. M/C. 29 November, 1916, p 4.
2. M/C. 29 July, 1922, p 8.
3. M/C. 26 February, 1923, p 5.
4. M/C. 2 April, 1923, p 5.
5. M/C. 5 May, 1923.
6. M/C. 4 March, 1924, p 2.
7. M/C. 19 August, 1926, p 4.
8. M/C. 17 January, 1928, p 4.
9. SBT. 17 February, 1928, p 7.
10. Ibid.
11. SBT. 31 August, 1928, p 6.
12. SBT. 10 December, 1953, p 9.
13. Transfer of property document under the Local Authorities Act, File O, (O'Shea, O'Shea, Corser and Wadley, solicitors) Murgon Shire Council archives, correspondence, 1929.
14. SBT. 8 September, 1939, p 5 and Mary Tiernan to Murgon Shire Council, letter dated 16 September, 1932, file T, 1932, Murgon Shire Council archives.
15. SBT. 17 February, 1949, p 6.

Local Government at Murgon

When the township of Murgon first came into existence, the areas now under the control of the Murgon Shire Council were then under two separate councils, that of Wienholt and Kilkivan. In Murgon itself, much of the small community's administration was carried out by the Murgon Progressive Association, however, this association had no administrative control, and as the township grew, and as the population of the entire region increased dramatically through closer settlement, it soon became obvious that the administrative bodies then controlling the area were becoming too overworked to effectively administer local government.

It was a contentious issue of the day, possibly the single most important issue affecting the people of early Murgon. The needs of the people of Murgon and district were pressing, the town required a number of facilities including water reticulation, better roads and drainage, the establishment of public recreation areas and a host of other facilities and conveniences. The only way of obtaining these items was through strong local government representation.

In order to discuss this important issue a public meeting was called at the Murgon School of Arts on the evening of Saturday 19 July, 1913. The meeting was called by advertisement and the specific issue was to discuss a proposal to form a new shire to be known as the Murgon shire. For a number of years there had been a general feeling that separation from Wienholt and Kilkivan shires would be advantageous to the people of Murgon, and the time now seemed ripe for a determined move to be made in that political and administrative direction. A report of that all important meeting claimed:

The feeling of Saturday's meeting was unmistakable, and with the exception of a little opposition from residents of Redgate and Manyung, who are just over the boundary of the Wienholt shire, the meeting was practically unanimous in favour of separation.

Mr H.J. Cooper (Boat Mountain), was voted to the chair. After explaining the object of the gathering the chairman called on Mr W.G. Armstrong to address those present.

Mr Armstrong traced the history of the district's rapid advancement and detailed his experiences of the congested state of business at the monthly meetings of the Wienholt shire. He retired from the council with the avowed object of working for the establishment of a new shire, as he considered that the present council could not efficiently cope with the work which it had been called upon to do. The office work was ever increasing, and likewise the office expenses. If they continued on their present course it would mean that the council would have to meet much oftener, and a multiplication of meetings would entail great inconvenience to the councillors who were already called upon to make many sacrifices. With the cutting up and settlement of large estates in the district the work of the council must continue to increase. The compactness of the proposed new shire, with practically every road converging on Murgon, would mean greater efficiency and economy in matters of local government. At present the overseer was seriously over-worked. Seven days a week were taken up in the work of inspection and management, and it would mean another addition to the staff entailing heavy expense to get through the work. He held that if further appointments were to be made, it would be better to make them to their own council. The age was one of decentralisation, and with the centre of local government at a distance from their own natural centre, it was impossible for local needs to get the attention their importance warranted. The new shire headquarters would be at Murgon, the natural outlet for all the country on the Mondure Estate and lying north of Barambah Creek to the Boonara side of the range. He hoped that those present would give the proposal their very serious consideration, and moved that the time for the establishment of a new shire with its centre at Murgon has arrived, and that the meeting take such steps as may be considered necessary to carry the motion into effect.

Councillor Heading seconded the motion, and stated that with the present congestion of business in the Wienholt Council it would soon be necessary to mark out another division; and, as with nine members round the council table as at present, it was impossible to get through all the business in one day, to have another three at board would simply mean confusion worse confounded. From what he knew of the district he was emphatically of the opinion that a new shire was absolutely necessary.

Mr P. Pearson considered that a new shire was not a necessity. He and his Redgate neighbours were well satisfied with things as they are, and he did not see his way clear to support a proposal which, in his opinion, would add to the rate-payers' burden.¹

Following this meeting, a deputation of rate-payers from Murgon waited upon the home secretary to present their case regarding the formation of a new shire. P.H. Armstrong, representing the rate-payers of Kilkivan shire who would be affected by such a change, told the home secretary that he and the other members of his delegation opposed the formation of a new shire at Murgon as it would increase office expenditure and thus leave less money to spend on the roads. However, the chairman of the Wienholt shire, R.L. Burns, said that he did not object to such a change, but was concerned over the plight of people of Proston who would shortly require a shire of their own and that if Murgon was granted shire status then it would effectively prevent Proston from becoming an independent local authority.²

Despite the many representations against the formation of the new administrative centre for the region, Murgon was gazetted as a shire from 16 January, 1914, being constituted from lands that previously had come under the control of both the Wienholt and Kilkivan shires. The Order-in-Council appeared in the *Government Gazette* on 20 January, 1914. There were three divisions, the first council elections were ordered to be held at the School of Arts, Murgon, on 3 February, 1914.³ The first division was represented by Peter Pearson, Alexander Leitch and William Wright (grandfather of the current shire chairman Bill Roberts). William Wright was a well known bullock driver who attained local fame for never swearing at his teams. Division Two was represented by W.G. Armstrong, H.J. Cooper and Andrew Cobb (grandfather of Mary Roberts, the wife of the current shire chairman) and Division Three was represented by Thomas Lancaster, James A. Heading and G.A. Peters.

The first chairman of the shire was W.G. Armstrong, the man who had worked long and hard for separation from the other two shires. He was later killed at Messines during the First World War.

The returning officer of the new council in 1914 and first clerk of the shire was George W. Keating — a temporary position he held for three months until a permanent clerk could be appointed.

Keating was one of the earliest settlers of the district. Giving up his job as a school teacher he arrived circa 1906/7 to manage the general store established by James Tiernan when the township was little more than a scattering of rough buildings and the railway station merely a small siding. Keating was then considered to be an exceptional athlete and competed at the annual Murgon sports days. Later he joined Martha Angel's staff whose general business was beginning to grow rapidly. He subsequently married Mrs Angel's daughter, Catherine. At that time there was no butter factory at Murgon and cream was brought to the siding by wagon and sent to the factory at Tiaro. Keating subsequently sold four thousand



W.G. Armstrong, chairman Murgon Shire Council
1914-1915.

Source — Murgon Shire Council.



*George and Catherine Keating with baby
Edna Keating.* Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

shares in that factory and was one of those responsible for convincing the directors of the Tiaro factory that it would be provident to move the factory from Tiaro to Murgon.

The first consignment of maize to be sent away from the Murgon district is attributed to Keating, the maize being loaded from the Manyung siding and sent by the agents, Armstrong Brothers, to Rockhampton in 1907. Shortly afterwards Keating took an executive of the Railways Department on a tour around the Manyung district in order to compile an estimate of the maize that was being grown there and to convince the official that a weigh-bridge was necessary. The weigh-bridge was granted in 1908. When the first race club was formed in Murgon, Keating acted as its secretary and starter for several years and later became its president. He was a member of the first football club ever to represent Murgon. In 1920 he became an active member of the town band and was also president of its committee for several years. He operated an agency for the Murarrie Bacon Company for

twenty-five years, and was chairman of the Murgon School Committee for twelve years. He acted as the official valuer for the Murgon Shire Council and was one of the original fellows of the Real Estate Institute of Queensland — considered to be a great honour. In a covering letter to the chairman of the Murgon Shire Council, written by C. Campbell, the secretary of the institute, on 27 March, 1930, Mr Campbell asked the chairman to present Keating with his diploma, adding: 'We regard this as a signal honour to both Mr Keating and your town for him to be one of the original fellows, and we think his past record entitles him to it. Very few (fellowships) have come to Queensland. Others can only obtain it after an arduous university course of study.'⁴

George Keating liked to help others but was equally as keen on keeping that help anonymous, the press later claiming: 'An unusual personality, George frequently performed kind actions by stealth and many an under-dog had reason to be grateful to him.' Keating left the Murgon district in March 1938, after living in the region for thirty-two years, to take up a position with Willcock Brothers at Toowoomba. Keating died in October that year, leaving a widow, Catherine, who died at Tamworth in 1967.⁵

In 1918 moves were made to have new shire council offices constructed, the minutes for March 1918 state: 'Moved by Councillor Cobb, seconded by Councillor Kratzmann that a sub-committee of three be appointed to have plans and specifications drawn up of a shire office ...'⁶ Council minutes also reveal that councillors voted to call tenders for a shire hall in April that year, and that H.W. Kratzmann be paid £3/5/- for the preparation of plans and specifications.⁷

Another new shire council complex was constructed in 1934, the builder was Thomas Leyer who tendered a price of £531 for the work, the architect was C.E. Plant and work commenced on 1 October, 1934.⁸

Some Prominent Personalities of Local Government

James Heading

As we have seen, James Alfred Heading was one of the first councillors on the Murgon Shire Council he also served as the council chairman in 1915, 1921–1924, 1927–1930. He was born on 26 January, 1884, at Payneham, South Australia, the son of William Heading and Rhoda Sara (nee Cook). In 1886 his parents moved to Victoria where the family resided for the following twenty-three years. In 1909 James Heading married Ruby Janice Thomas at Adelaide, the couple

arrived at Murgon in 1909 and selected land at Cloyna where Heading subsequently became a noted stud breeder of A.I.S. cattle and Large White pigs at his farm *Highfields*. James Heading later stated that when he had first come to look at the five hundred acres that would become his home in the Murgon district it had been a depressing sight. During a speech he gave to the Murgon Apex Club in 1962 he said that during his second year of farming he had experienced extreme financial difficulties and that he was saved by the kindness and continued backing of Martha Angel. He entered state parliament in the mid 1940s as the Country Party member for Wide Bay and represented that electorate until 1950 when he was returned to the new electorate of Marodian, a seat created by the electoral distribution of 1949. He continued to represent that seat until his retirement. During his career he assumed a number of other positions, including chairman of the Queensland Co-operative Bacon Association and chairman of the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association. He was chairman of the Murgon Shire Council and president of the Murgon Show Society. During the First World War he served with the 47th and 45th Battalions, A.I.F. and was awarded the D.C.M. and M.M. In 1954 he was awarded the C.M.G. Heading's wife died in 1959, he retired in 1960 and was created a Knight Bachelor in the New Year's Honours List of 1961. He died at the Murgon Hospital at 9.45 a.m. on 9 April, 1969, aged eighty-five years, and was given a state funeral.⁹

Alexander Leitch

Another of the first councillors on the Murgon Shire Council, Alexander Leitch, had had a curious life. Born at Glasgow, Scotland, in 1885, he was the son of a coach-builder named John Leitch and his wife Ann (nee Findlay). He was educated at Glasgow University and arrived at Murgon in 1910 as student minister of the Presbyterian Church, a position he maintained until he decided that a business career might have been a better proposition and he entered into the employment of Mrs Martha Angel's Railway Stores. On 12 February, 1914, he married one of Mrs Angel's daughters, Beatrice Angel, his marriage certificate states that he was twenty-nine years of age at the time and gives his occupation as an accountant. The marriage took place at the School of Arts Hall, Murgon, Beatrice was described as a cashier, aged twenty-seven.¹⁰ As we have seen, Alexander Leitch was early involved in public life and was one of the first councillors, remaining on the council all his life. He occupied prominent positions on almost every public body in the town, including the School of Arts, the Murgon Show Society, the Wondai Hospital Committee and the Wienholt Hospital Board. He was a patron of the sports and donated the Leitch Cup for the football clubs of the South Burnett. Alexander Leitch served as chairman of the Murgon Shire Council on three occasions, 1919–1920, 1926–27, and 1930–1933. However, Alexander Leitch was not to enjoy a long life, he died in his sleep at his home, aged just forty-seven years, during the early hours of Wednesday 22 November, 1933.¹¹ Beatrice died on 23 March, 1950 leaving an estate of almost £10,000.¹²

The Murgon Shire Council later released some biographical details of the remaining first councillors, these included:

William Wright: Lived in Taylor Street, was a bullock driver by trade and possessed the best team of bullocks in Murgon ... He also owned a farming property at Moffatdale.

Peter Pearson: Farmer at Redgate, near the lagoon. The first school was built on his property before its removal to its present site at Redgate. He was killed by a falling tree



Alexander Leitch.

Source — Murgon Shire Council.

while clearing cultivation. (The death of Pearson occurred on 5 June, 1922 which necessitated an election for Division One).¹³

Andrew Cobb: Selected property which now bears his name *Cobbs Hill*. It was one of the largest scrub properties in the district and was renowned for maize growing. His son Peter (who, like his father, later served on the Murgon Shire Council) carted the crop by one wagon load per day for 12 months. (approximately 3,000 bags) ...

H.J. Cooper: Selected scrub property on Boat Mountain, now owned by Charles Braithwaite. His son H.G.H. Cooper was also a councillor for many years.

Tom Lancaster: He and his brother, Bill, selected land at Byee. Two properties on Barambah Creek and two scrub blocks. They were fine citizens and remained bachelors.

G.A. Peters: Selected property at Silverleaf. Gus was renowned for his interest in trees and the shape of the trees in Lamb Street is testimony to his skill.¹⁴

Thomas William Caswell

Another man who played a prominent role in the history of Murgon and also of the state generally, was Thomas William Caswell. T.W. Caswell was born in the county of Worcestershire in 1841 and was brought to Queensland with his parents in 1848 aboard the immigrant ship *Tamar*. His father selected land in Brisbane's West End on the site where the South Brisbane Gas Works was later constructed. In 1867 T.W. Caswell selected his own land at Veresdale where he subsequently married and lived for several years, later moving his family to Woolloongabba where he opened a general store. He became a member of the Booroodabin Divisional Board which later became the South Brisbane Town Council upon which he was one of the first aldermen representing Number Three Division for several years. After selling his interests in the city he moved to Wallumbilla on the Western rail line and was one of the first residents to construct a house at that small community. He also pioneered the growing of wheat in that district. After selling out at Wallumbilla he moved, to Murgon, circa 1906.

The press later reported of Caswell:

... in his youth, being of an adventurous disposition, (he) travelled over a large portion of Queensland as a drover and mail carrier. While in his teens he carried the western mail from Brisbane to Ipswich on a packhorse, going up one day and back the next. He had many encounters with the blacks, but remarked that he never shot to kill, although on several occasions he had used firearms to frighten them. On one occasion when assisting the mounted police, who were after an aboriginal named Yellow Billy who was wanted for murder, he captured the malefactor and tied him with his stirrup iron leather until the police arrived.

As a drover he took cattle over many parts of the west and north and drove a mob from the South Australian border to the Gulf, a distance of over 1200 miles without sighting a fence. He was the first white man on Charter Towers, taking up cattle and forming a cattle station which he called *Woodhead*, on which was afterwards the site of the goldfield. While droving to and from the station he occasionally had to swim the Burdekin in flood with the cattle. His reminiscences of old Brisbane were very interesting. He had seen teams bogged in Queen Street, which then consisted of a row of bark humpies, one of which was the rope works, and another the old gaol with gallows. As boys he and his brother used to catch lobsters in the swamp which is now the site of the new town hall, and to get from Brisbane to South Brisbane meant swimming the river, which he had done many times. During his life ... (he) was a staunch member of the Methodist Church, and an ardent temperance advocate. Even in illness he refused to take alcohol in any form. On more than one occasion when he suspected the presence of brandy in medicine he would break the bottle sooner than take it.¹⁵

Thomas William Caswell died at his residence in Murgon on Monday 9 April, 1928.¹⁶

One of Caswell's sons was Walter G. Caswell who was involved with the earliest days of business in the town. He opened a small business in premises facing the railway line, keeping a barber's and fancy goods shop and operating the community's post office. He also operated a

drapery business in the building later occupied by Burton's butchery. Selling his business, he subsequently moved to Brisbane where he became involved in various pursuits and frequently returned to the South Burnett in his capacity as a commercial traveller. Following an operation for appendicitis, he contracted pneumonia and died at the Auchenflower Private Hospital on Saturday morning 5 September, 1936. He was buried at the Toowong cemetery.¹⁷

Francis William Caswell, another son of T.W. Caswell, was also a leading identity of the Murgon region. Known affectionately as the 'Grand old man of Murgon', Caswell arrived in Murgon circa 1909 and played a leading role in the development of the town and district. He was a justice of the peace and reportedly presided over the first court held at Murgon. Additionally he was the first chairman of the Murgon Ambulance Committee and served as chairman of the Murgon Fire Brigade, the Murgon Chamber of Commerce, the Murgon Show Society and the Murgon War-time Repatriation Committee. He died, aged ninety years, on Monday 9 November, 1959, after being in poor health for some considerable time.¹⁸

Sir Robert Webster

A very successful man in both local government and business was Sir Robert Webster who served on the Murgon Shire Council during the 1920s. Robert Webster was born in the Charters Towers region where his father was a mine manager. Robert was one of the first volunteers for the First World War and landed at Gallipoli. After the war he settled on land at Windera and became heavily involved in the production of cotton. So successful was Sir Robert that he retired with a spacious home overlooking Sydney Harbour and a Rolls Royce. His coat of arms, designed for him when he was knighted in 1963, displayed symbols of spinning and weaving surmounted by a weaving bird with a cotton ball in its mouth. Sir Robert became influential in a number of region's community enterprises and was a councillor of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufacturers.¹⁹

John Krebs

John Krebs has been one of the longest serving members of the council, being first elected in 1943, he served eighteen years as chairman. John Krebs was born at Kalbar and arrived at Murgon as a carpenter in 1919. He soon established his own building contract business and remained in that business all his life. He was an active sportsman, representing Murgon in both cricket and rugby league, and in addition to serving for a record term on the council he also served on a number of other public bodies, including the fire brigade and hospital boards. He resigned from the council in April 1972 and for his services to the community was honoured with an O.B.E. in 1973. A bridge at Fick's Crossing was named after him in 1971 as was a street in Murgon. His wife and one son predeceased him. He died in July 1981.²⁰

Bill Roberts

Bill Roberts, the current shire chairman, local accountant and long time newspaper commentator, was born in Brisbane on 22 April, 1925. He is the son of George Burnett Roberts and his wife, Vera Alice, (nee Wright), both his parents lived in Murgon. His mother arrived in Murgon in 1907, shortly after the town was first founded, her father, William, was a farmer and bullock driver who selected land adjacent to the Cherbourg region, his wife's name was Alice Diana (nee Caswell). Bill Roberts' grandparents were farmers, William senior (more popularly known as Billy) spending much of his time not on the farm but working with his bullock team, carting timber for the local sawmill and also bringing the logs into town for rail transportation to other centres such as Maryborough and Brisbane.

Bill Roberts completed his primary education at Murgon, moving to the Brisbane Boys' College in 1939, at the age of thirteen years, where he remained until 1942.

Studying law for a year at Queensland University without completing his course, he joined the airforce in 1944. Bill Roberts was based firstly at Kingaroy where he completed his basic training. After approximately three months he was transferred to Ultimo in Sydney, later completing a radio



Bill and Mary Roberts, Anglican Church, Murgon, 5 November, 1949.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

course at the Radio College in Melbourne. Returning to Oakey and 6AD unit, he was employed in installing radar units in the aircraft which had been earmarked for service in Japan during the allied occupation of that country. He was discharged at Oakey in 1946 and returned to Murgon where he was articled as a law clerk to his father, George Burnett Roberts, a Murgon solicitor, who had arrived in the town from Maryborough in 1921. G.B. Roberts had completed his articles with the well known legal firm of Morton and Morton at Maryborough, and in addition to practicing as a solicitor he also ran a tax agency. During the course of his studies his son Bill Roberts therefore changed the direction of his career and began to study accountancy.

On 5 November, 1949, Bill Roberts married Mary Travess Cobb, the daughter of local sawmill pioneer and farmer Peter Scott Cobb, who had also served on the Murgon Shire Council, her grandfather, Andrew Cobb was one of the first councillors elected to the Murgon Shire Council in 1914 and later became shire chairman (1917–18). Mary's

mother was an Englishwoman from Bournemouth, named Mary Travess Cobb (more commonly known as Molly Cobb). Bill and Mary Roberts have three children, George Scott Roberts, a solicitor of Kingaroy, Margaret Kay Oliver, who lives at Buderim, and William Swain Roberts, named after his great great grandfather who once owned the *Maryborough Chronicle*. Swain is a solicitor based in Singapore.

A foundation member of the Murgon Apex, Bill Roberts was elected to council on 4 March, 1970, topping the poll and immediately becoming deputy chairman. He was appointed chairman on 9 May, 1972, upon the retirement of long serving councillor John Krebs. In the 1980 New Year's Honours List Bill Roberts was awarded the O.B.E.²¹

Dermot Tiernan

Dermot Tiernan was one of the leading contemporary personalities of Murgon and a forceful figure on local government. The landlord of the Australian Hotel and a descendant of P.J. Tiernan, Dermot Tiernan served on the Murgon Shire Council for twenty-two years and was a committee chairman for nineteen years. He was a highly respected businessman who did much for the local community, he served on the Murgon Fire Brigade Board for many years including periods as its deputy and acting chairman and was a member of the Murgon State Emergency Service. He served on the Castra Retirement Home Committee the Queensland Ambulance Service Committee and was a member of the South Burnett Hotels Association.²²

Dermot Tiernan died as a result of a brawl that occurred on the pavement near his hotel on 20 March, 1993. Tiernan had attempted to intervene in the brawl, going to the aid of the police, but was struck to the ground. He was rushed to the Royal Brisbane Hospital suffering from a brain haemorrhage but was taken off life support systems two days later.²³ A Cherbourg youth, who has never been publicly named, was subsequently charged with his murder, and the event created considerable tension in the town. Soon after the event the bridge across Barambah Creek at Cherbourg was firebombed as a 'symbolic act', and the press called for tougher punishments, the *South Burnett Times* published: 'We can no longer tolerate the mollycoddling approach of governments to juvenile crime and public brawls, whether it is white law or aboriginal law. Governments in recent years have over-ridden common sense in the application of penalties for crimes ... unless we restore community respect for the law, we are heading towards anarchy.'²⁴

An emergency meeting was called between the Murgon Shire Council and the Cherbourg Community Council to discuss ways to curb the community's juvenile crime rate. A message from Mrs Jillian Tiernan, Dermot Tiernan's widow, who was suffering with breast cancer at the time, was read at the councils' meeting, she stated that she had no resentment or ill feelings towards members of any community and hoped that the events would strengthen relationships between the people of Cherbourg and Murgon. Even so, the meeting was disrupted with a bomb scare, the second such scare in three weeks, when an anonymous person telephoned to claim that a bomb planted at council chambers would explode within ten minutes. Councillors then called an end to the meeting and the building was evacuated. Police subsequently searched the building but no bomb was discovered.²⁵ Cherbourg Community Council chairman Les Stewart told the press that the event had: '... put a wedge between the two communities,' but he appealed for people to allow the law to take its own course.²⁶

Dermot Tiernan was buried at the Murgon cemetery on Friday 26 March, 1993, the funeral procession was led by Cherbourg Community Council chairman Councillor Les Stewart. Police, including Queensland's Police Union president John O'Gorman, formed a guard of honour at the funeral, the cortège moving from the church, past the scene of the tragedy, to the cemetery at the other side of town.²⁷

Meanwhile, those involved in the fracas had been arrested and a sixteen years' old youth allegedly responsible for striking Tiernan had been charged with murder. Soon afterwards a racist symbol was anonymously erected on the outskirts of Cherbourg, this symbol took the form of a white sheet on a cross that had been splattered with tomato sauce — depicting blood. The cross was removed soon afterwards by Cherbourg police. During the previous weekend a house about four kilometres towards Goomeri owned by the South Burnett Black Housing Association was burned to the ground and police suspected racial-driven arson.²⁸

In April more than one hundred people attended a police community liaison committee meeting and a vote was passed to trial a voluntary juvenile curfew on the streets of Murgon between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. Police would stop juveniles found in the streets during the curfew hours and ask if they would like to be driven home.²⁹

The youth charged with Tiernan's murder appeared in the Murgon Children's Court on Wednesday 14 April, 1993, and was remanded in custody until committal proceedings could take place later that year.³⁰ In October the youth was committed to stand trial at the Brisbane Supreme Court charged with murder, robbery with violence and seriously assaulting a police officer.³¹ The youth was found guilty of manslaughter in the Brisbane Supreme Court on 22 June, 1994, after being held on remand at the Westbrook Detention Centre for nine months. Trial judge, Justice Margaret White, released him on bail pending sentencing.³² In July the youth was sentenced to three years' probation on the manslaughter charge with sixty hours of community service for assaulting a police officer and Justice Margaret White also ordered that he undergo alcohol counselling.³³

In February 1994 the new council library at Murgon was opened by Deputy Premier Tom Burns and officially named the 'Dermot Tiernan Memorial Library'. Burns said during the opening that the list of Dermot Tiernan's achievements was: '... the longest he had seen during his public life.'³⁴ In March 1995 a spokes-person for the Governor General's Honours Secretariat said that Tiernan would receive a posthumous Bravery Medal for going to the aid of the police at the time of his death.³⁵

In addition to his council responsibilities Dermot Tiernan served on the Sugar Coast Regional Tourism Board and was chairman of the Bjelke-Petersen Rural Studies Centre, he also served on the South Burnett Regional Economic Planning Committee. He was a member of the Murgon Apex Club, a life member of the Downlands Past Students' Union and also of the St Leo's University College.³⁶

Chronological Listing of Chairmen and Shire Clerks

Chairmen and Mayors

- W.G. Armstrong, chairman 1914–1915.
 J.A. Heading, chairman 1915, 1921–1924, 1927–1930. Councillor 1914–1924, 1927–1930.
 P. Pearson, chairman 1915–1917. Councillor 1914–1917.
 A. Cobb, chairman 1917–1918. Councillor 1917–1919.
 F.G. Rewald, chairman 1918–1919. Councillor 1918–1936.
 A. Leitch, chairman 1919–1920, 1926–1927, 1930–1933. Councillor 1914–1938.
 P.A. Smyth, chairman 1920–1921. Councillor 1920–1924.
 R.J. Webster, chairman 1924–1926. Councillor 1921–1926.
 F.W. Caswell, chairman 1933–1939. Councillor 1928–1939, 1941–1943.
 H. Wilson, chairman April 1939–May 1943.
 O.S. Wallace, chairman 1943–1949 1952–1954. Councillor 1943–1954.
 W.D. Davidson, chairman 1949–1952.
 J. Krebs, chairman 1954–1972. Councillor 1943–1972.
 G.W. Roberts, chairman 1972–. Councillor 1970–.³⁷

Shire Clerks and Chief Executive Officers

As with most other shires in the South Burnett, the Murgon Shire Council has had relatively few shire clerks, including its first, George W. Keating, who began serving on 14 January 1914. Others have included T.W. Sanderson and N.S. Griffiths who was suspended on 27 December, 1945, and dismissed on 8 January, 1946. Long serving shire clerk, Norman Smith Griffiths was a highly experienced shire clerk, he held a certificate of competency and had been registered as a local government clerk since 29 August, 1923.³⁸ Despite this long experience he was dismissed from his post in 1946 following allegations of ineptitude. O.S. Wallace, the chairman who first suspended and then dismissed Griffiths, informed Griffiths by letter in December 1945 that there were six charges being made against him, including failure to finalise an audit, failure to dispatch rate notices, failure to transfer funds to the Post War Reconstruction Works and Services Reserve Fund, the failure to frame the 1945/46 budget estimates correctly, the failure to dispatch information to the government statistician and failure to reply to an 'unreasonable amount of the correspondence addressed to this office by government departments.'³⁹

Following a council investigation into the matter and a special council meeting held on 8 January, 1946, E.L. Alcorn, then acting shire clerk, wrote to Griffiths on that day advising him: '... that following upon your suspension from office as Clerk of the Murgon Shire Council it was resolved at the special meeting held this day for the purpose of considering your suspension that you be dismissed from the above-mentioned office with effect from the date of suspension, viz 27th December, 1945.'⁴⁰

Frank Magnus Carlson Narracott, B.E.M., F.I.M.M. (Ret.), J.P. was shire clerk at Murgon for more than thirty years, from 16 April, 1951, to 3 July, 1981, and therefore saw many of the important changes that affected the people of the region. He was born on 31 March, 1916, at Clermont, Queensland, the second of 6 children. His father was Arthur Stewart Narracott, his mother Helena Matilda Narracott, (nee Carlson).

Frank Narracott's father was born in Brisbane on 16 March, 1888. He became a Methodist minister and preached at West End, Albert Street, Cunnamulla, Childers and Clermont. He became engaged to Miss Carlson, a member of the Church of England and later changed his profession and conducted his stock and station agency business in Clermont.

Frank Narracott's mother was born in Clermont on 6 April, 1893. She was not employed but was actively engaged in church choral work and amateur photography. In December 1916

Clermont was destroyed by flood and so too was the family. Frank Narracott with his mother and grandparents spent a night on the roof of a house to escape the flood waters. Having lost all private and business assets the family, like many others, was penniless.

A.S. Narracott then accepted a position in 1917 at Quilpie as manager for H.J. Carter & Co., a stock and station agent. The railway line was then being completed. Apart from a period of three years farming in the Dawson Valley he held this position until 1928 when the business was sold. He again started his own business in the same field.

Because of the railway line, Quilpie was a developing town and A.S. Narracott was active in its progress. In 1928 the state government conducted a Royal Commission into local authority boundaries which resulted in the creation of the Quilpie shire in place of the previous Adavale shire and parts of the neighbouring shires.

A.S. Narracott saw opportunities within these changes. He sat for the examination and secured his qualifications as a local government clerk, he was then appointed the first shire clerk to the Quilpie Shire Council. He held this position until his death in April 1944.

Frank Narracott's education was obtained at the Quilpie State School. Because of the Great Depression he left school, aged fourteen years, at the end of 1930. There was no money available for secondary studies, employment was hard to come by, but he secured part time work as a janitor in the shire office with a wage of ten shillings per week.

Under his father's guidance he enrolled with Lightband & Donaldson of Brisbane and studied accountancy by correspondence. In 1932 he was appointed to the position of junior clerk and became interested in local government activities. Because of his father's illness in the late 1930s, Frank Narracott was helping him in much of his work and decided to sit for the clerk's examination. Tutored by Hemmingway & Robertson, he qualified in 1939 securing 3rd place in Queensland. He was then appointed assistant shire clerk at Quilpie.

Frank Narracott married Myra Florence Hollow on 24 February, 1940, at St Luke's Anglican Church in Gulgong, N.S.W.

While at Quilpie Frank Narracott volunteered for service with the R.A.A.F. He was accepted for air crew training but entry into the service was delayed because of his occupation. However, on 25 April, 1942, he entered camp and after the usual period of class subjects at Sandgate he completed elementary flying on Tiger Moths at Narrandera, later moving to Bundaberg, flying Avro Ansons, where he obtained his pilot's wings. He then served three months at Cootamundra Navigation School flying as a staff pilot prior to being shipped to England. In England he was seconded to the R.A.F. and attended a special flying instructors' school and was a flying instructor on twin engine machines at advanced flying units until peace was declared.

During his service in England his father died and the Quilpie Shire Council held the position open for him until he returned from active service, resuming work there in January 1946 as shire clerk.

Owing to the climatic conditions in Quilpie, which were unfavourable to the health of his children, Frank Narracott and his wife decided to seek a better climate. After unsuccessful applications to a number of shires he was appointed shire clerk to the Murgon Shire Council and commenced duties at Murgon on 16 April, 1951, taking over from E.L (Len) Alcorn who had secured a similar position with the Stanthorpe Shire Council.⁴¹

Frank Narracott later wrote:

Cr. W.D. (Bill) Davidson, a real estate agent, was chairman on my appointment. He had good vision for Murgon, but as often is the case in farming communities they were too far reaching for some. However, he sowed the seeds for some of the progress that followed.

Next Cr. O.S. (Sid) Wallace. He had a steadying affect but met an untimely end due to an accident on the Gympie rail station on his return from a local government conference in Brisbane.

Cr. John Kerbs, a building contractor of some standing, was appointed on the death of Cr. Wallace. He held this position for a number of years during which many of the major projects were completed.

Cr. G.W. (Bill) Roberts, a tax professional, took over from Cr. Krebs and still fills this position with a certain flair.

When I commenced duties there I was informed that I had inherited an honorary position as secretary of the South Burnett Water Conservation Committee, comprised of representatives of the five shires. As the name implies, its objects were to promote construction of a major water scheme for the area. This was achieved by the construction of the Bjelke Petersen Dam on Barker Creek.

At first our road plant was very small and loading facilities primitive, contractors were not interested. Albert Heitmann was overseer and with Bill Davidson's initial drive, and continued by others, we soon built up our own adequate plant and carried out our works by day labour. Overseers and foremen were trained in the process, and I can name — Stan Casten, Percy Schultz and Lester Wessling.

A timber bridge over Saw Pit Creek was already on the programme but no contractors were interested. We obtained a bridge foreman (French). I taught his son to do the costing on that and other works. The bridge was completed but we had no finance for the approaches. The bridge soon attracted signs: 'For sale, a bridge to nowhere,' etc.

Because of the outlandish quotes received for the construction of a timber crib weir in Barambah Creek to supply adequate water for the proposed sewerage scheme for Murgon, we undertook its construction by day labour using local men and one experienced pile driver and his own equipment. The weir was completed just prior to a flood in the creek.

We were mindful of the fact that Murgon needed additional industries to provide employment. I was honorary secretary to the investigating committee for the establishment of the Murgon abattoirs, another council inspired project assisted by the business people of the area. It had its first kill in 1962 and now employs over six hundred staff. To compliment the abattoirs the council provided pig and calf saleyards and also live-weight cattle saleyards.

Murgon's development increased the need for a complete sewerage scheme and as usual opposition was forthcoming. A poll was conducted for the loan and it was carried 60% in favour.

I was also secretary of the Murgon Fire Brigade Board, and because of the many rural fires the board's area was extended to include the area of the Shire of Murgon. Four-wheel drive fire tenders were then required for access to certain areas.

The sports complex at the show grounds was another council project but was the brain-child of Cr. Dermot Tiernan. It enabled the creation of the Murgon Y.M.C.A. which expanded to establish the sheltered workshop. Dermot was the driving force behind many of the projects of Murgon in later years and was tireless in his efforts.

I also contributed in some small way in the creation of the aged persons' home 'Castra' — another council project.

The locations of the court-house, police station, maternal and child welfare centre and the council office, came not by accident, but by the initial efforts of Cr. Davidson. That land was originally state school reserve with a rail line running diagonally through it. Not good for the safety of the children. I accompanied him on visits to Brisbane to arrange with the state government departments. Transfers were arranged with the council ceding some land so as to join the high school and primary school lands and also giving the council an area for the swimming pool. This is located adjacent to both schools for educational purposes.⁴²

In appreciation of his services to the people of Murgon, Frank Narracott was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1982, the medal being personally presented to him by Queen Elizabeth during her visit to Queensland that year.⁴³

Warren Hubner

Warren Hubner was born at Kilcoy on 23 July, 1948, the son of Leslie and Gweneth Hubner. He was appointed senior clerk to the Murgon Shire Council in March 1972, in August 1973 he became deputy shire clerk and on 6 July, 1981, became shire clerk, replacing Frank Narracott

who had retired. Prior to his appointment to Murgon, Warren Hubner had worked at the Caboolture Shire Council. He resigned from the Murgon Shire Council in July 1995 to go into business in the motel industry, he and his wife Sharlien having purchased a motel at Maroochydore.⁴⁴

Robert Carruthers

Robert Carruthers, the present chief executive officer of Murgon Shire Council, was born in Sydney in 1950, the son of Charles and Betty Carruthers. He was appointed C.E.O. in July 1995, replacing Warren Hubner. After working as a public servant and policeman in N.S.W., Robert Carruthers started in local government at the Blue Mountains City Council, and subsequently worked at the Southern Mitchell County Council and the Cabonne Shire in Molong N.S.W. He then moved to Morningside Shire Council in Far North Queensland where he was appointed shire clerk in 1984 and where he remained until 1990. His subsequent positions were: town clerk, Port Keats N.T. (1991–92); shire clerk/general manager, Tallaganda Shire Council, Braidwood N.S.W. (1992–94); town clerk, Nguiu Council, Bathurst Island N.T. (1994–95). He moved to Murgon from Bathurst Island.⁴⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifty-five

Local Government at Murgon

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16. *Ibid.*
17. SBT. 11 September, 1936, p 7.
18. SBT. 12 November, 1959, p 1.
19. SBT. 7 January, 1976, p 3.
20. SBT. 28 July, 1971, 26 April, 1972, p 1 and 22 July, 1981, p 3.
21. SBT. 2 January, 1980, p 2 and 6 July, 1983, p 10.
22. SBT. 30 March, 1993, p 3.
23. SBT. 23 March, 1993, p 1 and 6 August, 1993, p 2.
24. SBT. 23 March, 1993, p 2.
25. SBT. 26 March, 1993, p 1.
26. SBT. 23 March, 1993, p 3.
27. SBT. 30 March, 1993, p 3.
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31. SBT. 8 October, 1993, p 1.
32. SBT. 24 June, 1994, p 1.
33. SBT. 19 July, 1994, p 1.
34. SBT. 15 February, 1994, p 1.
35. SBT. 7 March, 1995, p 7.
36. SBT. 30 March, 1993, p 3.
37. Murgon Shire Council archives
38. QGG 28 February, 1939, p 850.
39. Letter to N.S. Griffiths from O.S. Wallace, dated 28 December, 1945, in which Wallace informed Griffiths of his suspension and the charges laid against him. This letter may be found in file: Suspension of Clerk, original correspondence tendered at the special meeting of the council, 8 January, 1946, which considered the suspension of the clerk. Murgon Shire Council archives, correspondence boxes, 1946.
40. E.L. Alcorn to N.S. Griffiths, this letter may be found in file: Suspension of Clerk, original correspondence tendered at the special meeting of the council, 8 January, 1946, which considered the suspension of the clerk. See also file: Moneys Due to Mr N.S. Griffith, Murgon Shire Council archives, correspondence boxes, 1946.
41. Letter to the author from Frank Narracott, dated 19 July, 1996.
42. Ibid.
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44. Author interview with Warren Hubner, recorded 2 June, 1996 and SBT. 4 July, 1995, p 2.
45. R. Carruther to author, August, 1997.

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Progress, War and Beyond for Murgon



Murgon memorial, main street circa 1929 or 1932.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 89359.

By the mid to late 1930s the town of Murgon was rapidly expanding and there had been a flurry of progress — despite the adverse impact of the Great Depression and a long spell of relatively dry weather that had lasted for approximately ten years. Some of the more important improvements to the town to that date included additions to the butter factory, the establishment of the electricity scheme, the construction of the Star Theatre, improvements to the Australian Hotel and the new Royal Hotel building which, as we have seen, replaced the earlier construction burned to the ground in 1928. The Rural School building had cost approximately £1000, extensions to the Murgon State School costing £2500, the new Lutheran Church costing £1000, and the show and recreational grounds improvement scheme was in the process of costing £3000. Additionally, by 1938, plans were underway for the construction of an imposing town hall, at a cost of £10,500, the water scheme, costing approximately £21,000 had been approved by council, and main roads were forging ahead with improvements costing somewhere in the region of £120,000. In total, major improvements during the decade from 1928 to 1938 had been costed at approximately £255,000.¹

The official opening of the Murgon Town Hall took place on Friday 16 December, 1938. The hall was constructed by Maryborough builder H.G. Neilsen, the architect was C.E. Plant. The building incorporated the main auditorium, a library, reading room and Returned Soldiers' League room. Part of the building was situated on the site of the original School of Arts and several shops which were removed to the show grounds. The hall was opened by the minister for agriculture, F.W. Bulcock, (in the absence of the premier, William Forgan Smith). In his introductory speech the chairman of the Murgon Shire Council, F.W. Caswell, stated: 'Today's ceremony is, in many ways, an event of great significance in the history of the development of the district ... one can safely claim today that we are celebrating barely a quarter of a century's

achievement.² The opening was celebrated with a ball and supper to which all residents of the shire were invited, although a charge was made of five shillings for gentlemen and three shillings for ladies.³



Murgon Civic Centre, 1938.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 98396.



Murgon Civic Centre, 1938.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 98338.

The first recital held at the hall was that of vocalist, Miss Mirth Burton, a young lady described in the press as a 'talented vocalist', who was a student of the Melbourne Conservatorium. The recital was held in January, 1939, Miss Burton, the daughter of Mr and Mrs M.A. Burton, being

escorted onto the stage by well known Murgon personality J.A. Heading. Other entertainers included singer James Burns and pianist Mona Lee.⁴

The construction of the new town hall effectively replaced many of the functions of the old School of Arts, as W. Griffiths pointed out in 1938: 'The building (the original School of Arts) has been pulled down ... the old School of Arts Committee has been abolished and the council is now the trustee as gazetted by Order-in-Council. In future the administration of the library will be in the hands of a sub-committee of the council.'⁵

The first School of Arts which was moved to the show grounds to become the Hanlon Hall, was the original picture theatre for Murgon and where silent films were shown each week. On 27 October, 1927, a contract was signed between Dr William Henry Norman Randall, a medical practitioner who was also the president of the School of Arts, and Fred Sweet, a picture show proprietor, agreeing to allow Sweet to show his films at the School of Arts each Wednesday and Saturday evenings.⁶

One of the pianists who provided the music accompaniment to the films was Gladys Shelley who also played the piano for the silent movies at Clarrie Thompson's Olympia Theatre at Kingaroy. Mrs Shelley's mother was Mary Jane Christie who was the wife of one of Murgon's early police officers. Mary Jane was born at Peak Crossing on 19 November, 1871. She became a nurse and worked at the Ipswich Hospital until the turn of the century when she met and soon afterwards married Robert George Christie, then a young police constable. After service at Southport and Gympie he was posted as sergeant-in-charge of the Murgon police station. The family later moved to Kingaroy and finally retired to Brisbane. Mary Jane died at Newmarket, aged ninety-nine years, on Monday 14 June, 1971.⁷ Her husband had been something of a legend in the district, being the recipient of the King's Medal in 1914 for the arrest of: '... an armed lunatic,' in the Coomera district. He had joined the force in 1897 and as a plain clothes officer had assisted in the investigation into the infamous Gatton murders in 1898. He retired from the force in 1932 and died in Brisbane on 5 July, 1944.⁸

Another person at Murgon who was musically talented was Elsa White. Sister Elsa White (nee Borchert), was a trained nurse who lived in the Murgon district and was renowned for her voice. Known as the Gladys Moncrieff of Murgon, Sister White was reputed to have had a beautiful soprano voice. She first discovered that she could sing at the Murgon Methodist Sunday School when she was just four years of age. Her first accomplished song was reported to have been: 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus'. At the age of fourteen years she won the W.H. Paling Gold Medal for girls at the Rockhampton Eisteddfod, and became the first female vocalist under the age of fifteen in Murgon to win a gold medal. In later years Sister White studied singing at the Sydney Conservatoire of Music under the instruction of the Italian operatic singer, Guido Caccalli. Caccalli had arrived in Australia with the Gonzales Opera Company shortly after the First World War. While at the conservatoire Sister White was awarded a proficiency prize for her work at the Gladesville Mental Hospital.⁹

By 1939, of course, the world was heading into the great conflict of the Second World War and the progress of the region would certainly be hampered by a number of problems associated with prosecuting that war. As we shall see in a later chapter, the people of Murgon threw themselves into the conflict with rigid determination, arranging for fund raising activities in support of the troops, the formation of local forces and support groups such as the Red Cross and various patriotic bodies.

One district resident who has been described as '... a mainstay of Murgon,' was Charles Braithwaite, he was also described as a man of great honesty and integrity, the press later claiming: 'In a world of double standards, former Murgon councillor Charles Braithwaite was a man of single standards and whose handshake was his bond.' Edward Charles Braithwaite was born on 12 July, 1920, at *Kalinya*, near Murgon, he attended school at Boat Mountain and worked on the family farm until joining the 2/12th Battalion of the Fifth Light Horse Brigade. He served as a lieutenant at Ramu Valley and Shaggy Ridge and later devoted much of his time to the Murgon community. He became a director and chairman of the South Burnett Dairy, was president and patron of the Murgon Show Society and was active in the Queensland Dairyman's Organisation. He served on the Murgon Shire Council for nine years and was a foundation member of the Australian Stock Horse Association. In later years he was diagnosed as suffering

from a heart condition and he died at the Wondai Hospital in October 1994, being survived by his wife, Margaret.¹⁰

Despite the war, progress at Murgon continued. On Friday 15 November, 1940, Murgon's new court-house was opened by the recently appointed attorney-general, J. O'Keefe, it was, in fact, O'Keefe's first public appearance as the attorney-general of Queensland.



Aerial view of Murgon, 1938.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 62590.

For some time it had been realised that the old Murgon court-house was hopelessly inadequate for the burgeoning township, and in April 1936 the local member, Mr C. Clayton, notified the Department of Justice that a new court-house for Murgon was becoming an urgent necessity. This view was supported by the district supervisor of public works who advised the Department of Justice that the construction of a new building would be more economical and practical than simply building additions to the old court-house.

Little was achieved for the following few years due to financial constraints, however, during the financial year of 1939 plans and specifications for the proposed building were prepared complete with a detailed estimate of costs. The press later reported:

In January last approval was given to the erection of the new building and the work was carried out by men on wages. The building comprises a court room 25ft x 18ft, situated at the rear of the public offices which accommodates the police magistrate and visiting officials. The clerk of petty sessions has a room 15ft. x 13ft., which, like the police magistrate's room, has direct access to the court room. The building contains offices for the veterinary surgeon, the dairy inspector, as well as a general office for the clerk of petty sessions and the public. There is a spare room in the building. All offices have access to verandahs at front and back by means of french lights, and verandahs surround the court room, all verandahs being 8ft. wide. The front elevation is enhanced by having wide concrete piers supporting double

verandah posts and wide entrance steps leading into a gable projection in the centre. The building is founded on hardwood stumps with the exception of the front piers mentioned, and all are enclosed with battens.

The furniture from the old court-house has been re-used after having been reconditioned. Linoleum floor covering and new furniture have been supplied for the offices. Electric light has also been installed. The work included the removal of the cell building.¹¹

Following the opening of the court-house the attorney-general and his entourage were taken to an impressive dinner at the Australian Hotel.¹²

By 1941 Murgon was the second most important centre on the South Burnett with a population of 1091 people. Kingaroy was the largest centre with 2330 persons and Nanango was in third place with 1025 persons, clearly, Murgon had advanced dramatically since the days when visitors to the township would find only a scattering of bark and canvas humpies and Bob Gray's less than impressive store. The shire then covered an area of 271 square miles with a total population of 4000. It is interesting to note that the Murgon shire was the smallest of all the South Burnett shires, yet its principal centre, Murgon, was the second largest.¹³

The official opening of the new Murgon High School took place on Friday 13 April, 1945, the opening ceremony being performed by the minister for transport, Mr E.J. Walsh, who was deputizing for the education minister. The head teacher appointed to the school was Mr M. Portley. The ceremony was followed by a dinner at the Royal Hotel and afterwards a large audience enjoyed a concert at the town hall. Also a part of the celebrations was a patriotic carnival, raising funds for the Red Cross and other local charities.¹⁴

Progress at Murgon has reflected the general prosperity of the entire South Burnett region with the installation of services such as sewerage and reticulated water. The Murgon Shire Council swimming pool was opened by Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, the minister for works and housing, on 20 November, 1965. The pool had been constructed by L.G. Smith of Wondai with W.J. Reinhold and Partners of Brisbane being the consulting engineers. The total cost of the pool had been £75,511. The official opening was celebrated with swimming demonstrations and a water ballet, followed by afternoon tea.¹⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifty-six

Progress, War and Beyond for Murgon

1. SBT. 2 September, 1938, p 6.
2. SBT. 23 December, 1938, p 8.
3. Invitation insertion for the *South Burnett Times*, Murgon Shire Council archives.
4. SBT. 6 January, 1939, p 3.
5. Griffiths to *Queensland Newspapers Ltd.*, letter dated 11 March, 1938, correspondence box 1938, file: School of Arts, Murgon Shire Council archives.
6. For a copy of this contract see: Murgon Shire Council archives, correspondence box, 1927.
7. SBT. 30 June, 1971, p 12.
8. K/H. 13 July, 1944, p 2.
9. SBT. 7 January, 1960, p 16.
10. SBT. 21 October, 1994, p 27.
11. SBT. 21 November, 1940, p 6.
12. Ibid.
13. Statistics from *Queensland Year Book, 1941*, issued by the government statistician, Brisbane, pp 30–31 and 255.
14. SBT. 19 April, 1945, p 3.
15. For further details on the construction of the pool see: the official opening brochure, Murgon Shire Council archives.

The Barker Creek Dam Project

For many years some landholders in the Barker Creek region had believed that there was a necessity in the area for a dam and irrigation project, but it was a controversial issue that polarised the local community. In 1973 the proposed project was the subject of a joint investigation by the Department of Primary Industries and the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, and in its annual report for that year the commission made it clear that such a scheme was not an economical one, the press later reported of it: 'The report went on to say that the benefited area was already highly productive and that any additional production would hardly offset the losses of the inundated areas.'¹

The proposed dam was to be situated on Barker Creek 1.3 kilometres upstream from its junction with Barambah Creek, the site was selected after detailed examination of the area in comparison with an alternative one on Barambah Creek a short distance downstream from the junction of the two creeks. It was proposed that the dam be an earth and rock-fill construction with a concrete lined open spillway. The dam would be twenty-six metres in height from stream bed to spillway crest with a storage capacity of 125,000 megalitres and with a weir on Barambah Creek with a storage capacity of 715 megalitres. It would provide irrigation to landholders in both the Wondai and Murgon shires and also supplement water supplies for Cherbourg, Murgon and Wondai.²

A public meeting was called for Thursday 25 October, 1973, with a view to discussing the issue, the meeting was attended by F.B. Haigh, the commissioner for irrigation and water supply.³

The meeting was chaired by Cr. G.W. Roberts, chairman of the Murgon Shire Council, also in attendance was Cr. Alan R. Meddleton, the chairman of the South Burnett Water Conservation Committee who pointed out in his opening remarks that since his committee had been formed in 1949, members had worked towards improving water conservation on the South Burnett. Commissioner Haigh stated that while there were a number of licences for irrigation on the stream, the situation in Barker Creek was that water shortages were frequently occurring and during one period of eighteen months no water had flowed in the creek. Landholders had experienced other long periods without water and at times the water flow had been inadequate to meet fifty per cent of demand. Haigh also said that the proposed dam would cost somewhere in the vicinity of \$7.5 million.⁴

In addition to the obvious advantage of providing water to rural holdings, there were other benefits in the proposed scheme, as Alan Keates, shire clerk of the Wondai Shire Council pointed out in a letter to Premier Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, on 6 January, 1978, the town was provided with water from Barambah Creek and: 'During the '69 drought and present drought the availability of water from Barambah Creek has become an alarming issue for this council ... Your urgent consideration and support of this project is requested.'⁵

Those opposed to the dam were primarily landholders whose land would be inundated if the scheme went ahead. These people formed an organisation, the Barker Creek Dam Inundation Landholders' Association, in 1978, with the object of protecting the interests of those who would be affected by the construction of such a dam.⁶

In 1977 renewed moves were made to have the project reconsidered, yet Mr N.G. Cush, chairman of the Barker Dam Objection Committee, stated in May that year that attitudes had not changed during the intervening four years and that affected rate-payers were extremely concerned over the possible inundation of their lands. He called for a public meeting to discuss

the issue and challenged Cr. G.W. Roberts, chairman of the Murgon Shire Council, to a debate.⁷ Another protest group, the Nanango Shire Affected Landholders' Group, was formed in the Nanango shire following a public meeting held at the Wyalla Dip Reserve in January 1978. John Lee was elected chairman and Mrs J. Munro was elected secretary/treasurer.⁸

On Friday 20 January, 1978, the Barker Dam Supporters' Organisation convened a public meeting to decide the issue, those attending the meeting including Premier Johannes Bjelke-Petersen. Both sides of the case were presented, some of those who would be affected by the inundation of their lands described the act as 'vandalism of good country,' and stated that some of the land that would be covered by water was among the best grazing country in the South Burnett. Even so, the general feeling of those present was a positive one and when put to the vote there was an eight to one majority for proceeding with the dam.⁹ Despite this, chairman of the Nanango Shire Council, Councillor Reg McCallum, remained strongly in opposition to the dam, claiming that if such a dam proceeded, Nanango would be, 'the sad loser', he added that more than thirty farmers would be involved in resumptions of land and this would result in significant reductions in rate revenue to the council.¹⁰

In December 1979 the state government gave approval in principle for the construction of a dam on Barker Creek, subject to acceptance by landholders affected by the proposal. By that time the original estimated cost of little more than \$7 million had risen to approximately \$17.6 million. Cabinet had appointed a special committee to provide information on the project that was to be known as the Barker-Barambah Irrigation Project.¹¹

In May 1980 the chairman of the South Burnett Water Conservation Committee, Councillor Alan R. Meddleton, announced that the first two years of detailed surveying and engineering for the Barker Creek Dam would be carried out by officers from the Boondooma Dam project that was then under construction. The site selected was just south of the junction with Barambah Creek and would incorporate a weir upstream on Barambah Creek to allow irrigation in the Redgate area.¹²

Another influential lobby group was the Barambah and Barker Creeks Water Conservation Supporters' Organisation. In June 1980 this organisation wrote to both the Murgon and Wondai Shire Councils seeking support to have the name of the dam altered to the Bjelke-Petersen Dam in honour of the state premier and also of his wife Florence.¹³

This suggestion was adopted by state cabinet and a press statement was released on 26 August, 1980, confirming that the dam would be named the Bjelke-Petersen Dam. The weir constructed across Barambah Creek was to be named in honour of former Murgon shire councillor, Joe Sippel, Sippel had served the Murgon Shire Council for more than three decades having settled in the region during the 1920s. Joe Sippel was a very well known local personality. He came to Murgon from a small farm at Lockyer Creek where he had been growing lucerne and maize. He later recalled: 'I had a brother up here and I decided to come here and start dairying.' He acquired four hundred acres at Redgate and later expanded his holding to 850 acres. Sippel was elected to the council in 1943 and served as deputy chairman prior to his retirement from council in 1974.¹⁴

The dam was officially opened by M.J. Ahern, then state premier, on 4 March, 1989. Since that time the dam has become a popular recreational facility with camping, picnic areas and other styles of accommodation being provided. The lake has been stocked with fish and is popular with fishermen and other water sports enthusiasts.¹⁵

Notes and Sources
Chapter Fifty-seven
The Barker Creek Dam Project

1. SBT. 11 May, 1977, p 1.
2. For details of these proposals see: *Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, Water Conservation Proposals and Investigations — Barker Creek, August, 1973*, Wondai Shire Council archives.
3. Letter dated 10 October, 1973, from Murgon Shire Council to Wondai Shire Council, Barker Creek Dam file, A160/1, Wondai Shire Council archives.
4. Report of the public meeting held at the town hall, Murgon, Thursday 25 October, 1973, file A160/1. Wondai Shire Council archives.
5. Letter of 6 January, 1978, file A160/1, Wondai Shire Council archives.
6. File A160/1, Wondai Shire Council archives.
7. SBT. 11 May, 1977, p 1.
8. SBT. 11 January, 1978, p 2.
9. SBT. 25 January, 1978, p 1.
10. SBT. 6 December, 1978, p 35.
11. File A160/1, Wondai Shire Council archives.
12. SBT. 28 May, 1980, p 2.
13. File A160/1, Wondai Shire Council archives.
14. File A160/1, Wondai Shire Council archives. For further details on the career of Joe Sippel see: *The Murgon and District News*, 7 November, 1979, p 4.
15. File A160/1, Wondai Shire Council archives.

The South Burnett Meat Works Co-operative Association



The South Burnett meatworks at Murgon.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

Like so many other industries in the region, the South Burnett Meat Works Co-operative Association came about because of an industrial need and the foresight of regional residents who were prepared to take the financial risks involved in starting such a company. The company was formed primarily as an initiative of Murgon business-people who saw the need for a manufacturing and processing plant and banded together to form such a plant in order to best utilize the local product. For Murgon, and indeed for many adjacent regions such as Wondai and even Kilkivan, the formation of such a processing plant was to play an important role in the financial and social structure of the region, providing a strong financial fabric and a convenient market for cattle producers.

During the Second World War there was no shortage of meat processing plants in Australia, despite the demand for meat brought about by the war and the requirement for meat for military consumption. In 1941 the government of the United Kingdom contracted to purchase 240,000 tons of beef, mutton, lamb, veal and pork with a contractual agreement to take any additional quantities that became available for export. Clearly there was, at that time, a promising future for meat production. In 1941 there were thirteen meatworks in Queensland, these were supplemented by nine additional bacon factories, the largest meatworks were at Brisbane, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Bowen and Townsville, the meat being marketed through the Queensland Meat Industry Board.¹

The formation of a meatworks at Murgon had been considered as early as 1926 when J.S. Mickan proposed the concept to the Murgon Progress Association, however, the concept never became a reality, one of the primary reasons was that, initially at least, country killed meat was not allowed to be sold in Brisbane.²

The concept was evidently again considered at various times, Noel Edwin Warburton, who subsequently became the association's first chairman of the board, later stated that looking back through the association's records: '... he had found a motion moved at a meeting in 1943 by Mr W. McKewen and seconded by Mr J.L. Pyne: "... that serious consideration be given to the establishment of a killing works at Murgon ...".'³

Nothing evidently became of this early recommendation and in 1951 another attempt was made to revive the project by the Murgon Shire Council, the Murgon Chamber of Commerce and the Murgon branch of the A.L.P., again, without any concrete results. However, in 1956 a private meeting was held in Murgon to again discuss the issue of forming a company to construct a local meat processing plant. The meeting was held in the old shire council chambers and those attending were local residents who were interested in the future of the regional meat industry. Neil Perkins, who later became a director of the company, attended that first meeting and subsequently recalled: 'Previously they had meetings with two A.L.P. representatives, because they were all labor governments in those days, two from the chamber of commerce and two from the council, and they used to invite the commission agents who were the key cattle dealing people. None of them had previously shown much interest but for the first time two of them turned up. Buck Pratt was one of them and when he came along it all started to roll, he was one of the original directors.'⁴

The meeting was successful and it was decided to call a public meeting in the town hall to discuss the venture and to form a co-operative to construct and operate a meat processing plant. This public meeting was held at 2 p.m. Saturday 4 August, 1956, and was attended by ninety people. Noel Warburton was appointed chairman of the meeting and F. Narracott was appointed secretary. Following discussions on the project it was decided to form an association with the object of operating a meatworks and to make an application to the registrar of co-operative associations for registration. R. Mander Jones, John Samuel Mickan, N.E. Warburton, B.D. Pratt, J.P. Galloway, C.E. Hutton and H.M. Stephens were nominated for election to the board of directors and there being no further nominations were duly elected. At the following meeting H.M. Stephens tendered his resignation and H.C. Buchester was appointed to fill the vacancy. G.F.A. Beitzel was also appointed to the directorate and later in the year R. Jefferies and J. Tuite were also added. In October 1956 the association received official registration.⁵

A steering committee was formed by the new association, this steering committee subsequently selected three experts in the meat industry who were appointed to investigate the best site for a factory, with expressions of interest coming from many regions such as Kingaroy, Wondai, Murgon, Goomeri, Cinnabar and Kilkivan. The three meat experts were A.S. Jeffrey, the general manager of the Casino abattoir, the association's consulting engineer, Arthur Norris, and a leading Brisbane meat wholesaler and retailer named Don C. Cameron.⁶ Sites were inspected in February 1957 and initial options were taken on sites at Kilkivan, Murgon and Wondai. Finally, on 2 March, 1957, during a meeting of the directors of the association, the present site of the meatworks was chosen on a block of land owned by Mrs M.A. Pratt, the mother of B.D. (Buck) Pratt, the commission agent and company director, and an option to purchase was obtained at a price of £25 per acre for one hundred acres.⁷

There were nine specific reasons for the selection of the Murgon site, and it was quite evident that there was no parochialism involved in the decision. From the beginning N.E. Warburton had made it clear that Murgon need not necessarily be the site of the factory, and that the site selection, provided it was within the South Burnett region, would be carefully evaluated on its merits. The selection committee inspected the various proposals on 11 and 12 of February, 1957, and met in Brisbane on Thursday 28 February in order to examine their notes and to discuss the possibilities. The nine set criteria guiding them including the centrality of the site with an airport within close proximity, the location of the tick boundary, a continuous, clean supply of fresh water, a site of up to one hundred acres where waste water could be disposed of without health risks, a supply of electricity, a site where the railway line was in close proximity, central to as many stock routes as possible, the availability of a good main roads system and finally the region had to be serviced by modern accommodation, facilities and amenities necessary to provide the

requirements for staff. The committee later wrote: '... We recommend that Pratt's paddock situated near the town of Murgon has the greatest percentage of all these features and far outweighs any other site on a point basis ... The Pratt site is most outstanding and in our opinion (is) the only site in the area. Angel's paddock has certain factors but in our opinion could not be considered. The site at Wondai is quite good and central, but the railway being two miles away rules it out. In regards to the other sites that were inspected we would say that Cinnabar and Kilkivan were just about on equal terms.'⁸

Volunteers, principally from the association's directorate, canvassed the region selling shares in the new venture and one pound shares were issued.⁹

B.D. (Buck) Pratt was certainly one of the foremost supporters of the abattoir complex and served on the first board of directors. He finally resigned from that position in 1962, after the factory had been successfully completed.¹⁰

The first shares were allotted on 19 January, 1957, yet the selling of the shares was a difficult task and it took several years to sell sufficient shares for half the cost of the building, the other half having to be borrowed. The timing of the project was certainly not the best, the country was then experiencing a quite severe drought and farmers were having a difficult time financially. Many of these farmers would have participated in the new business but financial restrictions imposed upon them by the drought prevented a large proportion of them from purchasing shares. Some farmers acquired shares with post dated cheques, promising to honour the cheques at a future date. John Samuel Mickan, one of the board's directors, was appointed public relations officer on 30 March, 1957, one of his responsibilities was to sell shares for which he was given varying percentages of commission. He promised that he would re-invest ten per cent of his commissions in the association. His endeavours were initially successful and an inspection of share purchases during the period he was actively selling shares in the business show a significant increase. Some shares sold were later transferred due to the economic conditions prevalent at the time, and the chairman of the board, N.E. Warburton, waged a very public campaign through the pages of the press in order to promote the fact that the new association desperately needed the support of local farmers in order to get the project off the ground. This campaign and the endeavours of members of the association such as John Samuel Mickan, were evidently modestly successful and shares were regularly being sold, mainly in lots of two hundred, to local farmers and businessmen. By September 1958 the share capital of the association totalled some £51,000.¹¹

At the June 1957 meeting it was decided to call applications for the position of organising secretary, Ray Saunders, who had been filling that position, wished to be relieved of his duties, and subsequently J. McLaren was appointed, taking up his duties from 19 August, 1957. Also in 1957 the Bank of New South Wales was appointed as bankers to the association and a preliminary plan of the proposed works was drawn up by Messrs Sproul and Norris from which an artist's impression was made.¹²

The option to purchase the land owned by Mrs Pratt was taken up during a meeting of the directors held on 28 September, 1957, although it was many months before the actual sale was finalised. During that same meeting the directors received a letter from the Murgon Shire Council advising them that the council wished to construct saleyards adjacent to the proposed meatworks and employing the same rail siding facilities.¹³

Otto Madsen M.L.A., the minister for agriculture and stock, officiated at the turning of the first sod on 2 May, 1958, but the act was pre-emptive and this site was later (March 1959) altered somewhat, the board selecting an area on the Gayndah side of the Murgon to Proston rail line as opposed to the original site on the opposite side of the line.¹⁴

In 1958 a two man team was appointed by the state government to report on the proposal, this included Mr W. Webster, the assistant under-secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, and Mr W.P. Hammond, a grazier representative on the Queensland Meat Industry Board. Both men reported favourably on the proposal.¹⁵

In 1959 and 1960 government assistance was again requested. A submission was made to state cabinet, the deputation being introduced by Johannes Bjelke-Petersen. Cabinet decided to

guarantee a loan on a pound for pound basis up to £175,000, the chairman and secretary of the association then attempted to obtain finance through a number of financial institutions without success and were finally able to raise a debenture loan through the S.G.I.O. with the government guarantee.¹⁶

The press later reported: 'Mr N.E. Warburton (chairman of directors) has announced that the State Government Insurance Office is lending the association £60,000, which is £ for £ on government guarantee for shares allotted by the association. This, with the £60,000 share capital will be sufficient for the first stage of the works, costing an estimated £120,000. It is the association's intention to kill for the American market. The boning room and cold storage requirements will cost about £30,000, which may have to be raised locally. The granting of the loan followed a deputation to the state treasurer (Mr Hiley) comprising Mr Warburton, Mr W. Brinkworth (secretary) and a board member, Mr B.D. Pratt. Although the loan was not finalised until October 19, arrangements were made for a surveyor and the engineer and his assistant to be on the site on October 20 to take levels, so that no time would be lost in preparing working plans ... Already orders have been placed for some of the machinery and Mr Norris will be visiting Melbourne soon to investigate other requirements ... Murgon Shire Council is to build a municipal saleyards alongside the abattoir site.'¹⁷

Tenders were let for an office and amenities block on 19 April, 1960. Two tenders were received for the work, one from Wondai builder L.G. Smith, the other from J.W. and B.F. Goodchild — both Smith and Goodchild were shareholders in the association. The tender was awarded to Goodchild for £3827, almost a thousand pounds less than Smith's tender.¹⁸

Plans for the main building were received on 21 January, 1961, and were submitted to the Murgon Shire Council for building approval. Tenders for the main building were accepted on 18 February, 1961.

That month the secretary of the South Burnett Meat Co-operative Association, Mr W.C. Brinkworth, announced that the tender to construct the main buildings at the abattoir site at Murgon had been awarded to K.D. Morris and Sons Ltd. of Brisbane, the tender price being £44,935, this costing had been the lowest of six tenders. At that date most of the factory's machinery had been ordered and the abattoir was expected to commence operations sometime between August and October that year with a capacity of five hundred cattle each week or the equivalent in pigs or calves.¹⁹

The press later reported: 'The years 1957 and 1958 were very dry ones and drought caused the association to postpone some of its activities. The amenities block was erected and the main building started. A full time secretary was appointed in August 1962 and the first beast was killed ... it was a very proud day for all.'²⁰

The factory, which cost a total of £148,000, commenced operations on 27 August, 1962, although it was not officially opened until Saturday 20 October that year, six years after the company had first been formed. This opening attracted a large crowd of people, Q.C.W.A. members served afternoon tea to 490 people and several hundreds more were believed to have attended the function. The ceremony was performed by the minister for primary industries, Charles Adermann, and was held on a platform erected on the killing floor of the abattoir and chaired by the association's first chairman of directors, N.E. Warburton.²¹ During the opening ceremony Adermann pointed out that the construction of the factory came at a propitious time in the industry, and while the U.K. meat market was then declining — its purchases down to only seventeen per cent of Australian beef exports — the U.S. market was expanding dramatically. Three years previously the U.S. had taken only twenty-five per cent of Australian beef exports, whereas in 1962 that figure had risen to seventy-two per cent with added markets being opened up in Japan.²²

Visitors saw the factory in full operation, several cattle were killed and processed, after which invited guests enjoyed an official dinner at the Royal Hotel in Murgon.

The capacity of the factory was nine hundred cattle each week or the equivalent in pigs and sheep. The first manager at the factory was Keith J. Cleary, appointed in 1962, who had previously held the position of manager at the council abattoir at Blayney, New South Wales. In

that position Cleary had been responsible for a dramatic growth at the Blayney factory, it was the first New South Wales factory to show a profit in its first year of operations and in 1960, three years after it opened, it won the F.R. Bluett award for local government enterprise.²³ Keith Cleary was chosen from a field of forty-seven applicants for the position as manager at Murgon, his appointment was made following interviews with six of the applicants at Casino, New South Wales, his salary being £2500 per year with the use of a vehicle.²⁴ In May 1962, C. Griffiths was appointed engineer.²⁵

Yet the first few years of the Murgon factory's operations were something of a struggle, financially, and indeed, in the very early days of its operations there was considerable public comment concerning the possible failure of the project and the early closure of the new factory. During the seventh annual meeting of the association, N.E. Warburton told shareholders that the first year of trading had shown a loss, but this loss was within acceptable limits and had been incurred during the first weeks of the factory's operations when the workers had been unskilled and the factory was in the 'shake-down' mode of operations. Warburton also pointed out that the boning room and cold storage facilities were inadequate and this had seriously affected business. In his report he stated: 'It is most essential that the extra facilities be established as soon as possible, and, in this regard, the directors have had the consulting engineer draw up plans for these extensions.'²⁶

Yet by 1963 it was evident that the factory would be a success, in August that year the abattoir manager stated that the factory was producing a far greater output than it had been designed for and that it was: '... bursting at the seams.'²⁷

During a meeting of shareholders held in September 1963 it was decided to expend a further £28,000 on extensions to the factory's facilities, at that time, in addition to its meat, the factory was obtaining significant profits from both meatmeal and tallow.²⁸

In November that year the company secretary, W.C. Brinkworth, wrote to shareholders advising them that 51,472 head of stock had been killed at the factory since it had commenced operations the previous year.²⁹

According to the annual report for 1964 the association made a profit of more than £15,000, even allowing for the depreciation on equipment of approximately £9,000. The full profit was ploughed back into the association therefore leaving nothing for shareholders' dividends. Instead, the directors offered a seven per cent bonus issue of shares.³⁰

The growth of the operation was significant and on 9 October, 1964, a new beef chiller was added to the factory complex, this was followed by a new boning room, a freezer store and three deep freeze tunnels on 6 November, 1964. For the 1964/65 financial year the profits rose dramatically and it was evident that the association was playing a major role in the economic development of the region, not only were cattle producers selling their stock for better prices, but stock was also subjected to less anti-mortem stress and damage, thus increasing financial returns to producers.³¹

Further expansion quickly followed, a new amenities and administration block was commenced on 20 August, 1965, the original office was then converted into an amenities block for female employees. Other improvements for the 1965/66 financial year included the installation of a third bed for the beef floor, conversion to fuel oil firing furnaces in the boilers, a paunch disposal building with the necessary equipment, a new boning room and equipment conversion of a small stock floor to rail dressing, the extension of cold rooms for small stock and the installation of a chlorination plant. Employment rose from 77 persons the previous year to 133 persons.³²

Over the following years the business increased as expected with various borrowings and the addition of plant and machinery reflecting the relative income. The association's general manager, Keith Cleary, was forced to resign in January 1969 due to ill health and in June that year John Keech was appointed acting manager, later being appointed general manager.³³

On 1 July, 1971 a subsidiary of the co-operative, known as Hub Wholesale Meat Delivery, was purchased, this subsidiary delivered meat to butchers in Maryborough, Hervey Bay, Gympie, Nambour and all the coastal regions immediately south of Mooloolaba.³⁴



Directors of the South Burnett Meat Works Association, 1968. **Back row, L to R:** W. Brinkworth, J. Hebbel, W. Kapernick, J. Thun, S. Smith. **Front row:** B. Pratt, G. Bietzel, N. Warburton, chairman, J. Mickan, J. Galloway.

Source — South Burnett Meat Works Association archives.

On 30 March, 1973 John Keech resigned his position as general manager and was replaced by E.J. Brennan, a dynamic and forceful administrator.³⁵

In 1976 John Samuel Mickan, one of the original directors and the man who had been responsible for selling many of the shares in the business, died at Murgon. Mickan was one of Murgon's more colourful and well known personalities. He was born in the Albury district and arrived on the South Burnett with his parents in 1908 where the family settled on a farm at Reedy Creek. Twelve years later John Mickan began a fruit business in the main street of Kingaroy. However, he had always been interested in real estate and auctioneering and this led him to move to Murgon in 1931 where he started his own real estate and auctioneering business with a fresh fruit and vegetable mart. He married Henrietta Williams of Baddow, Maryborough, and in addition to his other business interests he was a Rawleigh dealer for many years and also operated a postal run between Murgon and Proston. The press later reported of him: 'Mr Mickan played a leading role in community affairs. This included participation in School Parents and Citizens Associations, the Murgon Show Society, the Fire Brigade Board, Bowls Club and Football Club. Mr Mickan was a life member of the Murgon Rugby League Club ... He had also been a South Burnett president as well as holding several offices with the Murgon and South Burnett Bowls Association.' Mickan's first wife predeceased him and he later married Violet Milla of Brisbane. John Samuel Mickan died in June 1976 and was cremated at the Mount Thompson Crematorium in Brisbane.³⁶

E.J. Brennan, the man who replaced John Keech as manager at the meatworks, was a manager with long experience in the meat industry, he came to Murgon from Melbourne and had twenty years' experience as a senior executive and manager. His career in the meat industry began in 1942 when he had started work as an office boy with Swifts at Gladstone. Since that time he had worked within the industry in New South Wales, Victoria, the Northern Territory and Queensland. He was a chairman of the Queensland Meatworks Association for seven terms and also served on the Australian Meatworks Federal Council, the Meat Advisory Council and on committees of the Meat and Allied Trades Federation. He retired from his position as general

manager of the Murgon abattoir in 1983 after serving in that position for ten years. Following his retirement he and his wife moved to Suffolk Park Beach near Byron Bay.³⁷

The overall viability of the business was reflected in the profits made and the dividends subsequently paid which, during the early years of Brennan's tenure as general manager, mounted quite dramatically. By 1977 the net profit before taxation was in excess of half a million dollars and directors recommended a dividend to shareholders of twelve per cent, a clear indication of E.J. Brennan's aggressive management.³⁸ The following year the association showed a pre-tax net profit of \$1.16 million.³⁹ However, thereafter, during Brennan's management, the profits steadily decreased, until his final year in that position when the association made just \$211,141 pre-tax profit.⁴⁰

The 1982/83 financial year was not a good one for the association and the factory was closed for three months. During that year N.E. Warburton resigned as chairman and was replaced by C.B. Boyle.⁴¹

In early 1983 the general manager, Ed Brennan, asked to be allowed to retire, for personal reasons, and his resignation was accepted by the board. A month or more later, in April 1983, the chairman of the meatworks, C.B. Boyle, during a farewell dinner to Brennan, announced the appointment of David Woolrych as general manager. Woolrych had been employed in the meat industry all his life, including a period working for J.C. Hutton for twenty-one years. With that company Woolrych had held positions in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Launceston and Kyneton. He was the manager of Hutton's Brisbane branch where up to nine hundred persons were employed, this was the company's largest operation, he also owned a grazing property at Tansey.⁴²

In 1990 the chairman of the board, C.B. Boyle, announced that the co-operative had made more than \$2.5 million profit for the financial year after allowing more than \$383,000 for depreciation on plant, buildings, machinery and vehicles. This profit, well in excess of any previous year, had been attained largely due to the continued substantial capital expenditure on upgrading the abattoirs over the previous five or six years. The profit allowed directors to recommend a dividend of fifteen per cent.⁴³

Profits slumped the following year to just over \$331,000 with a dividend of just ten per cent, chairman C.B. Boyle attributed the drop in profit to a variety of causes, in his annual report for that year he wrote: 'Our competitors agree that it was a particularly difficult year for the meat processing industry with significant adverse overseas developments such as the lead-up to and implementation of the liberalisation in Japan. At home in Australia the federal government imposed 100% cost recovery for meat inspection, there was an alteration to the levies for funding the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation, and two payments to our meatworks employees for a commitment to structural efficiency.'⁴⁴ During the year the association had continued to upgrade the abattoir with the completion of two blast freezers and the building to house them, the installation of a small stock chiller, a training boning room and carton store, a substantial upgrade to the power and refrigeration supply, the installation of a new batch cooker, two new beef chillers and a chiller/freezer for Korean beef. A major upgrade in computer software was also undertaken. Over the previous two years more than \$2 million had been expended on improving and expanding facilities.⁴⁵

Profits again dropped the next year to just \$141,010, following the recessionary economic conditions then prevailing in Australia, although the association was, at that time, employing around 460 employees with a total salaries and wages bill of \$11.2 million, clearly a massive injection of funding to the local economy. No dividend was paid for the year.⁴⁶

Profits again began to grow steadily, \$300,000 in 1993, \$534,000 in 1994 and a remarkable 3.1 million in 1995.⁴⁷

Today the Murgon meatworks is among the state's top exporters and is the fourth largest meatworks in Australia with meat being sold into Japan, Korea, the United States and the Middle East. As with many other export industries, business at the meatworks is governed by a plethora of external influences that frequently sees mercurial rises and falls in product demand. These influences include the recent E.coli outbreak in Japan, the cotton chemical residue in meat following the feeding of cattle on stock-feed contaminated with chemicals, and, even more

importantly, the impact of mad cows disease in Great Britain which saw a dramatic decline in beef consumption world-wide. For the financial year of 1995/96 the company showed an after tax loss of \$443,233 reflecting the current depressed state of the beef industry world-wide. Since 1987 the turnover of the association has risen from \$44 million to \$123 million in 1996, staff numbers over that period have also increased from 254 in 1987 to 574 in 1996.⁴⁸

Yet despite these sometimes faltering figures the business continues to be one of the most important in Queensland. As Bill Roberts pointed out in his article of 25 October, 1996, the cooperative is ranked number fourteen in the top twenty-five exporters in Queensland, the top twenty-five being headed by such giants as B.H.P., the Queensland Sugar Corporation and M.I.M. Holdings.⁴⁹

Long term (twenty-three years) director and deputy chairman, Don Bishop, resigned early in 1995 and Francis Coe, who had joined the board in August 1988, was appointed deputy chairman in January 1993. He was elected chairman in May 1996. Francis Coe is the director of four family companies involved in cattle grazing, mixed farming, citrus growing and seed production. His property is *Coo-ee* situated at Durong.⁵⁰

In February 1995 Bruce Hatcher, a director of the accountancy firm of Horwarth and Horwarth, was appointed an independent director, as was Bill Proud, managing director of 'The Marketing Centre' in August 1996. Anthony Coates, principal of *Eidsvold* station, was appointed a director in March 1995 and as deputy chairman in May 1996.⁵¹

During the history of the meatworks there have been several people who have played a significant role in its operations and who deserve special mention for the growth of the company. During his twenty-seven years as chairman, N.E. Warburton did much to make the meatworks so successful, he spent considerable energy and personal effort in ensuring that the project continued to grow. Warburton died in August 1991. Others include Jack Galloway, one of the original directors who continued as a director until his death in November 1992. John Thun was, at one time a deputy chairman and a director for twenty-nine years until his resignation in December 1996. J.S. Mickan, an original director, made the whole project possible through his share raising efforts and was probably the first person to suggest such a venture in 1926. Early general managers such as Keith Cleary and John Keech who struggled with limited 'security' and Ed Brennan who developed a success with trading that has now been refined into prosperous export trading by the present manager David Woolrych. Cam Boyle was the accountant who brought a new approach to the financial controls of the organisation, firstly as an accountant and then as a director, deputy chairman and chairman.⁵²

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifty-eight

The South Burnett Meat Works Co-operative Association

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Burnett Valley Pty. Ltd. Leather Company

The Burnett Valley Leather Company is another of the Murgon region's more important industries. The factory is situated close to the meatworks on the opposite side of the Gayndah Road at the town's industrial estate where it also operates a stockfeed mill. Approximately one third of the company's requirements in hides comes from the Murgon meatworks, with the remaining hides being trucked in from other meatworks. The company's market is mainly an international one, selling little into Australia but finding ready acceptance for wet blue hides in countries like Japan and Italy for manufacturing into products such as car seats.¹

The genesis of the factory is largely due to a number of local people and one man, Clive Gilchrist, was the driving force behind the concept. In 1997 Mr Gilchrist recorded:

I first became interested in this project in 1975 when, during a visit to Wingham on the central coast on New South Wales, I was impressed with the fact that a new tannery had been established adjacent to a new housing estate on the edge of town. That a tannery could co-exist with homes, ran counter to the generally accepted belief that tanneries were stinking places. A visit to the tannery along with local opinion convinced me that a modern tannery need not provide an environmental hazard. Discussions with the principals of Angus Nugent's Wingham tannery, in particular Mr Varo Tchetchenian, the general manager, followed, during which they indicated their willingness to co-operate in the establishment of a tannery in Murgon. With a background in the meat industry it was my opinion that there was an opportunity to establish a tannery at Murgon. In 1978 I placed a proposal before the Murgon Development Bureau to support the venture. The chairman, Councillor Dermot Tiernan, became an enthusiastic supporter, and the project was taken up as a priority activity in submissions to the South Burnett Meat Works Co-op and the Murgon Council. The meatworks general manager, Mr Ed Brennan, investigated the proposal but it was not taken up by them. The Murgon Shire Council under Chairman Bill Roberts and Shire Clerk Frank Narracott decided to investigate the idea for themselves. A party comprising of about twelve including the above-mentioned, Councillors S. Angel, D. Tiernan, the engineer and health officer with other councillors and myself flew down to Wingham to inspect the operation. Following the visit the council instructed its engineers, Messrs W.J. Reinhold and Partners, to prepare an environmental impact statement for a Murgon tannery. On adoption of this statement they proceeded to set aside land on the council industrial estate for a tannery.

The Murgon Development Bureau instructed chartered accountants, Graham Edmonds & Co., to prepare a summary of the position, following which on 9 November, 1979, they presented a feasibility report in favour of the project. Following rejection by the local meatworks, the proposal was presented to the South Burnett Co-op Dairy Association. Their co-operative, under the board chairmanship of Bill Keys, and with the enthusiastic backing of General Manager Brian Mobbs, adopted the project and proceeded to investigate means of financing it.

Attempts were made at this time to interest state government sources in investing in the venture but while they were sympathetic, there was no structure in place at the time for investment in a private venture.

The South Burnett Co-op Dairy Association was unable to raise the necessary finance of about \$3,000,000 and the project lapsed, though it was still listed as top priority by the enthusiastic Murgon Development Bureau. Negotiations to purchase the vacant Humetal buildings continued.

We continued to maintain contact with Mr Varo Tchetchenian and to study developments in the Australian and world tanning industry, and in August, 1988 decided, with the support of Mr Mobbs and Mr Tiernan, that the project be reopened and a concerted effort was made

to get it under way. I offered to invest \$50,000 as a gesture of faith, and representatives of stockbrokers Morgans and Nevitts in Brisbane visited Murgon and spoke with the interested parties. A private company, the Murgon Leather Company Pty. Ltd., was formed with Messrs Tiernan A.M., and Gilchrist as founding directors. By this time the Queensland government had established a venture capital fund within the Queensland Development Corporation with a capital of \$20,000,000. With the backing of the development bureau the leather company now had a 'summary of position' done by Mann Judd Edmunds followed by an updated feasibility study.

Following further studies the South Burnett Co-op Dairy Association decided to invest \$700,000, and the Q.I.D.C. Venture Capital Fund \$800,000, with the balance of \$300,000 to be raised in a public subscription from private shareholders making a total of \$2,000,000.

A public unlisted company was formed to be known as the Murgon Leather Co. Limited with a maximum of fifty shareholders. The founding directors were Bill Keys, Dermot Tiernan, Garth Zerner, Tom McAntee, Clarrie Marquatt, John Saitzeff, Clive Gilchrist, with Brian Mobbs as general manager and Graham Stephenson as company secretary.

Messrs Farr Evrat & Associates Pty. Ltd. of Toowoomba were engaged as consulting engineers to the project on the basis of their experience with tanneries and sewerage systems. Varo Tchetchenian, master tanner and part owner of Angus Nugent's of Wingham, was engaged as consultant responsible for the overall planning.

A decision was made to conduct the operation on a toll tanning basis whereby hides would be tanned to a wet blue stage on behalf of clients. Initial production was to be 2000 hides weekly employing a staff of seventeen. Along with the buildings on the industrial estate one hundred acres were purchased from Ron Bishop to be developed for the disposal of wastewater and eventually fattening of cattle. Mr Bishop was an original shareholder accepting shares in the company in exchange for his land.

Ian Sandford was appointed to the board at this early stage as a representative of Q.I.D.C. Trained as a chemical engineer with early experience in the wine industry, the Australian Industry Development Corporation and as principal of Northstate Partners, his own consultancy firm, he was responsible for drawing up the original business plan of the company.

Also appointed at this time was Peter Grant of Taurus Australia, Peter's wide experience in the marketing of Australian leather set the company on a firm footing in the presentation and marketing field. He was largely instrumental in establishing the Murgonlea logo and the jumbo pallet and white pack, now known throughout the world leather markets for their consistent quality.

Rodney Overend was appointed the first tannery manager. He was from New Zealand and had broad experience in the tanning industry in that country and in Great Britain. Acting closely with the consultant Varo and the consulting engineer Tony Loveday, Mr Overend, along with his foreman Garry Herriman, set up and staffed the tannery.

After much study it was decided to adopt the chrome exhaustion tanning process which was new to this country at that time. Most of the plant finally installed came from Italy though one large tanning drum was moved to Murgon by road from an old tannery in Sydney.

In January, 1989 the start up date for the tannery was set for July that year, but due to a variety of the usual unforeseen problems the first hides were not tanned until November, 1989, fourteen years after the project was first conceived.

The role of an original shareholder, Doug Collyer of the *South Burnett Times*, must be stated at this time. Mr Collyer was heavily involved in enlisting support and publicising the tannery project.

To fill the place of retirees along the way, Keith Gooley, former general manager of the Casino Co-op Meatworks, and Rodney Bell a solicitor of Toowoomba, have brought a breath of experience to the board. John Spencer has taken over from the founding chairman Bill Keys who steered the organisation through the difficult early establishment days.

Following Rodney Overend's return to New Zealand in 1991, Russell Bentley became manager and has taken the operation to its present capacity of approximately 12,000 hides weekly and broadened the product range to include split hides. Green hides are received for processing from meatworks as far afield as Inverell and Biloela.

Murgon Leather is now owned by Burnett Valley Limited, the successor to the South Burnett Co-op Dairy Association which had bought out the Q.I.D.C. Venture Capital Fund's interest. Full credit must be given to the Q.I.D.C. Venture Capital Fund for its support and investment without which it is doubtful if this industry would have got off the ground.²

Business growth at the factory has been both dramatic and sustained. In 1995 a wet-blue hide splitting machine was installed at an overall cost of approximately \$400,000. General manager, Russell Bentley, said at the time that the machine would allow hides to be sliced to the exact thickness required by customers. The Murgon Leather Company was the only hide organisation in Australia then using such technology. The installation of the machine had followed extensive research by company executives, Russell Bentley had travelled to Italy in September 1994 to conduct research and production supervisor, Garry Herriman and engineer Warren Isaac had spent time in Italy training on the machine.³

Notes and Sources

Chapter Fifty-nine

Burnett Valley Pty. Ltd. Leather Company

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Contemporary Murgon

Murgon and district has been the home of many interesting personalities, some of whom are listed in this history, there have been very fine athletes, especially coming from the Cherbourg community, some important political and business figures have developed in the Murgon region and Murgon has also been the home of some exceptional artists. One of these is the internationally renown painter, Jozsef Balogh, whose work is now on display at galleries and in private collections around the world, including galleries in Hungary, Germany, Belgium, France, England, Portugal, Spain, Malaysia, the U.S.A., Switzerland, the Soviet Union, Iran, Iraq and many parts of Australia. Prime Minister Harold Holt was once one of Balogh's subjects.

Jozsef Balogh was born at Szeged, Hungary, in 1922. During the Second World War he was conscripted into the Hungarian Airforce where he served as a lecturer in technical drawings. At the end of the war he returned to Szeged, close to the border with Yugoslavia, where his mother still lived, but he was captured by the occupying Soviet forces and deported to a slave labour camp at Grozny where he lived under appalling conditions for the following four and a half years. Despite the conditions, Jozsef still managed to carry on his love for painting and he put his talents to profitable use. Utilising the rags that had been used to bind up the prisoners' feet and whatever paint he could steal from the factory where the prisoners were forced to work, Jozsef managed to paint small pictures that he smuggled out of the camp to exchange for food, primarily onions, potatoes or bread, a worthwhile exercise as the Russians only issued starvation rations.

Jozsef managed to escape from the camp three times, each time being recaptured and brought back to face terrible punishments. On the last occasion, three years after his incarceration, he remained at liberty for four days before being recaptured while attempting to steal a few vegetables from a farmer's field. He was returned to the prison compound and the entire camp was paraded to watch while Jozsef was beaten by fifty soldiers, lined either side, who used their rifle butts on the unfortunate man, raining blow after blow on his body until he was rendered unconscious, his head swollen, bloody and distorted. His wife, Anna Balogh, who still lives in Murgon, later recalled: 'The rest of the story I found out from another prisoner, who later became an opera singer in Australia. He told me that while Jozsef was unconscious they kept beating him and in the end his feet were split practically in two and they thought he was dead. He was lying in a hole that had been dug for the punishments and they put a plank over him and the Russians swore and said that they would leave him for a few days and if he was really dead they would just bury him there.'¹

Yet Jozsef was to survive his ordeal — with the help of two German doctors — also prisoners at the camp, who would sneak out at night to give the injured man some water. The doctors remonstrated with the camp commandant who showed no mercy and said that Jozsef had committed the crime of attempted escape and must die. The only concession the commandant would make was to state that if Jozsef was able to walk to the hospital, such as it was, then he could be admitted for medical treatment. Jozsef, however, was unable to walk and for the following few days he remained lying in the hole, virtually on the edge of death, until he was finally dragged to the hospital where two orderlies took him inside. He was examined by a doctor who said that one of his legs would have to be amputated as it was gangrenous. However, another doctor stated that it could be saved if fly-worm maggots were packed into the wound. This was done, Jozsef still thankfully unconscious, and after remaining virtually in a coma for three weeks he came to, lying on the plank of wood that served as a bed, and he was told that his wound was still packed with maggots. Jozsef quickly pulled away the bloodied bandages to see the fly-worms eating his flesh and was horrified, but the action of the fly-worms certainly saved his leg, and months later he was again walking.

Life in the camps became somewhat easier after this ordeal, his captors were amazed at the artist's recovery and he was assigned to lighter duties in the oil refinery which allowed him more time to paint his small pictures and to supply himself and his friends with somewhat better rations.

Around Christmas 1950 Jozsef was released from the camps and he returned home to Szeged. After some time he travelled to Budapest to enrol at the Desi Hubert School of Fine Art where he studied for the following four and a half years. He spent two years completing anatomical studies, (using dead bodies), and during this period he was earning his living by working for a Hungarian interior decorator. At this time too he began selling some of his work to the Hungarian government which hung the paintings in its own art gallery, for sale, thus aiding artists and also generating some profits for the government.

This was an intensive period in Jozsef Balogh's life, working through the day at the interior decorator's, attending classes at the School of Arts, painting every evening for at least four hours and painting during every spare moment of the weekends. However, Jozsef's life was to change dramatically during the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

Unwilling to continue living under the yoke of Communist oppression, facing deportations to the U.S.S.R. food shortages and the general destruction of property, Jozsef went onto the streets to fight for his freedom. He was involved in a fire-fight at a local radio station, he painted anti-Communist placards and a few weeks after the revolt had started he joined the exodus of some 150,000 Hungarians who were forced to flee from Hungary to Holland.

In Holland Jozsef joined with a group of expatriate Hungarian intellectuals and it was during this period that he was commissioned to paint a life-sized portrait of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, a considerable honour. After completing this portrait Jozsef began work for a company producing textile drawings. More than three years later he became a freelance textile designer, selling many of his designs, and in the meantime he met his first wife, Maria. The couple travelled to the French Riviera and Spain and as Jozsef loved to paint scenes with bright sunny colours, they decided to emigrate to Australia, arriving, with their son, in 1962.

Jozsef and Maria lived initially at Sydney where another son was born, however, life in the antipodes was something of a challenge, there was little in the way of work for a new immigrant artist but he opened a small studio and began selling his designs to textile manufacturers. Even so it remained difficult for the young artist to make a living sufficient to maintain a family of four, and two years later they returned to Holland, arriving in 1964.

Holland was something of a disappointment to Jozsef after the relatively easy-going life he had enjoyed in Australia, and a year later he returned to Sydney alone, with the intention of becoming sufficiently established to be able to send for his family. However, this plan never eventuated, and nine months later Maria sent Jozsef his divorce papers.

Once more this was a particularly trying time for the artist, but about two months later he met his second wife, Anna, at which time he was working with another textile manufacturer in Sydney. Over the following years the couple travelled and lived in many centres. At Hobart Anna was able to arrange for Jozsef's first exhibition which was enormously successful, every painting was subsequently sold. The success of this exhibition led to Jozsef being commissioned to paint many portraits and when these had been completed the couple returned to Sydney where Jozsef worked for one man who subsequently asked him to use his talents to forge old masters, a request which Jozsef strongly refused prior to terminating their business relationship.

The couple now travelled freely, Adelaide became something of a base for Jozsef as he and Anna moved from there to North Queensland, spending six months in South Australia and six months in the north, based at Julatten. Portrait commissions became an integral part of the artist's life and income, the portraits being completed in one sitting. The press at this time reported: 'Jozsef Balogh has an almost uncanny gift to portray the main characteristics of his subject.'

At Brisbane Jozsef carried out many more portrait commissions, about forty-five portraits in four months. Jozsef now entered a portrait in the Archibald prize, however, the painting was returned unopened which angered the artist so much that he was determined never to enter any other Australian art competitions — despite the fact that during his life he painted more than six hundred Australian portraits.

The couple travelled extensively during several overseas trips they made in the 1970s and during which time Jozsef painted many more portraits, especially during a long stay at Ipoh in Malaysia.



Jozsef Balogh, a self portrait.

Courtesy — Anna Balogh collection.



One of Jozsef Balogh's many portraits, capturing the character of his subject.

Courtesy — Anna Balogh collection.

Arriving finally back in Australia circa 1977, Jozsef and Anna moved to South Australia, then North Queensland, and various other centres, including Maleny and Yarraman, prior to taking another long overseas trip before moving permanently to Murgon in 1992.

Jozsef became ill soon afterwards with a bone marrow irregularity, he went into remission for two years but the illness returned and despite many blood transfusions he died, aged seventy-two, and was subsequently cremated, his ashes being sprinkled at the mouth of the Brisbane River. Several of his works, including a self portrait, were donated to the shire by Anna Balogh and are now on display at the Murgon library.²

Historically, Murgon has been an important centre in the overall social and economic structure of the South Burnett. Industries such as the butter factory, the meatworks and the tannery have provided employment for residents in many locations spread throughout the various shires that have generated income to those shires. Additionally, rail links from Murgon to other centres such as Windaera and Proston provided the infrastructure for the development of industrial and agrarian progress throughout those centres, especially at Proston which benefited through the opening of the butter factory there and which in turn provided for the economic expansion of that centre.

Murgon, generally regarded as being one of the major service centres of the South Burnett, is ideally situated for further development and already there are indications of substantial growth, socially, industrially and from a tourism perspective. Irrigated crop lands ensure that agriculture remains viable, despite the ravages of, at times, uncertain weather conditions and sustainable crops include peanuts, dubosia, navy beans and cotton. Established industries are still viable and

prospering, and the geographical location, including the quality of soils, the availability of water, power and other services ensures that the area will continue to grow financially. We have seen already in this history that the meatworks at Murgon was sited in that locality because of the advantages of the area, the availability of rail and road transport, power, modern facilities and accommodation and many other features which made that particular site attractive to the investors. Those kinds of attractions are still bringing investors to the region and the growing wine industry, and horticulture in its many forms, are evidence of this.

Up until the present time there has never been a sustainable wine industry on the South Burnett, although grapes have been successfully grown in the region for more than one hundred years. Yet the establishment of a wine industry moved closer to reality in 1994 when a federal business advise programme provided a special grant of \$67,000 to investigate a proposal to establish such an industry in the area. The concept was sponsored by the South Burnett Local Government Association. Climatic conditions on the South Burnett are similar to those found in the Hunter Valley region, the soil types are suitable for grape production and in many cases are superior to those found in the Hunter Valley.³

A proposal to develop a disused feedlot at Redgate was approved by investors in March 1995 and a property owned by Burnett Lime, valued to \$140,000 was purchased by the newly formed company of South Burnett Wines. By June 1995 the project was advancing with the preparation of the soil ready for the planting of grape vines and irrigation plant and machinery was being installed.⁴

In July 1995 Alan Russell of Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation, a statutory federal government body, visited the South Burnett and advised local wine growers to develop the region's identity as 'Burnett Valley' allowing the distinct characteristics of the local wines to be identified not only in Australia but also world-wide.⁵

In 1997, one of the leading figures in the promotion of the wine industry on the South Burnett, Neil Perkins, wrote an outline of the industry which included:

In the early 1900s the settlers in the South Burnett planted grape vines and some of these produced their own wine.

The present emerging wine industry started with a *Courier Mail* news item in April 1993, which was noticed by Geoff Milgate B.A.R.A. (Business Advice for Rural Areas) officer recently appointed for the South Burnett region. He contacted Leon Wolman (Gold Coast businessman featured in the *Courier Mail* report) and others and arranged a visit by a Chinese delegation. This eventuated in the South Burnett local authorities making an application for government funds to proceed with a feasibility study for a wine industry. The Macarthur Report which was completed in June 1994.

The team of Geoff Milgate and Kingaroy Council E.D.O. officer Vaughan Prasser then promoted the industry and arranged T.A.F.E. course for intending growers. They were also very active in forming the Burnett Valley Wine Growers organisation with over 60 members in 1994. As a result of all this activity several existing farmers started planting grape vines and planning for boutique wine making and cellar door sales. Tony Connellan and family at *Rimfire* were the first to produce commercial wine with an opening by M.L.A. Russell Cooper in 1995.

In early 1995 South Burnett Wines Pty. Ltd. was formed and they proceeded with the purchase of the Redgate feedlot and planted 17 acres of two red and two white varieties in September 1995.

In 1996 *Rimfire* were very successful with their wines by winning several awards. *Wonbar* produced their first wine this year.

In 1997 South Burnett Wines decided on the name of Barambah Ridge for the vineyard ...

During May 1997 a large subdivision for vineyard development has been finalised for a relatively large wine production. This project is at Moffatdale adjacent to the Bjelke-Petersen Dam and the existing development of Barambah Ridge.

Wine production from up to 200 tons of grapes or approximately 200,000 bottles of wine is planned for 1998 at Barambah Ridge.

By the year 2000 the South Burnett regions should be producing more wine than the present total Queensland production.⁶

Murgon features many modern facilities, including sporting areas, schools, service clubs, recreational areas, a hospital with a maternity section and much more. At Murgon there is a fully irrigated nine-hole golf course, a lawn bowls club, a gun club with night shooting facilities, a floodlit sports oval with a turf wicket, a fully equipped gymnasium and an Olympic sized swimming pool. Other sports catered for in Murgon include squash, badminton and indoor cricket.

Shopping facilities are now being upgraded with the provision of a new shopping complex, extensive additions have been made to the show-grounds complex, and the region is ideally situated to attract the significant increase in tourism expected over the next two decades. These tourist features include installations at Cherbourg such as the emu farm, the Fick's Crossing National Fitness Camp, fossicking areas such as those at Cloyna and Windera, Boondooma Dam, Sidcup Castle at Proston, the Queensland Dairy Museum on the Murgon/Gayndah road, Yallakool Tourist Park at the Bjelke-Petersen Dam, Boat Mountain Environmental Park, the Jack Smith Environmental Park, Landcruiser Mountain Park and the G.W. Roberts' Look-out. The showground sports complex in Macalister Street is operated by the Y.M.C.A. and incorporates a kindergarten. The live-weight selling centre on the Gayndah Road has approximately one thousand head of cattle going under the auctioneer's hammer each week. On the Tableland scenic drive tourists will see some of the region's more beautiful scenery. There are several service clubs operating in the town including the R.S.L., Apex, Lions, Rotary and Quota. There are two motels, two hotels, three caravan parks and several rest areas within the town, and tourist information is available from the Murgon District Development Bureau which operates in Lamb Street.

In April 1996 the chief executive officer of the Murgon Shire Council, Robert Carruthers, told his council that plans to establish a new shopping complex for the town were moving rapidly ahead. Mr Carruthers stated that specifications for the complex had been completed and that tenders would be called for its construction within two weeks. The complex design provided for a 1200 square metre supermarket, a bank and four speciality shops. Having completed these plans Mr Carruthers said that his council was then ready to continue talks with Burnett Valley Ltd. concerning a joint venture with the project.⁷ In November 1996 the council announced that tenders were likely to be called for the purchase of the shopping complex development, the concept provided for plans for an investor to take over the project from the council and to construct the centre, the package was to include the transfer of council owned land at the corner of Lamb and Krebs Streets where the centre was to be built.⁸

Since the coming of non-indigenous settlers to the Murgon area during the 1840s, the entire region has altered dramatically. The sites where the aboriginal people once roamed now includes some of the most productive agricultural land in the entire state. The rolling countryside is home to the descendants of immigrants and early selectors, the indigenous people still live and prosper at the modern community now known as Cherbourg, and, with the passing of the old industries, mining, timber and dairying, new and exciting ventures are daily being opened up.

Today the region plays a vital role in the state's tourism industry, and agricultural concerns such as the massive navy bean crop and peanuts plays a vital role in the state's economy.

During the past 150 years or so we have learned many valuable lessons. We know now that the depredations carried out against the aboriginal people, especially in the first years of colonial settlement, were almost beyond comprehension, acts of barbarity carried out by a group of people who knew no better and whose actions were influenced by the social mores of the day. We have learned too that there is a cost to be paid for the wilful destruction of the forests, many of which were simply destroyed in order to make way for farming land. Yet despite these ravages, the years have also brought enormous progress and inestimable benefits in the forms of transportation, communications, agricultural and industrial developments, all of which sustain the economy of both urban and rural centres where we live and work. Those lessons we have learned from the past are today everywhere reflected in the on-going wealth of the Murgon shire.

The years since the early 1970s have been dramatic ones for the people of the South Burnett. The shires have experienced a number of remarkable changes, socially, politically and architecturally. The social fabric has substantially altered, conforming to a modern society which the first settlers of the region could never possibly have envisaged.



Modern Murgon with the war memorial in the foreground and the Australian Hotel on the left.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

Looking back over the years it is possible to see the changes wrought by the passage of time. By the 1970s gone were the days when timber, gold, mercury, copper, cinnabar and other important commodities like butter and cheese were vital to the region's financial well-being. The railways were beginning to stagnate, massive pastoral holdings were a thing of distant memory,

By then the future of the region depended largely on a number of vital factors, agricultural crops such as wheat, peanuts, navy beans, the production of pigs and cattle, and the rapidly growing tourism industry were making an impact on the local economy. In October 1996 the mayor of Murgon shire told delegates of the October meeting of the South Burnett Local Government Association that he saw the region as a city of some 37,000 people, adding: 'We have established an ethos in the South Burnett through which member councils are working in complete cooperation. That is the essence of the spirit of local government.' Councillor Roberts' statement came after the region had been selected as a model for regional rural development in Australia, he also highlighted the cooperation which was taking place between the councils concerning the researching and writing of this history.⁹

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Chapter Sixty

Contemporary Murgon

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