

LANDSCAPES
OF
CHANGE

A History
of the
South Burnett

VOLUME 2



Dr Tony Matthews Ph.D.

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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.

First published in 1997

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National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication data

Matthews, Tony, 1949-

Landscapes of change : a history of the South Burnett.

1st ed.

Bibliography.

Includes index.

ISBN 0 7242 7944 X (Double volume set)

ISBN 0 7242 7945 8 (Volume 1)

ISBN 0 7242 7946 6 (Volume 2)

1. South Burnett Region (Qld.) - History. I. Title

994.32

Author: Tony Matthews, 32 Marshall Street, Warwick, Qld. 4370.

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

Typesetting and Page Layout: Sun Photoset, 518 Brunswick Street, New Farm, Qld. 4005.

Pre-Press: Pep Colour Central, 518 Brunswick Street, New Farm, Qld. 4005.

Printing: Inprint, Zillmere Road, Boondall, Qld. 4034.

Binding: Podlich Enterprises, 450 Stafford Road, Stafford, Qld. 4053.

Contents

Volume 2

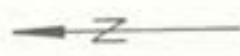
Chapter Sixty-one	
Pastoral Development in the Wondai/Proston Districts	486
Chapter Sixty-two	
Boondooma and Other Important Stations Within the Shire of Wondai	490
Chapter Sixty-three	
The Railway Arrives and Wondai is Formed	502
Chapter Sixty-four	
Local Government at Wondai	520
Chapter Sixty-five	
Those Who Made Their Mark in Wondai	535
Chapter Sixty-six	
Early Education in the Wondai Region	537
Chapter Sixty-seven	
Early Businessmen and Selectors in the Wondai Region	541
Chapter Sixty-eight	
Tingoora, Charlestown and Adjacent Areas	546
Chapter Sixty-nine	
Proston	550
Chapter Seventy	
Kinleymore, Speedwell, Stalworth and Abbeywood Districts	554
Chapter Seventy-one	
Continued Progress in the Proston District	561
Chapter Seventy-two	
Mondure, Hivesville and Brigooda Regions	563
Chapter Seventy-three	
Mining and Mineral Exploration in the Wondai Shire	568
Chapter Seventy-four	
Durong and District	570
Chapter Seventy-five	
Wondai, the Cradle of the Cotton Industry on the South Burnett	575

Chapter Seventy-six	
Continued Progress at Wondai	578
Chapter Seventy-seven	
Taabinga Station	584
Chapter Seventy-eight	
Burrandown Station	591
Chapter Seventy-nine	
Closer Settlement and Coolabunia	596
Chapter Eighty	
Kingaroy and District	603
Chapter Eighty-one	
The Great Fires of Kingaroy	619
Chapter Eighty-two	
Continued Progress in the Kingaroy Region	621
Chapter Eighty-three	
Taabinga Village	625
Chapter Eighty-four	
Booie and Adjacent Areas	632
Chapter Eighty-five	
Kumbia, Mannuem and Benair Districts	641
Chapter Eighty-six	
Some Early Selectors of the Stuart Valley, Inverlaw, Wattlegrove, Gordonbrook and Dangore Districts	651
Chapter Eighty-seven	
Ironpot, Chahpingah and Burrandowan Districts	655
Chapter Eighty-eight	
Memerambi	661
Chapter Eighty-nine	
Crawford	666
Chapter Ninety	
Edenvale	669
Chapter Ninety-one	
Wooroolin	671
Chapter Ninety-two	
Goodger and Kunioon West	677
Chapter Ninety-three	
Local Government at Kingaroy	680
Chapter Ninety-four	
Contemporary Kingaroy	694
Chapter Ninety-five	
Timber, Sawmills and the Timbermen	699

Chapter Ninety-six	
The Prickly Pear Menace	741
Chapter Ninety-seven	
The Dairy Industry, Establishing the First Factories	757
Chapter Ninety-eight	
The Butter Markets and the 'Margarine Menace'	774
Chapter Ninety-nine	
Butter Markets and the Great War	776
Chapter One Hundred	
The Post War Dairy Industry	780
Chapter One Hundred and One	
The Amalgamation of the Butter Factories	782
Chapter One Hundred and Two	
The Growth of the Dairy Industry	785
Chapter One Hundred and Three	
Controversy and the Wondai Butter Factory	791
Chapter One Hundred and Four	
The Secret Commissions	798
Chapter One Hundred and Five	
The Decline of the Dairy Industry	801
Chapter One Hundred and Six	
The Queensland Country Women's Association, the Red Cross and Other Organisations	805
Chapter One Hundred and Seven	
The First Two Decades of the New Century	821
Chapter One Hundred and Eight	
Aliens and the War	835
Chapter One Hundred and Nine	
The War Drags On	838
Chapter One Hundred and Ten	
The Soldier Settlements	842
Chapter One Hundred and Eleven	
Medical Care at Nanango	848
Chapter One Hundred and Twelve	
Medical Care at Kingaroy	861
Chapter One Hundred and Thirteen	
Private Hospitals in the Kilkivan Shire	871
Chapter One Hundred and Fourteen	
Medical Care at Murgon	877
Chapter One Hundred and Fifteen	
Medical Care at Wondai	881

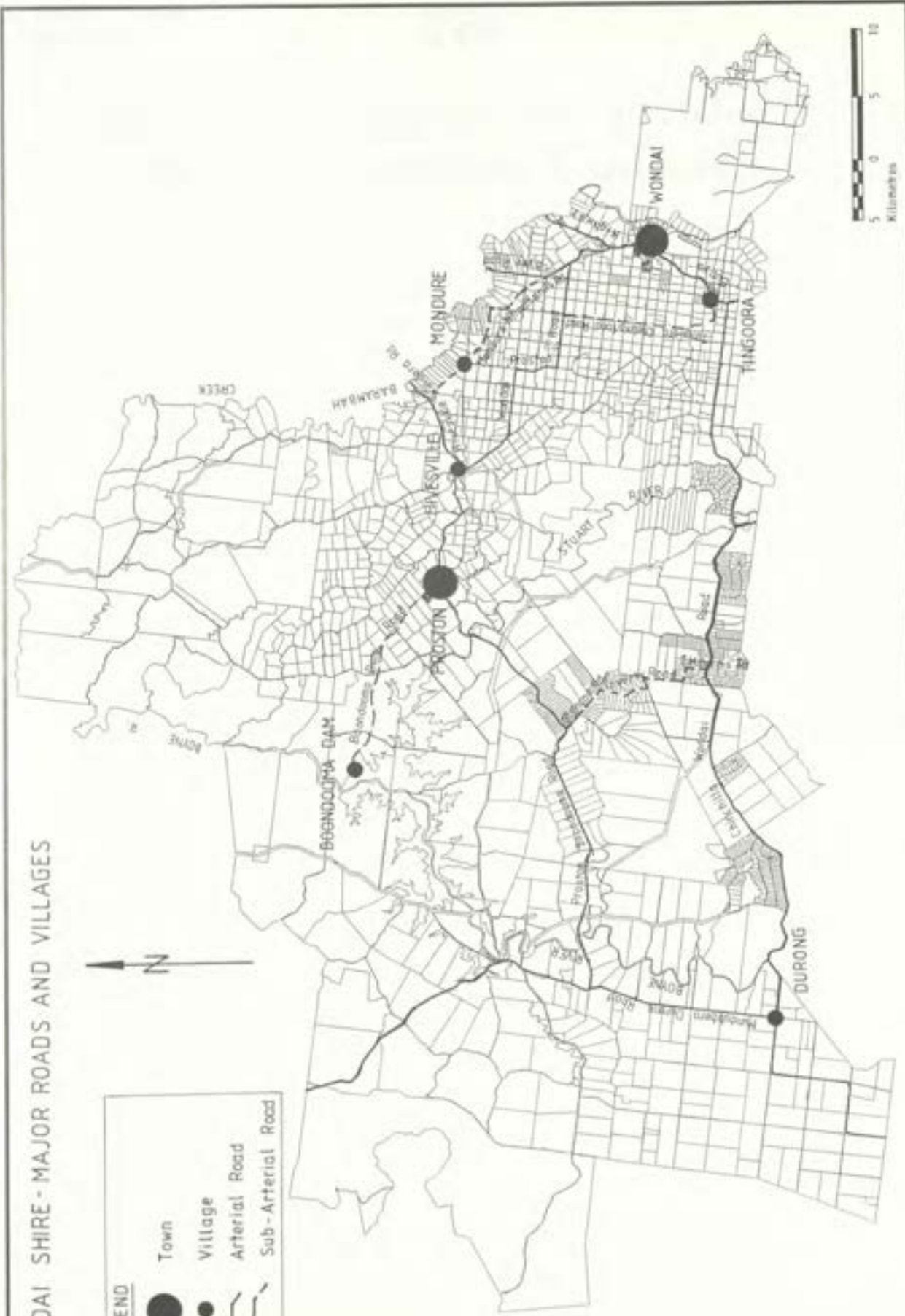
Chapter One Hundred and Sixteen	
Aviation on the South Burnett	888
Chapter One Hundred and Seventeen	
The Peanut Industry	912
Chapter One Hundred and Eighteen	
The Navy Bean Industry	931
Chapter One Hundred and Nineteen	
Crime and Justice	939
Chapter One Hundred and Twenty	
A History of Electricity on the South Burnett	960
Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-one	
The South Burnett Regional Electricity Board	973
Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-two	
Neumgna Coal and the Tarong Power Station Project	975
Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-three	
The Great Depression and the Home Front During the Second World War	997
Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-four	
The Print Media	1014
Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-five	
The Broadcast Media	1031
Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-six	
The Railways in Decline	1039
Conclusion	1041
Notes and Sources — may be seen at the end of each chapter.	
Select Bibliography	1042
Index — may be seen at the end of Volume 2.	

WONDAL SHIRE - MAJOR ROADS AND VILLAGES



LEGEND

- Town
- Village
- Arterial Road
- - - Sub-Arterial Road



Pastoral Development in the Wondai/Proston Districts

As with many of the other centres within the South Burnett, the town of Wondai did not come into existence until closer settlement was taking place and with the arrival of the railway, bringing with it the potential for enormous expansion in agrarian concerns such as the exploitation of timber, and the production of stock, grains, vegetables, cream and other rural products, including peanuts and navy beans which later became vital to the region's economy.

The history, growth and development of Wondai and its surrounding districts is a complex one, encompassing a large area that once formed a number of important stations. The principal of these originally included *Mondure*, *Boondooma*, *Proston*, *Wigton* and *Barambah* with other stations later formed such as *Marshlands*, *Jingeri*, *Melrose*, *Marston* and *Sunday Creek*.

Of these, one of the more well known, and certainly one of the more important in terms of early colonial settlement, was *Mondure*. This station was originally settled in 1844 by Richard Jones, shortly after Henry Stuart Russell had selected his own property, *Burradowan*, near Kingaroy. Jones marked off an area of approximately 350 square miles and held it in conjunction with his other holding at *Barambah*. Like all other pastoral squatters of that era, Jones moved tens of thousands of sheep onto *Mondure*, employing Chinese and German shepherds to protect them against the depredations of marauding wild dogs and, occasionally, from the quite justified spear attacks of the local indigenous people. Jones gave the property to his son-in-law, Captain William O'Connell, the lease being transferred during the 1850s. It was sold to the partnership of McEuen and Green in 1860 who continued rearing sheep on the vast tracts of land. The station was offered for sale in October 1875, although evidently without success.¹

McEuen and Green held the property for twenty-two years, finally disposing of it to John Broadbent in 1882, it was later sold to Arnold Wienholt who subsequently disposed of a large part of his holding when he opened it up for closer settlement.

With the coming of the railway lines it was necessary to provide agricultural land for the expected influx of farmers. The first ballot of *Mondure* lands was held on 9 December, 1901, in the parish of McEuen, with prices ranging from 25/- to 45/- per acre.

Mondure Flats Estate was purchased from Wienholt, the sale of the land being arranged by a syndicate called the *Mondure Estates*. The land was extensively advertised in the 1909 press offering generous terms with five per cent interest. The agents were Weaver and Glasson of Brisbane.²

In June 1885, while owned by Broadbent, the station came under the management of one of Wondai's more well known early settlers, Joseph James Bushnell, and over the following years the output of the property changed slowly from sheep to cattle breeding. According to Bushnell: '... the cattle comprised 5000 head of mixed stock, mostly Shorthorns, and 10,000 sheep. The sheep were divided into flocks, ranging from, 1700 to 2000 and were shepherded by Germans ... Owing to the neglect which had reigned, the cattle were extremely wild, and it entailed some three years' work on the manager's part to restore order. Owing to the difficulties experienced in maintaining a healthy condition among the sheep, however, the owners eventually sold the flock and stocked more heavily with cattle.'³

Intensely cold winters did not agree with the Shorthorn cattle running on the property and this influenced the owners to introduce Herefords. Bulls were bought from a New South Wales breeder and subsequent purchases of additional Hereford sires were made which resulted in a considerable improvement in the stock. An account of these times, given by manager

J.J. Bushnell, records: 'At the time of the disposal of the holding the *Mondure* herd of 12,000 head ranked among the best in the Burnett district. When the holding was sold the breeders under eight-years-old were sent to the Wienholt western station. Older cows were spayed and sent to *Widgee* for fattening purposes. Of the horses, the pick was dispatched — also to the West. These included the thoroughbred stallion, 'Ensign', which had made a good name for himself on *Mondure*, and further distinguished himself in the West ... Three brumby yards were situated within half-a-mile of the present town of Wondai, while a cattle yard was maintained not a mile from the town site. The *Mondure* Estate covered an area which is now occupied by highly-improved farms and is the scene of a successful dairying community.⁴

J.J. Bushnell was certainly one of the region's foremost settlers who, for the remainder of his life, retained a remarkable memory of his early experiences at *Mondure* station region. In May 1924 a report of those experiences was published. It revealed:

Still hale and hearty, despite his advanced years, Mr J.J. Bushnell, of *The Springs*, in the Wondai district, greeted the writer with a firm hand-grip and said that something had gone wrong with his water-trough for his cattle and horses, and therefore he had to go and fix it up. 'But,' he added, 'if you will come along with me into the paddock, we can talk while I am working.'

In the conversation that followed, Mr Bushnell said that he could remember as far back as the late sixties (1860s). He was at that time working for the late Mr John Eaton, of *Teebar*, who was his first 'boss', and, who lived to be 97 years of age ...

After leaving *Teebar*, Mr Bushnell was appointed head-stockman on *Boobyjan* in 1877. At that time Mr Thomas Evans was manager ... *Boobyjan's* owner then was Ellen Lawless. During his five years' stay at *Boobyjan*, Mr. Bushnell married his late wife, who predeceased him on 28 March, 1923. They had been married for 45 years.

Mr Bushnell remembered well that from *Boobyjan* they had to ride to Maryborough, their nearest township ... They often rode the distance to Maryborough between sunrise and sunset, and on one such occasion he had Mrs Bushnell with him. They left *Boobyjan* at daybreak and reached Maryborough just after dark — a splendid performance for both rider and horses.

Later on, when Mr Bushnell was looking after *Mondure*, for many years Kilkivan was their nearest railway station and was about 40 miles away but this was a tremendous improvement upon the long 'trek to Maryborough'. While Mr and Mrs Bushnell were at *Boobyjan*, two of their sons were born.

After leaving *Boobyjan*, Mr Bushnell was occupied for two years in various jobs such as droving and shooting marsupials then he was given the overseership of *Coonambula* station, which was situated very near to the present Mundubbera railway station. Mundubbera actually was an out-station of *Coonambula* Station ... Here Mr and Mrs Bushnell spent three years after which Mr Bushnell again went droving and marsupial shooting for two years. He was then offered and accepted the management of *Gigoomgan* station in the Wide Bay district which was only four miles from his old surroundings of *Teebar*. *Gigoomgan* at that time was owned by George Mant Senr. Mr and Mrs Bushnell stayed there five years and during that time their only daughter was born.

Mr Bushnell was then offered the management of *Mondure* station by John Broadbent, of *Widgee* in 1886, and he accepted the appointment, remaining manager for 25 years. He did not resign until the lease had expired, and some few years later the freehold of about 22,000 acres of *Mondure* was sold for closer settlement purposes by Mr Arnold Wienholt. Mr Bushnell has since been settled for about 12 years at his present home, *The Springs* which he selected himself and which was part of the Government leasehold resumption of *Mondure* ...

Mr Bushnell relates that for many years cattle were sold according to the weight of tallow they contained. 'What did your bullock boil?' or 'What did you boil with your last lot of fats?' was the usual question one cattleman might ask another. They never asked, 'What price did you get for your cattle?' Old, and surplus cattle were boiled down on the stations for their tallow. The tallow in a fluid form, was poured into the sheep's paunch which was previously cleaned and pickled and then taken by the bullock drays to Maryborough.

Mr Bushnell remembers one instance when a bush-fire one afternoon set light to a dray and was destroyed. Each of four drays contained about three tons of tallow and in this instance the fire consumed the whole dray and tallow. This happened about 9 miles from

Boobyjan on a bank of a creek which ever after has been called Fatty Creek. Even 15 to 20 years after this occurrence there remained still a bare spot where the tallow had been burned, as nothing appeared to be able to grow there.

The highest flood Mr Bushnell ever witnessed, and as far as he knows, the highest on record, occurred at *Mondure* early in February 1890 when the station lost about 500 head of cattle through drowning. The severity and seriousness of that flood can be gauged by the fact that Mr Bushnell found about a dozen *Barambah* cattle, washed up on *Mondure* after the flood, some of which must have been taken by the current quite 20 miles from their own run. The next highest flood on *Mondure* was in February 1893 when again stock were drowned but the losses were negligible.

Talking about dry times, Mr Bushnell said that seasons similar to the dry spell which broke in December 1923 were quite common. But the 1902 drought was as severe as ever he had seen or wished to see. Out of a herd of 7000 head of cattle at that time on *Mondure*, 4000 perished. On the night when the rain came, Mr Bushnell was camped with 700 head of cattle on the road where Murgon now stands. These cattle were to be travelled by road as far as Goomeri, from whence three special trains were to take them to the coast, but owing to the timely rain it was possible to cancel the trains and drive the cattle back to *Mondure*. That was the first time that an attempt had been made to shift cattle to relief country on account of drought ... Mr Joseph James Bushnell was born in Ipswich, when it was called Limestone, on the 21st February, 1852. At that time his father, Richard Bushnell, had just left *Wetheron* station which he was managing for Fred Humpfreys, who lived in England. Leaving the family in Ipswich, Richard Bushnell was taken with gold-fever and went to the diggings at Bendigo and Ballarat. He was away for over a year and was very successful in the alluvial diggings but not so in the reefs, where he lost all he had formerly made ... Eventually he came back to manage the *Wetheron* station.⁵

Joseph James Bushnell died at the Wondai Hospital on 29 July 1946.⁶

Arnold Wienholt, as we have seen, was one of the region's first and more influential personalities. He was born at Goomburra on the Darling Downs, both his father and uncle were politicians. The Wienholt family were extraordinarily wealthy, owning forty-nine sheep and cattle stations. Young Arnold Wienholt was sent to England for his education where he was enrolled at Eton. Later, when he was able to take control of his own business empire, he was instrumental in pioneering the export of frozen meat from Australia, he did much to formulate effective methods of tick control and bred some of the state's best blood stock. He served in parliament from 1909 to 1913 and ran unsuccessfully against Andrew Fisher for the seat of Wide Bay in 1913. Fisher won the seat by more than three thousand votes.⁷

Having evidently tired of politics Wienholt decided to go to Africa for the big game hunting. He was farewelled at a special Liberal Party function, held in the committee rooms at Parliament House, in July 1913, during which he was presented with a pair of Zeiss field glasses. Wienholt told the guests that he had no intention of again entering into politics, but added that should his state call, he would be ready to put down his rifle and again take up the challenge.⁸

Wienholt, in true political fashion, was mindful to acquire good press concerning his exploits in Africa, but little was heard from him until November 1913 when a letter was received from Cape Town in which he advised that he was: 'Leaving at once for one of the German West African ports, and thence will go by railway to ... the terminus of the north western railway, and from there strike north ... lions are very thick up there.'⁹

During one of his many hunting trips to Africa, Wienholt was mauled by a lion, an event that did little to dim his public profile.¹⁰ When the First World War broke out he became a police trooper and later a soldier, and in 1935 began work as a war correspondent for the *Courier Mail*, covering the Italian invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), during which Haile Selassie was forced into exile.

Wienholt was killed in 1940 under somewhat mysterious circumstances while acting as an intelligence agent for the British government which was working to expel the Italians and to return Haile Selassie to the throne. Wienholt, acting as a secret agent, had gone into a dense forest region to gather information when he was ambushed by Italian-trained Ethiopians and killed. His body, or at least a few of his scattered bones, a gun and a piece of one of his boots, were found six months later.¹¹

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixty-one

Pastoral Development in the Wondai/Proston Districts

1. For a description of the station, its buildings, stock holdings, wool-shed etc, see: the sale advertisement in B/C. 30 October, 1875, p 7.
2. For a copy of these advertisements see: B/C. supplement, 8 December, 1909, p 16, also Wondai Museum archives, file 291/LCA 3.
3. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 5.
4. Ibid.
5. M/C. 1 May, 1924, p 8.
6. SBT. 8 August, 1946, p 4.
7. M/C. 3 June, 1913, p 5.
8. M/C. 24 July, 1913, p 5.
9. M/C. 13 November, 1913, p 5.
10. For some details of this event see: M/C. 12 April, 1928, p 5.
11. For a comprehensive study of Arnold Wienholt see: *Arnold Wienholt, Man and Myth*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Queensland, by Dr Rosamond Siemon.

Boondooma and Other Important Stations Within the Shire of Wondai

Boondooma station west of Wondai, stands today as a rather neglected relic of its former glory. The homestead is weathered by time and wind, its floors are rotten, birds have nested in its roof. It is a lonely place, the outbuildings have become overgrown. In the homestead's front yard, there is a lone grave, that of a Scottish station manager named George Munro who died here in 1895. It is a fitting, cold and rather ominous testimony to the history of this settlement where so many people have died under tragic circumstances.

Boondooma station was first settled by the Lawson brothers Alexander and Robert, and a partner, Robert Alexander, in 1846. The holding comprised a number of runs, these included *Boondooma* itself, *Jua*, *Waringa*, *Waagineraganya*, *Piar* and *Dangarabungy*. In 1867 ownership passed to John Young and W.O. Gilchrist, then to W.O. Gilchrist and J.B. Watt in 1888 and later to E.J. McConnel. Thereafter the transfers of each portion were complex. On 17 September, 1885, the combined holdings of *Boondooma* came under the provisions of the Crown Lands Act of 1884. As a requirement of this act *Boondooma* was split into resumed and leased sections. Following the approval of the Land Board, the leased land area of *Boondooma* was 259 square miles while the resumed section was 249 square miles. The lease was issued over the leased area on 1 July, 1887. At this time the station was owned by Gilchrist Watt and Co., their manager was George Munro, after Munro's death his son, Peter, took over as manager.¹

George Munro was reported to have come originally from Scotland as a: '... sheep expert and jackeroo.' He was employed by a man named Peter Brodie of Glenavlon, New South Wales. While at Glenavlon he married Mary Brodie, the second daughter of his employer, they had two sons, Hector and Peter. Munro later left Brodie's employ and went to work for Gilchrist and Watt at *Boondooma*. After the death of George Munro, his wife returned to Sydney, she is reported to have lived to the age of eighty-nine years, dying in Sydney in 1927.²

The original homestead, no longer in existence, had been built by the first owners, the Lawsons. The first white child to be born at the station was Robert Hazelwood Lawson in 1856, he later became chief draftsman at the Queensland Survey Office and was the commodore of the Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron, 1893-94, being one of its founding members. He was also a founding member of the Brisbane Rowing Club.³

The station functioned profitably for most of its years, striking difficulties, like many other stations, from diseases such as scab in sheep. Cotton was one of the major experimental crops of the station, however, as we shall see



Mrs George Munro, wife of the manager of *Boondooma* station. Lived there from the early 1870s to 1895.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 2830/P3(a)

in later chapters, cotton, while extremely profitable and successful in some regions such as the Darling Downs, was never to become a major crop on the South Burnett.

An authority on the history of the Boondooma region is Jack Coe, author of *The Big Scrub*. In 1997 Mr Coe wrote:

... in 1846 Alexander and Robert Lawson and Robert Alexander took up the holdings of *Boondooma* and *Proston*. Then on April 12th, 1851, this partnership was dissolved with the Lawson Brothers taking *Boondooma* and Robert Alexander taking *Proston*. In the 1864 era *Proston* run was managed by Dr Hamilton who was a brother-in-law of the Lawsons ... It is generally accepted that the first homestead was on high stumps and was erected about 1850, it was destroyed by a wind storm in 1923 ... According to the wage sheets, *Boondooma* during this period (1850s) was a hive of industry, and in addition to the stone house, (still in existence) two homesteads were built to accommodate the two brothers and their families, as Alex was married in 1855 and Robert in 1857. The main builder of the homesteads was a German migrant by the name of Moules, it is also recorded that 25,000 wooden shingles were split at this time and these were used to cover the roofs of these buildings. The two homesteads were built low and side by side with a common detached kitchen, connected to the dining room by a covered way. Out-buildings that would have been built at that time were the meat-house, dairy, post office, jail and others.

In 1863 the Lawsons dissolved the partnership, Robert acquired property in the Tenterfield and Stanthorpe districts and Alex Lawson continued on at *Boondooma*. Then about 1865 Alex took his book-keeper, William Stewart, as his partner, William was married to Isabella Ball, a sister of Emily Ball who was Alex's wife ... In 1869 Alex Lawson was killed in a fall from a horse near St Lawrence, north of Rockhampton.⁴

Various nationalities were used as labourers on the station. In November 1996, Brother Placid Lawson wrote: 'In a letter from the Lawsons to Gilchrist Watt and Co., dated 18 January, 1855, they say that they intend discharging all their Chinese and thus will not require the 2 tons of rice that had been forwarded. German migrants were hired from early 1855 — they were expected to arrive in February 1855, a letter to Gilchrist Watt and Co., 18 January, 1855, and a letter to Messrs Kirchner and Co., Sydney, of 9 May, 1853, speaks of the Lawsons in process of procuring 18 Germans, "... similar to those already obtained through you". So in fact the Lawsons appear to have taken on Germans at about that time, ie May 1853.⁵

In addition to Chinese and German workers and shepherds, the Lawson brothers evidently also used ticket of leave convicts on *Boondooma*, as may be seen from a letter, dated 23 June, 1853, written by one of the Lawson brothers in which they applied for the renewal of ticket of leave passports for two of their men, John Cherry and Charles Jones (alias George Hillier). The letter claimed: 'Enclosed we beg to forward you 5/- in postage stamps as the fees for the renewal of the passports of the ticket of leave holders named in the margin, together with one of the passports of these men.⁶

In 1854 almost all the sheep on *Boondooma* were infected by scab, the disease brought to the station by a squatter named T. Murray-Prior travelling with a large flock of sheep through *Boondooma* from the Logan River to *Hawkwood* station in the Upper Burnett region. The number of infected sheep appears to have been approximately thirty thousand, of which more than seventeen thousand had to be destroyed. In December 1854 the Lawsons advised Murray-Prior: 'Sir, I am sorry to inform you that nearly all the sheep on *Boondooma* Run have become infected with scab owing to your travelling with diseased sheep through that run. We now (regret) to say that we have instructed our agents in Sydney to commence an action against you.⁷

Under the Scab and Catarrh Act, which passed through the Legislative Council in 1846, penalties for travelling scab infected sheep included fines of not less than five pounds and up to fifty pounds. Abandoning scab infected sheep in the scrub was illegal, as was disposing of the carcass of an infected sheep in any waterhole.⁸ Murray-Prior was badly affected by the development of scab in his flocks. He was reported to have destroyed approximately eight thousand head, boiling them down for tallow, and despite the assistance given to him by neighbours who, in all, contributed approximately nine hundred head to begin building up his flocks once again, he never recovered from the financial losses and finally sold *Hawkwood* station. The threat of legal action from the Lawson brothers never eventuated. Brother Placid Lawson

later writing: 'A letter from Robert Lawson to Gilchrist Watt and Co., dated 17 February, 1855, says that: "... after due consideration ... we are informed that should we gain the action, Mr Prior has no money to pay us for the loss sustained, should this be the case it would be extreme folly to carry on the action as the expenses would involve us with heavy responsibilities".⁹

Scab in sheep was a disease that all squatters feared and they did what they could to prevent its spread into their own flocks. It appears to have been more prevalent during the months of May, June and July and was said to have been caused through a variety of circumstances including scanty pasture, mismanagement, over-driving and exposure to long periods of wet weather. It manifested itself in a number of symptoms, the sheep became uneasy and restless, scratching themselves with their feet and nibbling at their wool, tearing it from their skin. The skin became rough and discoloured and formed pustules that ran together to form a scab. The infected sheep generally lost condition and soon died. The disease was spread by sheep rubbing against each other or rubbing against the rails of sheep yards that had already come into contact with infected sheep, or even coming into contact with infected ground.¹⁰

According to the wages book at *Boondooma*, currently held at the John Oxley Library in Brisbane, some of the men working at *Boondooma* station during the early 1850s included a long list of Chinese shepherds whose allowance included a bonus, or *cumseong* being given to them at the completion of certain periods of service. These are described in the wages book as: 'After the expiry of the first six months each is to receive a *cumseong* of half a dollar per month till he has served 2 years from the date of his agreement, after that from the 2nd till the 3rd year each is to receive a *cumseong* of a whole dollar per month. From the 3rd till the 4th year each is to receive a dollar and a half and from the 4th till the 5th year two dollars each extra.' There were twenty-two Chinese shepherds on the books at that time. Rations for all the men were carefully documented and their cost was deducted from wages.¹¹

Supplies for the station came from Limestone (Ipswich). They were hauled over the range by bullock teams and drays, travelling via Cooyar and Nanango. Later, following the establishment of trading posts at the Mary River in 1847, supplies were sometimes sent down from Wide Bay Village and the produce of the station, wool, tallow and hides, were sent up to Wide Bay Village for export to Sydney and overseas. (From 23 January, 1849, Wide Bay Village became officially known as Maryborough).

A later description of the station claimed: 'In 1852 (sic) a stonemason named Brill was employed on the construction of a permanent homestead. The building still stands, but the shingle roof has been replaced with corrugated iron. The framework of the building was constructed of stones cemented together with ant bed. It is a fort like structure with windows protected by heavy iron bars as a precautionary measure against possible attacks by the aborigines ... This was the home the Lawson Brothers had prepared for their wives.'¹² Some of this information appears to be incorrect, according to descendant Brother Placid Lawson, Brill (also reported in a variety of documents as being Brell) did not arrive in Australia until 1853 and therefore could not have constructed the stone building the previous year, and the building was never used as a home, at least during the Lawsons' tenure. Many reports give the stonemason's nationality as Flemish but Brother Lawson claims that he was, in fact, German.¹³

In November 1996 Brother Placid Lawson wrote: 'My conclusions are based not on documentation — which does not exist — but on detective thoughts and hunches over the pondering of all the material I had collected and really putting two and two together ... I immediately became suspicious for the following reasons: The building (stone one) is too small to be a house. There are no dividing walls inside to create rooms. There are no fireplaces which would be necessary to warm the building, for the winters in the South Burnett can be cold. There were no kitchen arrangements, which again would be necessary. The building itself is isolated from the rest of the domestic buildings.'¹⁴

Wilhelm Brill and his wife Catharina had married in 1848 (Wilhelm was born in 1811 at Kafertal, Baden, Germany), and the couple had arrived in Moreton Bay in mid January 1853 aboard the *Johann Caesar* which had left Hamburg the previous September. According to the list of immigrants Wilhelm, like many other passengers aboard the same vessel, was described as a vinedresser, he was forty-two years of age, Catharina was thirty-nine, they had four children, one of whom, Theresa, aged two years, died during the voyage.¹⁵

In order to process the wool produced at the station, a wool scourer and press were constructed on the banks of the Boyne River near the present homestead. The scouring pots were reported to have held four hundred gallons of water and soda and these were used to boil the fleeces. The fleeces were then pressed into bales and transported to Brisbane or Maryborough by bullock team. Flooding later caused erosion of the river bank and the wool press machinery and scouring pots were lost — although one pot is said to have survived and was later used on the station as a water tank.¹⁶

A later account of station life included:

The life of the shepherds was lonely and precarious. The aborigines resented their intrusion and the flocks onto their lands, and some of the shepherds lost their lives as the result of aboriginal attacks. The white men buried them in what was known as the station cemetery near Boondooma Creek. Caskets were made from packing cases. Four posts, six to seven feet, were erected around the grave and the remaining Chinese erected a bark shelter in the form of a roof over the four posts, under which they placed a quantity of food for the dead, for his use when he resurrected. This was their belief. The food proved easy prey for the aborigines who would steal it at night. They are reported as having developed the idea that killing a shepherd was a profitable business as it saved them a deal of hunting. Consequently a number of Chinese fell victim to their savage onslaughts. It was also the custom of the Chinese to exhume the remains of their people and return them to their homeland. Thus a number of the graves were exhumed in later years. The passage of over a hundred years, with periodic bushfires, has taken a toll on the posts depicting the graves, and today little identification remains.

By 1860 the use of bullocks was being replaced by heavy horses attached to the drays, which proved to be considerably faster in their motion and gradually the distance was covered in less time.

Boondooma folk enjoyed yet another amenity which commenced about this era. One of the first mail contracts to serve the Burnett district was from Dalby to Gayndah, via Jandowae, Burrandowan, Boondooma and Coranga ...

Just when life was becoming a little more pleasant with increasing amenities, tragedy was to strike the Lawson family. Alexander Lawson, one of the two squatters was on a journey to Broad Sound, when his horse threw him and he was killed, (1869). At the time of the accident his wife was in Brisbane receiving medical attention. In a letter to her written only two days before his death, Alexander complained of his horse he was riding being a 'habitual stumbler'. His bereaved wife was left with a young family to care for ...

Amongst those who found employment on the station were Robert Burney, Jackeroo, R. Brazier, a carrier in 1861. Waldock and Godfrey, carriers in 1862, Campbell 1863, Charles Warren (chef) 1863. A bullock driver of earlier years, named Dilger, found a special interest in the district when he opened an hotel across the Boyne River, not a great distance from the homestead. Here station employees and wayfarers satisfied their thirst until the hotel was burned down to a few posts and a chimney. A use was found for a number of recessed bottles from the hotel bottle-heap. They were placed neck first into the ground to take the butts of small gates. An iron D was placed over the top of each butt, thus enabling the gate to swing freely. Dilger moved to Durah where he was successful financially. A Parish was named after him which appears on the map as 'Delger', now owned by J.P. Duff & Company.

One who joined the employees in 1863 was Charles Warren, who took up the position as chef. The name Warren was to become a legend on *Boondooma* as Charles was the first of four generations on the station pay-roll ...

Miss Emma Williams was employed as lady's help to Mrs Munro, wife of the manager. The rate of pay was 2/6 per week, with work commencing at 4 a.m. each day. Whilst employed there she married Mr Alf. C. Warren, also employed as an excellent plaiter of ropes and whips. The marriage was solemnised by the travelling 'padre' ...

Mr & Mrs Christy Wheller were also employed on the station and their daughter Ethel was christened there on *Boondooma*. Another character in the 1890s who was employed was Herman Müller who went to Brisbane and acquired a wife, winning her with the story of his owning the station. Legend has it that he was seen aiding his bride up Queen Street on one arm and a stalk of bananas over the other. On their return to the station he instructed her to the kitchen where he informed her she would be engaged as cook. She stayed two days and left. Many years later he was found dead by the roadside near Proston — having been killed by a fallen tree.¹⁷



Mr & Mrs Charles Warren of Boondooma station, 1863.

Source — Thomson family collection

Friedrich Möller (also known as Moeller, anglicised to Miller) was another of the station's employees, he worked initially as a shepherd and later became the station carter, travelling to Ipswich for mail and supplies.¹⁶

The number of people who have died accidentally or otherwise at *Boondooma* is not known as records of such deaths were never kept. However, there appears to have been a remarkably tragic sequence of deaths at the station.

One of the first instances was recorded in the form of a ballad, written by a man named William Barnes, a stockman who worked at the homestead. In this ballad, Barnes tells of another stockman named Billy Blythe who was thrown from his horse. He landed against a fence post, and was seriously injured. He was placed upon a dray and hurried to *Jimbour* station, near Dalby. However, it seems that he never arrived. The journey was an arduous one, and Blythe, obviously in great pain, simply expired on the way. Barnes's ballad ends:

Mark the spot well, where the roan stag he fell,
 And the place where poor Billy last sighed,
 And gather around stockmen, and shed a tear,
 For your old friend poor Billy Blythe.¹⁷

Strangely, the author of this ballad was himself to meet with a premature and tragic death. Just a few years after penning his poem, he broke his neck during an attempted feat of horsemanship.

Two of William Barnes's children were also to die under tragic circumstances when they were drowned in a *Boondooma* water-hole. The press subsequently reported: 'The lads were missed and on searching for them the mother noticed two hats floating on the water when she waded in as far as she could to try and find them, but being unable to swim could only search the shallow parts, in vain. She then bravely saddled a horse, never ridden before by a lady, and rode to the head station (*Boondooma*), 18 miles away, to acquaint her husband of the sad occurrence, leaving one child (now Mrs C.A. McCallum) locked up in the house to look after 3 children, one a baby 8 months' old. When she arrived, her husband rode the animal back, immediately, followed by

others and recovered the bodies of the little ones, which were close together. Sometime later, on the same station, she lost her husband, who was thrown against a tree, when after cattle, and almost instantly killed.²⁰

After the death of her husband and children Mary Barnes, with the surviving members of her family, moved to Glen Erin and lived there for twelve years when she selected land at Johnstown, finally retiring to Nanango. She had been born at *Bear* station and after her marriage to William Barnes moved to Blackbutt, then Jumna and *Boondooma* where William Barnes was head stockman. Mrs Barnes died in July 1925.²¹

Over the years there were several murders of shepherds killed in lonely out-stations. The culprits were never apprehended. One of the graves on the station is that of Robert Payne Burney, who is generally believed to have committed suicide, primarily, it seems, because his grave is facing west, however, as Brother Placid Lawson points out: 'I have the printout of the magistrate's enquiry, October 10, 1864, at *Boondooma*, before Mr D. Parry Okeden, J.P. Amongst the evidence was that given by R.F.I. Needham, an assistant at *Boondooma* who stated that: "... between 9 and 10 o'clock on Sunday October 9, 1864, a.m., Robert P. Burney came to me and asked me to accompany him to the river to bathe. I declined and he then left the room as I supposed to go by himself". The finding given by Parry Okeden was that: "... he accidentally drowned in a waterhole in the River Boyne, having fallen in after bathing, and being unable to swim". There was no evidence given nor conclusion arrived at that he had committed suicide.'²²

The inscription on Burney's grave has long ago worn off, but according to a report written in 1919 it once read: 'October 9, 1864. In memory of Robert Payne Burney, aged 21 years, youngest son of Lieut. Col. Burney, England.'²³

The other known grave situated in what was once the front garden to the existing homestead is that of station manager George Munro, its inscription reads: 'In Memory of George Munro, born at Easter Lealty, Rossshire, Scotland, 18th September, 1837, died at *Boondooma* 24th March, 1895. Peace Perfect Peace.' There are reputed to be twenty-five graves on *Boondooma* but only those of Munro and Burney have headstones, the area known as the Chinese cemetery now shows little evidence of its use as a graveyard, and not only Chinese nationals were buried there. Buddy Thomson, whose family later owned the station, records that a boy who was killed through the bite of a redback spider is buried at the Chinese cemetery, this information having been supplied directly from the victim's sister.²⁴

In June 1863 a traveller through this region wrote an account of his journey from *Proston* station to *Boondooma* and finally to *Wigton*. While en route to *Wigton* he became lost and was forced to return to *Proston* with the aid of a shepherd who acted as his guide. The following day, with the help of an aboriginal boy acting as a guide, the traveller returned to the region to force his way through almost impenetrable scrub to *Wigton*. The notes he made of the journey are interesting, for they give a description of the homestead at *Proston* and the original homestead at *Boondooma*, long since destroyed. The traveller wrote in 1863:

I stood at eventide on the bank of the wide sandy bed of the Stuart River. With some hesitation I crossed the stream, which was not deep, but rather wide and covered in with the mantle of night.

The home station of *Proston* is on the farther bank, and, as is usual in squatting districts, close to the junction of another water-course. It is a neat cottage, looking into a garden extending down towards the river. The prospect is not extensive, but the wide bed of the Stuart showing evidence of deep and swollen waters, presents a pleasing view. The usual station buildings extend down to the left, and the inevitable wool-shed stands conspicuous on a neighbouring hill. The proprietor being from home, detained on a homeward journey by swollen rivers, I enjoyed the hospitality of a relative in charge, and next morning, on a successor and substitute for Reuben, (the author's horse) who wished for rest, I set off for *Boondooma*. On the eastern shore of the Boyne there is an excellent way-side inn — the first hotel I had encountered since leaving the haunts of civilisation ... Crossing the Boyne, which is a perfect picture of the Stuart, in a few minutes the traveller is in view of the homestead of *Boondooma*. It has a pretty appearance. The cottage, verandahed and doubly verandahed with a trellised work embowered in vines, looks out on an extensive lawn, reaching down to a very beautiful garden on the bank of the Boyne. A long range of buildings stretches along the face of the hill in the rear — the abodes of the station hands. The society

at *Boondooma* was too pleasing to make a departure possible on the following day so, contrary to all my firmest resolutions, I rested.

But squandered time must be regained. Next morning I was aboard, prepared for a wild dash through *Proston* and onward away to *Wigton*. With a nice lunch folded up for me by fair hands, and including among other dainties a bottle of sherry, I had the anticipation of a pleasant journey. A beautiful blue sky, a fresh bracing air, and an occasional pull at the sherry, gave buoyancy to my spirits, and it being a borrowed horse away we bounded at a slapping pace. The road could not be surpassed. The exhilarating atmosphere had a most pleasing effect, and as we bounded along I sang 'Cheer boys cheer,' and other enlivening ditties.²⁵



Boondooma station, head stockman, John Harrop, with 'Dusty Bob'.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 1222.



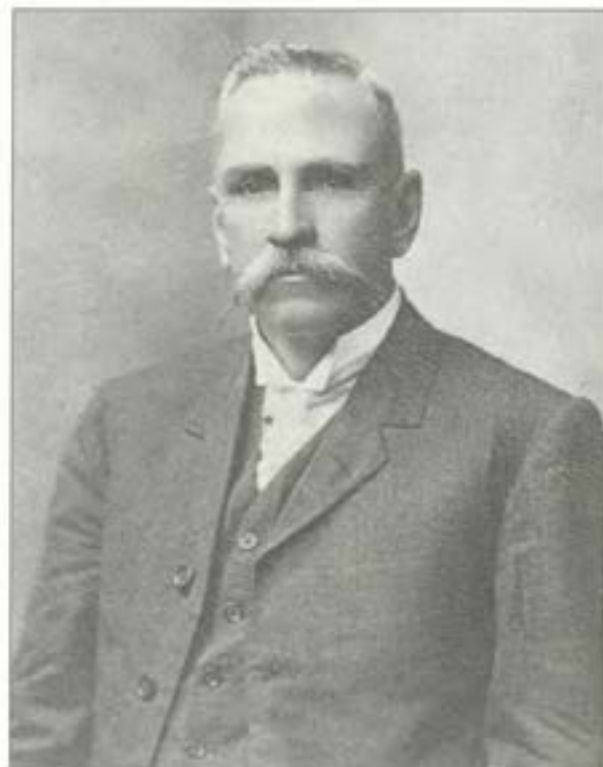
Hector and Peter Munro, 1890, spent some of their early years on Boondooma station. Peter (standing) managed Boondooma station.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref 2842/P3(b).

Another visitor to *Boondooma* station homestead in March 1924 described it as '... beginning to show signs of age but is still a fine building. All the timber used was pit sawn on the station and hand dressed and conforms very well to the English style of farmhouse. The ceilings are in a wonderful state of preservation, being composed of cypress pine and are beautifully polished. Some antique work I noticed was the mantles over the fire places. These are handsome cedar pieces and are all hand carved, while the old dinner wagon running from the kitchen to the dining room is still in existence.'²⁶ The building described in this paragraph was almost certainly the original homestead, thought to be situated at the rear and to the right of the existing building, it was destroyed that year during a storm.²⁷

Robert Lawson died on 29 December, 1885, at Turbot Street Brisbane, aged sixty four.²⁸

By the time Wondai was established following the coming of the rail line, conditions for the settlers at *Boondooma* had improved dramatically. On 23 June, 1904, *Boondooma* station was transferred from William Oswald Gilchrist, Walter Cumming Watt, William Holden Watt, Edward William Knox and Ernest Alexander Stuart Watt, who were the executors of the estate of John Brown Watt, to James Henry McConnel, David Rose McConnel, Mary Macleod Banks, Eric Walter McConnel and Edward John McConnel, then known as D.C. McConnel and Sons.²⁹ J.H. McConnel was the son of David Canon McConnel, the first squatter in the Brisbane Valley who settled *Cressbrook* station in 1841.



Archibald Graham (snr.) Manager of Boondooma from 1908.
Source — Thomson family collection.

In 1908 Archibald Graham became manager of *Boondooma*, but within a few years the station was further broken up with the expiry of leases and subsequent resumptions.

Now that Wondai was a growing township with the rail line in place, the management and workers of *Boondooma* led a far better life. They enjoyed a means of communication never available to previous residents of the station, beasts, wool, hides, and other produce would be simply trucked to Wondai, and later to Proston which is even closer, and then forwarded to the respective markets at Brisbane, Sydney and overseas. With the growth of Wondai there were also better facilities, access to a hospital, schooling at Proston, stores could be brought easily, quickly and inexpensively, no longer would the residents of the station have to rely on bullock wagons to bring their requirements from Maryborough two or three times a year. In 1922 the lease over *Boondooma* proper finally expired and the land was thrown open for selection. Frederick Palethorpe was successful in acquiring the homestead block through ballot, later transferring the holding to Jane Anne Stockill. Palethorpe is reported to have

later joined the police force, rising to the rank of deputy commissioner of police.³⁰

Jane Anne Stockill was never married to her life's partner, Edward Thomson, although she lived under the name of Thomson. Their son, also named Edward, later acquired the station and ran it until it was purchased by the Wondai Shire Council.³¹



Dangarabungy, Boondooma station, 1914.

Source — Thomson family collection.



Standing: Bernard Stockill. L. to R. Ned Thomson,
Jane Anne Stockill.
Front: Edward Albert Schofield-Thomson, Ivy Eileen Annie
Yvonne Stockill.

Source — Thomson family collection.

Some Boondooma Station Holding Ownerships and Transfers

Boondooma

Applicant:	Alexander and Robert Lawson (and Robert Alexander)
Date of Application:	31 October, 1851.
Area:	29 sq. miles.
Transfers:	To Robert and Alexander Lawson 1852. To Alexander Robertson Lawson 1863. To John Young and William Oswald Gilchrist 1867. To William Oswald Gilchrist 1872. To William Oswald Gilchrist and John Brown Watt 1888.

Jua

Applicant:	Alexander and Robert Lawson, and Robert Alexander.
Date of Application:	31 October 1851.
Area:	110 sq. miles.
Transfers:	To Robert and Alexander Lawson 1852 To Alexander Robertson Lawson 1863. To John Young and W.O. Gilchrist 1867. To W.O. Gilchrist 1872. To W.O. Gilchrist and J.B. Watt 1888.

Waringa

Applicant:	Alexander and Robert Lawson and Robert Alexander.
Date of Application:	31 October 1851.
Area:	100 sq. miles.
Transfers:	To Robert and Alexander Lawson 1852. To Alexander Robertson Lawson 1863. To John Young and W.O. Gilchrist 1867. To W.O. Gilchrist 1872. To W.O. Gilchrist and J.B. Watt 1888.

Waagineraganya

Applicant:	Alexander and Robert Lawson and Robert Alexander.
Date of Application:	31 October 1851.
Area:	71½ sq miles.
Transfers:	To Robert and Alexander Lawson 1852. To Alexander Robertson Lawson 1863. To John Young and W.O. Gilchrist. 1867. To W.O. Gilchrist 1872. To W.O. Gilchrist and J. B. Watt 1889.

Piar

Applicant:	Alexander and Robert Lawson.
Date of Application:	19 November 1856
Area:	33 sq miles.
Transfers:	To Alexander Robertson Lawson 1863. To John Young and W.O. Gilchrist 1867. To W.O. Gilchrist 1872. To W.O. Gilchrist and J.B. Watt 1888.

Dangarabungy

Applicant:	Alexander and Robert Lawson.
Date of Application:	30 March, 1857.
Area:	50 sq miles.
Transfers:	To Alexander Robertson Lawson 1863. To John Young and W.O. Gilchrist 1867. To W.O. Gilchrist 1872. To W.O. Gilchrist and J.B. Watt 1888. ³²

Other stations that have played an important role in the history of the Wondai region include *Sunday Creek*, taken up as a resumption from *Mondure* by George Hives in 1895. *Marshlands* was also a resumption from *Mondure*. It was taken up by D.J. McConnel in 1898 and managed in conjunction with *Boondooma* by Edward John McConnel.

A report of Edward John McConnel later stated:

Marshlands, the family homestead, dates back for forty years — soon after the railway line reached Kilkivan and when the South Burnett was but a wilderness. With indomitable pluck and the true nation-building viewpoint, he tackled the big pioneering problems always in a big way, and few, if any, in the State today, are more deserving of its thanks. Apart from the improved areas of *Marshlands* with its many acres of forest lands greatly improved in productivity by being laid down with Rhodes grass, and its fine homestead which was the home for indeterminate periods of many of the earlier district selectors, open house always

being kept, it is in *The Plains* and *Boondooma* areas where his progressive spirit was accorded full scope. From the wilderness of pear and brigalow scrub *The Plains* property today comprises 10,000 acres of waving Rhodes grass, watered by bores and huge dams, and is probably not excelled in value as a grazing property by any similar area in the State. In effecting this metamorphosis numerous gangs of men were employed for years and horse teams were continuously engaged in cartage of supplies, pear poison, etc., from Wondai. It is estimated on good authority that he spent £60,000 in developmental work in this district. Liberal by nature his benefactions were many. It is doubtful if the grandstand on Wondai show-grounds would have been built but for his liberality. He was a liberal supporter of the Wondai Show Society, being patron of the society for many years and retaining that honourable position until his passing.³³

E.J. McConnel died at the Wondai Hospital, aged sixty-five years, on the afternoon of Wednesday 11 June, 1930, after a long illness. He was interred at the St Faith's Church cemetery, Mondure, on Friday 13 June, 1930.³⁴

The *Marshlands* homestead remains as one of the more imposing station residences in the South Burnett. The residence was designed by the well known Brisbane architect Robin Dods who also designed dozens of other important buildings, both private and public, throughout the state. The floors were constructed of mahogany and the doors of cedar, there were six bedrooms, all facing towards the north and east to take advantage of the sun, the separate kitchen was a slab building situated on the western side of the house and connected by a door. After the death of E.J. McConnel, his daughter, Marjorie, took over the management of the property, it was later purchased by the Wieden family and in 1976 was purchased by Rob Slaughter and his wife Margie.³⁵



E.J. McConnel.

Source — Thomson family collection.

Wigton station was taken up by G. Mocatta during the 1840s, although there appears to be no specific date remaining to show when Mocatta actually moved onto the 16,000 acres run. He applied for the lease on 8 July, 1850, but remained on the run for only a short while, selling it to P. Pigott in 1851. Pigott was an enterprising businessman with a keen eye to the future. He expanded *Wigton* with two more acquisitions, each of 16,000 acres, that of *Ballyhew* and *Woroon*. These were taken up on 31 October, 1851, and 18 April, 1854, respectively. These combined properties were disposed of to Dugald Graham in 1855. Over the following years *Wigton* changed hands several times, once in 1869 and again, twice, in 1872. The station was offered for sale in February 1874 and from a description of the sale advertisement we can gain an idea of the station's size and various holdings. On 11 February, 1874, the *Brisbane Courier* published:

The *Wigton* and *Calragie* stations situated 120 miles from the shipping port of Maryborough, 28 miles from Gayndah and 110 miles from Dalby with 17000 sheep more or less, 400 cattle. Brewster and Trebeck have received instructions to sell by public auction at their rooms, Squatter's Exchange, George Street, Sydney, on Wednesday the 4th day of April at 11.00 o'clock those valuable stations known as *Wigton* and *Calragie* consisting of the following large blocks; *Wigton*, *Ballyhew*, *Woroon*, *Wangaranga*, *Small's Creek*, and *Scrub Creek*. The pasture is adapted for either sheep or cattle and all the runs are abundantly and permanently watered in every direction. With the above station will be offered 17000 really good sheep, these have been very closely culled every year and only the very best ewes have been retained. There are 450 very choice rams, 5000 specially selected ewes have been set apart for breeding next year, also 400 quiet cattle, horses, working bullocks, carts, buggy, stores etc to be taken at valuation.

Improvements comprise manager's house, store, paddocks, new substantial stockyard and every requisite for working the station to advantage.³⁶

The run, approximately 117 square miles in size, was transferred to J.H. Fox in 1886. Resumptions of some of the original holdings now began to take place, dramatically reducing the size of the property.³⁷

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixty-two

Boondooma and Other Important Stations Within the Shire of Wondai

1. QSA CLO/13, CLO/N8, LAN/N67, LAN/AF99.
2. *Boondooma Historical Background*, typescript, JOL VF 994.32.
3. Letter to the author from Brother Placid Lawson, 1 November, 1996.
4. Letter to the author from Jack Coe, dated 18 April, 1997.
5. Letter to the author from Brother Placid Lawson, dated 1 November, 1996, p 2.
6. Records, (Manuscript) 1853-63, *Boondooma Station Correspondence*, JOL OM 66.007.
7. Ibid.
8. MBC. 21 November, 1846, p 4.
9. QCL. 17 December, 1959, p 8, and letters to the author from Brother Placid Lawson, dated 12 September, 1996 and 1 November, 1996.
10. MBC. 8 January, 1848, p 3.
11. *Boondooma Station Wages Book*, JOL OM 66 7/2.
12. *Boondooma Historical Background*, typescript, JOL VF 994.32 and letter from Brother Placid Lawson to the author dated 1 November 1996.
13. Letter to the author from Brother Placid Lawson, dated 12 September, 1996.
14. Letter from Brother Placid Lawson to the author, dated 1 November, 1996.
15. List of immigrants aboard the *Johann Caesar*, dated 14 January, 1853, QSA Z 598, p 238.
16. *Boondooma Historical Background*, typescript, JOL VF 994.32.
17. *Boondooma Historical Background*, typescript, JOL VF 994.32.
18. Correspondence and various items of documentation from Howard Miller to the author, April, 1997.
19. For the full text see: WW. pp 201-202.
20. Obituary of Mary Barnes, Pioneer file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
21. Ibid.
22. Letter from Brother Placid Lawson to the author dated 1 November, 1996.
23. M/C. 13 September, 1919. p 3.
24. M/C. 17 June, 1972, p 7 and author interview with Buddy Thomson, recorded at Boondooma, 13 November, 1996.
25. M/C. 18 June, 1863, p 4.
26. M/C. 29 March, 1924, p 3.
27. Letter from Brother Placid Lawson to the author dated 1 November, 1996.
28. B/C. 31 December, 1885, p 1.
29. QSA. LAN/AF99.
30. *Boondooma Historical Background*, typescript, JOL VF 994.32.
31. Author interview with Buddy Thomson, conducted at *Boondooma* station, 13 November, 1996.
32. QSA CLO/13, CLO/N8, Lan/N67 and *Boondooma* holding. State Library of Queensland V.F. 994.32 QUE ORO 4810208.
33. SBT. 13 June, 1930, p 7.
34. Ibid.
35. SBT. 14 February, 1990, pp 22-23.
36. B/C. 11 February, 1874, p 4.
37. For further details on the transfers of ownership on this property see: WW. pp 204-207.

The Railway Arrives and Wondai is Formed

With the coming of the railways so the township of Wondai blossomed. Like Murgon and Goomeri, the rail brought hopeful families, selectors, workers, businessmen, hoteliers, churches, banks, billiard halls, butchers, bakers, milliners, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, saddlers, mercers, brick-makers, chemists and a host of other people all convinced that the region would grow rapidly now that it was connected to a modern system of communication and transport. Those early selectors were attracted by the possibilities the land had to offer, many had come from regions not so well endowed with rich pastoral holdings, but the Wondai district offered much more, abundant waterways, adequate rainfall, excellent soil and plenty of sun. To many early settlers this was the promised Eden where ordinary men and women could finally own land of sufficient size and quality to earn a modest living. At the centre of this promised pastoral Utopia was a small village that would later be formed into one of the more important service centres in the South Burnett.

The survey of the township of Wondai was ordered by the Survey Department on 20 May, 1903, this was carried out by a surveyor named Henry St. John Wood on 29 June that year. The site was originally known by several names, initially it was simply Dingo Creek — named after the large numbers of dingoes that were then roaming the area, but the embryonic township itself was at first known as Bushnell — after local resident Joseph James Bushnell, but almost immediately renamed Wondai, the aboriginal name for dingoes or wild dogs.

Two weeks after the rail line was opened the first sale of town allotments took place (This was advertised in the *Queensland Government Gazette* as being held on 29 September, 1903).¹

At first the village of Wondai resembled a miners' camp, most of the people living adjacent to the rail line residing in canvas tents or hastily constructed bark and tin humpies. However, these rudimentary forms of accommodation soon began to take on a more permanent form, small cottages were built, some substantial houses and even a public house. Real estate speculators were purchasing town allotments as soon as they became available, one visitor to Wondai in 1909 claiming: 'Wondai is literally progressing by leaps and bounds so far as architectural advancement is concerned, and ... some of the ever-cautious suspicious ... Maryborough speculators are even now grabbing any available plots at figures which ... cannot be conducive to their nocturnal slumbers.'²

A police presence in the small community was an early requirement, especially when the village was in its first stages of construction, even prior to the line being put through when there was a plethora of itinerant workers and grog shanties. In that embryonic settlement life and conditions could sometimes become quite rough. Residents petitioned for the establishment of a police station at Wondai on 19 March, 1907, claiming:

That the large amount of selection that has taken place in the ... district generally and the great difficulty of obtaining police assistance when required warrants the establishment of (a) police station here controlled by a responsible officer ...

That we selectors & residents suffer great inconvenience, mental worry and sufferings, by the disgraceful conduct and use of obscene language by persons under the influence of liquor.

That at times it is not safe for persons to travel alone at night, through aboriginals being under the influence supplied by unknown persons.

That Wondai by reason of its geographical position, is the centre of all parishes herein mentioned and a great amount of work requiring the attention of a police officer should be worked from this centre by reason of its being in such position ...

That in our opinion the officer would have the whole of his time taken up by attending to the requirements of the place.³

A press report of 1930 claimed:

Wondai's designation as a police district dates back for 20 years. Records are hazy about the early district police service but it is a well-known fact among older hands that the first police barracks was a diminutive building now flanking the main block of buildings adjacent to the post office. Fresh in the memory of aged residents are scenes of the far-off days when prisoners were chained to a log outside that building, exposed to the public gaze, and allowed to escape if they could manage to drag the always substantial timber with them! That, at least, is how the story goes. The then barracks were owned by Charles Hess ...

The present police station was erected about 1915 at which time the present court house also was built. The first occupant of the station, the first permanent police officer stationed at Wondai, was the now Sergeant H. Barnes. He was followed by Constable J. Clare. Both served previously in Kilkivan ...

Vigilance on behalf of public safety and the protection of community interests is exercised, with devotion to service and duty, by two police officers stationed at the Wondai police station. The present officer in charge is Sergeant M. Cranitch whose service in the Wide Bay and Burnett district extends over many years. Some years ago he left Maryborough for an appointment in Gympie, after having been in charge of the Newtown district for a long period ... Capable assistance is rendered by Constable Fox.⁴



The Wondai police station, date unknown.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives, Harold Mears' collection.

One of the more highly respected police officers to be appointed to the area was Daniel Stephen Quinn who spent some of his early career in Wondai and finally retired as senior sergeant at Annerley.⁵ The Cranitch family have had the distinction of seeing two generations of their family serving as police officers in Wondai. Matt Cranitch later wrote:

It was in March 1928 that the Cranitch family first came to Wondai where my father had been appointed officer in charge of police. Our arrival by train at about 6 p.m. to a darkened town, after the slow train ride, left us in doubt as to what the place would be like and how

we would like living in this town. The family booked into the Wondai Hotel which at that time was conducted by Mr Peter O'Brien.

After a few days we moved to the police house. That first night the family sat on the front verandah, wondered as to the future, saw the dimly lit buildings, kerosene and carbide being the method of lighting, and marvelled at the serenity of the place. The following morning we were awakened by the birds singing and were able to see many multi-coloured birds in the trees. For city slickers it was a wondrous sight.

I can recall those first few days in Wondai, the many men and women who came to the police station to welcome my Dad and Mum. I recall dirt roads, the red dust clouds and the sight of horse drawn vehicles using the roads ... 1929 will always be remembered as the year of the Great Depression and Wondai was caught up in this economic disaster. Who will ever forget the hundreds of unemployed persons who passed through the district each week, either walking the roads or jumping the rattler (train). I can recall the generosity of the people of Wondai and district in helping these unfortunate persons. I can recall my own mother having a large iron pot on the stove each day from which she served Irish stew to up to forty persons per day. All the ingredients had been supplied by the butchers, grocers and people of the district.

In March 1934 we left Wondai for Brisbane ... On the 7th September, 1969, I returned to Wondai as the officer in charge of police and occupied the same house that I had done as a youngster ...⁶

With the advent of closer settlement and the coming of the railways, the lands that once comprised the *Mondure* and *Boondooma* runs and others were opened up to the hundreds of selectors who thronged to the region. On 10 October, 1904, the first Land Court was held at Maddison's building in Wondai, when the whole of the land in the parish of McEuen and parts of Charlestown and Mondure were thrown open for selection and balloted for. Most of those blocks were taken up, the land being rich and, in many cases, well watered, and a large number of the successful applicants had taken possession of their land before the end of the year while practically all the selectors were living on their blocks by June 1905.

There was a certain amount of cynical comment regarding the methods used to sell off government land, social commentators remarking on the promises of politicians, 'in their snug official billet,' to: '... facilitating the planting of a sturdy and independent yeomanry on the land.'⁷ Yet despite these promises the selling off of the lands in the South Burnett was sometimes subject to bureaucratic ineptitude. For example in June 1901 a prime parcel of land on Barambah Creek was sold to an adjacent station owner for just 12/6d per acre, when the going price was £5 per acre. The sale had not been advertised in the local press and the deal had taken place in Brisbane without local landholders (other than the landholder who bought the land) being aware that it was even for sale. A local journalist castigated the government claiming that such a practice robbed the Treasury of much needed funds and disallowed other parties in making their interest known. The deal reeked of inside knowledge and seemed to indicate that the government was more interested in building up another rural squirarchy rather than allowing the ordinary man and woman to purchase their piece of land at honest prices. As the correspondent claimed: 'Anyone can squander an estate by reckless expenditure and by living upon capital instead of income, and that seems to be the policy of our sapient rulers ... (it) is a very pronounced instance of class legislation. If these sales are conducted in this secret fashion to save the few pounds that proper advertising would cost, it is the silliest of silly economy ... Anyway, it looks as if there is something rotten in the State of Queensland, and it doesn't require an intelligent Hamlet to see the sweet game that is going on behind the wings.'⁸

The bitterness and cynicism had justifiable grounds, and the acrimonious debate was heightened soon afterwards when it was discovered that the expired occupation licence for much of the famed *Mondure* run was about to be re-granted to the lessees without offering the land for selection. The situation created widespread heated debate as there were many people who, anticipating the expiration of the lease, wished to take up selections in that fertile stretch of territory. The press published a detailed report in September 1901 which is here reproduced:

The action of the government in granting an occupation licence to the recent lessees of *Mondure* station of the expired lease of that run is, in the present financial position of this State, the most extraordinary that anyone could possibly imagine. It was understood in this

district that on the expiration of the *Mondure* lease (about the end of June) the Crown land thereon would be thrown open for selection for farms and homesteads. To give colour to these opinions, a surveyor has been engaged for the last three months on *Mondure* mapping out the selections, and lithographs have been prepared of the expired lease and distributed. Inquiries about these lands have been made from Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, while prospective applicants from Toowoomba, Maryborough, the Isis, and Warwick have visited the district and gone to expense to look at the land. Now, however, about a fortnight before the country was expected to be proclaimed open for selection, comes the news that the government has leased the entire expired lease (150 square miles) to the recent lessees (trustees estate of D. Williams), at an annual rental of £212 12s. 6d., of which of course only half is payable this year. This practically ties up this country for eighteen months, some of the most magnificent in the district, and, apart from the trouble this action has caused numbers of private persons, it seems strange that the government can afford to lease 150 square miles of scrub and high-class pastoral land for £212 12s. 6d., when by opening it for selection they could have got about £16 a mile, at a period in the history of the State when the greater the revenue obtainable the better ... I am beginning to believe the promises of the present government are worse than pie-crusts, and certainly this *Mondure* transaction and the dilatory way in which the Kilkivan-Nanango railway extension is being pushed on are sufficient to destroy any Burnett elector's faith in the present Ministry, and have not improved the government candidate's chance of return at the next State elections. The present government seem to be doing their best to destroy the Wide Bay and Burnett district in their land policy, and the comparison of the methods adopted in this district and those in the nearer districts to Brisbane is interesting ...

The *Courier* in a footnote to this letter says: 'The Under Secretary for Lands, to whom the above letter was submitted, states that our correspondent is under a misapprehension. The facts are that the lease expired on 30th June last, and the late lessees were allowed to continue in occupation at the former rental. Their present tenure is a license under Part V, of the Land Act, which does not in any way prevent the government from opening the land for selection at any time, that right being reserved to them. The surveyors have been over a considerable area of the land, and whenever the plans are complete there will be nothing to prevent the land from being opened for selection. The points upon which our correspondent is said to be wrong are, first, that the land is not locked up irrevocably for any period, and second, the plans are not yet sufficiently forward to allow of its being opened for selection. Whether it will be so opened when the plans are ready is evidently another matter upon which the Cabinet will doubtless decide.'

(The) ... *Nanango News*, which also came to hand yesterday, contains the following leading article on the subject: 'Something in the nature of a sensation was caused in Nanango when it became known that land in the expired *Mondure* lease, which was recently surveyed for the purpose of being thrown open to close settlement, had been quietly withdrawn and granted as an occupation licence to the present holders of the property. For a considerable time past hundreds of persons in the district have been looking forward anxiously to securing a portion of this land, most of which is known to be superior agricultural land and close to the Kilkivan extension. At the Land Court held here on the 12th instant, an application from the lessees to retain the land was acceded to although maps had been prepared and printed and the land cut up into areas for farming purposes, and if thrown open as expected, it would have been largely selected. It is impossible to understand the action of the government which claims to be desirous of settling people on the land ... How much longer is this farce to continue? Is it not about time we had a fresh set of rulers? A little later on we shall probably be told by the Government that they do not feel justified in extending the line beyond the 17 mile peg because of the scarcity of population along the route. Still hundreds of persons who have been waiting for months to get on this land have been euhred by a daring piece of departmental thimble-rigging.'⁹

A later report claimed that the lands of *Mondure* were to be opened up for settlement in November that year.¹⁰

Despite problems such as these, the land rush continued unabated. Selectors were determined to acquire what land they could, irrespective of the obstacles they would encounter and the financial difficulties they would experience. Selecting and clearing a farm from virgin bush was time-consuming, arduous and difficult, and the selectors could expect little or no return for their investment for some considerable time — often for many years. It was pointed out in the press that South Sea Island labourers then working on the sugar cane fields of the Wide Bay region — the most poorly paid of all labourers at that time — could expect to earn considerably more in a

year than the selectors who were taking up land in the South Burnett. Some of these early settlers, naturally, folded their operations after a year or two, unable to meet their financial commitments, others simply found that they were unsuited to agricultural work and returned to the cities. Yet forfeited selections were eagerly snapped up by other selectors, the new land-holders disregarding the problems of the first occupants. When the *Mondure* land was opened up it was described as being the 'lode-stone' of attraction, but the prices were considerably more than the selectors were used to paying. Even so, as the press claimed: '... there is sure to be a rush for these blocks. There is sure to be eager competition for the best of these areas, while even the poorest land will find some settler ready to accept all the risks of cultivation in the hope of making a settled home of some sort.'¹¹

The *Mondure* lands were offered for two pounds five shillings an acre, but the expected land rush, in this instance at least, did not eventuate, most selectors believing that the land was worth only £1 per acre and in some areas considerably less. Many selections at that time were being offered for between fifteen shillings to £1 per acre, and it was a fortunate selector who could afford to pay more while still struggling to clear the heavily timbered land, construct some kind of dwelling, purchase tools, put up fencing, buy seed, clear prickly pear, and finally to maintain his family. Thus at more than two pounds per acre the majority of selectors feared that they would go bankrupt before they had even sown their first crop.¹²

By now the township of Wondai was growing dramatically. A description of the settlement later stated:

Pictures of the town of Wondai in the early days give an adequate idea of the then existing conditions. It was not unlike a mining township in appearance. Several substantial premises were erected and were supplemented by temporary structures of various types, and of many materials. Tents were common residential quarters. In 1905 Wondai boasted two hotels. The first, the *Mondure* Hotel, was erected by James Alexander Slater who can claim to have given Wondai its first building. The *Wondai* Hotel was built a little later. Maryborough business interests were alive to the possibilities of commerce and the Maryborough Mercantile Co.'s establishment was managed by Mr W. Howitt, Mr W.J. Maddison conducted a commission agency, and Mr Dan Poacher was 'the village blacksmith.' Postal and telegraphic matters were handled at the railway station.

When the *Mondure* leasehold was resumed and opened for selection among the first to settle were Messrs. George and Harry Compagnoni, and Charles and George Roseby, Fred Hansen, James Buttersfield, Asmus Hansen, P. Larsen, Dave Reid, Fred Farley, B. Johannessen, George Ponting, Ernest Monteith, Peter Olsen, Bob Hatch, William, Fred and Harry Horn, George, William and Arthur Coulsen, Samuel Long and W. and R. Lacey. Stories of the man who 'went under' are not frequently related in connection with Wondai's history, but at least one man failed. Luis Fouchoult, a Frenchman, acquired a number of farms by some means and introduced a thousand sheep to his property. For some years the sheep showed signs of progress but eventually they were reduced and the flock was ruined, though the country could not be held blameworthy. The Frenchman incurred heavy expenditure in fencing and netting his property and in clearing his forest land, but the odds were against him and finally he submitted to his mortgagee.

When the new settlers entered their properties the country was in its natural wild state, most of the *Mondure* country being black soil forest land. Without exception none of the settlers on *Mondure* country was provided with permanent water. They were obliged to sink wells and construct dams and in the meantime obtain their supplies from the nearest water. Men were called upon 'to work like niggers,' to fight for their very existence. Nevertheless, few failed. The interest of the station staff was aroused in the arrival of four young office clerks from Sydney, who went 'on the land'. A distinct antipathy existed in the minds of the squatters and station managers towards the 'cocky', and the old hands speculated regarding the future of the young city-bred farmers on whose progress a close watch was maintained. The newcomers searched for water; they commenced to sink a well. (In those days they had no boring plant — shafts had to be sunk in four or five feet spells, each section, having to be timbered progressively). The watch kept on the 'townies' revealed that they were sinking their well with creditable dispatch. The shaft was about 80 feet in depth, and yet their efforts were unavailing. Not despairing, the young fellows constructed dams on their respective holdings and today each is a prosperous farmer.¹³

Some of the early settlers to the region included A. Pickels of *Blacklands Stud*, Cowan Keys of the *Sunnymeade Stud* who was to play a major role in the dairy industry, Samuel Farley,

P. Hansen, H. Miller, Robert Burns, the Kelleher brothers, Stacey Brand, H. Marquardt, W. Bielke, John Hetherington, Andrew Hansen and many others who followed in these men's footsteps as closer settlement gradually developed.¹⁴

Samuel Farley was an early settler at Leafdale, John W. Farley records in his family history that Leafdale was named as such due to the finding of a fossilised leaf in the region. Samuel Farley, after attempting unsuccessfully to purchase land at Cecil Plains in 1910, later moved on to the Wondai district to acquire two blocks of land.¹⁵

Cecil Lyle Farley was another of the first settlers in the district, arriving in Queensland with his parents in 1911 to take up land at Leafdale. After his marriage to Miss Constance Maud Onions, he moved to Mondure where he selected a property on Barambah Creek in order to begin experimenting with market gardening. So successful was this venture that he subsequently purchased another property at Stonelands where he excavated two large dams for irrigation. He died, aged sixty-two years, at the Wondai Hospital, on Friday 5 June, 1959, leaving a widow, seven sons and two daughters.¹⁶

A. Pickels was a leading local dairy farmer who, in 1928, was chosen to be among a select group of Queenslanders to represent the state on the official 'Empire Farmers' Tour', this tour was arranged through the British National Union and, in addition to carrying out an extensive inspection of British farming regions, was also scheduled to meet with the King. In 1928 the press reported:

Coming from Rosewood in 1907, Mr Pickels acquired his present holding of *Blacklands*, commencing as a dairyman and stud-breeder in a small way with a few foundation stock ... He is now the owner of approximately 340 head of registered I.M.S. cattle, being the largest number of Herd Book dairy stock owned by any one person in the Commonwealth. It is also improbable that any other stud master can claim such a list of show-ring successes. Hundreds of championships throughout the state have been won by representatives of this herd and numerous milking competitions have been won, and records for production have been established. Mr Pickels has always been a keen exponent of this good Australian breed and is a member of both the Queensland and Australasian I.M.S. Councils. In addition to the 340 acres of *Blacklands*, with its beautiful homestead and modern equipment, a further valuable property of 180 acres at Leafdale is used as a paddock for stock other than milkers, and near Proston township a huge property of 980 acres is also under Mr Pickels' ownership, part being cleared and utilised for dairying under the share system.¹⁷

Other regional representatives on the historic British tour included P.P. Falt and M.P. Nielsen (also reported as Neilsen). Falt arrived in Australia from Denmark aboard the Orient liner *Cusco* on 18 April, 1900. Two years after his arrival he selected land at Crows Nest but found that the district was not to his liking and in 1908 he purchased land at Charlestown which he held until 1912 when he selected 300 acres at Cushnie where he began the *Ryfield Friesian Stud*. He was also Queensland inspector for the Friesian Cattle Club of Australia.¹⁸ M.P. Nielsen was a prominent farmer in the Home Creek region who had arrived in Australia aboard the same ship as P.P. Falt. A native of Jutland, Nielsen selected land at Home Creek in July 1900, just three months after his arrival in Australia. Nielsen was trained as a butter expert in a country renowned for its butter production. In addition to his holding at Home Creek he also had property interests in the Tingooora region.¹⁹

One local man who led an interesting life was James Swan, a Scot who was born at Dunfermline in Scotland on 17 December, 1842. Swan was reputed to have led a difficult early life and was working at the age of eleven years for a wage of ten pence per week. He left Scotland at the age of thirteen, sailing aboard the ship *Marco Polo* for Australia, and landing on 17 February, 1855. He worked firstly on a farm in the Wangaratta district where, at the age of seventeen years, he won the title of champion ploughman for the Wangaratta region. After a few years in other kinds of employment he selected land at Rutherglen and married Ann Morrison on 13 February, 1870. In 1879 the couple left Rutherglen and moved to Eskdale where they selected land on Little Snowy Creek. While at this property Swan discovered gold on his land and he worked the claim for several years until the gold finally petered out. He then moved to a property in Victoria where he and his family lived until they came to Queensland in 1910. While still retaining his interests in Victoria, he purchased 480 acres at Chelmsford with a further 160 acres forest block, and here the family remained. James Swan died at the Wondai Hospital in October, 1933, his wife having predeceased him by approximately eleven years.²⁰

Cowan Keys was a particularly well known local personality who was very active in the dairy industry, he was born in the Bega district of New South Wales on 27 December, 1877, and later moved to Queensland with his wife and young family, settling at Kings Creek near Clifton where he commenced farming lucerne and sheep. In about 1906 he left the Darling Downs and travelled to Murgon where he purchased land at Cloyna and was one of the first to carry out large scale scrub clearing in that district. He later acquired land at Wondai and Tingoorra. He soon afterwards began the breeding of stud dairy cattle and started a Jersey stud at *Sunnymeade*, bringing the nucleus of his herd up from Bega. He took an active part in producers' organisations, was a member of the Queensland Farmers' Union, a foundation member of the show society at Wondai and represented Division One on the Wondai Shire Council. As may be seen elsewhere in this history he was one of the primary movers behind the establishment of a butter factory at Wondai and served on its board, he later also established a Hereford stud at Condamine. Cowan Keys died at the Kingaroy Hospital in 1949.²¹

Albert James Ferris was one of the early selectors at Greenview, he and his wife, Regatha Maud Ferris (nee Perkins), and their four daughters and three sons, arrived in Wondai in 1921, purchasing a 160 acres property at Greenview which they operated as a dairy farm but also growing crops such as maize, peas, and, during the war years, navy beans. Two sons were born to the family after their arrival in the Wondai region. Bert Ferris, as he was more popularly known, was born in Casino, he later operated a milk vending business in the district.²²

The Hansen name is synonymous with the early settlement of the Wondai region. The family patriarch, Rasmus Jorgen Hansen, was born on 13 February, 1835, in the parish of Kliplev, province of Sønderjylland in southern Denmark. On 13 September, 1860, he married Sinnet Christine Tychsen and the couple had seven children, six of whom survived to adulthood. The press later reported: 'Family tradition has it that Rasmus Hansen was required to take up arms five times during his life in Europe, twice for Denmark and three times for Prussia. It was because of this constant turmoil that he eventually decided that he and his family would join the great exodus to the New World. One of the six children, Peter Hansen, was the first to arrive in Australia circa September 1879, he was then just sixteen years of age. He was followed by Asmus Hansen in 1883 and the following year the remainder of the family emigrated, arriving at Brisbane on 25 August, 1884. Of the six children who emigrated five of them came to live on the South Burnett, these included Peter, Doras, Asmus, Andrew and Fred.'²³

Andrew Hansen's wife, Emma, was one of Mondure region's early settlers. Emma Hansen was born at Fairney View on 14 February, 1873, the daughter of Joachim Schumann and his wife Anna Katrina (nee Ehrich). She was baptised in the Lutheran Church at Fairney View on 23 March, 1873, by the Lutheran pastor, E. Heiner, who also later confirmed her. On 9 May, 1894, at the age of twenty-one, she married Andrew Christian Hansen, the ceremony again being performed by Pastor Heiner. The couple had a large family but three of their children died in infancy. After spending over thirteen years in the Fairney View region the family moved to the Wondai district on 29 February, 1908, selecting land at Mondure which was later carried on by the youngest son. In 1954 the couple retired to Wondai. Andrew Hansen died on 3 July, 1959, aged eighty-eight years, and Emma lived for a further five years, dying quietly at the Wondai Hospital, aged ninety-one years, on Wednesday 22 July, 1964.²⁴



Group of Hansens, 1900. H.P. Hansen, Boobie; Asmus Hansen, Leafdale; Andrew Hansen, Mondure; F.A. Hansen, North Mondure.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 2691/P3(b)



Ernie Bielke's steam tractor and corn sheller on Peter Hansen's farm 'Good Hope' in 1927.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 1340/P2.

John Hetherington came from the Richmond River district of New South Wales. His father was a pioneer of the dairying industry in the Richmond region. Hetherington arrived in Wondai circa 1909 and settled at Mount McEuen, a press report of him later stating: 'In recent years (late 1920s) he has produced cream to the annual value of over £1000. His early struggles in a newly opened district involved the rearing of a family of young children. However, he showed himself equal to the task. Proof is furnished by the fact that, having settled four sons on the land ... he has progressed sufficiently to harvest last year 1200 bags of corn, apart from the returns from his dairying.'²⁵

The prices of goods in Wondai during the town's formative years were particularly high, according to a visitor to the region, eggs were sold 'fresh' and 'stale', with twopence difference in the price per dozen. 'Fresh' oysters could be obtained, being railed down from Pialba, but as they were rather expensive these were considered something of a luxury. The people of that fledgling township did not want for entertainment, there were many travelling shows visiting the area on a regular basis. One of the favourites appears to have been a wild horse show named 'The Australian Buckjumpers', men and their horses who reportedly performed remarkable equestrian feats.

The first move to improve postal matters in Wondai was taken in 1909. Before that time postal business in Wondai had been transacted at the railway station but it was a somewhat *pis aller* affair and the Farmers' Progress Association sought separate control. A Mr Eva was appointed postmaster, the post office operated from a building rented from J.A. Slater. Agitation that took place later resulted in the construction of a more substantial post office that was officially opened in 1910. Eva also was the first postmaster to assume control in that office.²⁶

Farmers were evidently doing quite well, one prominent early settler, Andrew McLucas, telling a journalist that he had recently taken 1100 bags of corn from a relatively small area of land. There was work for all, indeed, labour appears to have been in short supply and some of the larger landholders were having difficulty finding workers to help them with their crops, even with the availability of labourers from the Barambah aboriginal settlement.²⁷

One of the earliest businesses to become established in the town was A.V. and C. Boisen. A report of the Boisen operation, published in 1930, claimed: 'The oldest established business in Wondai was opened in a very small way by Mr A.V. Boisen with very little capital and with little experience and with a wealth of enthusiasm for the future of the district ... later, Mr C. Boisen joined his brother and the firm of A.V. and C. Boisen was launched. For some years the firm had the hard fight that is generally the lot of a young business in a pioneering farming district with

its fluctuating seasons and property values. However, with close attention to business, and with a view to giving their many patrons the benefit of keen buying, Messrs Boisen are today firmly established as an important trading concern ... (with) stocks of general and household, drapery, clothing, mercery, footwear and furniture ... With a view to widening their scope Messrs A.V. and C. Boisen acquired the Model Store in 1925.²⁸

This brief paragraph did little to get to the heart of the Boisen saga in the South Burnett, nor did it portray the colourful personalities who made up the family and who managed to create what later became an important retail business in Wondai serving residents throughout the shire and beyond.

The Boisen story begins with Niels Peter Boisen, a Danish immigrant and his brother, Peter, who also emigrated to the colony. Niels Peter arrived in Australia circa 1870, his brother having come sometime previously. Niels Peter joined Peter in a farming venture at New Farm and later at Childers. Niels Peter subsequently married Anna Dorothea Carlsen. Family descendant Neil Woodgate later wrote: 'The Boisen family paid for the passage of the Carlsen family, close friends from the same village, to travel to Australia from Denmark. Niels Peter married the Carlsen daughter, Anna Dorothea, when she was sixteen. Three Carlsen daughters died from scurvy en-route to Australia.'²⁹

The couple continued farming in that region but as Anna was suffering ill health, they decided that a cooler climate might suit them and they moved to Tasmania where they took over an apple orchard in an area that later became a suburb of Hobart. While in this region they had a daughter whom they named Susan Tasmania Boisen. They returned finally to Childers where they became sugar cane farmers and where they had a large family.

Hearing of the opening of lands in the South Burnett region where good quality farming properties were then becoming available, Niels Peter and his eldest son, Arthur, travelled to the South Burnett to assess the region for its potential. Neil Woodgate later wrote: 'When Alfred was sixteen he travelled from Childers to the South Burnett on a bullock dray with Niels Peter and his brother. Alf said that in many places there were no tracks and that they had to cut their way through the scrub. He mentioned an occasion when he was left alone guarding the dray overnight when Niels Peter and his brother went off to obtain provisions from a settler's homestead.



Wondai, new post and telegraph office, 1911–1912.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 2072/P4.

During the night he was approached by aborigines. He was frightened. After satisfying their curiosity the aborigines went away. No words were spoken.³⁰

Once they realised that the opportunities of further development on the South Burnett were almost limitless, they decided to move the family south. Arthur was the first to arrive and to select land at Tingoora at what became known as Boisen's Hill, a beautiful site on the peak of some high country between Tingoora and Greenview. This land was taken up circa 1901, prior to the arrival of the rail line at Wondai.

In 1902, Charles, Arthur's brother, travelled from Childers to Goomeri by train, Goomeri then being the terminus, the rail line having been opened there in August that year. From Goomeri he walked along the rail line cuttings to the site where Wondai was in the process of being established, at that time little more than a scattering of tents and shanties. Mick Boisen, Charles' son, later stated: 'It always intrigued me, the clarity and detail of his memory. He said that when he got to Barambah Creek they were building the bridge, he looked down and it was a cold morning and the breath of the workers formed a halo around their heads, and they said to him: "How far are you going?" and he told them, they then said: "Well hang on a minute we're just due to have a cup of tea and you might as well join us," which he did.'³¹

Charles later continued his walk to Tingoora to join his brother and to carve out their selection from the scrub. Later, Niels Peter and the remainder of the family also came to the South Burnett, travelling by train from Childers they selected land near Tingoora.

Arthur subsequently became a prominent Tingoora personality, carrying on a dairy farm and becoming one of the first people to grow peanuts in that area, an endeavour in which he was particularly successful. He was well known as a water diviner and would assist locals in the discovery of water on their properties, a service he offered free of charge. He was also secretary of the Tingoora Farmers' Progress Association (of which Niels Peter was president).

There were, in fact, two men in the Wondai district who were involved in water divining at that time, both early selectors. One was Arthur Boisen of *Bonnie View*, the other was J.M. Anderson, and there was no love lost between the two competitors. Letters from both men to various newspapers appear to indicate that these men were capable of successfully divining for water, each experiencing both successes and failures.³²

Arthur Boisen died in May 1961, aged eighty years, and was buried at the Wondai cemetery.³³

One of the first women settlers in the Tingoora district was Maggie Raine Boisen, the wife of Arthur Boisen. Maggie Boisen was born at Gympie and at an early age went to Toronto, Lake Macquarie, New South Wales, later returning to Wondai with her aunt and uncle, Mr and Mrs James Alexander Slater, when the railway was under construction and when Wondai was little more than a tent township. The press subsequently reported that Maggie Boisen: '... possessed a wonderful personality and was intensely fond of music, singing and dancing, and enjoyed most of all the companionship of friends around the piano, singing good old songs, including many of the popular hymns. To be loved by everybody won for her a title which characterised her life amongst the early settlers. In the year 1907 she was married to Arthur Boisen, of Tingoora, one of the pioneers of the district, and proved a loyal and devoted wife and mother, and soon made many friends in that district, and was ever ready to assist in public life. During World War One she worked hard for Patriotic and Red Cross and Comforts Funds; also in entertaining soldiers from military hospitals around Brisbane. She was noted for her hospitality and portrayed a spirit of self-sacrifice in which she found her greatest pleasure.'³⁴

Maggie Boisen died at the Tingoora residence of her daughter, Mrs E.S. Vickery, on Sunday 18 April, 1948, and was later interred at the Wondai cemetery.³⁵

Niels Boisen had four sons, Arthur, the eldest, Charles, Alfred Victor and William, and of these, two sons, Alfred Victor and Charles, were to become well known in the Wondai district for their business enterprise. It was these two men who were contracted initially to the Kilkivan Shire Council to clear the main street of Tingoora, work that was done by hand. After working on the land for a while, Alfred decided that he would open a business. With the arrival of the rail line it was evident that Wondai was becoming a busy regional centre. Descendant Neil Woodgate later wrote:

Alf (Alfred Victor) showed me the first sixpence he ever made and told me the story of his going into business. The sons worked for their father, Niels Peter, on his dairy farm for keep (deferred wages). When Alf was nineteen, a dispute erupted between Alf and Niels Peter. Mid winter, Alf wanted shoes to protect his bare feet from the morning frosts when gathering the cows for milking. Niels Peter refused and said that Alf was soft. Alf demanded, and was given, his back pay, fifty pounds. With the money he purchased a tent, a trestle and some drapery items. He set up the tent on the bullock track leading to the sawmill with the trestle out front and singlets, handkerchiefs and socks laid out neatly for sale. He made his first sale to a bullocky. A singlet and a pair of socks, price sixpence.³⁶

A.V. Boisen later graduated to a building where he was assisted by his sister, Martha. Alfred erected a sign over the store which read 'A.V. Boisen'. He was a universal provider and sold boots and shoes, drapery, some men's wear and other general items. Martha Boisen proved to be a competent purchaser of stock with a sound understanding of business practices and principles. She left the business after about a year in order to be married to Harry Compagnoni, the first shire clerk at Wondai. At around this time Charles Boisen was continuing with his farming interests, growing maize that was harvested and threshed with the help of labourers drawn from the Barambah settlement. However, this venture was not financially successful, the crop was selling for less than it had cost to grow and harvest. With this experience behind him, Charles decided that he could do no worse in general business and therefore moved into Wondai to commence business in partnership with his brother Alfred Victor. The brothers had little money and no experience of general business but what they lacked in experience and finances they made up for in enthusiasm and a willingness to work long hours. At that time the Maryborough Mercantile Co-operative was the leading business in Wondai but within a few years of the Boisen's store being started the co-operative closed down and the Boisen business was able to expand into the vacated premises. After a while of operating as universal providers the brothers decided they could do better by specialising in drapery and allied lines. In addition to selling ready-made items, millinery and drapery they also employed seamstresses and a tailor, advertising that the company was: 'The Drapers of the South Burnett.'

The patriarch of the family and the original Danish immigrant, Niels Peter Boisen, died in March, 1922, aged seventy-one years.³⁷

By this time another branch store had been opened at Murgon and the business was doing reasonably well — certainly well enough to provide a modest living for both families, when Alfred became ill and was hospitalised at Gympie leaving Charles in charge of the business. It was probably at this time that the Murgon store was closed.

Descendant Sybil Woodgate later wrote:

In its heyday, people travelled by horse and sulky from the Kilkivan area to shop from the extensive and varied range of A.V. and C. Boisen. In addition to a dressmaker and tailor, a ladies' milliner was employed. In the early days Alf was critically ill with typhoid fever, supposedly caught from the open drains. He spent some time in the Gympie Hospital, the nearest, and always said he owed his life to the outstanding care and devotion of the matron there. In due course both Alf and Charles married, the former having a family of two sons and three daughters and the latter a son and a daughter. Alf was actively interested in public affairs, amongst other things being a member of the first Wondai Band, the Chamber of Commerce and the Wondai Show Society.³⁸

Carvosso's store, a general drapery business in Wondai, was another business that was in direct competition with the Boisen operation. When this store finally closed down, Alfred and Charles believed they could improve their business by opening another store at the Carvosso site on the opposite side of the railway line and they purchased the building. Charles remained in the original shop while Alfred moved down to the new business that was known as the Model Store, the two stores still being operated in partnership. For a while these businesses remained viable but as time passed it became obvious that there was not sufficient trade in the town to warrant the running of both stores. The original store building was owned by James Slater, while the brothers owned the bottom store on the opposite side of the rail line. Charles now became ill and was forced to undergo a major operation, taking him from the business for three or four months. Mick Boisen later wrote:

Alfred was now placed in a very difficult position. He had the responsibility of the two stores, each with its own special problems during a period of difficult trading. He had to face the reality that his brother might not be able to resume his place in the firm and there was still the ever-pressing need for store amalgamation. A decision had to be made. Alfred therefore took what must be regarded as the logical course, closing the original store, moving all its stock to the second building and auctioning all the slow moving stock. The name Model Store was replaced with A.V. and C. Boisen. When Charles made his recovery and returned to business life he was presented with a *fait accompli*. The move did not cause even the slightest animosity, for this most remarkable partnership, which spanned a complete lifetime, was characterised by mutual respect.³⁹

During the Second World War the store and some of the stock were destroyed by fire. The fire started at a dentist's surgery, the dentist had left a steriliser operating while he went to pay his rates and the item of equipment ignited, setting fire to the building. The fire quickly spread to adjacent buildings which included seven shops, there was little to be done as there was no water supply or fire-fighting unit at Wondai. Almost all the stock was saved by soldiers who were then stationed in the region, a bren-gun carrier was driven through the windows and a human chain of soldiers was formed to carry goods from the burning building. The stock was deposited in the street and was later taken to a garage on the site where Boisen's subsequently carried on trading. Unfortunately that evening some of the stock was looted from the garage. The store had been insured but not sufficiently to cover the cost of rebuilding which was, in any case, not permitted during war time.⁴⁰

The garage to where the stock was taken had been used by the Department of Forestry to store charcoal for the gas producers that were used to power vehicles during the petrol rationed years of the war. The fine dust from the charcoal, coupled with the grease left in the old garage, ruined much of the stock that had not been looted following the fire. The brothers then set about



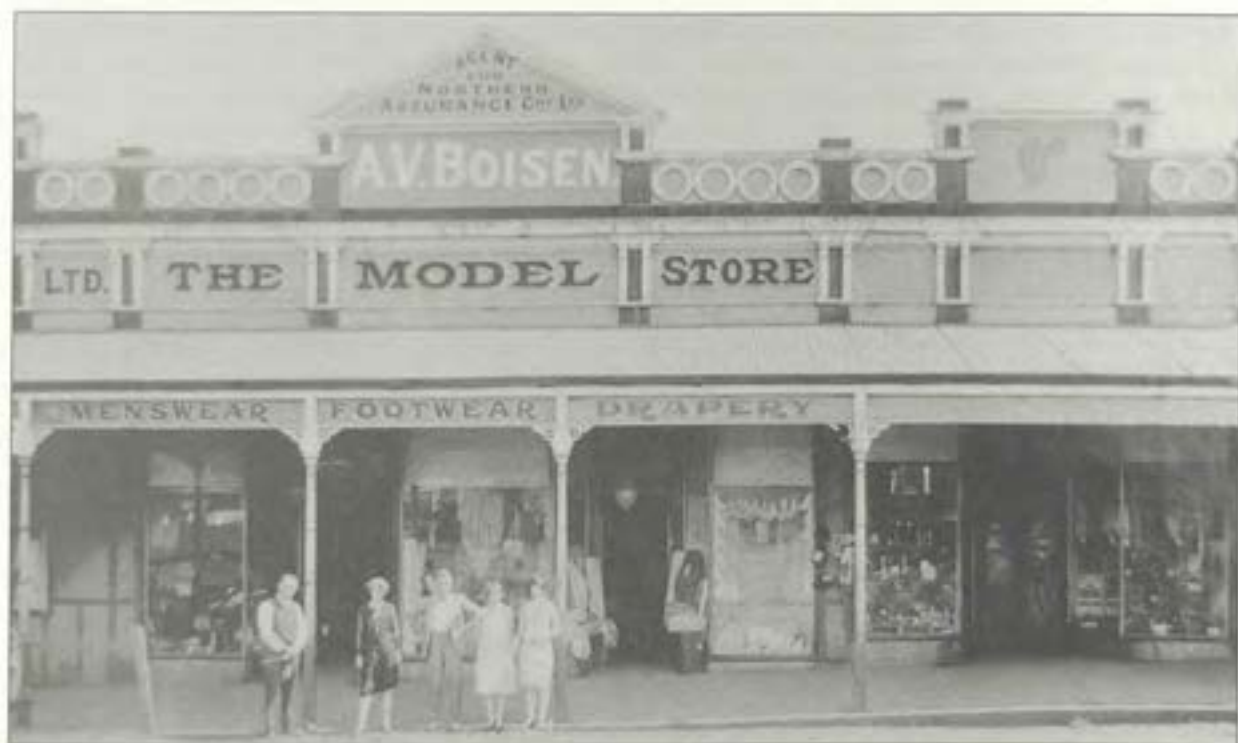
The staff of Boisen's store. Alfred Boisen on left, Charles Boisen second from right.

Source — M. Boisen collection.

salvaging what they could from the damage and they re-opened their business in the garage after employing a former Swedish ship's carpenter named Ted Jonson to line the building and to carry out other alterations necessary to make the building suitable for the purpose. This building was, initially at least, only considered to be temporary accommodation, however, after the war the brothers realised that the business was functioning quite well from the garage premises and they decided to remain in that location as there was no pressing need for them to relocate at that time. The brothers had evidently planned to eventually move, as Mick Boisen later wrote: 'The firm had purchased other premises, however, the idea of someone having to relinquish their premises for them to move into was very difficult for the brothers to accept. It was possible too that such a change could have resulted in the loss to the town of an important business. A.V. and C. Boisen therefore accepted the situation in a kind of "wait and see what happens" basis.'⁴¹

Alfred Victor Boisen became well known in the region due to his publications outlining business and financial reforms. These publications: *The Key to Unlock Prosperity and Progress in Australia*, and *An Essential Primary Production Credit Plan*, received volumes of publicity in the local press and were widely discussed at public meetings. Alfred Victor Boisen's health eventually failed him and he was forced to retire, he died in July 1961 when Charles acquired his share of the business. Both Alfred and Charles had been inseparable friends with a great love for, and commitment to the South Burnett and its people which spanned seventy years.

Mick Boisen, the son of Charles Boisen, began working in the family business in 1940. Charles Boisen died in June 1966 when Mick and his sister took control of the shop.⁴²



A.V. Boisen's store, Haly Street, Wondai, circa 1927. Staff: Mr A. Boisen, Miss Windsor, V. Cooper (Vi Smith), Eileen Hansen.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. 889/P4.

Among other early settlers and business people to the district was Francis Jones who arrived in 1907 and began a modest tool shop beside his home. Despite a fire in 1912 his business was so successful that he soon owned the town's sawmill and joinery, and was the town's undertaker. (For full details of Francis Jones and his sawmill see chapter 95).⁴³

The first undertaker, however, operated through Nosworthy's Emporium which was situated where the fire-brigade building and town library now stand. This was a substantial building called Broadway House, the business sold household furniture, glassware and china. Another early entrepreneur was Will Perkins who operated a carrying business with a solid-tyred truck.⁴⁴



Great fire of Wondai. 5 May, 1912. The building on the right is the Hotel Cecil, F. Driberg, general carrier, better known as Chummie, in front of the ruins with his horse and cart. Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 1326.

The 1912 fire devastated much of the central business district of the small township and seriously affected business growth in the region. The fire occurred on 5 May that year, many of the town's businessmen suffered the loss of both their buildings and stock.

The Queensland National Bank opened a branch at Wondai on 11 February, 1908, presumably in rented premises. Its first manager was H. Golden who served until 1919 when R.W. Cameron was appointed. That year the bank purchased half an acre of land costing £300 which fronted onto both Mackenzie and Pring Streets. In 1910 new offices were constructed on this land, the cost of construction being £750. Alterations were made to the bank residence in 1923, and in 1967 the land was subdivided and a block of subdivided land facing Pring Street was sold. In 1971 the bank building was remodelled at a cost of \$17,000. A branch of this bank was opened at Tingoora in 1909. This was finally closed in 1966.⁴⁵

Another of Wondai's early businessmen was its well known blacksmith, Jack Hauritz. The blacksmith's shop was an important centre during the region's formative years and blacksmiths were vital to the early transport industry in the state. In Wondai Jack Hauritz operated large premises opposite Huston's garage. Described as being a very competent tradesman, Jack Hauritz's callings included those of blacksmith, farrier, wheel right and coach builder. He employed up to twenty-three people and therefore played a significant role in the economic development of the town and district.

Another early businessman was Ian Macfarlane who became a well known public figure in the area, he was a foundation member of the Wondai Show Society, a highly respected auctioneer and estate agent, and is reputed to have operated one of the first motor vehicle agencies in the town. Ian Macfarlane specialised in stock sales, he constructed cattle sale yards near the butter factory and cattle were brought from all around the district to be auctioned there.

Harry Slade was another of the town's early and well known businessmen, he operated a large store at Slade's Corner near the present site of the roundabout, this store was the Universal Providers. Slade sold groceries, hardware and produce, and, indeed, he played an important role in the development of the town, providing employment and purchasing much of the produce grown in the region.⁴⁶

Over the years following first settlement in the Wondai district the growth of the township continued. The new state school was opened by the education minister, Mr J.W. Blair, at midday on Monday 15 September, 1913. The day had been declared a public holiday in Wondai and arrangements had been made for a huge picnic. The proceedings of the day commenced with a display of physical exercises. The children were then lined up into a square formation for the official opening. During the remainder of the day the people of Wondai enjoyed a programme of games, racing and other sports. The first head teacher was George Ward.⁴⁷



State School, Wondai.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref 3344/P4.



MacKenzie Street, from Scott Street.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref 1214.

In 1911 a traveller through the region remarked:

The visitor to Wondai cannot fail to be struck with the air of confidence evinced by the residents each and all of whom are satisfied that the district has a big future before it from an agricultural point of view. Within the past year or two the town itself has progressed by leaps and bounds, and at the present time the erection of new and substantial buildings are going on apace. The lately erected School of Arts, and the Q.N. Bank premises would do credit to towns of a more mature age and two brick stores in course of erection for Mr Slater, will further ornament Fitzroy Street which is situated on the southern side of the line. Beyond the business portion of this street on its eastern end are some pretty private residences and also in the streets intersecting it substantial business places are noticeable.

The State School, by the way, is rather small for the number of scholars attending it, but Mr Appel on his late visit promised that necessary additions would be made.

McEuen Street, on the North side of the line, can also boast of some nice buildings and business places, and in the streets beyond and intersecting it substantial private residences and business places are observable.

The cutting of the town in halves by the railway reserve is to be regretted, but it is too late to 'cry over spilt milk', to say the least of it the railway reserve is an unsightly block in its present condition. The station itself is a disgrace, the cream shed is only a box, and the goods shed, well, the least said about it the better.

The recent strike of sub-artesian water will also prove an important factor in the future of Wondai and the early erection of a butter factory should give a great impetus to the dairying industry of the district.⁴⁵



Shire residents at town allotments sale. Armstrong & Grayson Auctioneers. Mondure Hotel on the right.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 3348/P3(b).

The first show at Wondai was opened in 1911 by Digby Frank Denham, then state premier. The first show committee comprised of Cowan Keys, T.W. Hampshire, Andrew McLucas, A. Pickels, B. Cowan, Harry Compagnoni and I. Macfarlane.

The building known as the Memorial Hall and School of Arts at Wondai was opened by the state governor, Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Herbert John Chapman Goodwin, on Tuesday 10 January, 1928, although the institution had actually come into being in 1922 which saw fund-raising activities accumulate £1,600 to have the School of Arts building constructed. Sir John and his wife, Lady Goodwin, arrived by mail train on the evening of Monday 9 January, 1928, in order to open the new building. The hall had first been contemplated in 1918, before the end of the First World War, however, owing to drought the project was shelved, primarily for economic reasons. By 1928 the rural situation had improved dramatically and at the beginning of the year a building committee swung into action in order to have the hall constructed. One of the leading figures in the organisation of the project was J.A. Slater. The building was 106 feet by 41 feet, and included an attached supper room, a main hall with vestibule, two front rooms which were used as a library and reading room respectively and upstairs accommodation was provided for returned soldiers. Timber from the original Wondai School of Arts, which by that time had been demolished, was used in its construction, saving approximately £300 on costs. The total contract price for the building of the hall was £2600.⁴⁹



Opening of the Memorial Hall, Wondai, January 1928.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 1267.

On the morning of 10 January in company with Mr A. McLucas, the shire chairman and Mr W.C. Fuller shire clerk, and a number of other notables, the governor and his wife were taken on a guided tour of the region, enjoying morning tea at *Marshlands* homestead the guests of Mr and Mrs E.J. McConnel. During the return journey to Wondai it rained heavily, the governor's car became bogged and, according to a subsequent report: '... it was necessary for all hands to get out and push'. The report does not state whether or not the governor and his wife were included in the labouring party. Upon their final return to Wondai the official party was taken to the Hotel Cecil for lunch and the official opening was performed that afternoon.⁵⁰

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixty-three

The Railway Arrives and Wondai is Formed

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2. M/C. 23 September, 1909, p 4.
3. Petition for Establishment of Police Station at Wondai, Wondai Museum archives.
4. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 11.
5. Letter to Cr. Percy Iszlaub from Patricia Rowsell, dated 17 February, 1996, Wondai Museum archives.
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23. *The Murgon and District News*, 31 October, 1979, p 8. For the memoirs of Frederick Asmus Hansen, the younger brother of Peter and Asmus Hansen, see: file 1522/LCA2, Wondai Museum archives.
24. SBT. 20 August, 1964, p 8.
25. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 12.
26. Ibid, p 14.
27. M/C. 23 September, 1909, p 4.
28. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 12.
29. Notations to the author from Neil Woodgate, 1997.
30. Ibid.
31. Author interview with Mick Boisen, conducted at Wondai, 12 November, 1996.
32. M/C. 25 December, 1909, p 3.
33. Cemetery records, Wondai Shire Council archives.
34. SBT. 6 May, 1948, p 4.
35. Ibid.
36. Notations to the author, from Neil Woodgate, 1997.
37. Cemetery records, Wondai Shire Council archives.
38. Notations to the author from Sybil Woodgate, 1997.
39. Appendix to letter to the author from Mick Boisen, dated 8 February, 1997.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Cemetery records, Wondai Shire Council archives and author interview with Mick Boisen, conducted at Wondai, 12 November, 1996.
43. *The Murgon and District News*, 28 January, 1980, p 8.
44. Ibid.
45. Wondai Branch, N.A.B. Group Archives.
46. Mick Boisen to author, August 1997.
47. M/C. 18 September, 1913, p 8.
48. *Wondai Times*, 29 April, 1911, p 4.
49. M/C. 11 January, 1928, p 8.
50. Ibid.

Local Government at Wondai

The Divisional Boards Act was passed in 1879 creating two types of local authorities, municipalities and divisional boards, and immediately following the creation of the act there was a flurry of activity in creating the various divisional boards, particularly in the areas contiguous to Brisbane. That year the Divisional Board of Baramba was constituted covering an area over a substantial region including the site where the shire of Wondai would later be formed.

In 1902 the Local Authorities' Act was passed, divisional boards were superseded by three types of local authorities, city, town and shires.

As closer settlement brought larger numbers of people to the region, the administrative control of distant local authorities proved quite unsatisfactory, and in October 1905 the Wondai Farmers' Progress Association was formed. From this association a New Shire Committee was elected which succeeded in obtaining the gazettal of the Wondai area as a third division of the Kilkivan Shire.



First Council, Shire of Wienholt. H.J. Compagnoni, shire clerk; H. Short, T.E. Campbell, J. McLucas, N.F. Osborne, S.S. Fenwick, W.G. Armstrong. Seated: G. Hives, P.J. Burns, (chairman); R.L. Burns, Archibald Blue. (Blue was not a member of the first council, but merely a media representative present on the day this photograph was taken).

Source — Wondai Shire Council.



G. McMicken, shire clerk from 1914–1927.

Source — M. Boisen collection

The first Wondai Progress Association included Patrick James Burns (president), J.A. Slater, N.F. Higgins, M. Higgins, H.A. Davey, W. Davey, W. Howitt, and J.F. Alexander (honorary secretary). The New Shire Committee consisted of J.A. Slater (chairman), Patrick James Burns, W.G. Armstrong, H.J. Compagnoni, J. McLucas, and W. Howitt.

This system of representation continued for several years, however, dissatisfaction with conditions created further agitation. Many Wondai residents believed that they were not receiving fair representation and agitation for separation increased dramatically. Finally, delegates of the Farmers' Progress Association waited on the home secretary, J.T. Bell, (of Jimbour) who granted the request for a new shire. Wienholt Shire was finally constituted from the shires of Kilkivan, Nanango, Rawbelle and Wambo with Wondai as its centre, the area covered 2097 square miles. The Order-in-Council appeared in the *Government Gazette* of 25 December, 1909, to take effect as from 1 January, 1910. Elections were announced for 28 January, 1910, with H.J. Compagnoni as returning officer.¹

The first meeting of the council of the Shire of Wienholt was held in Hodge's Hall, Wondai, at noon on 2 March, 1910. The divisional representatives were: No 1 Division: Patrick James Burns, R.L. Burns, and G.H. Hives. Number 2 Division: S.S. Fenwick, T.E. Campbell and Henry Short. Number 3 Division: W.G. Armstrong, N.F. Osborne and J. McLucas. Patrick James Burns was elected chairman and Harry Jasper Compagnoni was appointed shire clerk.²

In 1914 the name was changed to Wondai Shire and in the same year Number One Division was made into the Murgon Shire. The name of the shire was, apparently, never acceptable to that first council, and although it was proposed at the first council meeting to hold over discussions concerning the name for the following six months, there were actually two proposals tabled, the first came from Cr. W.G. Armstrong who proposed the name of Mondure, the second came from Cr. P.J. Burns who preferred the name of Wondai. A motion was then carried that the clerk write to the home secretary, '... urging (the) change of name to Mondure.' It was also decided at that first meeting that: '... steps be taken to erect Council offices as soon as practicable at a cost not to exceed £150.'³ Despite this the name of Wienholt was finally changed by Order-in-Council to the Shire of Wondai. The last meeting of the Wienholt Shire Council took place on 29 July, 1914.⁴

The Wondai Shire Council later published:

The first shire clerk was appointed to attend his office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Within six months he was working six days each week, with an assistant, whilst the council could not transact its business in two full days each month, so great was the change, demand, and development ...

A poundkeeper/herdsman at the same salary as the clerk, was a man of no little importance, in his duties of reporting and negotiating the removal of illegal fences and gates on roads, removing squatters from reserves, collecting wheel tax from reluctant teamsters, and impounding the straying stock ... He was constantly the centre of trouble and concern to any member with divided loyalties.

Hours of deliberation produced a set of local laws within the first twelve months including the Sunday prohibition against the menace of the traction engines being driven on public roads ...

At first there was no jealously guarding of territorial boundaries, but rather the occasion for festivities if the area could be lessened. Acting on the report of a rumour, the Wienholt Shire in 1910 lodged an 'Emphatic and Powerful' protest against additional areas in two western parishes being proclaimed within.

Late in 1911, however, the township areas of Wooroolin, Wondai, and Murgon, were stirred to activity because of neglect and the predominance of rural representatives on the council. Wooroolin claimed dissatisfaction with control of Wooroolin dam; Wondai Chamber of Commerce, in the first show of its teeth, complained of the 'soup' water supply from Dingo Creek and the appalling state of town streets where 69 wheeled vehicles had produced a Saturday morning quagmire; Murgon town was demanding a street improvement loan of £750; Winderera Progress Association served some harsh criticism of their road at the Devil's Elbow and of council inefficiency.

Wooroolin was promised improvements to its dam, Wondai was given its first acetylene gas street lights. Murgon town streets were the cause of the first loan indebtedness ... but Winderera was told that 'tom foolery such as in their demand would be the cause of inefficiency, if any.'

On the 12th January, 1912, the Wooroolin section of the Shire was excised with parts of Nanango Shire to form the new Kingaroy Shire. Wienholt Council felt that the reduced area of the Shire was now more suitable for consolidation and valiant efforts were made in this direction. Efforts were made to change the name of Wienholt to Mondure Shire or Wondai Shire.

New developments were now taking place in the Murgon division of the Shire and also at Proston, a comparatively new part of the Shire. The council was busily engaged in opening roads for the rural community, appeasing Wondai Chamber of Commerce with the promise of a town well and tanks. The growing community at Murgon settlement was becoming restive and threatening separation, whilst the council struck its rate levy at 2½d. in the £ and secured from its bank an increase to £750 of its overdraft.

In August, 1913, at a cost of £173, Wondai was given its first town water supply in the form of a well, mill and tank. The settlement of Murgon actively campaigned for separation from the Shire. Their minority representation in Crs. Sheppard, Lancaster and Heading, sustained a momentum of pressure which resulted in the secession of their part of the area for the creation of the Shire of Murgon, on the 16th January, 1914 ...

The name of Wienholt Shire was now changed to the Shire of Wondai, with an area of 1370 square miles ...

In the period 1915 to 1925, the intervention of World War One, with the following years of economic depression, saw only little progress in the Shire area.

Prickly Pear still claimed large tracts of country and the council was constantly reminded of its duty to eradicate the pest, but retorted to the Government that its leasehold lands should first be cleared ...

This period of local government saw the development of farmers' progress associations in all parts of the Shire, the establishment of the Wondai District Hospital, a Bowling Club Committee on the 24th June, 1914, the Red Cross and Patriotic Committee on the 21st August, 1914, the Wondai Jockey Club on the 22nd April, 1915, and the Wondai School of Arts on the 2nd February, 1914.⁵

The first shire clerk of the new council, H.J. Compagnoni, was an interesting character, in 1930 the press reported of him: 'One of Mondure's first settlers who identified himself with the early movements in the Wondai district, Mr H.J. Compagnoni, rendered splendid service in the following offices: hon. secretary of the Wondai/Proston Railway League, hon. secretary of the Wondai New Shire Committee, clerk of the first Wondai Shire Council; president of the Memorial School of Arts. He also was secretary of the A.P. and I. Society for which he did yeoman service for a number of years. Mr Compagnoni was actively associated with every movement which had for its objective the advancement of the town and district, and was acclaimed the "soul of honour". He was paid a high tribute when, in 1929, on leaving the district, he was entertained in the Memorial Hall by 200 district representatives, and in appreciation of his great help to the district, was made the recipient of a substantial presentation.'⁶

In 1988 H.J. Compagnoni's niece, who also later worked at the council, gave us further information concerning her uncle, writing:

He was born in Sydney, Grandfather Compagnoni came from Switzerland and settled in Sydney sometime around the 1860s. Harry had a good education and at first he worked in a solicitor's office in Sydney but came to Queensland about 1906 or 1907 and pioneered a scrub farm property 10 miles from Wondai in partnership with his brother George.

Harry left the land some years later and put his half on a share basis with somebody and took up the position of first shire clerk to the Wondai Shire Council ... Later, Harry started up his own business as auctioneer and commission agent in Wondai and ran a very successful business for many years. Then he moved to Brisbane and some years later retired there where he died in approximately 1961 ...

My father George Compagnoni served as a councillor for Wondai Shire for some years before he died in 1938.⁷

George Edward Compagnoni was certainly another of the region's more outstanding characters. Selecting land at Chelmsford during the region's formative years, George Compagnoni developed the holding into a fine dairy and general farming property stocked with cattle of a high standard. His original holding was the usual surveyed block of 160 acres, but through lengthy endeavour he managed to increase this holding to approximately four hundred acres. He was heavily involved in many community events and in 1933, following repeated requests, he accepted the nomination for the position of councillor on the Wondai Shire Council representing Number One Division. In the next elections he topped the poll and at the following elections was returned unopposed. In 1938 he was granted leave of absence from the council on account of ill health. He was taken to Brisbane by air on 27 May, 1938, in order to receive specialist medical treatment, however, he died at a private hospital in Brisbane in June that year.⁸



Original shire office, Bramston Street. Mr G. McMicken shire clerk, Miss May Riedy, secretary.

Source — M. Boisen collection.

Town Hall and Shire Council Chambers

Plans for a new brick town hall embodying the council offices were discussed at a meeting of the shire council in February 1938, although there was some dissent, especially from Councillor O'Rourke, who stated that the council chambers then occupied by the council were quite adequate

and that no new offices or chambers need be constructed. Architects for the proposed design were Lucas and Cummings of Brisbane who submitted an estimate of costs at £7825, their own fees being £475 (although this was later to rise substantially). In addition to the council offices and hall the building would also house a library, reading room and a diggers' room.⁹



Early Wondai Shire Council office with extension.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref 1357/P4.

The requirement for a new town hall had come about gradually. The first small town hall, a simple wooden structure, was quite adequate for its time but as the town had grown it finally became evident that the hall could no longer adequately serve the growing population. On picture show nights there was rarely sufficient seating and in order to solve the problem the construction of a gallery had been suggested. An architect had inspected the premises and reported that the building was not structurally sound enough to support a gallery. The picture show proprietors also at that time made a request to the council that the operating box be put in order as it was too low for the purposes of proper projection. The council had approved the request but efforts to raise the box proved ineffectual, the box began bulging from the weight of the roof on it and it was considered quite unsafe. The press claimed that if any further attempts were made to move the box the roof would collapse. On 21 December, 1936, the School of Arts Committee made a formal application to the council to have a modern brick hall constructed, the council agreed to investigate the possibilities and appointed an architect to provide plans and estimates. Sketch plans for the new hall included seating for approximately 550 people and the dancing space would be considerably larger than that in the old hall. A new picture projection box would also be constructed. The suggested site was in what was then the railway yards, opposite the existing hall, there would be a supper room, kitchenette, stage and two dressings rooms. A public meeting to discuss the issue was called in March 1938 and despite some criticism the public approved of the scheme with only 10 dissentients in 250.¹⁰

The hall proposal moved closer to fruition in June that year when the council unanimously agreed to make an application to the Treasury for a loan of £8000 to cover the costs of its construction.¹¹

Tenders for the construction of the hall were opened by the council in February 1939, the lowest quotation of £7680 coming from the builder H. Neilson of Murgon.¹² However, Neilson soon afterwards withdrew his tender claiming that an error of £1000 had been made and the next lowest tender, that of Baxter and Hargreaves of Brisbane for £9081, was recommended for acceptance.¹³ Lesleigh George Smith of Wondai was, however, later selected to complete the work, a contract was signed on 5 June, 1939, with a total cost of £9081.¹⁴

The construction of the hall continued for the following ten months. It was officially opened by F.W. Bulcock, minister for agriculture and stock, on Friday 19 April, 1940. The official opening took place at 3 p.m. followed by a grand ball, the first held in the new hall, at 7 o'clock that evening.¹⁵

Some Personalities of Local Government



P.J. Burns, chairman of the Wienholt Shire Council, 1910.
Source — Wondai Shire Council.

Patrick James Burns

The first chairman of the Wondai Shire Council, Patrick James Burns, was the son of a southern wheat farmer and was born on 1 November, 1867, at Echuca, Victoria, a border town on the Murray River. His parents were Thomas and Margaret Burns who had come out from Ireland aboard the *Caduceus* in 1863. When he was nineteen years of age he and his brother, William Michael Burns, contracted for a number of irrigation schemes and railways that were then being constructed in the state. One of their major jobs was associated with the Murrumbidgee irrigation and water conservation projects. They later trekked across New South Wales to Queensland with their teams and plant and continued working in western Queensland. In 1893 P.J. Burns selected a grazing property at Roma and remained there for approximately five years. After leaving Roma he travelled extensively in the west and then to Rockhampton where he contracted for the Rockhampton-Bajool link in the main northern railway.

In 1904 P.J. Burns married Nora Barrett, the daughter of John Barrett of Midgee, Rockhampton. The following year the couple came to Wondai where they selected the property they called *Cherrywood*. During the first few years of his tenure at *Cherrywood*, P.J. Burns constructed the Kingaroy railway dam which was used to fill the water tenders of the steam engines. In addition to later being the first chairman of the council, he was also chairman of the first district progress association. P.J. Burns died in Brisbane, while attending the Brisbane Exhibition, on the morning of Thursday 20 August, 1936, he was buried at the Wondai cemetery.¹⁶

P.J. Burns' brother, William Michael Burns, also remained in the district all his life. After extensive dam sinking operations at Boondooma he took up farming in the Murgon district at a property on the Oakdale-Boat Mountain road. He subsequently sold this property and purchased *Dangalalla* via Tingoorra on the Stuart River, circa 1922. While at Boondooma he had married Dorothea Gibson of Wondai. With the help of his family the property was developed into a dairy farm, the cream being transported twice weekly by buckboard to Tingoorra. In later years the farm was transformed into peanut growing and later still to grazing, building up a large herd of Herefords. W.M. Burns died at his home on 19 March, 1948, and was also interred in the Wondai cemetery.¹⁷

James Alexander Slater

James Alexander Slater was another of Wondai's shire chairmen and one of the earliest residents in the region. Slater was one of Wondai's first representatives on the Kilkivan Shire Council (1907–1910). He subsequently became president of the Wondai Show Society in its first five years of existence. He was chairman of the Wondai Shire Council in 1915 and again in 1917 and 1918.¹⁸

Slater, in addition to being involved in the hotel industry, selected a farm on the Greenview road. Over the years he became a very popular figure in the town, often recalling the early days when Wondai was little more than a tent township. He and his wife left Wondai during the latter part of the 1930s, moving to Brisbane. Mrs Slater predeceased him by about ten years and Slater himself died in Brisbane on 19 September, 1952, aged eighty-four years.¹⁹



J.A. Slater, chairman of the Wondai Shire Council, 1915, 1917-18.
Source — Wondai Shire Council.



Andrew and Amanda McLucas, 1916.
Source — John McLucas.

Andrew McLucas

Another of the very early settlers and elected officers of the council — a man who served two terms as chairman of the council — was Andrew McLucas, born at Ipswich on 10 September, 1864. He spent his youth at Millbong and married Manthilda Augusta Amanda Wieland at Ipswich in 1886. Several years later he selected a property at Greenview (subsequently owned by Councillor Percy Iszlaub). McLucas contracted to run a post office from the family home. He was Wondai's first representative on the Kilkivan Divisional Board and was later a foundation member of the Wondai Shire Council.²⁰

Andrew's son, John McLucas, later wrote:

John McLucas (snr) and his wife Sara Ann, came from Donegal, North of Ireland in about 1852.

They settled west of Ipswich near Purga. Their first five children failed to survive for reasons unknown to me. They reared five sons, William, Joseph, John, Andrew and Robert.

This part of history concerns the life of Andrew, more or less, born 1864. Andrew was five years of age when his father John died at the age of 34 years. A few years later his mother, Sara Ann, remarried. There being no school to go to at that time in that area, Andrew spent much of his time running with the black kids from the nearby black settlement chasing wallabies etc. The school was built in the area when Andrew was almost 14 years' old. Andrew only went to school for 3 months after that time.

For a short time, he and brother Joseph, helped their step-father working horse teams. The boys didn't get on well with the step-father so Joseph took Andrew out to the west, cattle droving, and working as station hands for a few years. They came back to the Minden area, where they met up with the Wieland girls. Joseph married Ann Wieland, and Andrew married Amanda Wieland in 1886.

Andrew and Amanda bought two small farms in the Boonah area. Andrew spent much of his time working for the council, doing road work, while Amanda did the dairying in a small

way. During the very severe drought in 1902, they lost all but one cow. Andrew and Amanda selected a 240 acre property each in the South Burnett in 1902. Andrew built a slab house in December 1902 and the family moved to the property in June 1903.

They named the farm *Greenview*. Andrew built the first timber house in the district in 1904, which became the receiving office of mail for the district until 1906. The school was built on 2 acres of land donated by Amanda McLucas in 1905. The school was known as the Greenview School. Andrew built a small house of tin on the corner adjoining the school grounds to house the first teachers. Miss Bowe was the first and later Miss Connors. About 1909, Amanda McLucas donated another 2 acres for a school house to be built. The first married teacher was Sam Bridges ...

Over the last about 15 years of my father's life, he suffered a good deal of illness. About 1917, he had kidney trouble, a form of Bright's Disease. He was receiving treatment from a herbalist in Brisbane. Later he had double pneumonia, he was very ill, and was not expected to live. That illness left him with a heart condition.

Later he had a lot of trouble with skin cancers. He had several trips to Brisbane for treatment. Early in October, (1932) he became very ill and was admitted to the Wondai Hospital. It was found that he was in need of major surgery, but the hospital doctor was away on holidays, so it became necessary to have him transferred to Brisbane. He had to go by train, which journey took all night. He was operated on about 9 a.m. on Wednesday, but owing to his heart condition, he did not survive the surgery, and passed away on that day ...²¹

In 1930 the press reported:

The shire of Wondai is governed by a council having as the chairman a man of strength in the person of Councillor A. McLucas. Councillor McLucas has spent the best years of his life in Wondai. His tenure of office on the governing body of the shire extends over 17 years; for ten years he has been chairman. He has set a fine example to his fellow councillors. He is jealous of the interest of his shire, and his service has been marked by impartiality. His main desire is to see that the shire is governed on progressive lines.

... In 1904 Councillor McLucas commenced dairying, consigning his cream to Maryborough. He was one of the first cream suppliers from the Wondai area. Mr Ellwood was representing a Maryborough mercantile firm and Councillor McLucas purchased from him a separator — which machine must have been the first, or one of the first, to come into the district. Settlers commenced in a short while to flock to the South Burnett and considerable acreage was taken up around the Wondai district. Busy scenes were general throughout the locality when scrub-felling and stumping was in full swing.

Maize was encouraged and it formed the principal crop for some years till dairying began to take precedence in farming activities. The first school was built at Wondai and the second was erected at Mondure, the latter being removed later to Leafdale. The Greenview School followed, but it was difficult to maintain an attendance of 12.

Councillor McLucas witnessed the rapid expansion of dairy farming. He saw the farm lands increase until about the beginning of the Great War the settlers were sufficiently ambitious to press for a butter factory at Wondai. The lack of fresh water, however, sounded the death-knell of their endeavours. Four or five bores were sunk but with little success, and the bottom dropped out of the proposal. After those early efforts it is pleasing to old settlers of Cr. McLucas' type to know that Wondai is now to be provided with a factory. They consider it is justified.²²

Andrew McLucas died in October 1932 and he was later honoured with the construction of a monument dedicated to his memory and in appreciation of the work he had carried out for the shire. The monument was constructed at what was known as Slade's Corner, at the intersection of the Bunya Highway, Scott and Haly Streets and was unveiled by J.B. Edwards M.L.A. on Saturday 5 October, 1935.²³ The monument was moved to the nearby Gordon McKell Park in 1987 as the original site was being prepared for the construction of a new roundabout. Andrew's wife, Amanda, died in July 1947.²⁴

Percival Harold Outridge

Percival Harold Outridge was elected to the position of shire chairman in 1933, three years after being elected to council, receiving an overwhelming majority of votes. Outridge, one of the leading lights of Wondai's public history, was a native of Ipswich, and after attending school and college in Victoria and Queensland he managed a pharmacy business at Gordonvale in north Queensland, a position he held for about twelve months, later moving to Wondai. Once in the small township he quickly realised that there was an enormous potential for growth and he rapidly became involved in the business and public affairs of the community. He was one of the strongest agitators for the construction of a butter factory and played a prominent part in the discussions that led up to the establishment of such a factory. He was chairman of the provisional directorate of the factory and later became president of the Wondai Chamber of Commerce. He was vice-president of the School of Arts Committee, president of the Wienholt Hospital Board and held many other positions with community organisations. Outridge was also one of the driving forces behind the introduction of electric light into the town.²⁵



Percival Harold Outridge.

Source — J. Case.

Arthur Cloudes Philps

The chairman who served on the council from 1940 to 1946 was Arthur Cloudes Philps, a native of Granya, Victoria, who was also one of the first instigators of the Wondai butter factory. Married to Agnes Swan, the couple spent some time in both Queensland and Victoria before returning to Queensland and settling in the Wondai district to commence dairy farming. After serving for approximately twelve months on the management committee of the butter factory he was elected to represent Wondai on the board of directors at Maryborough, a position he held for about twenty-one years. Philps had a forceful personality. During the difficult times of the Second World War he served as chairman of the Wondai Shire Council from 1940 to 1946. He was patron of the Wondai Town Band and held many other public positions although towards the end of his life he was forced to relinquish these positions due to ill health. On the evening of 3 October, 1951, Arthur Philps attended the annual meeting of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association which was held at Wondai. He returned home about eleven o'clock that night and retired before midnight, however, during the early hours of the morning he suffered a stroke and died before medical assistance could be summoned. He was sixty-nine years of age at the time of his death.²⁶

Lesleigh George Windmell Smith

A legend in the Wondai district was Lesleigh George Windmell Smith, a man who served as chairman of the Wondai Shire Council for thirty-four years. Les Smith was born in Brisbane on 7 July, 1906, the son of Mr and Mrs George Smith of Eagle Junction. He was educated in Brisbane and completed his carpentry apprenticeship there before travelling to Wondai in 1929 to construct the residence at Wheatlands School. During this time he met Amy Violet (Vi) Cooper and they married at the Jareh Baptist Church Brisbane on 22 April, 1933. Les Smith quickly gained a reputation as a builder and many of the brick buildings in the region were constructed by him, these include the Wondai Town Hall, the ambulance centres at both Wondai and Kingaroy, the Kingaroy post office, the Kingaroy Methodist Church, the famous Proston Anglican Church and the Murgon Hospital.



L.G.W. Smith, C.B.E., chairman of the Wondai Shire Council, 1948-82. Source — Wondai Shire Council.

Smith was appointed to the Wondai Shire Council in May 1945 and became chairman in May 1948. He led the council from the difficult years of the late forties to 1982 and also served on many other public bodies including the Wondai Chamber of Commerce, the Fire Brigade Board and the Hospital Board. His wife, Vi, also played an important role in community affairs, she was patron of the Wondai Show Society and was involved in other societies and associations such as the P. and C. Association, the women's golf club and the Girl Guides and Brownies Association.

The couple had three children, Gil, Joan and Beryl. Beryl Smith is herself a well known Wondai identity, the Wondai librarian, and the longest serving librarian in the state.²⁷

Les Smith received his second honour in the New Year's Honour's List of 1976 when, in addition to the O.B.E. awarded in 1970, he was awarded the C.B.E.²⁸ He died, aged seventy-six years, at the Chermiside Hospital in January 1983.²⁹

Amy Violet Smith also comes from an English background, the Cooper family history records:

John Rouse (Cooper) married Mary Ann Cousens in Manchester, England on 25 December, 1865 ...

Records reveal that John Rouse was born in Carrington near Boston on the east coast of England, and was married in Manchester on the west coast of England. His occupation is listed on certificates as a carpenter/joiner. Information passed down through the families tell of hardships, unimaginable social conditions, especially the scarcity of employment with the resultant financial dilemma ...

John Rouse; Mary Ann; John 15 years; Fanny 11 years; Nellie 9 years; Annie 5 years; and Sidney 3 years; sailed from Liverpool on the *Renfrewshire* on 12 October, 1883 ...

They had originally planned to sail to Sydney. The first encounter recalled was being struck by severe storms in the Bay of Biscay where a mast was lost. As John Cooper was a carpenter/joiner it is told that he was involved with the necessary repairs. In the vicinity of the Cape of Good Hope we were told of a fire on ship. Details of this event are not available to date. The story is then told that the *Renfrewshire* was caught in ice from sailing too far south and in fact they are reported to have sighted New Zealand, and sailed for Sydney only to be caught in severe storms. The account passed down reports that the *Renfrewshire* was completely demasted in Moreton Bay, and was towed into Brisbane. Records reveal that the landing took place on 27 January, 1884 ...

The eldest child, John, became a plumber by trade, which obviously was to take him to Gympie, as it is there that he married Eleanor Lloyd in 1900. They moved from Gympie to Nanango, then to Kingaroy where he worked for Stehbens Brothers Plumbing. In 1914 he moved with his family to Wondai, where he purchased a plumbing business.

John and Eleanor Cooper had nine children, six of whom they raised past infancy ...³⁰

Amy Violet (Vi) Smith was born at Gympie in October 1908 and was just three years of age when the family moved to Nanango. There was no rail line to Nanango at that time and the family travelled by rail to Kingaroy where they detrained to continue their journey by coach, the family's possessions were taken to Nanango by bullock wagon. After a few years the family moved again,

this time to Kingaroy, later transferring to Wondai where Vi's father subsequently purchased the shop he was managing for Stehbens Brothers, the date of the family's arrival at Wondai was 1913. The family lived in a rented home.

Following her schooling, Vi Smith worked in Wondai, firstly with an accountant, then relieving at the post office, spending a number of years at A.V. Boisen's Store.³¹

Percy Iszlaub

One of the shire chairmen who has served the council for many years and who took over the position from Councillor Les Smith is Councillor Percy Harold Iszlaub, the son of Percy Harold Iszlaub (senior), whose family were early settlers of the Wondai district.

Percy Iszlaub's maternal antecedents in Australia began with Herman Ferdinand Julius Marquardt who was born in Germany on 20 November, 1861, and came to Australia at the age of twelve years. He married Gertrude Catherine Marquardt, (nee Otto), who was born in Germany on 18 February, 1868. They settled in the Lockrose district where they purchased the first cream separator in the region, prior to this the farm's cream had to be separated at the nearest butter factory.

The family land at Chelmsford on the South Burnett was first selected in 1902 but due to the extremely severe drought of that period they did not move onto their holding until four years later.

The original selectors of the Marquardt family came to the South Burnett from the Lockyer Valley district in 1906. Cr. Iszlaub states: 'The menfolk came up on horses driving a herd of dairy cattle numbering about one hundred and twenty head. Upon their arrival the cattle were depastured on the site of the present town hall and swimming pool. The family included nine children, the mother and girls travelled by train through Ipswich and Theebine, arriving the same day as the cattle. The family lived in a slab house until they could build quite a nice home.'³²



Iszlaub family. **Back row L. to R.:** George Iszlaub, Robert Hodge, William Hannant, Margaret Hannant, Conrad Iszlaub, William M. Iszlaub, George Brown, Albertina Brown. **Second row:** Nellie Hodge, Mary Hodge, Conrad Frederick Iszlaub, Martha Iszlaub, Edith Emily Iszlaub, Florence Iszlaub (later Stobert). **Front row:** William Iszlaub, Norman Hannant, Percy Iszlaub, Conrad Iszlaub, Elsie Hannant. Photograph dated 6 November, 1895, at Plainlands, Lockyer Valley, Queensland.

Source — Percy Iszlaub.

The paternal Iszlaub side of the family came from much the same area, but farther south along the Brisbane Valley towards Gatton. Percy Iszlaub's great great grandfather was Frederick Maxmillian Iszlaub, who arrived at Moreton Bay in September, 1855. Percy's great grandfather was Conrad Frederick Iszlaub who arrived with his family in 1855. He married Martha Robertson, who had emigrated from Edinburgh aboard the *Wansfell*, on 13 November, 1861.

Percy's grandfather, William Maxmillian Iszlaub, married Edith Emily McGeary of Rosewood and they, with their young family of three boys and two girls, moved up to the South Burnett circa 1908, coming overland and, like the Marquardt's, also driving a herd of dairy cattle. When they arrived they selected a 160 acres block of land at Greenview. William suffered an early death after being kicked by a horse on the Greenview property, in 1917, and he was interred at the Rosewood cemetery. The family carried on dairy farming, the cream being sent initially to the butter factory at Maryborough until the Wondai butter factory was constructed. They lived initially in a slab hut with an earthen floor — much the same as almost all other early settlers — but later constructed a substantial house. The land was dense scrub when the settlers arrived and this was cleared by hand, the entire block was cleared with the aid of about twenty aboriginal workers from the Barambah settlement who, during the clearing process, lived in a camp on the property.

Percy Harold Iszlaub (senior) Cr. Percy Iszlaub's father, was born on 14 April, 1893, he married in 1925 at the Mondure Lutheran Church. The couple and their family lived initially on the farm at Greenview. Percy Iszlaub was born at the Matron Kidd's private hospital in Wondai, on 3 February, 1926, the eldest of four children. In 1931 when Percy (junior) was five years of age, his father purchased another farm on the Greenview road, closer to Wondai. Just prior to its purchase the family went to Hervey Bay for a lengthy holiday — an unfamiliar experience for the entire family — and later moved onto their new farm. This farm had been purchased from the Henry Zackreson family. Percy (junior) attended Greenview School from 1931, walking one and a half miles to the school each day, although on his first day at school his father drove him there in the family utility. As he grew older he was allowed to ride a pony to school and subsequently gravitated to a bicycle. After leaving school Percy Iszlaub became involved in contract harvesting, a lucrative occupation for boys and young men having recently left school — especially during the Second World War which saw an acute shortage of labour. Young boys aged just fourteen years were being paid full adult wages for their labour, and those wages, again due to the lack of workers, had doubled in the previous few years. The money earned from harvesting and threshing enabled Percy to purchase his first farm, a 160 acres property, when he was still in his early twenties. On this farm he began growing peanuts for which the light soils were particularly suitable, in later years Percy won a marketing board award for producing the best Spanish Red peanuts in the state.

Percy Iszlaub met his future wife, Alison Munro, at the Wondai show ball. Alison's father, David Cook Munro, was a bank manager with the Union Bank in Victoria — the bank that later became the A.N.Z. — and had been transferred to Pittsworth. The family moved up to Queensland during the Second World War and came by troop train, travelling with hundreds of Australian soldiers. Percy and Alison were married on 18 October, 1968, and immediately afterwards the couple purchased another farm, 240 acres that had previously been owned by well known Wondai identity and former shire chairman, Andrew McLucas, the farm was also situated at Greenview and the property was known as *Greenview*.

Percy Iszlaub first considered entering public life following his involvement with the executive of the local branch of the Queensland Graingrowers' Association. He entered council on 10 August, 1967, being appointed to that post to fill a vacancy. At that time L.G. Smith was shire chairman. He became works chairman three years later, in 1970, and was chairman of the finance committee in 1973. He became deputy shire chairman in 1979 and was elected to the Chair in 1982 when L.G. Smith retired. Since then Percy Iszlaub has remained shire chairman, his first election after being elevated to the Chair was contested, however, Cr. Iszlaub easily retained the position and has been re-elected unopposed on every subsequent election since that time. During his tenure on the shire council one of the highlights and achievements of the council was the development of the power station at Tarong and the construction of the dam at Boondooma to service its water requirements. The construction of the dam brought about a massive upgrading of facilities at the Wondai Shire Council with the purchase of machinery in order to construct the access road to the dam, Cr. Iszlaub states: 'We bought the biggest purchase of plant in the history of the council.

we bought a new dozer, several new graders and heavy loading equipment, more and bigger trucks than we had ever generally used.³³

During Cr. Iszlaub's term as chairman the aesthetic quality of the town has altered dramatically with improvements to parks and gardens, the introduction of recreational and sporting facilities including dramatic improvements to the Wondai show-grounds race-course complex. Funding for this complex came through the Racing Development Fund and the Show-ground Capital Subsidy Schemes. The council was successful in obtaining an initial grant of \$212,000 which fully funded the redevelopment programme in 1982/83, and further funding has since seen the addition of extra facilities and equipment at the show-grounds.³⁴

G.C. Morris

Shire Clerk George Colin (Col.) Morris, was also something of a legend in Wondai. He became shire clerk on 28 August, 1948, and held that position for almost twenty-seven years, retiring on 1 January, 1975, to move to Caloundra. A self taught man, Colin Morris became a qualified accountant and an experienced local government auditor. During the Second World War he served with the A.I.F. in New Guinea and much of his studying was undertaken at night under army canvas. G.C. Morris died of cancer at Caloundra during the evening of Wednesday 7 February, 1979, aged sixty-three years, the local library is now named in his honour.³⁵

Alan Keates

Alan Keates' paternal grandparents, William Keates and his wife Daisy, with their family, emigrated from the Gurnsey Isles in 1910 to take up a dairy farm firstly in Beenleigh and then at Moggil in Brisbane where they also operated a milk run. His father was Phillip Morris Keates and his mother's name is Catherine Jesse Randell whose family lived in Brisbane.

P.M. Keates, a mechanic, worked in the engine room of Castlemaine Breweries prior to enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force during the Second World War where he served in the 2/1 -Aust-Armd-Bde-Coy-A.S.C. In 1942 his wife left Brisbane to live in Manumbar and in 1943 when their son Brian was born, moved to Wondai. P.M. Keates was discharged from the army in January 1945 and moved to Wondai to settle with his family taking up a mechanics position with Hustons' garage. He remained with this firm for approximately twelve months before moving to another small garage in Wondai which he purchased in the mid 1960s following the deaths of the two partners who had owned it. The garage was situated in Haly Street near the present site of Boisen's. Here P.M. Keates spent the remainder of his working life until his retirement when one of his sons, Brian, acquired the business. It was later sold and Brian went to work at the South Burnett Co-operative Meat Works Association at Murgon. P.M. Keates died on 8 February, 1988, aged seventy-six years.

Alan Keates was born at the Wondai Hospital on 22 November, 1946. He was educated at the Wondai State School which was situated where the Laurels Retirement Village now stands, and Kingaroy State High School.

Following completion of his education, in 1964 Alan Keates obtained employment in the spare parts department of Howlett Motors which was situated on the corner of Scott and Edwards Streets, Wondai. When a position became available at the Wondai Shire Council for a junior cost clerk at the end of 1964, Alan Keates applied for the position and was appointed to the post, commencing on 8 February, 1965, the shire clerk at that time was George Colin Morris. It was under the tutelage of Mr Morris that Alan Keates was prompted to study for higher positions within the council.

In 1968 the deputy shire clerk resigned and Alan Keates applied for the vacated position, by that time he was completing his accounting studies and was subsequently appointed to the deputy's post. He then completed the shire clerk's course on local government law and accounts, qualifying as a shire clerk on 13 September, 1974. When G.C. Morris resigned in 1975 his position was advertised and Alan Keates was successful in being appointed to the post, taking over on 10 January, 1975.³⁶

Since his appointment to the position as shire clerk (and later as chief executive officer) of the council, Alan Keates has become a vital part of the local community and has accessed much

government funding to provide services and facilities for the people of Wondai and district. Additionally, he has been a member of the golf club for more than thirty years and was made a life member of the Wondai Golf and Bowls Club in 1992. He served on the Wondai Bicentennial Committee and is secretary of the Wondai District Homes for the Aged Committee and the Boondooma Dam Fish Stocking Committee. As assistant secretary and treasurer of the South Burnett Race Club, he was instrumental in obtaining funding in excess of \$300,000 for the Wondai Racecourse and Show-grounds. He has also assisted many local organisations with advice, audits and other financial statements. Described by the shire chairman, Cr. Percy Iszlaub, and in the press, as being the 'unsung hero' of Wondai, in 1985 Alan Keates became Wondai's first recipient of the Telecom Australia Award.³⁷

Listing of Chairmen and Shire Clerks (Chief Executive Officers) of the Wondai Shire Council:

Wienholt Shire

- 1910 — Burns, P.J.
- 1911 — Armstrong, W.G.
- 1912 — Fenwick, S.S.
- 1913 — Burns, R.L.
- 1914 — Crombie, J.D.

Wondai Shire

- 1914 — Crombie, J.D.
- 1915 — Slater, J.A.
- 1916 — Campbell, W.P.
- 1917 — McLucas, A.
- 1917-18 — Slater, J.A.
- 1919-24 — McLucas, A.
- 1924-27 — Campbell, W.P.
- 1927-32 — McLucas, A.
- 1932-33 — Porter, M.H.
- 1933-40 — Outridge, P.H.
- 1940-46 — Philips, A.C.
- 1946-48 — Brownlee, J.K.
- 1948-82 — Smith, L.G.W., C.B.E.
- 1982- Iszlaub, P.H.

Shire Clerks

Wienholt Shire

- 1910-11 — Compagnoni, H.J.
- 1911-14 — Smithers, B.F.

Wondai Shire

- 1914-27 — McMicken, G.
- 1927-34 — Fuller, W.C.
- 1934-43 — Corkill, R.D.
- 1943-48 — Purser, L.T.
- 1948-75 — Morris, G.C.
- 1975- Keates, A.W.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixty-four

Local Government at Wondai

1. QGG Vol 18, Number 144, 25 December, 1909.
2. Minutes of the first meeting of the Wienholt Shire Council, dated 2 March, 1910, Wondai Shire Council archives, and M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 11.
3. Minutes of the first council meeting, Wondai Shire Council archives and M/C. 3 April, 1924, p 2.
4. QGG 1 August, 1914 and minutes of the Wienholt Shire Council 29 July, 1914, Wondai Shire Council archives, For further information on this matter see: QSA Col 089.
5. *Centelabrations*, Shire of Wondai, 2 October, 1959, pp 6–9.
6. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 17.
7. Letter from Alice Compagnoni to Percy Iszlaub, dated 2 February, 1988, File A255, Wondai Shire Council archives.
8. SBT. 24 June, 1938, p 5.
9. SBT. 18 February, 1938, p 5.
10. SBT. 18 March, 1938, p 7.
11. SBT. 17 June, 1938, p 7.
12. SBT. 17 February, 1939, p 7.
13. SBT. 17 March, 1939, p 8.
14. SBT. 16 June, 1939, p 7. A copy of the contract may be located in file: 3686/C, G1, Wondai Museum archives.
15. SBT. 12 April, 1940, p 1.
16. SBT. 28 August, 1936, p 6. A brief biography of Burns may be found in file A 255, Wondai Shire Council archives.
17. SBT. 8 April, 1948, p 6.
18. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 14, council records, Kilkivan Shire Council and Wondai Shire Council.
19. SBT. 2 October, 1952, p 3.
20. SBT. 25 March, 1987, p 39.
21. *Andrew McLucas*, by John McLucas, pp 1–2, file: A81/1, Wondai Shire Council archives and author interview with John McLucas, conducted 7 May, 1997.
22. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 11.
23. SBT. 11 October, 1935, p 3.
24. Author interview with John McLucas, conducted 7 May, 1997.
25. M/C. 4 May, 1933, p 7.
26. SBT. 18 October, 1951, p 1.
27. SBT. 13 August, 1991, p 18.
28. SBT. 7 January, 1976, p 3.
29. SBT. 2 February, 1983, p 2.
30. *The Cooper Family History*, pp 2–3, Wondai Museum archives.
31. Author interview with Vi Smith, conducted at Wondai, 11 November, 1996.
32. Author interview with Cr. Percy Iszlaub conducted at Wondai, 10 November, 1996.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, and author interview with Alan Keates, conducted at Wondai 11 November, 1996.
35. SBT. 14 February, 1979, p 12.
36. SBT. 13 February, 1996, p 2; letter of application for the position of shire clerk from Alan Keates, dated 27 August, 1974, file A 172–1, Wondai Shire Council archives, and author interview with Alan Keates, conducted at the Wondai Shire Council offices, 11 November, 1996.
37. SBT. 20 November, 1985, p 4.

Those Who Made Their Mark in Wondai

Among the many personalities who made a distinct impression on the history of the Wondai district was Allan Max Behm, deputy chairman of the Wondai Shire Council and a director of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association. Allan Behm, in addition to his extensive farming interests in the Wondai district which included that of a stud and commercial pig breeder, was extremely active in public affairs and was involved in many local community bodies. He died at the Brisbane General Hospital on Friday 22 July, 1967, after being involved in a car accident while returning home in a utility loaded with cement. The funeral, which took place at Wondai the following Monday, was reported to have been the largest ever seen in the town.¹

Another man who played a vital role in the development of the district was Mark Huston.

Mark Huston was born at Clermont in 1897, his father owned a puddling machine on the gold diggings and miners from the various claims, places with strange names such as the Wild Cat, the Busy Bee, the Kitten, Dead Horse and Wet Lead, would come to Mark's father to have their gold separated from the ore. His grandfather, Robert, had migrated from Belfast in 1864 and worked in the carrying business. Mark Huston's first job came when he was thirteen years of age, driving a flock of five thousand head of sheep from Avon Downs along the Sutor River to Nebo. In 1965 Mr Huston stated: 'I stayed with them for three months, there was very little grass and the dingoes were so bad that each night we had to make breaks (rope yards) and herd the sheep into them and then build fires around the outside. After three months on the road I went into Nebo for a haircut and they called me the Professor.'²

Mark Huston served in the First World War and wrote some memorable letters to his family that have since been published.³

Mark Huston spent his entire working life in the motor industry, he was apprenticed to Dobson's Garage at Clermont in 1924, later managing Dobson's Engineering Works at Capella, however, during the war years he had been gassed and this had created health problems. In order to overcome these problems doctors had advised that Huston take on outside work, he moved to the Wondai district in 1933, purchasing a farm at Mondure. He found that farm work was not to his liking and employed a share farmer before moving to Rockhampton where he became foreman of Lawrence Motors. When the business of Bennett and Carter, the Ford dealership at Wondai, came on the market, Huston went into partnership with two friends from Capella, Bob and Ray Purdie, and purchased the dealership. The business began trading in 1935 under the name of Huston, Purdie and Son. Mark Huston later purchased the Purdie shares and during the 1950s the modern brick building was constructed. The family company of M.J. Huston and Sons was formed in 1960. Mark Huston and his wife retired to a 480 acres farm at Slater's Hill on Greenview road in 1966 where they established an orchard, his son, Allan, then became the Ford dealer and the company was run in association with Robert James Huston. Allan Huston died in March 1995.⁴

Mark Huston's wife was Jean B. Huston, (nee Hetherington) who was born in Scotland on 6 May, 1901. Her family emigrated to Australia in 1907 and settled firstly at Woodford where her father opened a blacksmith's shop. Two years later the family moved to Tingoora and David Hetherington, Jean's father, once again opened a blacksmith's shop. In 1914 the family moved to *Logan Downs* a grazing and sheep property near Clermont. In August 1919 Jean met Mark Huston following his return from the Great War. They were married in Brisbane on 20 October, 1920, and settled initially at Clermont. Jean Huston died in 1977.⁵

Another person to play a prominent role in the more recent history of the shire was Jim Houston, a businessman, post office proprietor, bandsman and former naval rating who had played a captured Japanese bugle during the historic surrender of Japanese troops. In the Netherlands East Indies in 1945. Jim Houston was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1911 and educated there. He migrated to Australia in 1928. He first worked on a farm at Greenview, then for the Wecker brothers at Charlestown. He later acquired his own farm but subsequently sold this farm to work at Ham's general store at Tingoorra. Jim Houston enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy in 1941 and married Jessie Campbell of Wooroolin during that year. He served as a wireless operator on the corvette *H.M.A.S. Rockhampton*. He returned to Tingoorra in 1946 to again work at Ham's store. In 1949 he and his wife purchased the Wooroolin cafe and remained there until 1960 when they acquired the Wooroolin post office. His wife, died in 1978, aged sixty-seven.

Houston subsequently sold the post office and retired in Wooroolin, later moving to Kingaroy. He was instrumental in forming the Wooroolin-Tingoorra sub-branch of the R.S.L. At its formation he was elected secretary and held that office till his death. He was also the instigator of the Highland gathering held annually at Wooroolin.

In 1952 he was responsible for forming the Wooroolin School Bugle Band. The band performed for charitable purposes all over the district and also at the Brisbane Exhibitions, he was awarded the M.B.E. in 1979. Jim Houston died in 1993 and was interred at the Taabinga cemetery.⁶

Robert Samuel Hodge was another well known Wondai identity and a prominent state politician. Described in the *Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament* as a 'publican and storekeeper,' Hodge was born at Bridgwater, Somerset, England, in 1866 and after arriving on the South Burnett became the owner of both urban and farm selections. He was the owner of the Mondure Hotel at Wondai, and Hodge's Hall and played a leading role in the town's and district's early development. He married Mary Elizabeth Iszlaub at Ipswich (and was therefore a great uncle to present Wondai mayor, Cr. Percy Iszlaub). R.S. Hodge became the member for Rosewood in March 1902, the member for the Burnett in October 1909, and the member for Nanango in 1912. He died on 8 April, 1924.⁷

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixty-five

Those Who Made Their Mark in Wondai

1. SBT. 26 July, 1967, p 1.
2. *The Leader*, 8 September, 1965, p 14.
3. See Matthews, Tony, *Crosses, Australian Soldiers in the Great War*, Boolarong, 1987, pp 87-93.
4. *The Leader*, 8 September, 1965, p 14, SBT. 24 October, 1995, p 15 and *Huston 50 Year Celebrations*, file A205-1, Wondai Shire Council archives.
5. SBT. 2 November, 1977, p 13.
6. Biographical notes, private papers, Percy Iszlaub collection. See also obituary, SBT. 8 January, 1993 p 8.
7. Waterson, p 87, and correspondence, Percy Iszlaub to author, August, 1997.

66

Early Education in the Wondai Region

As the population of the small township dramatically increased over the years following the introduction of the rail line, it soon became evident that an education system would have to be set in place for the children of the many settlers flocking to the district. A public meeting to discuss the issue of education was called in March 1904 and at a second meeting held the following month a building committee was elected. Following department approval, tenders were called for the construction of a provisional school and Daniel Taylor with a price of £105 was the successful tenderer, Mary O'Donahue was its first teacher. Like almost all other schools in the South Burnett region this school soon became too small for the growing population and a second school was constructed in 1913.

A 1930 report of the Wondai School claimed:

Miss Mary O'Donahue opened the Wondai State School ... (in) May 1905. She was in charge of ten pupils. When Mr T. (Thomas Lewis) Williams succeeded her in 1908 he remained one year, having registered his highest attendance at 48. Mr George Ward's tenure of the office of head-master was the longest in the school's history. He remained in charge during the period 1909-1928, and he left an attendance of 150. The present head-master, (1930) Mr Robert W. Radford, assumed control in January 1928, and the attendance at the present time is 174. Till Mr Ward became head-master the institution was a one-man school. When Mr Ward handed over the reins of office to Mr Radford he had three assistants. One assistant has since been added. The present capable staff of assistants is (in order of seniority) Miss G.M. Kyle, Mr D. Macfie, Miss M.F.E. Green and Mr J.L. Clancy ...

Mr Radford has enjoyed the full support of the parents' committee. Of this body Mr Charles Hess, a prominent townsman, has been for many years and is at present chairman. Considerable energy was devoted by the committee to the raising of funds for improvements to the grounds ... The school has recently been painted and the verandahs are ceiled. The ground beneath the building is asphalted, and protection from the weather is a noteworthy feature. Recent additions to the building are a school-master's office and a teachers' common room, two necessitous extensions. A new school-master's residence is in course of erection on a block of land adjacent to the school. Hitherto no such provision was made.¹

While the school started in 1905 it took another fifty-nine years before pupils at Wondai gained access to higher education, during that time students were forced to travel to high schools or colleges at places such as Murgon or Kingaroy. A secondary department was opened in 1964 with Mr G. Box as head teacher. In 1971 a new school was constructed beside the secondary department.²

In addition to the Wondai State School other schools were opened at Boondooma, Durong, Durong South, Brigooda, Speedwell, Abbeywood, Stonelands, Kinleymore, Hivesville, Mondure, Fairdale (Mondure Central), Mondure North, Mondure Central, Tingoora, Leafdale, Home Creek, Wheatlands, Proston, Chelmsford, Cushnie, Keysland and Greenview. Of these Tingoora and Wheatlands were among the largest, each registering an enrolment of between 40 and 50 children.

The North Mondure School was opened in January 1905 with Mrs Marian Edith Gillies as its first teacher, she served until 30 April, 1907, when she was replaced by George Walter Gould. There were three other acting teachers appointed after Gould, including Katie Power, Mary Hayes and Catherine Mary Ludeman before Eleanor Mary Leonard was appointed on 7 July, 1920, serving until the school was closed in October 1922.³

The Home Creek School came about after several years of lobbying by the Home Creek Farmers' Progress Association, it was constructed in 1905 by J. Devereux for £95/10/- and opened in January the following year, its first teacher was James McKenzie.⁴

The Greenview School celebrated its golden jubilee in 1955 at which time Cr. L.G. Smith gave an address outlining some of the school's history, he stated:

Not long after land in the Greenview district was thrown open for selection in 1901 the need for a school was felt. The residents of Greenview, Mondure and neighbouring districts held a meeting at Marquardt's Corner, now known as Elliott's. At this meeting, attended by Inspector Ross, it was decided to build a school on the corner of Muller's property which is now known as August Marquardt's. The Mondure residents decided they would prefer a school of their own. As a result schools were built at Greenview and at North Mondure.

The Greenview School was erected by Mr Jim Cameron, assisted by Percy Stringer, an original school pupil. This was opened ... (in) July 1905. Old residents of the district decided that the school should be called 'Greenview', taking the name from the homestead of the late Mr A. McLucas.⁵

The first teacher at the school was Violet M. Bow, a school residence was constructed in 1912 and extensions made in 1916. The school closed in 1935, reopened in 1948, and closed finally in 1973.⁶

Fairdale School, known initially as Central Mondure, like its contemporaries, came about due to public agitation, it was opened on 26 September, 1910, with Kathie Power as its first teacher. The name was changed to Fairdale in 1932 and the school was closed in 1973.⁷

The school at Chelmsford was opened on 23 August, 1910, it was named after the previous governor of Queensland, Lord Frederic John Napier Thesiger Chelmsford, who held office from November 1905 to May 1909. The first teacher of the school was Rebecca Jane Woolley. Like many other rural schools in the community it was finally closed in 1973.⁸



Scrub falling Cushman area. L to R. John Magnussen, Fred Simpson, Bob Adermann, Joe Adermann.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 2729/P2 (b).

The school at Keysland came about following a meeting of interested residents at North Mondure in September 1913 during which a building committee was elected. The school was opened in May 1915 with Peter Green as its first teacher. It was originally to be known as Park View, but prior to its opening the name was altered to Keysland. The school was closed in 1974.⁹

The lands at Cushnie were opened up for selection in 1910, the ballot for the blocks taking place at Wondai. On 4 July, 1917 a meeting was held in the home of Mr P.P. Falt in order to discuss the possibilities of opening a school in the rapidly growing region. There were then twenty-four children of school age living in the immediate vicinity. A.A. Reinke, one of the region's first selectors, offered a block of land for school purposes, and a building committee was formed. Over the following months a number of meetings were held, all furthering the progress of the project, and tenders were called for clearing the ground in 1918. The school at Cushnie was opened on 14 November, 1918, with Adolph Hohnke as its first teacher. An extension to the school was built in 1928 and a school residence was constructed in 1930. The school was finally closed in 1973.¹⁰

The Mondure School was opened on 24 January, 1921, an event that saw a decline in numbers at the school at North Mondure which closed the following year. First discussions for the establishment of the school had taken place in September 1918, the land was donated by E.J. McConnel, timber for its construction came from sawmill owner C. Rose and its first teacher was Christina Sampson who served in that capacity until September 1923 when she was replaced by Mary Catherine Spence.¹¹

With the opening up of lands at Mondure Estate it soon became evident that a school was needed at Wheatlands. Carl Zillmann wrote to the Department of Public Instruction on 13 March, 1911, requesting details of the procedure for the establishment of such a school. A building committee was formed and a public meeting was held on 10 February, 1912. On 16 February that year a formal application was made for a school. The committee was informed that funds would have to be raised to cover a share in the costs of establishing the school, these funds were collected, and in May 1912 District Inspector C. Fox visited the area to report on the viability of such a project. His report was favourable, tenders for the school were called and B. Robinson was chosen for the construction of the building, his tender being £262/14/-. The school was completed in August 1913 but as there were no teachers available it remained vacant for three months until Albert Henry Arthur Ruge, who had recently passed his examinations for candidates for the positions of teachers for small schools, was finally appointed. The school opened on 17 November, 1913, with an initial enrolment of nineteen students. Ruge remained at his post until July 1914 when he returned to Brisbane to attend the newly opened Teacher's Training College and he was replaced by Geraldine Fitzgerald as acting head teacher. Ruge returned to Wheatlands in 1915 and the following year enlisted in the A.I.F., he was wounded in action, awarded the D.C.M. and ended the war with the rank of sergeant. Upon returning to Australia he continued teaching at Wheatlands, was married in 1920 to Amelia Steinhardt, and purchased a nearby farm. He resigned from teaching in 1925 and took up farming as a full time occupation. He died in March, 1974. During his term at the Front he was replaced consecutively by three acting teachers, John George Billett, Frederick Reginald Willesden and Charles Vernon Hoffman. In 1925 Maurice Andrew Francis Wench took over as head teacher when Ruge resigned to take up farming.¹²

The schools at Boondooma have had a varied history, a subsequent report of them once stating: "The Boondooma (Dorong) State School commenced in 1923. The present Boondooma School has had many name changes since its beginning in 1923. It was first known as the Dorong Provisional School. Six different buildings have been used on five different sites to educate the children of the area. The Dorong South State School began two years later with an attendance of eighteen. Boondooma West School began in 1939, however, it closed down in 1968."¹³

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixty-six

Early Education in the Wondai Region

1. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 12.
2. *The District News*, 5 May, 1980, p 8. For a more detailed history of this school and secondary education in the Wondai region see: *Wondai State School Jubilee, 1905-1980*, pp 3-19.
3. Letter from G.N. Logan, senior information officer, Educational History Unit, Department of Education, reference GNL:hn:Hist Wondai. Let 63, file A 205-1, Wondai Shire Council archives.
4. For a more detailed history of this school see: *Wondai State School Jubilee, 1905-1980*, pp 20-22.
5. K/H. 28 July, 1955, p 4, see also SBT. 21 July, 1955.
6. For a more detailed history of this school see: *Wondai State School Jubilee, 1905-1980*, pp 23-26.
7. *Ibid*, pp 27-31.
8. *Herald News*, 30 September, 1970, p 10. For a more detailed history of this school see: *Wondai State School Jubilee, 1905-1980*, pp 32-36.
9. For a more detailed history of this school see: *Wondai State School Jubilee, 1905-1980*, pp 37-38.
10. For a more detailed history of this school see: *Wondai State School Jubilee, 1905-1980*, pp 39-41 and *Cushnie State School Golden Jubilee booklet, 1918-1968*, by Len Reinke.
11. For a detailed history of this school see: the golden jubilee booklet, *Mondure State School, 1921-1971*, Wondai Museum archives and the *Mondure State School Diamond Jubilee* booklet.
12. For a comprehensive history of this school see: *Through the Looking Glass, Reflections of the Wheatlands State School, 1913-1983*. Bill Lester (Ed.).
13. SBT. 19 October, 1977, p 3.

Early Businessmen and Selectors in the Wondai Region

Some of the early residents of Wondai left behind indelible memories of the part they played in the history of the town, businessmen and settlers who came to the region shortly after the arrival of the railway, and who settled at the fledgling village, then little more than a scattering of humpies, a few public houses and some narrow bush tracks euphemistically termed 'streets'. As we have seen, James Alexander Slater constructed the first hotel, other businesses included R. Slater's butcher's shop, George Warren's store and George Gray's mixed store business.

One of these early residents was Thomas Simpson McIntosh (Scottie) Forsyth.

Scottie Forsyth was a native of Aberdeen, Scotland, he, his wife and two sons, emigrated to Queensland in 1910 and after a short time at Cairns moved to Wondai in 1911. Scottie started a small business as a hairdresser and newsagent and was so popular that he had to move the business on six separate occasions, each time seeking larger premises, finally owning the freehold of a shop within the Cecil Hotel complex. Scottie was well known to all town and district residents, the press later reported of him: 'Scottie was looked on as almost an institution, in fact it has been said, and rightly too, that Scottie is Wondai and Wondai is Scottie. Right throughout the years during which his scissors clicked (in his early advertisements he styled himself as a cranium manipulator and shampoo-ologist), his saloon was looked on as the Men's Club, or debating room of the town and district. Possessed of a ready wit and a shrewd knowledge of men ... his comments were invited by a wide clientele of varied interests.'¹

In failing health, Scottie left Wondai on Saturday 1 February, 1941, in order to take a brief holiday at Maroochydore, however, he soon afterwards found it necessary to seek medical advice in Brisbane, he was admitted to the Mater Hospital and died there at 11.30 on the morning of Friday 7 February, 1941. His wife had predeceased him three years earlier.²

Businesses at Wondai were diverse and included J. Bradfield's photo studio in Burnett Street, Slater Brothers were general carriers, the Exchange Stores sold clothes, boots and shoes,



First Mondure Hotel at Wondai which burned down in 1912. On left, Carrodus drapers, Finnemore's, entrance to Hodge's Hall, Armstrong and Grayson auctioneers. The fire started when Bill Lamont, a jeweller who lived in a flat, tripped over a perambulator while carrying a kerosene light.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 1213.

W.S. Coleman was a cash grocer, the Mondure Hotel was competing with the Hotel Cecil which was advertising that it was: "The hotel of the Burnett and recognised by the travelling fraternity and public generally to be one of the best appointed houses in the state for solid comfort, attention and cuisine, stimulants, iceberg beverages and soothing syrups a speciality. Ladies, gentlemen, farmers, graziers, dairymen, Irish canary raisers, workers, bagmen and squatters catered for alike. Note the address, next door to Scottie the Great, cranium manipulator and shampoo-ologist."³



The main street of Wondai after the construction of the Cecil Hotel. A.V. & C. Boise in their store on the corner.

Source — Wondai Museum Ref 1212.



Hotel Cecil, Wondai. Slater's Building, constructed 1911.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 1526/P2(a), Arthur Bright collection.

The Acme Bar Company operated a restaurant next to the *Wondai Times* office, in 1913 it was under the management of C.R. Katter. Stuckey and Co. were general storekeepers and produce merchants situated opposite the railway station with T.T. Stuckey as manager. S. Nosworthy ran the Wondai Furnishing Mart, T.F. Baumgardt operated a chemist's shop, W.J. Anderson was a local plumber, John Cass ran 'the people's Boot Store' next to Macfarlane and Cowens, auctioneers and estate agents, C.E.C. Williams ran refreshment rooms next to Stuckey and Co. and also operated as a fruiterer, greengrocer and stationer.⁴

Mabel Faith Moore was a dressmaker and milliner who operated from the Ladies Emporium in Wondai, unfortunately she was to suffer a tragic death. After spending a holiday at Maryborough she returned to Wondai and was staying at Mr S. Nosworthy's residence. At 9 o'clock on the evening of Sunday 2 February, 1913, the methylated spirits of a lamp caught fire and exploded, and Mabel Moore was standing in the room at the time of the accident, the burning fuel set her clothes alight, she jumped through an open window falling ten feet to the ground where she sustained a severe blow to the head. The fire was quickly extinguished, Dr David Junk was called and the patient was soon afterwards taken to a private hospital. She rallied for a while but died, aged just twenty-three years, on the morning of 4 February, 1913.⁵

Florence Maud Robinson and her daughter, Dorothy, conducted the Blue Bird Cafe in Wondai for many years. The press later reporting: 'Mrs Robinson was the second eldest daughter of the late George Frederick William and Alice Ellena Anson who were born in London, England and arrived in Maryborough on the ship *Scottish Wizard*. The parents ... were married in the Church of England, Maryborough and settled in that town where they established a home and reared a family. Mr Anson was an employee of Messrs Wilson Hart and Co. for over 30 years. The late Mrs Robinson was born in Maryborough 79 years ago and spent her girlhood days in that locality. She was later married to Mr William Robinson who predeceased her almost 38 years ago. The major portion of her married life was spent at Wondai, during which time she was an active worker for the town and district. Some 30 years ago Mrs Robinson and her daughter Dorothy conducted a restaurant known as "The Blue Bird Cafe", during which time many lifelong acquaintances were made.' Florence Robinson died at the Wondai Hospital on 10 February, 1965, and was buried at the Wondai cemetery.⁶



Haly Street, Wondai, looking from the Bank of New South Wales corner towards the Wondai Hotel.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 1733/P1(a)



Wondai Hotel.

Source — Percy Iszlaub.

Another early resident was William Graham. Although there was a difference of thirteen years in the ages of William Graham and his wife, only three days lapsed after the death of Mrs Graham before William Graham also died. They had been married for fifty-seven years, a partnership that had resulted in a large family, three sons having predeceased their parents. William Graham was born in Sydney, his wife at Glebe. They were married at Grafton and circa 1921 they moved to Queensland and took over the farm then owned by Mr and Mrs G. Parnell. In later years the farm was run by their son, Sam Graham, and the aging couple continued to live on the property. Mrs Graham suffered a long illness with one of her hands which necessitated the removal of a large portion of the hand. She was finally admitted to the Wondai Hospital around February 1944, her husband also entered the hospital eleven days later, and they died, almost simultaneously in March that year.⁷

One time owner of the Wondai Hotel was A.W. Ware, a man of many talents who had once attained the high position of mayor of Adelaide.

Born at Kooringa, A.W. Ware arrived at Adelaide with his parents in 1868. His parents took over the Exchange Hotel, the oldest licensed house in the city. After leaving school A.W. Ware was apprenticed to the locomotive department of the railways service. He later left the service to work for Harold Brothers, ironmongers. However, following a serious accident he was forced to resign from that position and later became associated with his mother in the running of the hotel.

With his brother, Tom, he founded the Torrenside Brewery which later absorbed the Adelaide Brewery. Those two breweries were afterwards amalgamated with the Walkerville Brewery and the business became particularly successful. Ware served on the Adelaide City Council, firstly as an alderman and later as mayor. He occupied the mayoral chair for three years and it was during this time that as mayor of the city he entertained the Duke and Duchess of York, the press later claiming: 'The functions he arranged in honour of the Duke and Duchess of York were magnificent in their splendour'.⁸ For this he was awarded the C.M.G. In 1900 he and his wife travelled to England, they were present at the coronation of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra (formerly the Duke and Duchess of York) in 1901, and were also presented at Court.

During the Boer War, Ware was heavily involved in raising war chest funds, for example a cow he purchased for £12/10/- was later sold 'on the bugler system of fund-raising,' for 543 guineas.

With this money Ware provided a bushman's contingent and maintained five soldiers at the front for twelve months. In later years Ware moved to Queensland where he purchased a cattle station, however, after a particularly devastating drought he returned to Adelaide. Yet he always maintained a great love for Queensland and he again returned to take over the Royal Hotel at Maryborough for three years and later the Pacific Hotel at Southport. There his wife died and A.W. Ware returned once again to Adelaide to take over the management of the Exchange Hotel. He remained in Adelaide for eight years returning once again, for health reasons to Queensland in 1925, the *Adelaide News* of 3 May reporting: 'After an eventful public and commercial career Mr A.W. Ware, C.M.G. retires from business on Saturday and will leave by the *Moreton Bay* early in the week for Queensland where he will take the mineral waters at Muckadilla for several weeks.' Ware took over the Wondai Hotel in November that year.

This lifetime of achievement was brought to a close when Ware died at the Wondai Hospital at 9 a.m. on Saturday 29 January, 1927.⁹

The business of Mr W.H. Somerville, licensed commission agent, was also one of the early businesses in Wondai, being established in 1910. Somerville was reputed to have had: '... an excellent knowledge of the district and has travelled over all parts continuously for the past 20 years.' His business was important to the early selectors, in addition to being the real estate agent he was also the agent for Massey Harris machinery.¹⁰

William Thomas Parke and his wife, Hilda Elizabeth, arrived in Wondai in 1911, William purchased a butcher's shop and lived in Baynes Street. The home featured a wide verandah where dances and parties were frequently held. The butcher's shop was sold to the Burton brothers in 1930 and Parke moved his family to Gympie. However, in 1934 he sold the Gympie shop and returned the family to their old home in Wondai, William Parke then purchased the Ryan Brother's butcher's shop.¹¹

Other early residents of Wondai were Frank Clarence Bond and his wife Judith (nee Hansen), who were married at the Baptist Church in February 1913, a bible was presented to them by the church as a wedding gift, it was inscribed: '... theirs being the first marriage in the new building.'¹²

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixty-seven

Early Businessmen and Selectors in the Wondai Region

1. SBT. 13 February, 1941, p 2.
2. Ibid.
3. Family history file, Wondai Museum archives.
4. *Wondai Times*, 7 February, 1913, p 1.
5. *Wondai Times*, 7 February, 1913.
6. *Herald News*, 4 March, 1965, p 6.
7. SBT. 9 March, 1944, p 3.
8. SBT. 4 February, 1927, p 3.
9. Ibid.
10. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 14.
11. For further details on this family see: the memoirs of Hilda E. O'Brien, Wondai Museum archives 7455/L.C.A.2.
12. *Memoir*, George Bond, Wondai Museum archives.

Tingoora, Charlestown and Adjacent Areas

Tingoora, like many other small centres throughout the South Burnett, came about as a result of agricultural development and the arrival of the rail line, two events that necessitated the construction of a small service community to fill the needs of farming residents. By 1908 the small village of Tingoora had expanded somewhat and boasted a number of buildings, a report dated June 1908 claimed that the land was one of the best regions in the South Burnett for agriculture, and while the village was still very much in its infancy, 'teething', as one person described it, a farmers' progress association had been formed and it was the result of the work of this association, and the arrival of the railway, that the village had largely come into being. The report continued:

... up to a few months ago, a tarpaulin or a species of tent, was the receptacle for goods imported or exported at this siding. Everyone had to trust to his neighbours' or any tramp's honesty for safe receipt of his goods. So much for the origin of Tingoora. Now we are coming to the second phase of Tingoora babyhood.

The first public building, in the shape of an hotel, was erected by Mr J. Herold, of Kingaroy, in July last, (1907) and leased to William Healey, son of Mr Healey, bootmaker, in Nanango ... William Healey has recently sold out the goodwill of the hotel to Mrs Lillian Gould, of Longreach, but more anon. The second business place, a store, was built by the owner himself, Mr S.S. Fenwick, in September last. Mr Fenwick is a much travelled gentleman, and a man of considerable experience, full of pluck and energy, and a hard worker for the interests of the district. His advent in the midst of Tingoora has been a great acquisition to the place. He has been this year elected president of the Tingoora Progress Association. The next building was the school, erected at the end of last year, and opened in January last, Mr James McKenzie school teacher. Children's parents speak in the most eulogistic terms of his tuition. This gentleman also acts as secretary to the farmers' progress association of the district. Then last, but most important to farmers, is the railway station, which was finished by Christmas last, and it is only a few weeks ago that an acting station mistress, with her husband (a lengthsman), Mr and Mrs Lines, and family, have taken occupation of the residence built for them. After wrangling for ... (several) months for a resident at the siding, now a new difficulty has arisen. There is no post or receiving office. Tingooraites can now send their corn, timber, cream, and any other country produce with a consignment, but cannot get a postal note (much less a money order), not even a 1d. stamp.¹

The school mentioned in the above report came about, like so many other schools, following public agitation. The Department of Public Instruction received a letter from Tingoora residents, members of the Home Creek Farmers' Progress Association, written on 9 May, 1906, requesting that an area near Tingoora Siding be reserved for school purposes.² The Home Creek Farmers' Progress Association soon afterwards handed the matter over to the Tingoora Progress Association and by March 1907 a strong school committee had been formed and funds had been raised to aid in the construction of a school. On the fourteen of that month the committee wrote to the Department of Public Instruction requesting the necessary forms of application to have a school constructed on the site. Approval for the construction of the school was given on 18 April, 1907, and tenders were called for the construction of the building on 16 May.³ The school at Tingoora was opened on 20 January, 1908, its first teacher, James McKenzie, was stationed there for ten years, having been transferred from the provisional school at Home Creek.⁴ Ron Carruthers, headmaster in 1968, later wrote:

In 1908 the opening of this school was seen by Mr James McKenzie with a first day attendance of seven pupils. This number swelled to 37 by the end of that year and a large proportion of their leisure time was taken up by improving their playground.

In 1913 a public meeting was held with the object of removing the school from the township confines and enlarging it in the process. However, this proposal was vetoed by the Education Department. During the following year the building was enlarged and at the same time reached its present height. A later extension again increased the size of the school which ultimately reached its present day proportions in 1958.

The 1916-17 period saw a record enrolment of 80 pupils together with the construction of a head teacher's residence, and assistant teachers were appointed until 1920 when the attendance dropped below the required number. Mr McKenzie ended his long association with the school in 1918.

Mr Jack Christiansen was appointed to the school in 1955 and was the driving force behind a period of rejuvenation of the school ... Mr Ian Nesbitt skilfully guided the school through one of the most sweeping periods of the change in the history of Queensland education which was highlighted by the controversial abolition of scholarship and the rising of the school leaving age to 15, thus ensuring secondary education for all.⁵



Gordon Bell, station master at Tingoora.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives, Ref. 2731/P3(a).

The most significant force in this fledgling community was certainly the Tingoora Farmers' Progress Association which, as may be seen in existing documents held at the Wondai Museum archives, laboured for several years in order to improve conditions and services at the small community and its surrounding district. The association pressed for such items as the construction of a dam at Tingoora, lobbying the Kilkivan Shire Council, under whose jurisdiction the region then came, and even the Nanango Shire Council which did not control the area, for small grants of monies in order to help pay for the construction of such a dam.⁶

The association also pressed for the opening of the Cushnie lands for selection, the construction of a landing stage for horses and cattle at the Tingoora rail siding, the setting up of a reserve for cemetery purposes, the establishment of a pump at the Tingoora well, and many other items of community interest.⁷

One man who was certainly a progressive resident of the Tingoora region was Roland Croft who came to Australia circa 1922 but by 1924 had proved that he was a person of considerable ability. The press later reported of him: 'Mr Croft has not been in Australia for very long (but) has shown what can be done by brains, energy and keen business ability. Coming to a farm which many people said was worthless and a practical wilderness, the place today is one worthy of any man in the Burnett.' Croft's farm consisted of 160 acres, the house, which was in a seriously dilapidated condition when he acquired the property, was soon converted to a modern residence with some interesting features. One of these was the provision of electric light through a generator system, a convenience almost unheard of in those days, and Croft was then making provision to purchase '... a wireless receiving set,' another modern convenience which pre-dated the setting up of the local radio station by twelve years. At that time there was little radio reception in Australia apart from a few distant southern stations, state radio, 4QG in Brisbane was not introduced to Queensland until 27 July, 1925, up until that time the only faint radio services Queenslanders could receive were broadcast from Sydney or Melbourne, and the local radio station at Kingaroy did not begin broadcasting until 1936. Croft was also one of the few farmers who kept systematic farm accounts and could show extremely detailed profit and loss figures on every bag of maize he sold.⁸

Another interesting settler in the Tingoora region was William Richard Wilkes of Wilkesdale. Wilkes was born in Toowoomba and arrived in the region circa 1909 to establish a well known pastoral holding. Described as a man who lived a quiet and retiring life, he remained in the region for more than thirty years. He died at a Kingaroy private hospital on 20 July, 1939.⁹

The number of settlers in the Tingoora and adjacent regions such as Home Creek and Charlestown was quite large, selecting as they did such comparatively small acreages, and a detailed history of all the selections and selectors would prove to be unwieldy in this publication, the settlers themselves coming under almost identical circumstances and under very similar difficulties. Two such settlers, for example, were Adolf Albert Stümer and his wife Emily Elizabeth, who settled on land in the Home Creek region, shortly after their marriage at Boonah. Carpenters had been sent ahead to construct their first modest home but this had not been quite finished by the time the couple arrived and they lived for the first two weeks at a hotel in Wocroolin. The couple carried on a dairy farm but, like so many other settlers, experienced terrible difficulties obtaining sufficient supplies of water.¹⁰

By 1939 the small community of Tingoora was experiencing the advantages brought by rail and electricity. Tingoora, situated five miles from Wondai which was connected by both rail and a bitumen road, was the rail centre for the highly productive areas of Cushnie and Home Creek on one side and Charlestown on the other. The cables connecting Tingoora to the electricity system came in 1939 when cabling was laid from Kingaroy to Wondai, passing Tingoora as it did so. Electricity was switched on at Tingoora for the first time on 6 November, 1939. The small community featured a Methodist Church with a similar church at Home Creek, the railway station and station residence, a state school, post office, the well patronised Tingoora Hotel, the licensee being W.H. Curtis, a branch of the Q.N. Bank, F.W. Hess's bakery, J.K. Jessen's butchers, S. Richard's newsagency and cafe, a garage, general carriers and a cream depot for the Wondai butter factory.

There had been a second hotel at Tingoora, the Home Creek Hotel, this was situated on the main street approximately 150 yards from the Tingoora Hotel, however, the Home Creek Hotel was burned down on 7 November, 1937, and a lengthy law case followed when it was alleged that the landlord had set fire to the building. Frank Edmund Raynor, a soldier, was later tried for the offence and found not guilty. The hotel was then owned by William Garvey, who, on 11 August, 1929, had purchased the building and business from two sisters, Mrs Hutchison and Mrs Wallace, the purchase price had been £3425. In 1937 Garvey was forced to cease hotel-keeping due to ill health and he leased the hotel to Agnes Dunne, the terms of the lease were for ten years with a weekly rental of £5. Dunne and her defacto husband, the accused, Frank Raynor, were then also leasing the Tingoora Hotel, and it was Dunne's statements regarding the arson of the Home Creek Hotel which ultimately led Raynor to be charged with the crime. He was acquitted by jury at a re-trial which was held in March 1944, by which time Raynor was serving with the A.I.F.¹¹

The public hall at Tingoora was a source of unending pride for the people of the region. For many years an ancient building, described as being, 'most unattractive', had functioned as a venue for public meetings and other community affairs, however, in about 1932 there was a public drive to have a new hall constructed at the village, and despite some controversy regarding expenditure, the project went ahead and the new hall, costing £800, was opened in 1933. This debt was paid for within three years. The hall also functioned as a rest-room for the Tingoora Q.C.W.A.¹²

Among the early residents of Tingoora was Samuel Long. Long was born at Tinana, Maryborough, on 21 May, 1883, and came to the South Burnett circa 1890 to work with his father on the family selections at Charlestown and Chelmsford. He was reportedly very successful in the growing of peanuts, maize, potatoes and lucerne. Several years later, Long selected his own land at Tingoora. He married Ruth White of Toowoomba in 1920, they had two sons and one daughter. Long was a foundation member of the Kingaroy Show Society, the press later reporting of him: 'An outstanding farmer, keen competitor, good winner and loser and very careful of the standard of his exhibits, Mr Long's name has been a byword at all shows in this area ... He was recognised as one of Queensland's best judges in farm and dairy produce.' Long served during the First World War, he and his wife retired to Kingaroy and several months before his death he suffered a stroke from which he did not recover. He died in October 1954.¹³

One of the strangest events to occur in the region was that of the death of a farmer named Arthur Seiler who lived on a property at Glenrock, via Tingoora, in April 1940. Arthur Seiler and his brother, Allan Seiler, were working on the property when Allan left to assist one of their neighbours with a few days' mustering. Arthur was now left alone on the property, his wife having taken their children to visit her sister at Mannuam. When Allan Seiler returned to the farm a few days later he discovered the body of his brother hanging in the machinery shed. The press later reported that the body was: '... hanging by a chain with a strap around his neck from a beam of a machinery shed they had been erecting. The feet were on the ground so that deceased had died by strangulation.' The body was taken down and conveyed to Wondai for a post mortem examination. However, as a strange postscript, it appears that Arthur Seiler's brother, Edward Seiler, had been found in similar circumstances near the Boondooma stock route on 28 October the previous year.¹⁴

The small community at Charlestown was similar to many other such rural settlements spread throughout the South Burnett with a scattering of farming families relying on the services of regions such as Tingoora, Home Creek etc, and, to a larger extent, Wondai. The graveyard at Charlestown received considerable publicity in 1986 when it was 'rediscovered' by members of the Wondai and Nanango Shire Councils. Some of the early Charlestown residents buried at the cemetery include Hilda Alice McNicol, who died in 1903, Florence Olive Toop and her father Henry Toop, who was a member of the Nanango Divisional Board.¹⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixty-eight

Tingoora, Charlestown and Adjacent Areas

1. M/C. 16 June, 1908, p 3.
2. Letter EDU/2 2687, file 96584, State Archives of Queensland.
3. For further details see file: 6395 BCA 3, Wondai Museum archives.
4. SBT. 20 September, 1978, p 8.
5. *Herald News*, 6 March, 1968, p 13. For a comprehensive history of this school see: *The Little School on the Slope, Tingoora State School, 1908-1993*.
6. Letterbook Number 1, Tingoora Farmers' Progress Association, Wondai Museum archives.
7. *Ibid*, letters of 23 June, 1908, 16 October, 1908, 19 March, 1909, 6 May, 1909, 2 November 1909.
8. M/C. 12 April, 1924, p 6.
9. SBT. 28 July, 1939, p 3.
10. Author interview with Olive Wieland, conducted 29 April, 1997.
11. SBT. 12 August, 1943, p 6, 28 October, 1943 and 23 March, 1944, p 6 and K/H. 16 March, 1944, p 2.
12. SBT. 10 September, 1939, p 8.
13. K/H. 21 October, 1954, p 8.
14. SBT. 26 April, 1940, p 2.
15. SBT. 4 June, 1986, pp 42-43.

Proston

Before Proston became established the region was served only by the rural community, the members of which strongly fought for the establishment of a rail line, a line vital to the success of their farms and a method of getting their produce easily and economically to markets. As we have seen earlier in this history, the line to Proston was delayed for economic reasons until 1923, and this delay created great difficulties for those early selectors who were in the process of establishing their farms.

The first sod on the Murgon-to-Proston line was turned by the minister for railways, John Adamson, in January 1916.¹ Yet the construction of this line came at a difficult time for the state government, there was a shortage of man-power caused through the continuing war, a shortage of materials and a desperate lack of funds.

As the line progressed slowly towards its destination, the population of the region increased dramatically — primarily through the importation of railway construction workers and their families. With such a sudden increase in population it soon became evident that one of the first, and most important public services should be the provision of an education system for the children of these line workers.

The first moves for the establishment of a school at the Proston construction camp came in 1917. In March that year it was outlined that there were fourteen children at the camp with a further two children at a short distance who were also receiving no education. On 27 March a public meeting was held and a school building committee was formed, a formal application was made to the Department of Public Instruction, this application was received on 4 April, 1917. The first school lessons were given in a tent while the construction of the school building proceeded. The first teacher of the school was Florence Louise Fenwick, she resigned in order to marry in 1918 and was replaced by Elizabeth Ida Pacey.

However, the existence of this school was short lived. By 1918 the demand for construction workers was beginning to dwindle and in May that year Elizabeth Pacey wrote to the Department of Public Instruction to inform the department that attendance at the school was then only seven children with a further two pupils scheduled to leave within the week. On 31 July, 1918, Elizabeth Pacey was transferred and the school was closed.

For the following four years the children of the region received no formal education, but on 19 January, 1922, Thomas West, then secretary of the Proston branch of the Queensland Farmers' Union, wrote to the department requesting that a new school be established in the vicinity of the line. A building committee was elected on 9 April, 1922, and approval for the construction of a school was given on 25 October, 1922. Construction began on 13 October, 1923, and it was completed early in 1924. The school was officially opened on 24 July, 1924. T.A. Cocking was appointed acting teacher but it appears that he may not have arrived at Proston to take up his appointment. The first full-time head teacher was John Moore, he served until 1934 when he was replaced by David George Tweedy.

Throughout the years the region has been serviced by other schools such as those at Speedwell, Abbeywood and Hivesville, but as these schools all eventually closed during the late 1960s, students were transferred to the school at Proston thus bolstering that school's attendance figures and importance in the region.²

As with all other regional centres throughout the South Burnett, Proston did not fully become established until the rail line was laid to the area in 1923. As we have seen, following the arrival

of the long awaited line to Proston, a modern railway station of concrete, rather than timber, was constructed at the site and this was quickly followed by numerous sheds, a spacious station-master's dwelling and cattle trucking yards. Soon the tiny community was growing, settlers arriving by the train-load as selections were taken up and as enterprising business-people arrived so the fledgling township began to take shape. Plans were made for a public hall, a store, refreshment room, a hotel, and a butter factory.³ In July 1923, only a few months after the line to Proston had been completed, a report of the village claimed:

Since the completion of the Murgon-Proston railway, things at Proston are looking up and already the place has the appearance of a thriving town. Many allotments have been cleared for building purposes, the public hall is practically completed, Messrs Thorn and Walker have built a very nice general store while Messrs Parke and Coy. of Wondai have also built a commodious bulk store. The local option poll, resulting strongly in favour of new licences, has influenced Mr Condren to build a hotel. The site is now cleared, and later tenders are to be called for the erection of the building. Mr H. (Hugh) Welch is building a shop and dwelling and a small building has been erected for the Commercial Bank of Australia Ltd., to transact business once a week (Tuesdays), until such time as the town warrants a permanent bank and manager. Mr G.T.M. Boynton has made a contract with Mr H.W. Kratzmann of Murgon to build refreshment rooms, and will be in going order within a few weeks. All these places have sprung up in mushroom style, and with the erection of the butter factory in the near future, Proston, one must admit, is really going ahead.⁴

G.T.M. (Tim) Boynton, mentioned in the above report, opened the first cafeteria in Proston, Brigooda resident George Rankin later recalled that patrons could purchase a three course meal for 1/6d or tea and sandwiches for 9d. Rankin added: 'Boynton was more or less the founder of Proston. He later built a garage, a movie theatre and many other buildings in the heart of the town and installed generators to supply Proston's first electricity.'⁵ The electricity supply to Proston was originally installed by Boynton for use in conjunction with his various business enterprises, the press reporting: 'Proston is rapidly becoming "cityised". Mr Boynton installed electric light in Miss Gray's cafe, the post office, garage and the butchery premises of Mr J. French.'⁶ However, this was later extended to serve a wider section of the community. Three years later the press claimed: 'Mr G.T.M. Boynton is installing two 70 hp Lister engines on his property opposite the post office. He has obtained permission to supply electric current within a radius of 300 yards of his engines and intends to do so. This will be a great advantage to residents within the area.'⁷ Electricity supplied by Boynton remained as the town's sole supply until 1956 when the system was superseded by the Wide Bay-Burnett Electricity Board.⁸

The William Condren also mentioned in the 1923 report quoted above, the licensee of the Terminus Hotel at Proston, was to live for only three more years, he was killed in 1926 after being thrown from a horse, as the press later stated: 'Born, as it were on a horse, reared on a horse, to do with them all his life, and killed off one, is the reflex of Mr Condren's life.'⁹

William Condren was indeed well versed in the culture of horses and had devoted much of his life to them. In his younger days he had been heavily involved in horse racing, evidently with some considerable degree of success, the press later claimed: 'He was a keen judge of a horse. He could break, train, or do anything with a horse, and when getting horses shod he invariably informed the smith to "make the shoe to fit the hoof — not to cut the foot down to fit the first shoes he picked up".' Condren bought sheep, cattle and horses in New South Wales and drove them himself. He raced numerous horses in New South Wales and in the central and western parts of Queensland. After a successful career in racing he moved into the hotel business, purchasing a hotel at Goombungee on the Darling Downs where again he was successful. Station owners and hands, farmers and travellers would call into his hotel to listen to the expert talk of horses and the grand days of racing. While at Goombungee he selected land on the Stuart River and began to breed horses and cattle, and when the rail line to Proston was laid he bought some of the early town allotments and built what was described as being one of the most modern, compact, two-storey hotels in the state.

On Sunday 21 November, 1926, William Condren left his hotel to take two of his racehorses, Murexy, and her two years' old brother, to a grass paddock nearby. The horses had been in feed at Proston but following a period of rain on one of the properties owned by a local resident named H.W. Lindley, it was arranged that the horses should be turned out onto fresh grass. Condren

rode an old and quiet horse, leading the two more spirited racehorses. He delivered them safely to Mr Walter Vitch, a stockman who was to take care of them, and began the return journey of eight or nine miles to Proston. The press later claimed: 'On the return journey however, it is surmised that Mr Condren put the pony into a canter and that it toppled over with him, rolling on his body and crushing him severely. Though very seriously injured he was able to make his way to the residence of Mr and Mrs Scott, very kind-hearted and hospitable people, who made the injured gentleman as comfortable as possible and sent messages to Mrs Condren.'¹⁰

Condren was rushed by car to Proston and subsequently transferred by ambulance to the Wondai Hospital, however, his injuries were so severe and he was in so much pain that the journey was a very slow one, taking three hours for what normally was a trip of just an hour and a quarter.

At the hospital the local medical practitioner, Dr H.A. Sundstrup, made an examination and found that Condren's injuries were so severe that an immediate operation was necessary. The operation, assisted by Doctor Webster of Murgon, was carried out the following morning (Monday), but it was apparent from the very beginning of the operation that Condren's internal organs had been irreparably damaged. The *South Burnett Times* later reported: 'The patient, a big strong able-bodied man, came out of the operation in good spirits and remained conscious almost to the end. About twenty minutes to nine o'clock that night he began to sink and a few minutes later he passed peacefully away. Mrs Condren who was with him constantly at the hospital, was at the bedside, as was his nephew, Mr Victor Condren.'¹¹

Condren left a wife, daughter and son when he died, aged sixty-five years. He was described as being: '... a quiet, even tempered man who was liked and respected by all who knew him. No one ever went to his hotel and came away hungry or thirsty, money or no money.' Condren had been a member of the Wondai Shire Council, he was buried at the Wondai cemetery on Tuesday 23 November, 1926.¹²

After the death of her husband, Mrs Condren continued to run the hotel, Brigooda resident George Rankin recalled in 1980 that whenever a fresh keg was put out there would be free drinks for the house, the beer was not refrigerated, it came in wooden kegs that were placed at the end of the bar with a wet cloth draped over them to keep them cool. The hotel burned down in March 1966. Other businesses in the small township included Doug Smith's grocery, the butcher's shop of Jim French, Neilsen's Bakery and Milham's Drapery.¹³



Ernie McKay, Proston. Carting corn on the cob to be threshed. This corn was planted with a walking stick planter after the scrub had been burnt, 1930.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives, Ref. 1339/P2

Another of the early settlers to the Proston region was Hugh Welch, a self taught carpenter who worked on a number of shops and houses in both Wondai and Proston. He was born in London in 1885 and first came to Queensland with his parents at the age of six. The family settled on land at Laidley. Ten years later they returned to England, two more children having been born in Queensland. However, Hugh Welch longed to return to the country where he had primarily grown up and several years later he came back to Australia and successfully balloted for land at Proston where he eventually established an A.I.S. stud. He became a councillor with the Wondai Shire Council and served on that council for twenty years, he also served as a director on the South Burnett Dairy Co-operative. His marriage to Miss M. Dale took place at Gympie in 1922. In 1944 he sold his farming interests at Proston and moved to the coast, purchasing scrub land at Redcliffe where he grew pineapples. When the town of Redcliffe began to dramatically grow the land was subdivided for sale as town allotments. Hugh Welch died at Redcliffe Hospital in July 1976.¹⁴

By 1939, just a few months after the beginning of the Second World War, the people of Proston were enjoying many amenities, including significant businesses. As we have seen in previous chapters, the arrival of the rail in 1923 brought almost instant wealth to the region and soon afterwards the South Burnett Cooperative Dairy Association constructed a butter factory at Proston. Payments to suppliers for 1938 amounted to £120,926, and thus the factory represented the greatest single wealth unit in the region. The factory at that time was also expanding its operations, despite several years of dry weather that had impacted on manufactured output, and was also installing a piggery on an adjacent block of land, the pigs being fed largely on skim milk. Cream carriers were transporting cans from a variety of dairy farms spread throughout Boondooma, Durong, Monogorilby, Cadarga, Brigooda, Stalworth, Kinleymore, Stonelands, Abbeywood, Okeden and Speedwell.

The Queensland National Bank opened a receiving office at Proston in 1935. It was converted to a full branch in 1936 and the first manager was J.E. MacDonald. This was a receiving office of the Murgon head-office. Receiving offices were also opened at Durong, however, this closed in 1937 and another receiving office at Hivesville was closed in 1942, reopened in 1947 and closed again in 1966.¹⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Sixty-nine

Proston

1. M/C. 2 February, 1916.
2. For a detailed history of this school see: the golden jubilee booklet, *Proston and Hivesville State Schools, 1924-1974*, by J.C. Underwood and S.B. Shelton.
3. M/C. 16 April, 1923, p 2.
4. M/C. 17 July, 1923, p 2.
5. *The Murgon and District News*, 24 March, 1980, p 6.
6. SBT. 2 February, 1934.
7. SBT. 24 December, 1937.
8. *Centelabrations*, Wondai Shire Council, 2 October, 1959, p 13.
9. SBT. 26 November, 1926, p 2.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. *The Murgon and District News*, 24 March, 1980, p 6. For details of the hotel fire see: the K/H. 31 March, 1966, p 1.
14. SBT. 28 July, 1976, p 24.
15. *Outlet History*, N.A.B. Group Archives.

Kinleymore, Speedwell, Stalworth and Abbeywood Districts

The name of Kinleymore was originated by George Smythe and combined the names of early settlers of the region, Jack Kinnear, Andrew Ley and Don Morey.¹ Like most other rural areas within the shire, Kinleymore was a small centre with a farming population, the social hub of which was the Kinleymore Hall. Among the early selectors at Kinleymore were Archie Ley, A. Drummond, George Smythe, J.S. Postlethwaite, O. Viberg, Eric Keys, T. Hampshire, George Power and Harry Grieve. The school at Kinleymore was opened in 1913 following regional representation to the Department of Public Instruction in Brisbane. Andrew Whiteside, the first chairman of the Kinleymore School Committee, later stated that the school had been founded on land donated by Andrew Ley. Ley, who was present during the school's jubilee celebrations in 1963 stated: 'Archie Drummond and I selected here in 1909. We had to follow survey lines and lived in tents until we cleared land sufficiently to build huts.' The first official teacher at the Kinleymore School was Mrs W. Kidd of Gympie.²

Among the first selectors of Speedwell were Aubrey William Potter and his family. Potter was born in England in 1890 and migrated to Queensland with his father and brother, Vincent, in



Early selectors of the region at the home of Charles Perkins, circa 1917.

Source — I. Smith collection.

1909, the following year their mother and the remainder of their family joined them. They lived initially in Wondai where Aubrey found work in the local sawmill. In 1912 they moved into the bush and were instrumental in opening up the Speedwell region. Aubrey Potter married Ada Slinger, the daughter of another early settler family, in 1915, they lived on their Speedwell selection where they raised their family, finally retiring to Wondai in 1954. Aubrey Potter died at the Wondai Hospital in 1978.³

The broad area that comprises the Speedwell, Stalworth and Abbeywood regions was primarily settled by English migrants who had come to Australia aboard the ship *Oswestry Grange*. The area around the Speedwell district was known as the 'Overseas Settlement'. The press later claimed of those first English settlers: '... their only means of communication being by the road, an unconstructed bush track, to Wondai, distant 25 or 30 miles or so. The continued delay in the long promised railway to Proston was heartbreaking, but with true British doggedness the settlers, by means of their Railway League etc, achieved their objective with the opening of the line in 1923.'⁴

Those first selectors included John and Percy Slinger, George Perkins, W.H. Perkins and Charles Perkins, Horace Perkins, R.W. and A.W. Potter, E. Hird, A. Taylor, E. Dowell, S. Porter, A. Chesterton, A.G. and Charles Harper, Martin Comerford, John Walton, George T. Hatchett, Martin McGovern, R.W. Glanville, E.J. Cridland, H.S. Nairne, William Waters, E. Murgatroyd, S. Sunderland, Henry Lamy, A.L. Hinchliff, R.C. Larkin, Wilfrid Welch, Ezekiel York, Crawford Rees, J.R. Bull, R.W. Bracken, J.B. Donkersley, J.O.N. Wardill and Charles Wardill, George Stanfield, D.G. Anderson, J. Grace, Henry Holdsworth, H. Crick, Peter Henry, T.E. Marriott, Archibald F.N. Smith, Richard Penman and Fin Hodge.⁵

In 1962, Sydney Shaw, the first teacher at the Speedwell School, wrote his reminiscences of the region and of the education system that then played a large part in the lives of the settlers of Speedwell. Shaw wrote:

The origin of the name Speedwell is linked up with the origin of Speedwell itself.

About two years previous to the 'christening' of Speedwell, a number of families from England, chiefly from Bedfordshire, Yorkshire and the Midlands, sailed away on the *S.S. Oswestry Grange* to start a new life in a new country in the southern hemisphere, and they chose to come to Queensland. The *Oswestry Grange* was a very old and very slow boat, and the journey, including ports of call en-route to Brisbane, took them nearly three months. By that time many of them had become so closely attached to one another that it was their dearest wish to be able to settle together somewhere in this new land as neighbours, and so they went to the Lands Department in Brisbane to see what could be done. It so happened that the 'Proston Scrub' was then being surveyed into agriculture farms, under the fee-simple freehold form of tenure, varying in size from about 320 acres to 720 acres, according to quality. Some of the selections consisted entirely of rich softwood scrub. The larger area usually contained a few acres of forest land. The surveyors reported to the Lands Department that they had never seen richer country.

The minister for lands decided to reserve part of the 'Proston Scrub' selections entirely for overseas settlers, and he frankly explained that the area was a long way from a railway line, about 50 miles from Wondai on the south and Gayndah to the north-east, but to newcomers who had heard vivid stories of the vast distances of Australia, this didn't seem to be very far and they were delighted to be able to attain their desire ...

This party elected to trek with their families across country from Gayndah ... They arrived at the north west tip of the allotted area near *Jingeri* station, then owned by Mr and Mrs Lindley. They quickly took up some of the surveyed selections and settled with their families around the location of the place we now know as Speedwell — and the elder sons of Henry Perkins — Horace and Eddie, and Aubrey Potter and Vin Potter, elder sons of Mr R.W. Potter, also took up selections. The new settlers called their district: 'This Oswestry Grange Settlement', a name which soon fell into disuse as other settlers arrived: Bert Narin, Tim Boynton, Bert Boynton, Victor Beale from Germany and John Henry (Harry) Flynn and family from America, and the name Speedwell was chosen as a postal address. There has been some conjecture about the choosing of this name and I happen to know the exact circumstances. I first met Harry Flynn in 1911 in Wondai at Cowan's auction room when we were each trying to hire a horse to go out to inspect the Overseas Settlement at Proston with a view of selection. Subsequently, he selected at what is now Speedwell and I selected on Back Creek near *Wigton* station in what is now the Stalworth area.

The *Oswestry Grange* settlers had formed the Proston Progress Association and we both joined it. It was then that the postal authorities asked the progress association to choose a name as the postal address of the settlers, and a special meeting was called for this purpose. Personally, I was unable to attend, but sent the suggestion of 'Speedwell', explaining that it not only meant 'go ahead', but was also the name of an English blue flower, as well as being the name of one of the ships in which the Pilgrim Fathers sailed from Plymouth for America.

This latter fact stirred the American blood of Harry Flynn and he at once proposed that the name be Speedwell, and the resolution was unanimously carried.

Harry Flynn also played an important part in the establishment of Speedwell School. He had two young children — Marjory and John — and he was greatly concerned because neither they nor any other of the children had a school to attend. He lent me a horse and persuaded me to scour the district from Kinleymore, up to the *Wigton* station fence and over to *Jingeri* station, and see how many children of school age I could 'round up'.

I counted about forty, the progress association applied to the Department of Public Instruction for a school, and Henry Perkins offered a five acres corner of his selection for this purpose. Inspector Clement L. Fox was sent out to see what could be done, and he recommended two half-time provisional schools — one at Speedwell and the other at a point which was subsequently named Abbeywood after Inspector Fox's home suburb of Abbeywood in London, England. Some of the settlers demurred about Henry Perkins having the school on his selection so Inspector Fox took a compass and drew a circle embracing the Speedwell area and declared that the point on which the compass had made a hole should be the site for the school. Five acres were donated, and we had a working-bee to fall the scrub.

We then passed the hat round for funds to build the school. When completed, this consisted of a large canvass marquee covered over with an iron roof with guttering and tank to provide a water supply. We also constructed two hessian toilets. The floor of the school was the natural red earth. The desks had sawn timber decking placed in position by Harry Holdsworth, but the legs were of bush timber with the bark still on. The department provided a pinewood press, blackboard and all other school equipment.

In the meantime there was trouble at Abbeywood. They, too, had collected money for their half-time provisional school, but being unable to agree about a site had given all the money back to the donors. The department then decided that Speedwell should commence a full-time provisional school and Inspector Fox again came out to review the situation.

Then we struck real trouble. There was no suitable accommodation for a teacher. We had nothing better than tents and slab-humpies, and the Inspector assured us that it would be impossible to get any teacher to accept such an appointment. It was then that Harry Flynn got another brain-wave. He called a special meeting of the Proston Progress Association at Speedwell and informed them that in his opinion one of their own settlers — Sydney Shaw — was qualified to be a school-teacher, and he persuaded the meeting to recommend to the department that I should be appointed. I was not present and it was all done entirely without my knowledge.

The first intimation of any part of the matter which came to me was in the form of a telegram from the Department of Public Instruction, which I received in my kerosene box on a stump at the corner of Aussie Wardell's selection asking me to meet Inspector Fox at the Wondai Hotel on the very next day. I rode into Wondai in pouring rain all the way, and after changing into an entirely dry outfit purchased from Boisen's store, met Inspector Fox at the Wondai Hotel. He also had been wet through, visiting Greenview School, and was now wearing landlord Reichardt's coat and trousers, two sizes too big for him. He explained that he had been sent by the department to give me the usual examination for a head teacher of a small school. I demurred that I had a farm selection and had no intention of being a school teacher. We went up to his room and he left me there with the examination papers and pen and ink, with the door locked. So I answered all the questions, and subsequently received a telegram, afterwards confirmed by letter, appointing me as head teacher of the Speedwell Provisional State School.

Almost at once the school committee applied to the department requesting that the school be given the status of a full-time state school and a suitable state building provided. This request was granted and a neat little sawn-timber building was erected by the department, Abbeywood, also, was given the status of a full-time state school, with a building erected by the department, — but that is another story.

My scholars at Speedwell were probably the keenest pupils in Queensland. They had a delayed-action urge to learn. They had been deprived of schooling for two or three years and

dearly wanted to be able to write a letter home to grandma in England, so my task was easy, and there were quick promotions to the amazement of the inspector who, however, understood the position and was well-satisfied with the results. None of the children lived close to the school, Chestersons were the nearest, and tracks were cut through the scrub to the various homes ... I myself who had to come eight miles, often passed Edwin and Walter and their little sister Ida, happily walking their five mile journey to school ...

When the Abbeywood School was built I was transferred there and Miss Minnie Holdsworth, who came out with her father on the *Oswestry Grange* and was thus one of the original settlers of Speedwell, succeeded me as teacher.

The First World War in 1914 took a very severe toll of the sparse population of the Proston area. Its young men enlisted almost to a man and amongst those who laid down their lives to ensure our freedom we remember with gratitude and pride, Horace Perkins, Bert Nairn, Bill Grace and Charlie Wardell.⁶



Speedwell School, 1939.

Source — I. Smith collection.

Sydney Shaw, the author of the above reminiscences, was a colourful and adventurous man. He was born in 1880 at Sheffield and was brought up in the shadow of the: '... great steel works and factories ... the streets were smoky and begrimed, the (house) curtains sooty and the windows were in need of daily cleaning.'⁷ Shaw was educated in the typically working class British tradition and later went to work at the nearest factory, Jessup's Steel Works, a position he tolerated but did not relish. He later managed to obtain a position as a photographer at the works, taking technical photographs, but the urge to travel and to break away from the dull and monotonous routine of his British working class background eventually got the better of him and he travelled to Canada where he became involved in the now infamous scheme to found a settlement known as the New Britannia Colony on unoccupied prairie lands in the province of Saskatchewan. The hundreds of settlers who formed this colony were led by Reverend Isaac M. Barr who absconded with tens of thousands of pounds he swindled out of the settlers even before the immigrants had even seen their land. Shaw did not continue with the expedition (which later formed the town of Lloydminster), but worked for a while in Canada, returned to Sheffield and after another period of work with the local steel works eventually emigrated to Australia aboard the newly launched S.S. *Themistocles*, leaving Tilbury docks on 10 February, 1911. In his later life he became a Methodist clergyman, an orchardist, a viticulturist, served as a lieutenant during the First World War and ended his career owning a real estate business in Toowoomba.⁸



Stalworth Hall.

Source — I. Smith collection.

Frederick Perkins was another of Speedwell's first settlers. He was born in Bedfordshire, England and as a young man moved to Rushden in Northamptonshire where he was engaged in the boot and shoe industry. While at Rushden he married Sarah Ellen George. In 1910 he and his wife emigrated to Queensland, Frederick worked initially at the sawmill in Wondai prior to taking up his selection at Speedwell. Frederick Perkins died at his son's residence in Haly Street, Kingaroy in 1944.⁹

Another of the more prominent residents of Speedwell was Mr C.E. Perkins a native of England who took up land in the region when it was first thrown open for selection. Perkins, like many of his contemporaries, went in for dairy farming but he was also very public spirited, he served a term as deputy chairman on the Wondai Shire Council and also served on the Speedwell branch of the Q.D.O. He died in August, 1952.¹⁰

One of the early settlers of Abbeywood was Owen McGovern, who was born at Newport, Mayo, Ireland. McGovern was married at Glasgow where he and his wife resided until they came to Queensland circa 1921 and settled in the Abbeywood region. Mrs McGovern died circa 1927 and Owen McGovern afterwards lived at home with his two daughters and three sons. He died in October 1933 at the Wondai Hospital after suffering a long illness.¹¹

Archibald Farquharson Nicol Smith was one of the original group who selected land at Stalworth. He and his family played an important role in the region, his son, James, became a prominent local businessman who also served on the Wondai Shire Council.

Scottish migrants Archie and Janet Smith, together with their children James, Jane, and John, landed in Australia in July 1911. After a short stay in Brisbane they travelled to Kingaroy where Archie found work on the roads. Archie Smith made an application to select Portion 35, part of the resumption from Wigton station, which was 185 acres. The property was thickly and heavily timbered bloodwood scrub with dense undergrowth. He and his family moved onto the property on 13 June, 1912. In the first instance they lived under their wagon, and then a makeshift hut was constructed and finally a house that had been started as soon as they moved onto the property but was not completed until 1917. After the house was completed this entitled Smith to a lease.

Like most other regional farmers they grew crops of corn and had a few milking cows and pigs. When the pigs were ready to be sold they were loaded onto the wagon and taken to Wondai, the round journey took three days.

Archie Smith helped with the building of the Abbeywood School and prior to this the Smith children were being educated under the trees. In 1917 James Smith, at age 14 years, had to go

and find work. For some years he worked as a farm labourer and circa 1925 started work at Thorne & Walker's grocery store in Hivesville. In Hivesville he saw the hall and Q.C.W.A. rooms built, and other businesses start up.

In 1940 James Smith enlisted in the army and in 1942 he was taken prisoner at Singapore. Archie and Janet Smith sold their farm in 1940 and moved to Gympie, and then after a few years moved to Brisbane where they both died in 1953.

After his discharge from the army, James Smith returned to his old position with Thorne & Walker. In 1955 he was nominated by the Proston Ratepayers & Progress Association for Division Five of the Wondai Shire Council. He was to spend the next 10 years on the council. During this time he was chairman of the Council Finance Committee, and served on the Wide Bay Burnett Electricity Board, and was a member of the Wondai Fire Brigade Board. James and Agnes Smith retired to Redcliffe in 1965, James lived to 92 years, dying in Redcliffe in 1995.¹²

As we have seen, the first grocery store in Hivesville was opened and operated by S.S. Fenwick circa 1911, Fenwick was also on the first shire council and his daughter, Florence Louise, was a teacher at the Proston Provisional School and had also taught at the Abbeywood School circa 1915.

It was around the year 1918 that the business was taken over by Messrs Thorne & Walker. Before the railway came through the town all the goods for the grocery store were transported by wagon. Joyce Penman, the daughter of James Smith who later owned the store subsequently wrote:

The early customers of the store were the first pioneer settlers who came to the area and those who followed after. They were (to name a few) Archie Smith, Dick Penman, A.L. Hinchliff, E.J. Cridland, J.O.N. Wardill, John Slinger, Percy Slinger, Charles Perkins, Fin Hodge, R.C. Lakin, A.G. & C. Harper, G. Hives, A. Chesterton, A.A. Johnson, H. Welch, O. Viberg, G. Stanfield, H. Holdsworth and G. Seymour.

As the farmers in the area mastered their agricultural skills there was an increasing demand for farm machinery so Thorne & Walker became the agent for the International Harvester Company. Petrol to run the engines was ordered through the grocery store.

After World War One housing was improved. The timber was cut on the properties and nails, roofing and cement were ordered from the grocery store. Insurance on the buildings was important and this was done through Thorne & Walker who were agents for the State Government Insurance Office. Material for curtains and clothing was also ordered.

All dealings with the grocery store were on a credit basis, and there were many instances where families were carried by Thorne & Walker because of drought, sickness, farms that were not managed properly during the war, and worst of all the depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s. It took some people many years to pay the grocer off at £1 per month. Some even paid their accounts off with produce such as potatoes and maize.

After the railway was completed to Proston the grocery business of Thorne & Walker opened a store in the town circa 1917. The suppliers of goods were the same, however, they now had an increased number of customers, namely business people in the township and farmers from the Okeden Road and Brigooda areas ... From 1928 the Commercial Bank of Australia Ltd. rented a part of the shop for bank premises.

By this time both Mr Thorne and Mr Walker were deceased and a manager took charge of the business. In August of 1950 the business was purchased by James Smith (an employee of Thorne & Walker since circa 1925) and Alfred Henry Duffey. The Hivesville shop was also sold to Mr K. Maroske.

In the 1950s and 1960s Proston was a small prosperous town. There was a baker, 2 butchers, 2 grocery stores, a newsagent, a hotel, butter factory, sawmill, the railway sleeper mill, 2 cafes, 2 drapers, a piggery, 2 banks, guest house, 3 garages, cordial factory, 2 auctioneers, chemist and barber.

Smith & Duffey were in business for fourteen years. In 1964 the business was taken over by the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association to operate a Foodland store. The shop was used as a storage shed for many years and the shop of Perren & Day was refurbished as the new Foodland store. In 1991 the South Burnett Ministries purchased the old shop.¹³

Robert William Potter was one of the early selectors at Speedwell. He was a native of Leicestershire and a baker, who, with his wife and family, emigrated to Australia aboard the *Oswestry Grange*. He and his sons worked initially at the sawmill in Wondai, prior to taking up their selection at Speedwell. After twenty-two years in the Speedwell district he and his wife disposed of their farming interests to travel to England where they remained for nine months. Returning to Australia they lived at Bulimba. R.W. Potter died at a private hospital in Brisbane in 1943 and was interred at the Toowong cemetery.¹⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Seventy

Kinleymore, Speedwell, Stalworth and Abbeywood Districts

1. K/H. 27 March, 1958, p 6.
2. SBT. 27 June, 1963, pp 2-3.
3. SBT. 7 June, 1978, p 23.
4. SBT. 27 October, 1939, p 6.
5. WW. p 233.
6. SBT. 30 August, 1962.
7. *Over the Fence*, by Sydney Shaw, Arthur Stockwell Ltd., 1977.
8. For further details on the life of Sydney Shaw, and especially for information concerning his early days in the South Burnett see: *Over the Fence*, by Sydney Shaw, Arthur Stockwell Ltd., 1977.
9. SBT. 4 May, 1944, p 3.
10. For a detailed obituary on C.E. Perkins see: K/H. 21 August, 1952, p 3.
11. SBT. 20 October, 1933, p 7.
12. Letter to the author from Joyce Penman, dated 28 September, 1996.
13. Ibid, information sourced from original ledgers and docket books of the store presently in the hands of Joyce Penman.
14. SBT. 7 October, 1943, p 3.

Continued Progress in the Proston District

In the township of Proston there were, by 1939, many buildings, the railway station, police, postal department and a school with 102 pupils. Religious bodies included Roman Catholic, Church of England and Methodists, the last of whom shared their church with the Lutherans. A Baptist Church had been established at Speedwell. The first marriage in the Baptist Church at Speedwell was that of Miss L.M. Perkins to Mr H.W. Coulson. Mrs Coulson was born in Rushden, Northamptonshire, England in 1893, the daughter of Mr and Mrs Frederick Perkins. She first settled in Edward Street Wondai with her parents and as a young woman worked in a fruit shop and refreshment rooms, she assisted as manageress and catered for the first Wondai show luncheon. Later she purchased the business known as the Acme Bar, next to the *Wondai Times* building which was destroyed by fire on New Year's Eve 1916. After marrying H.W. Coulson she moved with her husband to Mount Pleasant, Leafdale, where they established their home. Mrs Coulson suffered ill health for the last few years of her life and she died in the Wondai Hospital in February 1964.¹

General stores in Proston during the early years included the Proston Cash and Carry, operated by H. Loosemore, Perren and Day's and, as we have seen, the well known Thorne and Walker's. Doctor R.L. Elcoate was the resident medical practitioner and a small cottage hospital, the Boondooma Private Hospital, also functioned in the region from 1934 to 1940. There were many small businesses such as garages, a restaurant, billiard rooms, hairdressers, bakers and plumbers, the saw-millers, C.G. Baldwin and Sons, provided work for many Proston men and the Proston Electric Light Company was also a small employer. The telephone service had been installed at most of the region's centres and main roads construction was moving forcefully ahead.²

One of the more unusual features of Proston is Sidcup Castle, owned by Hazel Blanch, which today houses a museum of artifacts. Sidcup Castle owes its existence to one man, an English carpenter from the town of Sidcup in Kent. His name was Harold Edward Douglas, and he was known to the people of Proston as Duggie.

Douglas left England when he was just 17 years of age and came to Australia to find work. During the early 1930s he arrived at Proston, found rooms in a local boarding house, and decided that he would spend the remainder of his life in the area.

However, he was a man with a vision, his dream was to build a home similar to the one he had left behind in England. For the next 40 years, he laboured to build his castle. No materials were ever purchased for the structure, everything was either donated by the local people, or Douglas found or manufactured them.

As year followed year, the strangely medieval building began to take shape, room by room, staircase by staircase, tower by tower. Seventeen rooms, narrow passageways, low ceilings, a patchwork conglomerate of a structure that seems to lead everywhere and go nowhere. The architecture is tortured and twisted. The staircases are steep and narrow, one almost too narrow to climb.³

Another of Proston's architectural features is the Shepherd Memorial Church of St Peter which has been described as: '... an outstanding example of church design for its period and location.' The church was designed by architect Joseph Fowell, of the firm of Fowell, McConnel and Mansfield, the builder was Lesleigh George Smith of Wondai. Fowell designed the church in Romanesque style with both European and Scandinavian influences, it was finished with high

quality face bricks. The architects received the 1940 Queensland Meritorious Architect Award (country division) for the design of the church.⁴

Among the early settlers of Proston was a colourful character named Henrich Moritz Theodore Dionysius. Dionysius was born in Riga, Germany, and spent his childhood in his hometown of Greiswald. As a young man he was irresistibly called to the sea and spent thirteen years serving as an able seaman on the wind-jammers, later transferring to steamships. He arrived in Queensland in 1888, settling initially in the Lockyer district where he began farming. He married in that district and the family later moved, firstly to Kingaroy, and subsequently to the Proston region where he became one of the earliest settlers.

It was in Dionysius' home near Proston that Pastor A.E. Reuther held one of the first Lutheran services in the area and the Dionysius family did much to assist in establishing the first Lutheran Church in the Proston district. Mrs Dionysius predeceased her husband in 1943 and Dionysius then lived with his family and other relatives. H.M.T. Dionysius died at the Wondai Hospital, aged ninety-one years, on Sunday 14 September, 1952.⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Seventy-one

Continued Progress in the Proston District

1. SBT. 13 February, 1964, p 7.
2. SBT. 27 October, 1939, p 6.
3. Author interview with Hazel Blanch, 1986.
4. SBT. 16 December, 1994, p 3.
5. SBT. 25 September, 1952, p 5.

Mondure, Hivesville and Brigooda Regions

At Hivesville the growth of the small community and its district matched that of Proston following the arrival of the railway line. Indeed Hivesville pre-dated Proston which grew at the rail head, but for many years Hivesville had served the entire district as the region's only business centre, the next closest being Murgon and Wondai.

While the small settlement and railway site was first named Jaumbill, the name Hivesville was given to the township in honour of George Hives, early grazier of *Sunday Creek* station, who took up that station as a *Mondure* resumption in 1895. The town allotments were surveyed from that station's homestead paddock. By 1939 the small community boasted a railway station and station residence, a state school, Q.C.W.A. rest room and a large public hall. The hall was one of the most important public buildings in the village. According to the original deeds of title the site came under the trusteeship of several members of the community in 1928. The land was donated to the community by George William Seymour who, according to the certificate of title, was paid one shilling for the property.¹ Doris E. Lonsdale later wrote her reminiscences of the building stating:

As far as I can remember, the original hall was one big room with a wide raised stage across the back end, probably about 3ft high, with a set of steps going up from the main floor, at each side. There was an exit back door from the stage — I think it may have been a set of double wooden doors. The stage was quite wide, as there was room for a good sized table against the back wall, behind the musicians. This table was used by the ladies to prepare supper, before the addition of kitchen and supper room. The addition of kitchen, etc, I think, was sometime in the 1930s, probably late 1930s.

Owing to the popularity of Hivesville dances, and increase in population, the hall was proving to be too small to accommodate the increased attendances. It became evident that an extension was needed. In the early 1950s the building was extended at the front, towards the street. The present nursery was incorporated in that extension. At the same time the stage was removed and that area set at (the) same level as (the) main floor. The little 'alcove stage thing,' at side was added. The idea being that the orchestra would be more central, but it was never a success.

I think the new flooring was put in at same time as (the) above alteration. It was said that some of the old boards were worn almost right through. The new floor consisted of very narrow boards, requiring a lot of nails. After the carpenters finished, several committee men, including my late husband, spent a day or so, skidding around the floor on their backsides, with a nail-punch and hammer. They had to punch all (the) nails down, well below floor level, before they could get it sanded.

In the early days supper was prepared at a table on the stage, and water for tea and coffee boiled in kerosene tins over a fire in (the) back-yard. When it was ready, there would be an interval. Everyone sat down and the food and drink would be distributed. First someone went with the cups, usually they were piled in a big wash-up dish. This person was followed by someone with a huge jug of tea, and followed in turn by bearers of milk and sugar, and then others with plates of sandwiches and cake. Any children present usually rushed the job of handing round the food. Not much time was wasted on refreshments — cups were collected again (in the wash-up dish) and food scraps quickly swept up. Dancing continued while the workers washed up, (again in the wash-up dish). Water had to be brought in from an outside tap, and from tins on (the) fire.

No function in the hall would have been complete without the 'billy boiler,' namely a Mr Joe Scheitl. It was more or less taken for granted that he would attend to that job. He was a little, old, fellow, very well mannered, and a champion at his job. Whatever the

weather, he always had the tea ready on time and plenty of hot water for washing-up. His only appearance in the hall was when he came in the back door with the tea or hot water. Otherwise he sat outside by the fire, sometimes in the rain, and sometimes in the cold frost. He attended to that job for many years. He expected, and got, nothing for it. Sometimes not even a 'thank you' ...

Music was often provided by an accordion. As a child, I recall my late step-father, Mr E. Ruthenberg, riding off on a horse, at night, with his accordion on (the) front of his saddle to play at dances in Hivesville. I think he would be paid ten shillings for his effort.

Later a Kinleymore couple — Roy Barnes with his saxophone, and Nancy Kelleher on piano, were the local orchestra for many years. Pictures were also held in (the) hall by the late Mr Arthur Johnson (snr). There was also the odd local concert, or play, put on by some organisation, plus the occasional visit by some travelling entertainer. Church services of several denominations were held at various times.²

Alcohol was not, of course, permitted in the hall but patrons — mainly men — would frequently bring their own supplies. During breaks in the dancing the men would gather at a place known as The Rock, a large boulder situated close by where they would drink and sometimes fight.³

In 1953 the trust of the hall was transferred to James Smith, William Bambling and Gwendoline Hives and the following year it was mortgaged to the C.B.A. Bank. Following complaints made to the Wondai Shire Council over the lack of facilities at the hall, the building was finally taken over by the Wondai Shire Council in July 1980 and several renovations were completed.⁴

The local businesses at Hivesville included the Proston Hotel with Mrs Jennings as the licensee, (although the name of the hotel created some considerable confusion to travellers). The hotel was first established circa 1911 by George Seymour, it was destroyed by fire in 1935 and the present hotel was then built. While the new hotel was being constructed a temporary bar was operated in the old butcher's shop situated across the road from the hotel site. The name was later changed to the Hivesville Hotel.⁵

The school at Hivesville, like many others, came about after public agitation, initial lessons are reported to have been given by a local lady, under canvas, but an official school was not opened until 1924. Shirley Shelton records in her school history that the school came about by somewhat devious means, the Department of Public Instruction required proof that there were sufficient children in the region to warrant the establishment of a school, and so all the children in the township, whether they belonged to the district or not, were gathered together and photographed. The photograph was sent to the department which soon afterwards granted permission for the establishment of a school. It was opened on 29 October, 1924, with Alexander Nesbitt Wilson as its head teacher, Mr Wilson remained in that post until July 1937 when he was replaced by Jack Deeth. The school was closed at the end of the 1968 school year and the building was later moved to Proston.⁶

Businesses included, in addition to Thorne and Walker's store, S.T. Fuller's bakery, the butcher's shop of Levitt and Smith, that had seen a succession of previous owners including a Mr Stephenson, the Drummond brothers and Andy Ley, a garage with six bowsers, the blacksmith J. Webb, branches of the Q.N. and C.B.A. Banks, a newsagency and cafe run by Arthur Johnson and his wife, another cafe owned by Miss A. Schultz and Johnson's Pictures which were screened in the Empire Theatre. The theatre was later converted to a peanut processing factory and is now closed down. The township had a depot for the Wondai butter factory and another depot for the Vacuum Oil Company. The local post office was operated through *Sunday Creek* station and the first post office in the township was opened in 1923, this operated at Johnson's cafe and store and a post office was constructed in 1949.

The grand feature of the small community and the place around which almost all community activity was centred was undoubtedly the hotel. In 1939 a report of the hotel included:

Of the buildings the modern brick hotel literally 'stands on its own.' Constructed some three years ago for Mr W. Soderholm, the building is a monument both to that gentleman's architectural and business sense. Subsequently purchased by Messrs Corsers, conduct was

taken over by Mrs Jennings, who, though with no previous experience in the hotel business, has, by augmenting the natural advantages of the building by good service, popularised 'the house' to such extent that commercial travellers (the connoisseurs of hotels) are arranging their itineraries so as to 'stop over' at Hivesville, such resulting in the enhancement of the trade of the town in general.

From time to time complaints have eventuated from various sources anent the anomaly of the title, 'Proston Hotel,' displayed on the front of the building. A statement that travellers have left the train in belief that they had reached Proston township on reading the said sign cannot be substantiated in that the sign cannot be read from the train until such has left the station and is going towards Proston. There is a certain amount of local prejudice against abandoning the title which was adopted when the township was Proston and which name it lost when the railway was built (opened in 1923) to the present terminus at Proston township. It is understood that steps are being taken to satisfy all parties interested, by adding the name 'Hivesville' under the Proston Hotel sign.⁷

As we have seen, the railway station at Hivesville was originally given the aboriginal name of Jaumbill, but this was later altered to Hivesville in honour of George Hives, the change being gazetted on 2 March, 1923.⁸ Hives married Gwendoline Buchanan in 1905, ten years after settling on his resumption, his wife was the daughter of a Nanango stock inspector. With the coming of the rail, of course, the population of the region dramatically increased and *Sunday Creek* became an important centre for the district residents, George Hives was renowned for the help he was always willing to offer to the new settlers, the station became the distribution centre for mail and other goods and selectors could purchase meat and other supplies at the homestead. Following the death of George Hives, his wife, Gwendoline, took over the management of the station with the help of manager Eddie Barr, a long time district resident. There she raised her daughters, Edwina, Dorothea, Georgina and Mary.

Mary Hives married James Ernest Smith in 1935 and they lived at their property, *Bellevue*, near Hivesville. Later they sold this property and purchased *Sunday Creek* from the estate of Mary's mother. Mary Smith died at Farrhome in Kingaroy on 4 June, 1992.⁹

Edwin William Donald (Eddie) Barr, the manager of *Sunday Creek*, was an interesting personality who played an important role in the township's, station's and district's history.



The Kerle family were early settlers of the Keysland district. This photograph of the Kerle family on their selection is typical of the conditions under which the settlers of the South Burnett then lived. Source — Trevor R. Kerle.

Eddie Barr was born at Nanango circa 1888, but he lived in the Hivesville region for forty-two years where he was known as an expert stockman. As a boy he attended Taabinga School but left at an early age in order to help his widowed mother, sisters and brothers. He began work at *Tarong* station when it was owned by Thomas Clapperton and it was on this station that he learned his stockman's trade. Following his marriage to Ethel Sutton, of Toowoomba, he worked for a while in the sawmilling trade, later returning to *Tarong* as a stockman. In 1916 he left with his wife and two small children to take up a position as manager of *Sunday Creek*, and he remained working there for the rest of his life. Eddie Barr died on 28 February, 1958, his wife having predeceased him several years earlier.¹⁰

An early settler couple in the Mondure region was that of Anna Friedricka Karoline Kerle and her husband Oskar Gustav Kerle. Mrs Kerle was born in June 1883 at Minden. She married O.G. Kerle on 23 April, 1913. Mrs Kerle died, aged sixty-three years, on 6 December, 1946, her husband died aged seventy-one years, both are interred at the Wheatlands cemetery.¹¹ In fact the Kerle family in its many branches is well represented in the South Burnett. Original Kerle settlers to Australia came from Germany aboard the immigrant vessel *Lammershagen* in 1873.¹²

At Brigooda, originally known as Lawson, there were approximately two dozen farms, although this small settlement had not progressed to any great extent until the construction of the Stuart River Bridge in the mid 1930s.¹³ The Brigooda School was constructed by Jack Kachel and Tom Simpson, each of whom had worked for a daily wage of eight shillings. The timber for the school was cut at one of the many steam-driven travelling mills that moved throughout the South Burnett during the region's formative years, it was paid for by local residents. However, funds were low at the time and there was insufficient money to complete the school that year. It was not until 1923 when further monies could be raised that the joinery was completed and the steps put in place. The school was known as Lawson and was opened on 16 June, 1924, with Richard John Ward as its first teacher.¹⁴ The name was later changed to Brigooda as there was already a Lawson in New South Wales and the Postal Department was experiencing confusion between the two centres. The school served the region for the following forty years before its closure.¹⁵

Among the early settlers in the Brigooda region were Samuel and Eugene Emma Rankin who overlanded from Bald Knob in 1921 with all their possessions and horses. In 1980 one of their children George Rankin, then seventy-one years of age, recalled that the primary reason why the region did not expand as did Wondai or Murgon was because of farm amalgamation — farmers receiving government aid to purchase other holdings, thus increasing their land area at the cost of population.¹⁶ Eugene Emma Rankin was born in Sussex, England, circa 1884, and at the age of three years arrived in Australia with her parents, Mr and Mrs G.J. Guppy. The family, which included Eugene's brother, lived at Glen Innes in the New England district. Eugene married Samuel Rankin in 1908, one of their sons, Gordon Stanley Rankin, died as a prisoner of war in Burma during the Second World War. Samuel Rankin died in 1933 and Eugene Rankin died at the Maryborough Hospital in January 1961.¹⁷

Notes and Sources

Chapter Seventy-two

Mondure, Hivesville and Brigooda Regions

1. Certificate of title, Wondai Shire Council archives.
2. *Hivesville Hall*, by Doris E. Lonsdale, Wondai Shire Council archives.
3. SBT, 16 July, 1986, p 27.
4. Various items of correspondence, file: A 134-1, and certificate of title, Wondai Shire Council archives.
5. *Hivesville, Its Town and People and How it Got its Name*, by G.M. Edwards, 1988, p 4.
6. *Ibid*, p 6. For a detailed history of the school see: *Proston and Hivesville State Schools, 1924-1974*, by J.C. Underwood and S.B. Shelton.

7. SBT. 3 November, 1939, p 6.
8. QGG 2 March, 1923, JOL.
9. SBT. 16 June, 1992, p 13.
10. SBT. 3 April, 1958, p 5.
11. SBT. 12 December, 1946, p 7.
12. For a comprehensive history of the Kerle family see: *Kerle Family, 1873-1991*, The Kerle Reunion Committee, 1991.
13. SBT. 27 October, 1939, p 6.
14. Letter to the Wondai Shire Council from the head teacher of the Brigooda School, dated 27 April, 1959, file: A31-2, Wondai Shire Council archives. This letter gives the names of the first pupils at the school.
15. SBT. 17 December, 1964, p 3 and Wondai Museum archives file 6329/LCA7 and 6330/LCA3.
16. *The Murgon and District News*, 24 March, 1980, p 6.
17. K/H. 2 February, 1961, p 7.

Mining and Mineral Exploration in the Wondai Shire

Unlike the shires of Nanango and Kilkivan, Wondai does not boast a rich mining history, there are no known extensive goldfields within the Wondai/Proston districts and there have never been any significant mining operations such as those at Fat Hen Creek, Black Snake, Cinnabar or the Seven Mile Creek. Yet Wondai is blessed with some minerals of commercial value, these include garnets, sapphires, dolomite, lime and even marble. From the early days of colonial settlement in the district, miners have worked the creeks and other promising regions in the hope of discovering gold, coal, silver, diamonds or semi-precious stones and the region is scattered with numerous deposits of marketable minerals. Dolomite, along with lime, limestone and marble exists north-west of Proston near the Okeden Road. Applications have been made at various locations for the mining of kaolin, lead, zinc, copper, molybdenum, bismuth, cobalt, diamonds, garnet and even oilshale.¹

Since the 1960s the tourist industry on the South Burnett has been slowly growing in momentum and various local associations and authorities have worked to promote this important source of income. Tourist attractions have, of course, included features such as the Bunya Mountains, Boondooma Dam, the Bjelke-Petersen Dam, various museums and craft displays, and even some of the industrial concerns, primarily the Tarong power station which attracts its share of tourist interest. Yet the fossicking for gemstones remains an important aspect of tourism within the Wondai shire and the extent of the region's richness in gems has been widely publicised in a number of national media outlets.

In 1966 R.E. Camm, the mines minister, stated that considerable interest was then being taken in a reported gemfield in the Proston region, the field lay approximately thirteen or fourteen miles west-south-west of the small township. Sapphires had previously been discovered at *Burrandowan* station but little was recorded of the weight or quality of these stones. In the Proston region at this time there was also little recorded knowledge of the richness or extent of the gemfield, fossickers were on site and apparently finding stones but these events then received little publicity, perhaps naturally so, fossickers and other miners are usually reluctant to disclose the extent of their discoveries.²

Among the more important of the known garnet fossicking fields was the land leased by Joyce and Desmond Mollenhauer. The field was originally opened up by Charles and Joan Raabe who sold the property to the Mollenhauers when they retired from the region. In 1977 the local press described the gemfield as: '... one of the best in the world.' By then fossickers from all over Australia and overseas were arriving weekly at the gemfield which was situated on the opposite side of the home property on the Dulong road, thirteen miles from Proston.³

Disaster struck on these fields in August 1972 when a thirty-six years' old Kallangur woman was killed in a cave-in while she was prospecting for garnets there. Ruth Judith Whitfield was working the field with her husband, John, when the accident occurred, her husband and a friend managed to dig her body from beneath the rubble.⁴ Mrs Whitfield had been working beneath a large overhang when it collapsed on her, burying her beneath about a ton of rubble. A mining enquiry held later at Kilarney recommended that notices be posted at the site warning fossickers of the dangers.⁵

In 1971 local farmer Les Koy noticed some small coloured stones on top of an ants' nest on his property at Brigooda and investigations soon revealed the presence of garnets and other semi-precious stones. He and his wife Joyce opened up their property to gem fossickers in 1988, the official opening ceremony being performed by Hazel Blanch, the owner of Sidcup Castle in nearby Proston.⁶

Other areas known to contain quantities of semi-precious stones in the South Burnett region include the jasper fields at Cloyna where fossickers also find agate, crystal and amethyst, Numbadi and Winderera Glen at Winderera where jasper and agate are the most commonly found.⁷

Notes and Sources

Chapter Seventy-three

Mining and Mineral Exploration in the Wondai Shire

1. For details of the various mining leases see: Wondai Shire Council file A 152-1.
2. SBT. 28 September, 1966, p 3.
3. SBT. 27 September, 1972, p 4.
4. SBT. 23 August, 1972, p 2.
5. SBT. 6 June, 1973, p 16.
6. SBT. 6 July, 1988, p 4.
7. SBT. 29 November, 1989, p 36.

Durong and District

The Durong district of Wondai shire is a rural area typical of so many other such centres within the South Burnett that have grown from an agrarian base serviced by centres such as Wondai and Proston. Durong itself is a small service centre providing facilities to members of the local community. It has experienced the growths and declines representative of the achievements and difficulties of the past sixty years or so and has seen the creation of facilities such as schools, churches and a variety of organisations. Schools in the vicinity have included the Durong School, opened as a provisional school in 1923 with Gertrude May Koppe as its teacher, the Durong South School, opened as a provisional school in 1925 with Dorothy Margaret Silvester as its teacher, the Boondooma West School, opened in 1939 with Gilbert Wockner as its teacher and the Burrandowan School, opened in 1923 with Edith Wockner as its teacher.¹

There were many early settlers in the region, some were business people others were farmers or workers. Prickly pear was one of the more formidable problems associated with early settlement in the Durong district, most of the settlers were in some way affected by the pear plant which spread with alarming rapidity in numerous areas of the state. This problem, the lack of water, the isolation and the initial difficulties of transporting produce to market were all issues that helped to defeat some of those first selectors, many of whom then abandoned their selections. However, many more remained to battle the pear, to search for water and to overcome the obstacles brought about through isolation and the lack of modern transport facilities. (For comprehensive details on the prickly pear menace see Chapter 96).

Among some of the early residents of the region were Robert and Elizabeth Slater and their family, Slater was a former butcher. Robert Stuart Bond exchanged his block of land at Wooroolin for a Durong block circa 1921 and upon his death in 1924 it was taken over by Oliver Stuart Bond. Peter John Bundesen selected land at Durong in 1915 but continued to live at Coolabunia West, one of his blocks was later sold to John Coe. Charlie Brazier settled at Durong in 1922, he was well known in the region due to his accordion playing which took him to all the local dance venues. He died in 1968. Barney Cavanagh purchased 605 acres at South Durong in 1929 where, after considerable difficulties, he finally constructed a four-roomed cottage from timber that had been milled on his property.

The Cook family, Bon, Win, and their children, arrived at Durong from their grandfather's property at Greenview in 1929. John Coe purchased his land from Alan Bundesen in 1918 and named it *Coo-ee*, like most other farmers in the region he experienced great difficulties with prickly pear. John Coe



Jack Coe doing a little housework at the 'Shingles', 'Coo-ee' 1932.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 2828P3(a)

ran cattle for a while but this proved, at first, to be unprofitable, prices were low and the cattle frequently strayed or were stolen. The family began dairying in 1933 but the procedure was primitive in the extreme, and it was not until 1935 that a modern milking shed and the necessary items of machinery were installed. The farm was run as a dairy for the following thirty years, later changing to agriculture and beef cattle.²



Jack Coe feeding 100 calves on separated milk at 'Coo-ee', Dulong, 1953.

Source — Shire of Wondal Museum archives. Ref. 2626/P2(c).

W.J. Cockerill arrived in 1919 from Brisbane where he had been a butcher, at the same time Bob Hobbs selected an adjoining farm. Stan Curran arrived at Dulong in 1927 and experienced great difficulty in obtaining water, only succeeding after sinking three bores. He married Lil Townson in 1922 and carried on dairy farming from 1932 until 1971 when the couple closed the dairy and returned to grazing.

Louis Duff and his wife, Ann, were early selectors, taking up a property they named *Duffield* circa 1911, the homestead at *Duffield* was constructed circa 1916. One of their sons, John Patrick Duff, was born at Bum Bum Creek near Crow's Nest in 1884. Achieving almost legendary fame for his abilities as a horseman, J.P. Duff later married Dorothy Ruth Evans and brought her to a selection he had acquired when he had been just sixteen years of age, the selection became known as *Di Di*. They lived, as did almost every other selector, in a slab hut with dirt floors, the hut being located in what had been the *Boondooma* holding yard. During difficult times J.P. Duff contracted to drive cattle to market — often for very long distances — he also carried out contract dam sinking. Over the years he became extraordinarily successful and was able to purchase five other properties. By 1976 he was the owner of 170,000 acres running approximately eight thousand cattle. Dorothy Ruth Duff died in May 1978 and John Patrick Duff died in February 1989.³

Frederick Christopher Phillips and his family were among the early business people in the region, Phillips arrived with his family at Tingoorra in 1936 after purchasing the Burrandowan Carrying Service from Norman McAllister, and this service was vital to the farmers of the Dulong region, providing transport facilities from a variety of areas, including the cartage of the all important produce, cream.⁴



John Gessling catching a goanna. 1932, dog named 'Snake-bite'.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref 4901/P3(a)

John and Walter Gessling came to Darr Creek from Toogoolawah in 1931 and moved to Durong circa 1932 where they built a house for Mrs A. McAllister prior to returning to Darr Creek. John Gessling later ran a butcher's cart from Darr Creek to Durong and was subsequently employed on the Durong-Burrandowan Cream Carrying Service. He married Doris Coe in 1939 and went to live in Wondai, later purchasing Norman McAllister's cream and general carrying businesses which the couple operated for many years prior to their retirement.

The social centre of Durong existed at the Durong Hall. On 14 October, 1933 a tender for the construction of the hall was accepted from Walter Gessling, the building was originally comprised of hall, stage and supper room. Timber for the hall was supplied by the Kowitz sawmill at Darr Creek and the building was officially opened by J.B. Edwards on 14 April, 1934. Extensions were added in 1952.

One of the outstations on *Boondooma* was *Corrunovan*, Gerald and Margery Grimes record in Jack Coe's publication *The Big Scrub* that a slab hut for a boundary rider was constructed on the outstation circa 1880. In 1900 portion six of *Corrunovan*, a block of land approximately 7,800 acres in size, was thrown open for selection and was taken up by E.M. Tancred. It was sold to T.A. Clapperton in 1913 who sold it to Alister Bailey Grimes, after whom the bridge across Boondooma Creek was named in 1963.⁵ An unpublished paper in the Wondai Museum archives claims:

Alister Bailey Grimes was born in Brisbane in December 1890. Educated in that city and was a second year student in engineering at the Queensland University when World War One broke out. He then enlisted for active service and served as a motor transport driver with the First Australian Field Ambulance in France. When the war ended he did not resume his engineering studies and in November, 1919, in partnership with Mr G.G. Bennetts, purchased *Corrunovan* from Mr T.A. Clapperton of Tarong. The partnership also had a holding on the Dawson River.

The partnership was dissolved circa 1924 when Mr Grimes became the sole owner of *Corrunovan*. At that time *Corrunovan* in common with all Boondooma and Durong areas

was badly infested with prickly pear and Mr Grimes spent large sums of money annually in an effort to control the pest, but no real progress was made until the advent of the cactoblastis insect which practically wiped out the pest, as all that now remains are very isolated pear plants.

In 1926 Grimes married Gwenda Roberts at Maryborough, a daughter of G.I. Roberts, editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle*.⁶

When the construction of Boondooma Dam was underway during the 1980s, the homestead at *Corrunovan* and its outbuildings had to be removed.⁷

Harry Horne purchased land at Dulong in 1919, his block having been originally selected by W. Sweet, at that time Horne had another property at Chelmsford. *Bellisle*, a block of land on the Boyne River, was occupied in 1919 by Bob Hobbs from Tipperary. Cyril Jerrard selected his farm in 1921, the block had no house so 'temporary quarters' were established in a cave. This cave was enclosed with saplings and branches and made reasonably comfortable, so comfortable, in fact, that it remained in use for the following ten years. In 1931 Jerrard selected an adjoining property and named the farm *Kingar Springs*, the property lies between *Corrunovan* and *Di Di*, and that year a one-roomed house was built approximately one mile from the cave, additions to the house later being constructed. Jerrard possessed an impressive intellect, he had won prizes for his essays during his school-days including the gold medal for the Queensland Society of Prevention of Cruelty competition and the Silver Challenge Cup for the Brisbane Grammar School. Later in life he became a keen astronomer and was a devoted ornithologist, taking unique photographs of the birds he studied. In 1920 he 'rediscovered' the paradise parrot which nests in a tunnel burrowed into a termites' mound. First discovered in 1844, it was thought to be extinct when Jerrard again sighted a member of the species. Jerrard was drowned during a family picnic day at Blacktown on 26 December, 1943.⁸

Cyril's brother Stanley Jerrard was also an early settler in the district, selecting portion twenty of the original *Boondooma* station. For the first six months of his tenure he camped under an apple tree while he cleared the land and constructed a slab hut.



Harry Horne travelling by flying fox across the flooded Boyne River before the bridge was built.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 2607/PS(a).

Bert Lamperd settled at Durong in August 1917, purchasing a block from Richard Pook. Lamperd began one of the first dairies in the region. W.G. and F. Murphy acquired their land at Durong in 1919. In 1924 James L. Richards took up an area of some ten thousand acres with a ten mile frontage to the Boyne River, Richards later became one of the largest suppliers of cream to the Proston butter factory.

Local organisations and associations have also played an important role in the community, these have included the Durong Co-operative Dip Association, formed in 1928 with the dip being completed in December that year by Mr M. Higgins on land donated by Oliver Stuart Bond. Other organisations have included the Q.C.W.A., formed in 1933, the Boondooma Grain Pool was formed in 1953 in order to obtain the best price for sorghum, a branch of the United Graziers' Association was formed in 1958, the Boondooma Co-operative Society was formed at Durong in 1969 and the Durong branch of the Queensland Dairyman's Organisation was formed in 1941. The Boondooma Cattleman's Protection Association was formed in 1958 in an effort to protect cattle from thieves, this was the first such organisation in Queensland and its formation created considerable press interest. As a result of this organisation's work the first police stock squads were soon afterwards formed.⁹

Cattle sales were conducted from Alf Joseph's *Happy Valley* yards during the early 1950s, the sales being conducted through Mactaggart's.

Coe's Park at the Proston turn-off was established in October, 1977, the Coe family planting the first bottle trees at the park on 10 October that year. In March 1982 the Wondai Shire Council advised the Coe family that the park was to be named in recognition of their efforts in establishing the park. Today the site is a shaded rest area much frequented by travellers.¹⁰

Notes and Sources

Chapter Seventy-four

Durong and District

1. Further details of these schools may be seen in Coe, J. *The Big Scrub*, 1977, pp 27-54.
2. For full details on the history of *Coo-ee* see: Coe, pp 173-185.
3. SBT. 1 March, 1989, p 12.
4. Coe, pp 106-108.
5. *Ibid*, p 206.
6. A.B. Grimes, unpublished document, file: A 14-1, Wondai Shire Council archives.
7. For details of this removal see: Coe, p 476.
8. For further details of this man's career see: G.L.J. Jerrard's article in Coe, pp 229-32.
9. Further information on the Cattleman's Protection Association may be seen in Coe, pp 367-38.
10. Coe, pp 505-06.

Wondai, the Cradle of the Cotton Industry on the South Burnett

With the coming of the railways to the South Burnett and the establishment of businesses such as the dairy industry, the region moved ahead on a strong financial footing. Yet there was one industry of which the people of the area were naturally wary, and this was the growing of cotton. While cotton cultivation has never become the large and widespread industry that is now seen at places such as the Darling Downs, it was once believed that the crop could dramatically reform agrarian endeavour on the South Burnett, and this perceived new revolution had its birth at Wondai.

Cotton had the potential to be an extremely profitable crop, it was difficult to grow, it was frequently the victim of insect attack, it required constant water, was difficult and time consuming to harvest — especially in the early days — but the returns could be excellent. Manufacturing plants in the British Midlands were constantly clamouring for good quality cotton at reasonable prices. The American market was also a source of potential wealth — although this was largely catered for through the wide-scale cotton fields at places such as Alberta and North Carolina.

Experiments in cotton production had begun in Queensland as far back as the 1860s, with varying results, and cotton growing in the warmer climates, especially along the tropical and sub-tropical coastal belts was certainly a strong possibility. However, inland the crop did not generally fair as well, although experiments determined that it could be grown in some regions, particularly on the Darling Downs.

Yet despite the hesitancy of some farmers to embrace this largely experimental crop, there was certainly some potential.

In June 1922, the Australian Cotton Growing Association sent a cotton growing expert named Mr Vernon into the South Burnett. Vernon went firstly to Kingaroy where he called a public meeting in order to discuss the possibilities of growing cotton in the region. However, many of those present believed that the South Burnett climate would be too cold for cotton growing and Vernon could find no support for his proposals.

After visiting Kingaroy, Vernon travelled to Wondai where his reception was slightly warmer, a report of his actions in the small township, and of the subsequent growth of the cotton industry, stated:

When he came to Wondai, one of the first men he met was Mr Neil Neilsen, of the Wondai Hotel. After the latter had heard of Mr Vernon's mission, he (Mr Neilsen) at once realised the opportunity given to the Wondai district, and instead of only a few farmers turning up at Mr Vernon's public meeting, as had been the case in other places, the meeting was attended by a splendid representative gathering of farmers and businessmen alike. Mr Neilsen, who is president of the Wondai Chamber of Commerce, had been responsible for arousing interest amongst the business people, and they to a man stood behind him. After Mr Vernon left Wondai, the Chamber of Commerce took the matter of cotton-growing up enthusiastically, and invited Mr Vernon back to address meetings of farmers throughout the district. Mr Neilsen as president of the Chamber of Commerce, assisted Mr Vernon, by taking him out in his car, by chairing all these meetings, and with Mr Vernon, addressing the farmers urging them to put in cotton as an adjunct to their other agricultural and dairying pursuits.¹

Finding that the farmers were, at first, somewhat sceptical, a local syndicate was formed, this syndicate consisted of Mr Neilsen as chairman, with fifteen Wondai businessmen as members.

The syndicate put one hundred and fifty acres under cotton cultivation, employing labour for the task. Apart from 1000 acres of cotton at *Boondooma*, this was the largest area then under cotton in the South Burnett. Experts from the Australian Cotton Growing Association visited the region while the crop was growing, and after inspecting the crop claimed that a return of 1400 to 2200 lb of cotton per acre would be their estimate provided the crop received the required rainfall. Unfortunately, however, practically no rain fell during the crucial period and the yield dropped by about 60 per cent. The press later claimed: 'Notwithstanding the dry weather, the syndicate's returns were better than the maize crop would have been in a fair average season. The credit due to the Wondai Chamber of Commerce for pushing cotton-growing cannot be over-stated, and farmers should realise the great help that institution has been to them in establishing the industry in their midst. At the time the syndicate was formed, the Chamber of Commerce was also busy in a publicity campaign, circularising the farmers throughout the Wondai district issuing what was termed "Cotton talks" which in a humorous and easily to-be-understood way explained why the farmers should grow cotton. The efforts of the Chamber achieved the aimed-at result practically everybody in the district talked cotton. In fact, visitors to Wondai at the time referred to Wondai people as "cotton men", or having "cotton bolls" on their heads. This, however, did not in the least discourage the Wondaites.'²

Due to the efforts of the Wondai Chamber of Commerce, large quantities of cotton seed were soon arriving at the railway station, and some six thousand acres were put under cotton within a radius of fifteen miles of Wondai. The land under cotton was situated in the Tingoora, Greenview, Mount McEuen and Mondure North districts. The syndicate's return from their cotton growing venture was £6 gross per acre, and this was experienced after one of the driest seasons on record. These returns proved to be a better paying proposition than maize planted at the same time on similar soil. In some parts of the Wondai district where, on account of scattered thunderstorms more rain had fallen, cotton crops yielded a return of £25 to £35 per acre. One farmer who planted six different crops at the same time of which the principal ones were potatoes, maize, pumpkins, sorghum and cotton and who gave them all the same cultivation, each crop having the same rainfall, had an interesting experience: Four crops failed completely; from the maize he got sufficient returns to feed his poultry, and the cotton crop gave him a return of £22 gross per acre.

Harvesting was also arranged with ease and provided work for many people in the region. A report of subsequent events claimed:

The Wondai syndicate was able to get 90 percent of their crop picked at 1½d. per lb., which was the standing payment; the final picking cost 2d. per lb. The experience has been that good pickers would average about 15/- per day, this being on a drought-stricken crop, and was not confined to men only. From these figures it is easily understood that in a good season, the cotton crops should give a splendid return for pickers, for, as it was, most of the pickers had had no experience, and being novices could hardly be expected to put up any records. Many were only working six hours a day. The fear of many farmers that there would be no labour available when picking time came around was absolutely unfounded with regard to the South Burnett; there was plenty of labour offering. Mr Neilsen received letters from practically all over Australia and portions of New Zealand, people being anxious to come into cotton growing districts for picking, and many also for settling purposes.³

As the result of this successful season many farmers in the Wondai district became enthusiastic over the possibilities of cotton production on a much larger scale, amongst them were P.J. Burns and J.A. Slater who intended to increase their areas under cotton, both had country in the Burrandowan portion of the South Burnett which they intended leasing on the share system. Slater offered 3000 acres and Burns 1000 acres, and many other farmers also said they would plant smaller areas to the crop. There were farmers in the Wondai district who had put small areas under cotton as a trial and were extremely pleased with the result. One of these was Mr W. Beduhn, who stated that owing to the dry spell he would have had practically no return from his farm, had it not been for the cotton. He netted £102 from fifteen acres under cotton despite the poor weather conditions. In 1923, following these excellent results, the press reported:

Following up their last year's efforts, the Wondai people at a public meeting, held on Saturday, 14th July, 1923, decided to form themselves into an organisation, to be known as the Wondai District Cotton Growers' Association. Messrs P.J. Burns and Neil Neilsen were responsible for convening the meeting, and the latter was elected chairman pro tem, while

the former accepted the position of treasurer pro tem. Permanent officers were elected at a subsequent meeting. The aims of the association are to assist growers in connection with all matters appertaining to cotton cultivation from the time the seed reaches the local railway station to the time the crop is despatched to the ginnery, particular attention being given to the methods of planting, spacing, cultivating and picking cotton. Wondai's move in this direction again is a leading one so far as the South Burnett is concerned, it having formed the first district cotton growers' association in these parts. A great fight is also put up by Wondai people for the establishment of a cotton ginnery there, but Murgon and Kingaroy are also in the field, and naturally those responsible for making the final arrangements of where the ginnery shall be must take into consideration the commercial and natural advantages of any of the towns mentioned before they decide, and in the meantime such town is hoping for success.

That Wondai must be given credit as the centre which did more for cotton growing in the South Burnett than any other district, is an undeniable fact, and it cannot be over emphasised that the biggest share of this credit should be given to Mr Neil Neilsen.⁴

The people of the Barambah aboriginal reserve were also successful in growing a cotton crop, the soil had proved suitable and there was plenty of water available from Barambah Creek.⁵

Over the following years the South Burnett developed into a fairly major cotton growing area, but despite the dreams of significant incomes generated from the vast fields of cotton bolls, cotton production was never to be the success of other industries such as dairy or beef production. There were a number of reasons for this failure, primary among them was poor advice to farmers which resulting in extensive planting of cotton in land unsuited for its proper growth. This was especially the case in the light scrub soils of the Kingaroy district. Farmers also suffered from unusual seasons of extreme wet and dry, an unsuccessful first trial crop showing woody growths on the cotton.⁶

Cotton is still a viable crop on the South Burnett but it plays a far less important role in agrarian management than other crops such as sorghum, peanuts and navy beans.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Seventy-five

Wondai, the Cradle of the Cotton Industry on the South Burnett

1. M/C. 10 March, 1924, p 2.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. M/C. 14 October, 1922, p 5.
6. M/C. 30 January, 1926, p 6.

Continued Progress at Wondai

Over the years the town of Wondai and its surrounding district continued to grow with many services and facilities being put into place including the water supply, sewerage and the highly prized saleyards which were opened at Wondai by O.O. Madsen, the agriculture and forestry minister, on 14 November, 1961.¹

The Wondai Fire Brigade was formed on 15 July, 1946, the plant then consisted of two trailer pumps which had to be towed by any vehicle that may have been available at the time of an emergency. The brigade's first board consisted of F. Kemp as chairman, G. McKell deputy chairman, L.T. Turner as secretary, R. Hargreaves, C.G. Argent and J.K. Brownlee. A report of the brigade's formation and early activities later concluded:

The Department of Health and Home Affairs, which controls the fire brigades of Queensland, made the original two trailer pumps available ... At the end of the first year a suitable site for a fire station was acquired at Proston. 1947 was an important year in that, through the courtesy of Mr C.G. Argent who disposed of portion of his business allotment to the board for the future erection of a fire station at Wondai; the board decided to purchase a 5000 gallon tank in the railway reserve as a standby in the event of fire, there being no town water; Mr A. Casten was appointed fire chief on October 9; the board purchased its first complete fire engine, a Dennis, from the Maryborough Fire Brigade Board, and Proston was provided with a trailer unit which was housed in Codd & Freney's garage in charge of Mr Codd ...

Another important milestone was 1950 in which the board was gazetted to take the whole of the Wondai shire under its control for the purpose of rural fire fighting ... the board acquired three new rural fire fighting units which were fitted and constructed by the fire chief, Arthur Casten. Being designed locally they are the only units of their kind in use in the state for the purpose of rural fire fighting, and it was during 1950 that the small Wondai brigade blossomed into two urban brigades, one at Wondai and the other at Proston with 13 firemen, 13 rural auxiliary groups equipped with knapsack sprays and fire beaters with 52 auxiliary firemen. These groups are situated at Cushnie, Keysland, Hivesville, Fairdale, Speedwell, Kinleymore, Brigooda, Abbeywood, Durong South, Durong, North Boondooma, Charlestown, Woroonden. The new brick fire station was erected and opened by the minister for health and home affairs in the same year.²

Associations such as the Queensland Graingrowers' Association's local branch did much to promote the region and to enhance the local economy, the inaugural meeting of the Wondai branch was held at the Oddfellows' Hall on 28 January, 1954. N.J. McAllister was elected its first president with P.H. Iszlaub and S. Burns as vice presidents, E.H. Jensen was secretary treasurer. Other men who played an important function in the association's early years were Allan Behm, president for eight years prior to his death following a car accident, and his successor, C.E. Cameron.³

As we have seen, the history of Wondai is culturally, socially and technically diverse and offers a rich pastiche of colourful historical components. The future of the region promises to be equally as diverse with primary production even now showing signs of an embryonic revolution. Traditionally, farmers have worked at producing maize, sorghum, peanuts, navy beans, dairy products and beef cattle, but with a changing market, particularly with a growing market in Asia, these traditional products may soon be substantially augmented. Sunflower seed is already an important industry and the demand for soya beans in Asia is strong with a rapidly growing demand in Australia — particularly as Australian consumers come to recognise the medicinal and

health qualities of soy products such as tofu and soy milk. Asia also purchases large quantities of pulse crops such as chick peas which have a high nutritional value and are therefore vital to developing countries with records of poor food production, high populations and weak economies. Additionally, there is a growing demand for products of the horticultural industry and orchards of various fruits will become widely established on the South Burnett where the soils and climate are perfect for such production. Vineyards and their associated wineries will also become a major part of the Wondai and South Burnett's region's economic future, although still in its infancy, the industry is growing strongly and will provide an additional tourist feature to the region.

The Wondai Shire Council is also currently investing in real-estate development in an effort to provide low cost land to prospective investors and this plan has been extremely successful in providing the basis for housing development and thus increasing employment opportunities within the shire. The concept was first proposed during the 1970s by Alan Keates, present chief executive officer of the Wondai Shire Council, he later recalled: 'During the middle-to-late seventies it was a changing scene, people would come to the region looking for a block of land and there was nothing for them, so I suggested to the council that they should open up residential estates and I'd found there was some crown land near Pring Street that had already been subdivided but had never been auctioned off, so I got in touch with the Lands Department and found that the council could take out a special development lease to develop these allotments and then sell them freehold, at that time we had to pay the government five per cent of the sale price. Within three weeks of the auction every allotment was sold.'⁴

Additionally the council has purchased a large block of land fronting the Bunya Highway, bordered by the golf course, where an industrial estate has been established. This block of land was originally Wondai's first official aerodrome, although this was later abandoned when a new aerodrome was opened on its present location opposite the Wondai cemetery. This industrial estate is now in the process of development.⁵

Further successful developments followed, and the shire council presently holds sufficient land for another two hundred housing blocks and families are attracted to the region for its rural lifestyle, more economical rates, lower cost of living, low crime rate and its personal security aspects.



The opening of the Allan (Snow) Huston Memorial Park at Ficks Crossing by Trevor Perrett, M.L.A., minister for primary industries, fisheries and forestry, 14 December, 1996.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews

One of the attractions of the town in respect to retirement prospects is that of the Laurels Retirement Village, for which the late Bob Huston must receive much of the credit. Bob Huston was the original president when the Wondai District Homes for the Aged Committee was formed on 3 June, 1974. The main aim of the committee was to provide low cost housing for the aged where residents could retain their independence. In 1976 the old school ground at Wondai was reserved for homes for the aged with the Wondai Shire Council as trustee. The first set of duplex units was opened by the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, on 28 May, 1977. Further funding was provided following a trip to Canberra by Bob Huston and Alan Keates in 1978 and construction began on these units the following year. On the day construction commenced, Bob Huston died. These two new units were opened that year and dedicated in Bob Huston's memory. Further funding became available in 1981 and eight more units were opened in 1982. In 1988 another two duplex units were opened at the old school sports ground in Mackenzie Street.⁶

Each year sees new investment and the opening of added facilities in the shire, for example, in December 1996 three important facilities were opened in the region on the same day, that of the Allan 'Snow' Huston Memorial Park at Fick's Crossing, the inland fisheries office of the Department of Primary Industries at the old court-house and the building extensions to the Wondai Shire Council administration centre. All these openings occurred on 14 December, 1996, the Allan Huston park was opened by Trevor Perrett, M.L.A. minister for primary industries and member for Barambah who also opened the fisheries office. The council building extensions were opened by Di McCauley, M.L.A. the minister for local government and planning. During her opening speech Mrs McCauley announced the provision of funding of more than \$2 million to augment Wondai's water supply and also to provide reticulated water to Tingooora.⁷

Di McCauley (nee Huston) is one of Wondai's more well known contemporary politicians. She was born in Wondai, the grand-daughter of Mark and Jean Huston who, as we have seen, owned the Ford dealership in the town. Her father was Bob Huston who served on the Wondai Shire Council and who did much to promote regional progression. Di McCauley moved away from Wondai after her marriage to Ian McCauley when she was nineteen years of age, her husband was employed in the coal industry and the couple moved extensively throughout Queensland and other states before settling on a property near Biloela. Prior to his retirement from the coal industry Ian McCauley was general manager at the Callide coalfields and chairman of the Australian Coal Association. Di McCauley has served on the Banana Shire Council before her election to state parliament, she became a cabinet minister in 1996 as the minister for local government and planning.⁸

Some interesting features of the region include the Wondai museum, situated behind the Col. Morris Library in Mackenzie Street, here visitors may see many displays that feature artifacts from Wondai's diverse history, including a items from the original public hospital. The Dingo Creek Bicentennial Park on the outskirts of the town is a pleasant rest area for travellers, Fick's Crossing Camp, five kilometres north of the town, offers camping accommodation for groups, a large dining hall, games rooms and a floodlit hard-court area are included at the camp. There are courses in ropes, archery and many other activities. The Wondai Rifle Club has an



The opening of the inland fisheries office at Wondai of the Department of Primary Industries by Trevor Perrett M.L.A., member for Barambah, on 14 December, 1996. Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.



The opening of the extensions to the Wondai Shire Council administration office by Di McCauley, M.L.A., minister for local government and planning, on 14 December, 1996.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

excellent range near the town and members shoot every first and third Sunday. Wondai has many services including the aerodrome with night lighting, there are three hotels, two motels, a caravan park, police, R.S.L., ambulance, hospital, shopping centre, post office, squash, golf club, netball, race-course, swimming pool and tennis. At Hivesville there is a hotel, shop and post office and at Tingora another hotel services that centre. Proston remains the second most important town within the shire and is a vital service centre to the people of that region. Wondai has also become known across Australia as the home of Wondai's Mate, the famous pacer and one of Australia's greatest winners in harness racing.

Without doubt the greatest tourist attraction in the Wondai region is Boondooma Dam. The construction of the dam is covered later in this history, but today the waterway attracts boat enthusiasts and fishermen in ever increasing numbers. At the dam there are now many facilities and attractions, including a modern camping area with all facilities, a caravan park, and rest areas with bar-b-ques and toilets. The dam has been stocked with fingerlings and is now showing exciting results with record catches.

Tourists will also enjoy other regional facilities and services including the Leura-Joy gemfield at Brigooda, the jasper fields at Cloyna, the Numbadi gemfield at Windera, Sidcup Castle at Proston and historic *Boondooma* homestead which, as we have seen, is now owned by the Wondai Shire Council and is being preserved.

In 1974 the Commonwealth government set aside a total of \$8 million for the preservation of the National estate and a further \$9 million had been set aside for the purchase of land of significance for nature conservation. Through the state government, local government authorities were invited to make submissions concerning projects that might qualify for funding, and during a meeting of the Wondai Shire Council held in October that year, councillors agreed that *Boondooma* station, then owned and occupied by Edward Thomson, would be an ideal subject for the conservation programme. Wondai shire clerk, George Colin Morris, stated that the conservation project would be a particularly valuable one as, in his opinion, the Mundubbera/Durong road which fronts the homestead could become one of the state's leading

arterial roads.⁹ In May the following year the council released the news that a grant of \$30,000 had been allocated for the preservation of the homestead.¹⁰

The shire council purchased the homestead for \$25,000 that year (1975), a further \$5000 was spent on legal costs, a survey, fencing and clearing. An estimate prepared in 1977/78 for proposed restoration work totalled \$9000.¹¹ Some restoration work has been completed by the shire council, in May 1991 shire clerk Alan Keates announced that a further \$3500 would be spent on preservation work, the money being allocated under the National Estate Grant System.¹²

In September 1996 news was released to the press that the South Burnett had been chosen as a national model for a regional tourism strategy funded by the Commonwealth Department of Industrial Science and Tourism. A large number of people attended the unveiling of the International Tourism Strategy during the annual art exhibition and special dinner held at Wondai that month. Guest speaker at the dinner was Professor Nell Arnold who stated that the South Burnett had enormous tourism potential, especially in the region of industrial tourism which would attract students in the fields of environmental management, mining, meat production and agricultural studies. Other groups of tourists would be interested in the power and timber industries, although Professor Arnold warned that it would be important to provide the infrastructure necessary to sustain such tourist growth.¹³

The Wondai Shire Council is committed to assisting the arts within the shire and has purchased the now defunct station master's residence near the railway station for conversion to an arts and cultural centre.¹⁴ In November 1996 the council decided to proceed with the development of the project which included plans for the lowering of the old station-master's residence.¹⁵

Today, Wondai is a small country town which promotes itself as an ideal and safe place to live, where there is a friendly atmosphere and rural community spirit but strategically placed for easy access to larger centres such as Toowoomba, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The town began as an important service centre for the people of the region, through the years it has persisted in this role, and while the landscape has changed, while agrarian roles, functions, disciplines and products have altered dramatically, the town of Wondai continues to provide its function as the most important service centre within the shire.

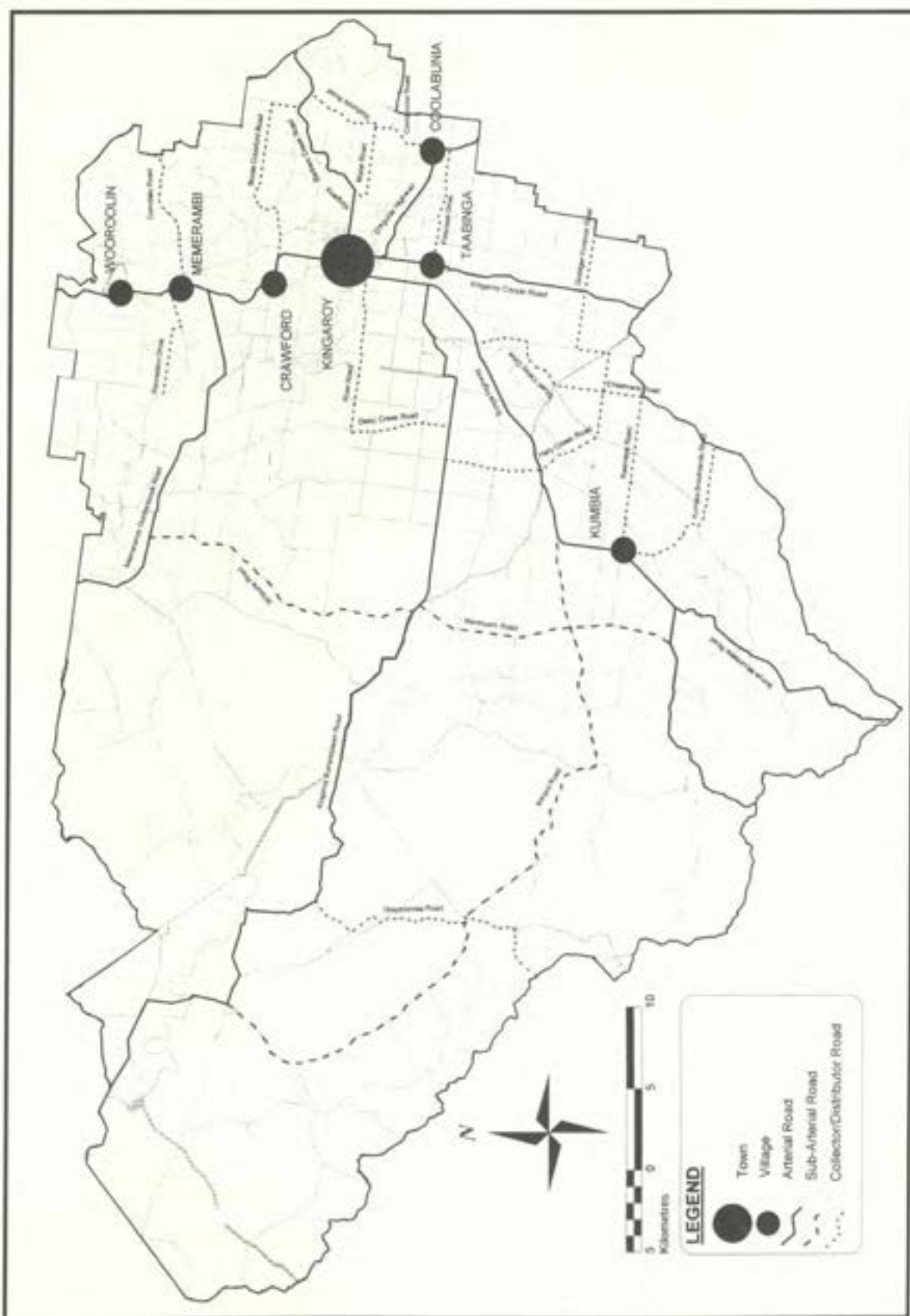
Notes and Sources

Chapter Seventy-six

Continued Progress at Wondai

1. K/H. 16 November, 1961, p 1.
2. SBT. 13 August, 1953, p 5.
3. For further details on the history of this association see: *History of the Wondai Branch QGGA*, by P.H. Iszlaub, 1981, Wondai Museum archives.
4. Author interview with Alan Keates, conducted at the Wondai Shire Council, 11 November, 1996.
5. Ibid.
6. SBT. 26 July, 1989, p 34.
7. An audio tape of this announcement, recorded by Greenapple Media, and a comprehensive portfolio of photographs of these events may be located at the archives of the Wondai Shire Council.
8. C/M. 22 June, 1996, p 10.
9. SBT. 23 October, 1974, p 2.
10. SBT. 21 May, 1975, p 3.
11. SBT. 27 December, 1989, p 1.
12. SBT. 1 May, 1991, p 9.
13. SBT. 24 September, 1996, p 1.
14. SBT. 1 October, 1996, p 3.
15. SBT. 22 November, 1996, p 3.

KINGAROY SHIRE – MAJOR ROADS AND VILLAGES



Taabinga Station



Taabinga homestead.

Source — Taabinga homestead archives.

Following the general spread of the squattocracy throughout the south-eastern section of the colony after the closure of the Moreton Bay penal settlement, many wealthy pastoralists moved north and west from Moreton Bay, Ipswich and other centres to take up the vast holdings that became the genesis of pastoral development in Queensland. Among these pastoralists were two brothers, Charles Robert Haly and William O'Grady Haly. The Haly family dates back to Irish antiquity and was originally named O'Hanly, however, according to a family history publication, in 1545 James O'Hanly killed the son of Lord Clanricarde in a duel and fled to Limerick where he changed his name to Haly.¹

During the early 1840s Charles Robert and William O'Grady Haly took a flock of more than five thousand sheep, about ten shepherds, three bullock drivers, some working boys, a carpenter and blacksmith and with all their stores, supplies and weapons loaded onto three bullock drays, left the Tamworth region of New South Wales and travelled north to become the first settlers of *Taabinga* station, near Kingaroy, a large piece of land, more than three hundred square miles in size, that extended from the Bunya Mountains to Home Creek, near Tingoora. Adjoining the station were *Burrandowan*, *Barambah* and *Nanango* stations. The date of the Halys' official occupancy of the land is recorded as 1846, however, it is likely that the brothers had been in possession of the property for several years prior to this date, probably taking up the station around 1842.

The first residence on *Taabinga* was a rough hut constructed of slabs with a bark roof and dirt floor. The homestead, which still stands today, was constructed in 1846, its western wall is built of locally quarried sandstone — the blocks some two feet in thickness. Much of the timber that went into the home's construction was taken from the forests of cedar in the Bunya Mountains, but the timber for the hardwood floors came from the property itself. A French influence may be seen in the fireplaces, which have a curved back in the French style, and some of the door panelling also displays French characteristics. The homestead features an elevated section used, it is claimed, as a look-out and defensive position.

Like all other stations in the South Burnett, the settlement and development of this station was subjected to the usual problems, scab in sheep, catarrh, speargrass, hostility from the local indigenous owners of the land, isolation and primitive conditions. Yet the brothers managed to build up their flocks, moving produce to the various ports on bullock wagons and drays and importing their stores the same way. The brothers were avid horse breeders, importing a number of expensive English and Arab stallions and some of their stallions became household names, including the famous 'Beeza' and 'Thomanby'.²

The Haly brothers' stable frequently dominated the local races, held at *Taabinga*, for example on 26 and 27 of December, 1851. William Haly's horse 'Doctor' won the first race and another horse named 'Snob' also owned by William O'Grady Haly easily took the honours, the press reporting: 'This was a sharply contested race, Lancelot (owned by John McKenzie) winning the first heat by about a length, the second heat Snob took by about half a neck and in the third heat the Arab blood of the horse and good judgement of the rider brought the Snob in a winner by a length.' The stewards and other executives of the race meeting read like a Who's Who of early colonial settlement in the South Burnett and included such names as Phillip Button, J.J.M. Borthwick, Bryce T. Barker, C.R. Haly, W. O'G Haly and George Clapperton. There was some concern over the location of the course used at the meeting, a local correspondent for the *Moreton Bay Courier* claiming: 'Much against the wish of Messrs Haly the races were obliged to come off on their new course, in consequence of our intended course not being ready in time — (it will be somewhere near the Burnett Inn). — It was not that Messrs Haly wished to stop the sport, but they, having several young horses, would have run them if the course had been off their station so as to have prevented any unpleasant remarks as to their horses being trained etc on the course. 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 ... I am happy to say there is every prospect of the formation of a club, to be called the Burnett Race Club, and perhaps it may be in force before some of the so-called go-ahead towns anticipate.'³

The Haly brothers were undoubtedly highly respected in the colony, both were courageous and resourceful and, at times, were capable of demonstrating a desire to right any wrongs that may have occurred. For example, in April 1849 the press reported an incident that occurred near *Taabinga* station in which William O'Grady Haly took a very active part. The report stated:

Captain O'Connell, the Commissioner of Crown Lands for this district, has just completed a tour of all the stations, having made calls upon the settlers for their 'little assessments'. It is not certainly known where the commissioner intends to establish his headquarters, but the locality generally spoken of is between the stations of Mr E.B. Hawkins and Messrs. Lawless. We have just heard of an act of the most praiseworthy intrepidity on the part of Mr William O'Grady Haly, a settler on the Burnett. It appears that a poor man was stopped on the road by two armed men, who knocked him down and robbed him of a carbine and some other articles. After they left him, he found his way to Mr Haly's station, and that gentleman, being informed of the circumstances, immediately armed himself, and pursued the robbers on horseback. On overtaking them, he called upon them to surrender, and actually succeeded in arresting these two desperadoes, although they had loaded pistols and a carbine in their possession. The prisoners were handed over to the custody of Capt. O'Connell's orderly troopers, who were to conduct them to Drayton for examination. It is impossible to speak too highly of the resolute conduct of Mr Haly.⁴

Charles Robert Haly and his brother officially tendered for the land in June 1850 and two years later a fourteen years' lease was granted to them. In 1856 the lease was forfeited as the rent had not been paid, but this was paid by 1857 and on 17 January, 1859, Charles Robert Haly became the sole lessee of the station.⁵ In 1860 he was elected as the district's first member of the newly formed Queensland Legislative Assembly.

In 1861 Haly was given permission to import from Britain twenty single men as labourers, at that time it was still difficult to attract shepherds and stockmen to the region as the dangers of aboriginal attack remained high.⁶

Charles Robert Haly lived at the station for more than thirty years, finally selling his interests in *Taabinga* in 1875 to James Henderson, Boulton Molineaux, Thomas Littlejohn and Thomas Alford.

The press released some speculation on the sale, in March 1875 the *Brisbane Courier* published: 'It is reported that Mr Haly has received what is considered a good offer for *Taabinga*, and it is not unlikely that the station may shortly change hands.'⁷

At the time of the sale all the station stock was mustered, the press subsequently reporting: 'The delivery of *Taabinga* station and stock will be completed by the 25th instant (May). There has been a good muster of cattle, over three thousand head, and the horses are all yarded ready to hand over. A short time after, it is understood, Mr Haly and family will take their departure from the station.'⁸

The following year the lease was transferred to Thomas Littlejohn and Thomas Alford of *Coochin Coochin* station in the Fassifern Valley. In 1876 a portion of the station was resumed for the Wide Bay and Burnett railway reserve. Thomas Alford became the sole owner of the station in 1883 and went to live at the holding.



Thomas Alford, who held a share in a partnership in the lease of *Taabinga* from 1875 to 1883. In 1883, he brought the lease himself.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.



Richard (Dick) Alford, who managed *Taabinga* for the partnership in which his brother Tom held an interest from 1875 to 1883.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

Thomas Alford, originally from Drayton, who ran *Taabinga* station, did as many other station owners were then doing and changed the station from sheep to cattle production. Thomas Alford was assisted in the running of the property by his brother Richard Symes (Dick) Alford, who acted as station manager for several years. By this time the demand for land on the South Burnett was growing. This evident demand for land prompted the government to cut *Taabinga* run in half and in 1886, 151 square miles were resumed leaving Alford with only approximately 154 square miles, the resumptions included Wooroolin and Gordonbrook down as far as Home Creek.⁹

One of the more well known characters to work at *Taabinga* station was its head stockman, John W. Walters. John Walters had been born on board the sailing vessel that brought his parents, Mr and Mrs Amos Walters, to Australia from Britain in 1857. Amos Walters found employment with John Bright at the Burnett Inn, Nanango. When John Walters reached maturity he began station work and was employed firstly at *Barambah* and then *Tarong* stations where he became an expert horseman. The press later reported of him: 'So proficient did he rapidly become as a stockman that at the age of 24 years he went to *Taabinga* station as head stockman which he remained until his death.' John Walters married Johannah Devereaux in 1876, his wife was killed during a sulky accident circa 1930, and John Walters died at his residence, *Ivyhome*, Taabinga, in December 1941.¹⁰

Taabinga was considerably reduced following the resumptions brought about by the Land Act of 1868. In 1878 or 1879 Charles Markwell selected 3430 acres in the centre of *Taabinga* holding and at around the same time his brother Walter took up an adjoining 1875 acres of the resumed lots. These two blocks were converted to freehold tenure in 1883 and were known as *Kingaroy Paddock*, the name later applied to the township that would spring up there following the arrival of the rail line in 1904. Harold Mears later wrote: 'The Markwell brothers were the sons of Isaac Markwell ... James Markwell selected *Brooklands*. At the same time Charles and Walter selected portions of *Taabinga* which they freeholded conjointly in 1883. James Markwell then bought the interests of his brother, Walter. Charles at the same time bought an interest in *Brooklands*, forming an equal partnership between these two brothers, Charles and James, in both *Kingaroy Paddock* and *Brooklands* which they operated for five years conjointly, when the partnership was dissolved and James became the sole proprietor.'¹¹

James Isaac Markwell was born on 19 April, 1843, and arrived at Moreton Bay with his family in 1849. Following his education he farmed at Bulimba for about six years and later purchased a block of land on the Logan River where he grew sugar, sending his produce to the sugar mill at Loganholme. Here he also raised cattle, in partnership with one of his brothers, and when this partnership was dissolved in 1879 James and his two brothers, Charles and Walter, decided to seek lands in the South Burnett region which led to their purchases of *Kingaroy Paddock* and *Brooklands*. After James became the sole owner of both *Kingaroy Paddock* and *Brooklands* he also purchased *Eddystone Vale* station on the Maranoa and *Archookoora* station where he and his family then lived. *Eddystone Vale* was later sold, as was *Brooklands*, Markwell also purchased *Ormand* on the Burnett River but later sold this property as his two sons had enlisted in the First World War and the station could not be run by Markwell alone.

In 1928, when James Markwell died, the press published the following obituary:

Another of Queensland's grand old pioneers, Mr James Isaac Markwell, passed away at his home *Archookoora*, on Thursday night 26th April, at the age of 85. The late Mr Markwell (son of the late Mr Isaac Beecham Markwell) came to Queensland with his parents 80 years ago in the sailing ship *Chasely*. He was educated at a private school in Brisbane, and then went to the bush where most of his life was spent, first on the Logan and next in the Burnett District where in the seventies he and his brother Charles for some years owned *Brooklands* and *Kingaroy* stations (where the towns so named now stand.) The partnership was then dissolved, and subsequently Mr James Markwell sold the latter place, but retained *Brooklands* and acquired *Eddystone Vale* station on the Maranoa, and *Archookoora* in the Burnett, residing with his family first at *Brooklands* and later selling it and making his home at *Archookoora* until 1919 when he retired to Brisbane ... Mr Markwell's two oldest sons Aubrey and Reginald served with the A.I.F. at the Front, the former paying the supreme sacrifice in France, and the latter serving with the Light Horse in Egypt until the end of the war. Mr Markwell married in 1885 Miss Adelaide Comport, by whom he is survived ... His funeral took place to the Toowong cemetery on 28th April.¹²

In 1887 the lease over *Taabinga* was transferred to Arthur Youngman. Youngman was born in Melbourne on 26 December, 1862, the second youngest in a family of four sons. He was educated at the Melbourne Grammar School and was considerably wealthy, having received a large inheritance. He had studied medicine for two years and disliked it intensely. After abandoning his medical studies Youngman moved to Queensland to become a jackeroo, it was during these years that he learned how to manage a property. According to his daughter, Mrs Gwenyth Leu, he rode from Rockhampton to purchase *Taabinga* in 1887.¹³

A later report of Youngman claimed:

Coming to Queensland in his early twenties, he gained his first experience of the grazing industry at *Rawbelle* station in the Upper Burnett. In 1887, at the age of twenty-five years, he came to this district, then in its virgin ruggedness, and purchased *Taabinga* station from Alford. At this time the property covered an area of 154½ square miles, having been cut in half for resumption purposes the previous year. One of the first improvements he effected at *Taabinga* station was the ringbarking of 50,000 acres. Also, he immediately centred on improving the herds by purchasing the best bulls from the Southern States and introducing Devon-Shorthorn cattle, definitely completing the conversion of *Taabinga* from a sheep run — as it was originally founded — to a cattle station. In addition to the station herd from which large drafts were sold annually as fat cattle, large numbers of store cattle were fattened on the holding. The annual turnover for a long period averaged 4000 to 5000 head.

In 1889, Mr Youngman acquired from Markwell Bros. an area of 5305 acres, then known as the *Kingaroy Paddock*, now the site of a large portion of the town of Kingaroy. With the advent of the township, he threw his weight behind every movement for its expansion, and donated land for the post office, police paddock (government offices), and School of Arts sites, and also gave sites for some of the churches ...

But perhaps the cause nearest his heart was the establishment and conduct of the Kingaroy District Hospital as a voluntarily controlled institution. His sincerity in this regard is best appreciated when it is recalled that it was the one only among his many such interests which succeeded in drawing him into active public life, for no other reason than the better to pursue this interest. Every year the grounds of *Taabinga* station were thrown open for a huge hospital fete, the expenses of such being borne by Mr Youngman ... He will also be gratefully remembered for his patriotic work during the Great War, and it is largely attributable to his personal efforts that the Shire subscribed over £25,000 to the Seventh War Loan, exceeding its quota and winning an Honour Flag.

The Memorial Park of seven acres was also presented by Mr Youngman to the people of the town, in perpetual memory of the district's fallen soldiers.¹⁴



Arthur Youngman and staff of *Taabinga* in the early 1900s. L-R. Arthur Youngman, Harry Sponers, Daphne Buchanan, Gwen Buchanan, Mrs Johnson (housekeeper), Dolly Walters (housemaid).

Source — *Taabinga* homestead archives.

Arthur Youngman married Daphne Griffiths Buchanan at All Saints Church, Brisbane in 1906, shortly after she had completed her education at Ipswich. Daphne was a remarkably pretty young woman and Arthur was twenty-five years her senior. Her father was a surveyor and Daphne was one of four daughters. Her arrival at *Taabinga* was something of a culture shock for the young bride, she was alarmed at the night sounds of kangaroos hopping along the verandahs and possums moving about on the roof. Yet she came to enjoy country life and ran the house with love and efficiency. As will be seen later in this history she was one of the first members of the Q.C.W.A. at Kingaroy and carried out a great deal of charitable work in the district.¹⁵

Life on *Taabinga* station during Youngman's tenure — despite land resumptions — certainly had some advantages. The family enjoyed the services of several servants, including a cook, a governess and at least two housemaids. In the grounds of the station a gardener was employed, in addition to tending the flower beds and lawns he also grew vegetables for the Youngman family and for all their working hands and families. Youngman purchased the second Rolls Royce in Queensland and a reflection of the type of lifestyle he was enjoying may be seen in the following report of *Taabinga* written in December 1906:

Mr A. Youngman, owner of *Taabinga* station, the homestead of which is situated on the banks of the Stewart (sic) River, about 20 miles from Nanango, 15 miles from Kingaroy, and 12 miles from Taabinga Village. Mr Youngman drove to Nanango races in his new motor car that he purchased about a month ago from the Canada Cycle and Motor Company, Brisbane. He secured at the time the services of a chauffeur from the same firm in the person of Mr Reginald de Mattos, a native of Spain, but who has spent six years in London before coming to Australia a few months ago. The main features of *Taabinga* station homestead are the two gardens (flower and vegetable) and the lawn in front of the house. Two gardeners are constantly attached to it, viz: Mr William Pickford, head gardener, an Englishman by birth, 20 years in Australia, recently from *Burrandowan* station, married last August to a Miss Anthony, of Brisbane, and before her marriage cook at *Burrandowan* station. The married couple now reside in a four-roomed and up-to-date cottage, surrounded with shrubs and flowers. The assistant gardener is Mr James Buchhester. The gardens are a perfect picture of beauty and a credit to both gardeners, although I must say that Mr Youngman has spared no expense to assist his workers. In the first place the soil has been imported from the nearest scrub, which must be 3 or 4 miles distant, if not more; the water is pumped out by steam from the Stewart (sic) River into a monster tank, and pipes and taps are laid out all over the ground. The huge stones that border the flower and vegetable beds, the gravel of the paths, the green edges, &c., all must have cost money, some say an outlay of over £2,000.¹⁶

Youngman was a generous man who helped the fledgling community wherever possible. For example he was responsible for having a well sunk on the square mile that had been set aside as the town block for the future Kingaroy, one early resident claiming: 'As regards to the township it is pleasant to state that the water difficulty has been overcome, thanks to the action of Mr Youngman of *Taabinga* station. This gentleman, who is the owner of the fine property known as *Kingaroy* estate comprising 5000 acres, has had a well sunk in the square mile area set apart for the township. It is 57 feet in depth, securely planked, and contains 25 feet of water. This he has presented to the Shire Council on condition that £100 be spent in the erection of a windmill and receiving tank ...'¹⁷

Successive resumptions substantially reduced the land area of the station, each one being opposed by Youngman, primarily on financial grounds.¹⁸ In April 1901 more than thirty-eight square miles were resumed leaving just seventy-one square miles remaining on *Taabinga* station, in 1907 half of this was resumed and Youngman received no compensation under the Crown Lands Act.¹⁹

In June 1910 Youngman was advised that the whole of his run was to be resumed, the resumption to take effect from 1 January, 1911. In October 1910 the case of the resumption of both *Taabinga* and *Tarong* went before the Land Court. Youngman claimed compensation of £62,585 12s, stating that his lease was not due to expire until 31 December, 1916, and that in the six years he still had to run on that lease he could make a profit of around £100,000 from dairying operations alone.²⁰ However, under the terms of the Land Act, Arthur Youngman had given up all rights to claim for compensation for improvements to his lease and the court awarded him only £10,500 with £2115 for improvements such as ringbarking and fencing. The compensation, which also included an added £1260 for costs, was paid in August 1911.²¹

Arthur Youngman died at *Taabinga* station at 6 a.m. on Monday 14 October, 1935, and was cremated at the Mount Thompson crematorium in Brisbane.²² The death of Youngman had a profound influence upon his wife, Daphne. Youngman was suffering from throat cancer and doctors would only prescribe a limited amount of morphine to ease the pain — fearing that too large a dose would be addictive. The subsequent suffering experienced by Arthur Youngman was sufficient for Daphne to turn from religion, believing that no God could inflict such pain on a human being.²³ Upon Youngman's death his daughter, Gwenyth, took over the management of the station and continued to do so for the remainder of her working life. Daphne Youngman died in 1975, aged eighty-six years, and was buried at the station's cemetery.²⁴

Today the original *Taabinga* holding has been reduced to approximately 1500 acres.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Seventy-seven

Taabinga Station

1. Haly family history publication, p 2 *Taabinga* station archives.
2. K/G. 5 April, 1935, supplement, p 1.
3. MBC. 18 January, 1851, p 2.
4. MBC. 28 April, 1849, p 3.
5. *Register of Runs*, QSA CLO/N7-8.
6. SBT. 21 June, 1967, p 7.
7. B/C. 27 March, 1875, p 6.
8. B/C. 29 May, 1875, p 7.
9. K/G. 5 April, 1935, supplement p 1; correspondence, dated 11 April, 1963, from Public Library of Queensland, archives section to Harold Mears, reproduced in *The First 100 Years* by Mears, H. Kingaroy Shire Council, p 80, and author interview with Gwenyth Leu, conducted at *Taabinga*, 5 May, 1997.
10. K/H. 18 December, 1941, p 1.
11. Mears, p 18.
12. N/N. 18 May, 1928.
13. K/G. 18 October, 1935 and SBT. 23 January, 1991, p 18.
14. K/G. 18 October, 1935.
15. *Daily Mail*, 1 May, 1906 and author interview with Gwenyth Leu, conducted at *Taabinga*, 5 May, 1997.
16. M/C. 17 December, 1906, p 4.
17. M/C. 18 November, 1905, p 3.
18. K/G. supplement, 5 April, 1935.
19. Mears, p 80.
20. M/C. 18 October, 1910, p 2.
21. M/C. 29 November, 1910, p 2, 30 November, 1910, p 3 and Mears, p 80.
22. For biographical details on Youngman see his obituary, published in the K/G. 18 October, 1935.
23. Author interview with Gwenyth Leu, conducted at *Taabinga*, 5 May, 1997.
24. *Ibid.*

Burrandowan Station

Henry Stuart Russell, one of the men who had undertaken that first historic exploration of the Wide Bay River in 1842, had done so because he was determined to himself find and select land on which he could depasture his sheep. This was a time of enormous land hunger, those early pastoralists knew that land brought wealth, the more land one could occupy, then the more wealth that land would bring. Russell was no exception to this profound greed for land. In partnership he already occupied considerable holdings at *Cecil Plains*, and he was excited by the news, some of which he received from James Davis, that there were limitless tracks of wonderful country to be had north of the Darling Downs.

On 24 November, 1842, accompanied by a man named William Orton who was a stockman working for Russell, and an aboriginal guide named Jemmy, Russell set off from *Cecil Plains* in an endeavour to find and explore this marvellous country upon which he aimed at depasturing tens of thousands of his sheep. He travelled across the Darling Downs into the Brisbane Valley and followed a rough track north to Tiaro where, by that time, W.K. Jolliffe had established his fledgling station.

The Tiaro station was primitive in the extreme, a few rough huts and cottages, a basic shearing shed, some shepherds and shearers. These men were experiencing considerable trouble with the aboriginal people and life in the region was fraught with danger.¹

Russell was critical of the region claiming that it would not be good country for the production of sheep. Somewhat disappointed, he turned onto a westerly direction, travelling towards Gayndah, experiencing storms and particularly hot weather until they eventually arrived at Barambah Creek which he mistook for the Boyne River.

Russell and his fellow travellers returned to *Jimbour* and subsequently to *Cecil Plains* and later formed a more thorough expedition in company with his brother, Sydenham, Henry Denis, William Orton, and the aboriginal guide, Jemmy, all of whom set off once again for the 'Boyne'. They travelled to a site near Gin Gin, and while Russell liked the country he again believed that it would not be suitable for sheep. Disappointed, he returned to the Downs and decided that *Burrandowan* would be the best place for his run.

Russell wrote a detailed account of his explorations in his book, *Genesis of Queensland*, but he also wrote an abbreviated account in 1873 during which he stated that *Burrandowan* had been taken up for his brother. Russell wrote: 'In the following November I visited this station (Eales' sheep station at Tiaro) and continued a course about W.N.W., came across a watershed which collectively took a northerly course. On the head of one of the streams which formed it I took up a station for my brother called *Burrandowan* which he afterwards occupied awhile. My two companions, William Orton, my stockman, afterwards proprietor of the Bull's Head Inn Drayton, Darling Downs, and Jemmy, the black boy, have been some years dead.'²

In March 1843 Russell placed his brother and his partner W.H. Glover in charge of the station. Yet the venture was not to be a successful one. The men and their shepherds were plagued with hostile aborigines who demanded food and other rations and commenced to kill the sheep. Glover attempted reconciliatory measures, giving the aboriginal people some of the sheep, but the spearings of sheep continued and hostilities soon broke out.

For approximately two years after the settlement of the station the region experienced tension and bloodshed, the aboriginal people spearing not only the sheep but occasionally the shepherds as

well. Glover and Sydenham Russell left *Burrandowan*, possibly in 1844, and Henry Stuart Russell himself arrived at the station to personally take over its management. J.E. Murphy in *Wilderness to Wealth*, states that Russell would have found the station completely abandoned, had it not been for the fear of the shepherds. They were frightened to leave their posts in an attempt to reach civilization, believing that they would be speared en-route.³

It must have been a particularly difficult time for Henry Stuart Russell. Life at *Burrandowan* was tenuous, to say the least. He employed a number of shepherds and apart from these was alone in hostile country surrounded by aggressive and angry indigenous people who had little fear of the white intruders and who resented their presence on traditional aboriginal lands.

For a man who, judging by his writings, was gregarious by nature and who enjoyed the comforts of civilization, life at *Burrandowan* must have been more than arduous. Rations were monotonous, mutton, tea, damper with the luxury of the occasional glass of port or whisky brought at enormous personal cost by bullock dray over the range from Limestone (Ipswich). Additionally, Russell was experiencing other problems with his flocks, the sheep were suffering from scab, and the remedies he applied were only moderately successful, hundreds died each day. Shepherds deserted their posts and were replaced, with great difficulty, by raw recruits, Germans or young Englishmen, sometimes Chinese, many of whom had no knowledge of the trade, who feared the aborigines and who would also soon afterwards desert.

Facing mounting problems, Russell decided to dispose of the station and he sold it to Captain G.C.N. Living in 1844.⁴

In June 1848 the station was sold to Philip Friell.⁵ Philip Friell was a colourful person who, prior to coming to Australia had led a vastly interesting life. In February 1854 the press reported of him:

(Philip Friell) was the only son of Captain Friell, who commanded a company in the late Duke of Wellington's own regiment, and who was killed in India. When Lord Hastings was Governor-General of India, he appointed Mr (Philip) Friell Judicial Surveyor of the Ceded Districts, which office he filled, with the utmost credit, for nine years, after which he entered the service of the King of Oude, as one of the confidential aides-de-camp of that sovereign; enjoying the rank of Colonel in his army. At that time the state of affairs in the kingdom of Oude was somewhat critical. The father of the reigning King had been Nabob of Oude, and was tributary to the Kings of Delhi; but, by the advice of Lord Hastings, he assumed the title of King, thus proclaiming himself independent of the House of Timour. Before taking this step, however, the Nabob stipulated that he should be recognised as King by the British Government, and, in order to support the application for this purpose, the Governor-General of India advised him to send a present to the reigning King of England (George IV.) Accordingly a magnificent present, valued at £100,000, was forwarded to England, and accepted by his Majesty, who returned the required recognition of the King of Oude. On the death of this sovereign, his son and successor directed that another valuable present should be forwarded to the King of England (then William IV.) This present consisted of a dress for the King and one for the Queen, with diamond necklaces, and a gold and silver chair, a gold bedstead, a horse and an elephant for each, with silver scale armour for the elephants, &c ... (however) the whole of the articles were refused by the King of England, with the exception of the horses and elephants, and these, it was said, were only retained for fear that they could not survive the return voyage. The pretext for rejecting the other presents was their excessive value; but the present accepted by George the IV was of far greater value. Mr Friell was appointed Envoy for the King of Oude, in laying the presents before his Britannic Majesty ... The part enacted by Mr Friell on this occasion reflected much credit upon his ability and fidelity; but he could not succeed in averting the intended insult from his Royal master. It was with great difficulty, however, that the rejected presents could be recovered from the custody of the East India Company, and when enumerated, it was found that two valuable diamond necklaces, and the silver scale armour for the elephants, were missing ... On his return to India, in 1838, he found the King, his master, dead, and another branch of the family on the throne of Oude. The reigning Prince was entirely at the command of the British ministry, and Mr Friell soon experienced, in the altered reception he met with, the effects of his ardent exertions in the cause of the late King. Accordingly he left India, and arrived in this colony in 1844, since which period he had been extensively engaged in squatting pursuits. For some time he resided in Brisbane, and a few years ago he wrote a very able pamphlet on the subject of Coolie immigration, then generally discussed as a means of supplying the Northern districts with labour. Mr Friell was attached to

scientific pursuits, and also possessed considerable skill as an amateur painter in oil colours. A few months ago he was solicited to come forward as representative of an important Northern constituency, but declined, on account of failing health.⁶

Russell, apparently, had never applied for an official lease over *Burrandowan* but simply squatted on the land. Friell applied for the pastoral leases following the proclamation of the Burnett District, his application was made in September 1849. Tenders for the various blocks that made up the run were accepted from Philip Friell by the Crown Lands Office on 30 April, 1850, and were published in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* on 26 July 1851. There were eight blocks of land which then comprised the station, these included:

- No 1. *Burrandowan*, estimated area 24,640 acres; estimated grazing capabilities, 6000 sheep.
- No 2. *Peeroone*, estimated area 25,760 acres; estimated grazing capabilities, 6000 sheep.
- No 3. *Chappingah* (Chahpingah), estimated area 15,840 acres; estimated grazing capabilities, 4000 sheep.
- No 4. *Letterfourie*, estimated area 17,920 acres; estimated grazing capabilities, 5000 sheep.
- No 5. *Gordonston*, estimated area 22,400 acres; estimated grazing capabilities, 4000 sheep.
- No 6. *Dangore*, estimated area 23,520 acres; estimated grazing capabilities, 4000 sheep.
- No 7. *Munnuem* (Mannuem) estimated area 25,200 acres; estimated grazing capabilities, 4000 sheep.
- No 8. *Dunrobin*, estimated area 29,000 acres; estimated grazing capabilities, 4000 sheep.⁷

From these figures we can calculate that Friell's land area totalled approximately 184,280 acres.

Friell too found that the running of *Burrandowan* was a dangerous and frustrating task. The shepherds continued to desert and Friell imported a small number of Indian workers. He attempted to have such a trade expanded to include a resumption of convict importation and labour, but this concept never crystallized and at the end of their terms of contract the Indians returned home. Friell built a fine homestead at *Burrandowan* which included a billiard parlour. The station during this period was said to have been stocked with more than 65,000 head of sheep. Friell died in 1854 leaving a widow and two children, a daughter of five years and a son aged eight.⁸

Published accounts of subsequent events are confused. Harold Mears, in his excellent publication *The First 100 Years*, states that Friell died in 1859, however, this is not correct, his obituary was published in the *Moreton Bay Courier* on 4 February 1854. Other accounts claim that the station was then purchased by Gordon Sandeman, however, this too is open to conjecture. Sandeman was certainly managing the station, the *Moreton Bay Courier* of 20 April, 1850, gave details of some events on *Burrandowan* and claimed that one man, listed in the report, was employed: '... by Mr G. Sandeman at *Burrandowan*.'⁹ In September 1859 Sandeman tendered for *Letterfourie*, one of the *Burrandowan* runs and this tender was accepted, but the run was later forfeited. As the archives section of the Public Library of Queensland claimed in 1963, '(Sandeman's) name does not appear at any time between 1860 and 1902 in the registers of pastoral runs as a leaseholder of any part of *Burrandowan* (or any run in the South Burnett).'¹⁰

This being so, the property must have remained in the hands of Friell's widow until it was sold to Robert Campbell in May 1860.

Problems with shepherds at *Burrandowan* were perennial. As we have seen, desertions were frequent, but shepherds were also, at times, wilfully destructive. For example, in January 1863 a German national employed as a shepherd was charged and brought before the police magistrate George Clapperton at Nanango for: 'Wilfully putting sheep into a yard containing Bathurst burr.' According to details revealed at the trial, the German, a man named Engle, was ordered by the overseer of *Burrandowan*, J.W. Willes, to take a valuable flock of ewe hoggets to the twenty-seven mile station at Ironpot Creek where there were two yards, one of which was forbidden for use due to a heavy infestation of the destructive burr. Approximately ten days later the overseer visited

the outstation and found the sheep in good condition. However, after another ten days had passed he again visited the station and found that the condition of the sheep had somewhat deteriorated. A further ten days passed and when the overseer again went to Ironpot Creek he discovered that Engle had placed the sheep in the forbidden yard. The sheep were almost completely black with burr. When the overseer challenged Engle over the issue, Engle had allegedly stated, in faltering English: 'Me no care.' Engle was relieved of his duties and was replaced by another shepherd named Callahan who remained with the sheep until shearing time. When the sheep were shorn it was discovered that the fleeces had been extensively damaged, '... to the extent of 6d per pound.' At his trial, Engle, as he could speak only a few words of English, '... gave no intelligible reply,' and his only defence was that there had also been a quantity of burr outside the yards. The magistrates, taking into consideration that this was Engle's first such offence, and that he was a foreigner, fined him £50, a very considerable amount of money in 1863.¹¹

The station was sold to Robert Towns and Alexander Stuart in 1870, in 1872 it was again sold, the new owners being Alexander Campbell and John Hay. In 1885 the Mercantile Bank of Sydney became the owners and ownership was transmitted to Alexander Henry Hudson as the official liquidator. On 28 June, 1900, the property was transferred to the Commercial Bank of Australia and on 2 July 1901 Frederick Borton purchased the property. This ownership was transferred to four men, possibly Borton's sons, on 2 July, 1901, these were: George Keppel Borton, Gerald Archibald Borton, Mark William Borton and Roderick Frederick Borton.¹²

With the introduction of the Closer Settlement Act, resumptions through the early part of the 20th century significantly reduced the size of the station to individual farms producing a variety of beef cattle and supporting the vast dairy industry that grew up in the South Burnett and which gave the region so much of its wealth.

A large part of what remained of the station was later turned into a soldier settlement, the Borton brothers retaining a total of 23,000 acres in two blocks. Keppel Borton eventually retired leaving Gerald Borton as manager. Gerald Borton died in 1919 and his son took control until about 1921 when the property was sold to a man named Turner. Mr F. Borton evidently later owned the station. Richard Fairfax Tancred finally purchased the property and constructed a substantial homestead. In 1934 the press reported of Tancred:

(Tancred) ... was a member of a distinguished Scottish family, his father being a commanding officer in the famous Scots Greys cavalry regiment during the Crimean War, while one of his brothers was an admiral in command of *H.M.S. Duke of Argyll* during the Great War...

Mr Tancred came direct from Scotland to this district about forty years ago to join his eldest brother, Mr George Tancred who had previously taken up a grazing block about five miles from Kingaroy. This property, a resumption from *Taabing* station, he named *Weenz* after his old home in Scotland. Another brother Mr Edward Tancred, who also came to this district a few years later and selected *Corrunavon* near *Boondooma*, died in Kingaroy in 1916.

Disposing of *Weenz*, Messrs George and R.F. Tancred spent some years in Central Queensland engaging in pastoral pursuits near Dingo. Mr R.F. Tancred later returned to this district and settled first at *Threen*, then at *Cooindah*, which property he acquired from Mr Aubrey Jones. About three years ago he purchased *Burradowan* station ... where he has since resided.¹³

Richard Tancred died of pneumonia in February, 1934, and was interred at the Memerambi cemetery, he was fifty-eight years of age at the time of his death.¹⁴ After his death Tancred's widow leased the land to George Lewis who bought it in 1943.¹⁵

Notes and Sources
Chapter Seventy-eight
Burrandowan Station

1. For an interesting anecdote of events at Jolliffe's shearing shed see: M/C, 11 May, 1922.
2. B/C. 30 May, 1873, p 3.
3. WW, p 130.
4. NSW Commissioner of Crown Lands Letterbook, 1843-8, pp 2-3, 27, 338-9, Mitchell Library, reference A1764-2.
5. Simpson Letterbook, p 22.
6. MBC. 4 February, 1854, p 2.
7. MBC. 16 August, 1851, p 4.
8. MBC. 4 February, 1854, p 2.
9. MBC. 20 April, 1850, p 2.
10. Mears, p 81.
11. M/C. 22 January, 1863 p 3. For full details of this trial see: MBC. 26 January, 1863, p 3.
12. *Register of Runs*, QSA, Mears, pp 39-40.
13. K/G. 2 March, 1934.
14. Ibid.
15. QCL. 11 June, 1959, p 11.

Closer Settlement and Coolabunia

The long period of closer settlement was a difficult one in Queensland's history, almost all of the wealthy land owners, those squatters who had taken up hundreds of thousands of square miles of the best lands available, were extremely reluctant to hand over their runs to individual selectors under a system which A.G. Muller, a later minister for lands, was to describe in 1960 as having been a form of 'peasant settlement'.¹ With money and power at their disposal, the squatters managed to successfully manipulate Queensland's land laws, 'dummying the runs' by placing large tracts of land in the names of family members. This 'dummying' of the land allowed the squatters to reserve the most prized land along river banks and railway lines for themselves. However, the land act of 1876 largely brought the practice of 'dummying' under control and led to a land boom that continued for the following half a century.

In the immediate vicinity of Kingaroy is the rich land mass known as the Coolabunia Scrub and where the small township of Coolabunia would later become established. One of the first selectors of Coolabunia was Walter Sawtell who took up land in the 1880s. Sawtell was typical of those first settlers, filled with adventurous spirit and a longing to roam the outback. He was born at Marshall Mount in the Illawarra district of New South Wales and spent his childhood at Kangaloon. When he was eighteen years of age he left home, and after working as a carpenter in various regions of New South Wales he was employed at a sawmill in Sydney. However, the monotony of the work soon forced him to move on, he found employment with a surveying party in the Hunter Valley and eventually moved to Queensland. After six years of bush work and horse breaking in the western regions he became a drover. It was during his work as a drover that he passed through the South Burnett and decided that the rich country would be excellent for general farming. He selected land at Coolabunia and also engaged in a carrying business between Kilkivan, Nanango and Esk. Walter Sawtell died, aged seventy-five years, on 2 September, 1936.²

Among other early selectors of the scrub were Fred Randell who selected land adjacent to the site of the future Coolabunia township. J. Perry came in 1879, W. Jack and J. Peary the same year, Robert Kendall, also in 1880, John Spooner in 1883 and George Bauer and John G. Wittman, who, in some histories have been erroneously credited with being the first settlers at Coolabunia, actually arrived in March 1884. These men were originally from the Lockyer district and in 1883 were working on *Nanango* station when they decided to take up land adjacent to each other in the Coolabunia Scrub. They have taken their place in history as the creators of the famous Coolabunia well. The selections they had taken up contained no water, and because the soil was so porous it was almost impossible to construct successful dams. The closest water supply was at Horse Gully, approximately four miles distant, and there was also a dam at Taabinga Village. One description of that dam and those times claimed in 1901: 'During the dry months stock was travelled five and six miles to water at the dam at Taabinga Village which proved a great blessing. I am told one could see stock in droves all day long making their way to this splendid sheet of water, besides carts with their tanks, carting it in some cases for family use. Every day one may see tents put up at this water sheltering families making their way to their new homes on the land lately taken up ...'³

These few water supplies often vanished during times of dry weather and in order to remedy this, George Bauer and John Wittman decided to dig a well on the boundary of their two properties. Accordingly they worked for weeks until they had reached a depth of approximately one hundred feet. At that time they struck a layer of damp sand and the prospects looked promising. Yet soon afterwards they reached an impenetrable layer of rock, and realising that they could go no deeper, the two men gave up their task.



Group of settlers photographed at Coolabunia in 1891. **Back row from left:** Tom Walters, Jack Heiner, 'Billy', Bill Thompson, Ezra Horne, Ted Thompson, Jack Randle, Mr Turner, Peter Jewell, Ben Pickels, Walter Sawtell. **2nd row from back:** Mrs Bauer and baby Charlie, also boy Alf, Ted and Mrs Randall and baby Rhoda, Fred and Mrs Horne and baby Elsie, Mrs Simmonds, Mr Simmonds (minister), Mr Mitchell, John Wittmann, 'Dr' Von Stein, George Strohmeyer, George Latcham, Edwin Miers, Henry Otto, Mr Randle Snr., Carl Otto. **3rd row:** Matt Pickels holding hat; Louisa Bauer sitting next to him; then passing to girl in dark clothing and nine ladies: Edith Latcham, Maggie Muller, Mrs F. Sawtell, Susan Walters, Annie Otto, Augusta Otto, Mrs John Wittmann, Ann Wittmann, Kate Wittmann, Mrs G. Strohmeyer. **Front row:** Four children — William Bauer, Jack Wittmann, Maggie Randall, George Wittmann. Boy next to man — Christy Bauer, behind him 2 Simmonds' children and nurse maid; Mr Fred Sawtell and sons Laurence and Ambrose, then youth, Sawtell employee; 3 Wittman sisters, Norah Caroline and Mary, the latter is nursing baby sister Margaret; Robert Otto, Walter Strohmeyer and Harry Heiner.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

However, in February 1893 Queensland was subjected to torrential rains and massive flooding, the hole dug by Wittman and Bauer rapidly filled with water, and even after the rains had stopped and the flooding diminished, the level of water in the well only fell to around sixty feet and remained at that point. Wittman and Bauer happily constructed a rough whim over the well, attached a bucket and rope and, naturally enough, began using the water for their stock and crops. As closer settlement brought more and more selectors to the region, the two men permitted these selectors to also use the water supply — it now being the only permanent supply for many miles.

The use of the well in this fashion led to a petition being sent to the government in order to have the government purchase the well and to construct a good pumping system. Yet there were problems, as one commentator remarked in June, 1901:

As the result of plucky private enterprise, such a well was discovered in a central position in Coolabunia some four or five years ago, and after a lot of agitation and representation, a paternal but tardy, Government, was induced to purchase it outright, for the benefit of a drought-stricken community. For some time the said droughty community cheerfully hauled up its bucket of precious liquid — 112 feet or so — as required, by means of a primitive hand windlass, but yet by that slow and laborious process, were then generally successful in obtaining just about sufficient to give their stock an appetite for more. If a man owned many head of stock, the contract often proved too big ... Time elapsed. The Government did not feel agitated. The windlass remained — so did the appetite. The bucket continued to agitate the water, and the wild vision of a trough agitated the minds of the agitators. More time elapsed. Suddenly there was wild delirious excitement in Coolabunia. The Pump had arrived, and its advent was heralded by a beautiful and capacious galvanized trough — a thing of beauty, resembling somewhat, half a dozen attenuated plunge baths, neatly

soldered, end to end. When this had been fitted into a stout and somewhat ornate frame it looked equal in capacity to the thirstiest occasion that was likely to arise in Coolabunia, even in the most parching of seasons. A substantial scaffold-like erection quickly rose, in its pride above the rustic and now despised — old hand windlass. A flight of steps at one end, led up to a staging upon its top, and upon the said staging there soon appeared in all its glory a dignified and imposing looking pump (however,) ... the more initiated have long ago, in their despair, reverted to the old rope and windless beneath ... We pitched our camp within some 50 yards of the Coolabunia well for a whole fortnight ... Our horses were thirsty upon arrival, and the empty trough, pump, &c., looked so nice that we mounted the steps and had our 'tweak' at the cow's tail, with the usual barren result. We then 'climbed down', waded through several inches of red mud, had a peep down the well through a maze of cross beams, and fancied that we saw water held in suspension somewhere between us and the taproot of Old England. Anyway it was a short cut to some other world ... Then we discovered a huge, clumsy, double-handled windlass encircled by a cable — which to judge from its tremendous diameter would be capable of holding, not only a bucket, but the sea ... Oh, that vile — that awful bucket! ... Properly speaking the thing was not a bucket at all, but a rakish, devil-may-care dissipated-looking young tank, attached by the cable referred to by a complicated knot that man or mariner has not yet invented a name sufficiently diabolical to designate ... This tank was battered into a shapeless mass of galvanised iron, which was faintly reminiscent of an Irishman's hat, at Donnybrook, only not one half so respectable. There were holes in it, too, that would accommodate two ordinary fingers quite easily ... At a fearful sacrifice of time, muscle, profanity and sweat we got that water — that is to say we got almost sufficient for two horses. We also got a couple of inches of red mud upon our clothing, a bruised arm from a fall (still sore), a tear in trousers from the broken bucket rim, some valuable experience, and several other things. Will it be doubted that we let down that young tank seven times on this occasion?⁴

Despite derogatory descriptions such as this, the well at Coolabunia was a great boon for the selectors of that region, and during the devastating drought of 1901/02 the local farmers depended largely upon the water they obtained from it. In fact the selectors of Coolabunia seem to have been less affected by the drought than many others on the South Burnett, the Coolabunia well certainly had something to do with that plus the fact that during the drought the farmers were fortunate enough to experience a few showers of rain at just the right time. A visitor to the region in September 1902, at the height of the drought, stated that the selectors: '... appeared to be fairly well satisfied with matters as they stood ... It appeared that the farmers of Coolabunia, Kingaroy and certain contiguous portions of Wooroolin had the exceptionally good fortune to be visited by ... opportune showers at just those critical junctures when moisture is an indispensable condition to the successful corn grower.'⁵

The well at Coolabunia was one of the most important centres for those early settlers, no evidence of it now exists, although a memorial to the first settlement and to the well was constructed near the site in 1983.

A later report of some of those early selectors included the following description:

Amenities were almost non-existent with the closest railroad Kilkivan on one side, and Esk on the other. Settlers lived in tents and shacks, their menu consisted mainly of damper, wild turkey and scrub pigeon. Except for those who could afford a horse, walking was the only means of transport. There was not a medical man within sixty miles of Coolabunia, and very often the nearest water was in the *Nanango* station lagoons. Mrs A. Strohmeyer, affectionately called 'Granny' very often came to the assistance of the sick and is known to have ushered many an infant into this lonely part of the world.

It was under such circumstances that the foundation of Coolabunia was laid.

Credit for the first log taken from this prodigious forest goes to Mr Charles Tessmann who hauled it to Taabinga Village. Later the world known Jarrah Milling Company of Western Australia purchased land between Horse Gully and Barker Creek, and opened up a mill. The quality of the timber was excellent with pine, yellowwood and hardwood all millable. The timber industry was firmly established with the advent of a railhead to Kingaroy in 1904 ...

Some of the selections are still in the possession of the original families and are being worked by descendants of the initial pioneer settlers. Namely Mr Ben Pickels property is

being farmed by his son Hector, Mr Charles Tessmann's by his son Arnold, Mr Fred Jessen's by his son and grandson, Christy and Keith, a portion of Mr John Perrett's by his grandson John Perrett and also a part of Mr D. Richards by his grandson, Des ...

Possibly one of the best known personalities was John Knowles. With his team of bullocks, plus son Charles, who was nearly always alongside, they covered many hundreds of miles yearly in this primitive mode of transport. All throughout the South Burnett his name was a household word.

In 1899 the first store was built on a plot purchased from Mr Fred Randell by Mr C. Butt and was managed by Harry Terkelsen.

In bad times supplies were drawn from Mr Selby of the Nanango store and the first bread deliveries were made by Mr Terkelsen on a bicycle.

Also in the year 1899 the first Baptist Chapel was erected and catered for all religious denominations. In the early days, Coolabunia boasted three blacksmiths, two butchers, two stores, a bank, a hall and a row of six houses, all occupied. The district was well represented in both world wars ...

The first steam traction engine was introduced by the Jarrah Milling Company and ran from Coolabunia to Kingaroy. Children were afraid of the 'monster' and would hide in the scrub until it passed. Charlie Kennedy was the driver and Billy Harris was credited with supplying the wood for the engine. At times it would haul three or four loaded wagons to Kingaroy.

Mr Fred Jessen introduced the first motor vehicle into the district. It was a motor buggy of 1906-7 vintage, which became famous for its transport of bank managers on business to and from Kingaroy, and made several trips as far as Gayndah.

The name of Peter Assad is recalled in many characteristics. He was first a hawker and later turned to horse dealing and possessed a wit that charmed his many friends. (Assad was a native of Lebanon who came to Queensland when he was twenty years of age. He married Elizabeth Saad of Toowoomba and arrived in Kingaroy in 1912. He died in May, 1964).⁶

The Ben Pickels mentioned in the above report had selected land at Coolabunia in 1888, his wife was Kate Ellen Pickels who was born at Rockhampton on 7 June, 1873. Ben Pickels died in 1924 aged fifty-four years and the farm was carried on by their son Hector, however, Hector was killed accidentally at Coolabunia in 1968. Mrs Kate Ellen Pickels was still alive in 1973 when she celebrated her 100th birthday at the Kingaroy Hospital.⁷

Ben's brother, James, was also one of the region's earliest settlers, he was born at Rosewood and arrived at Coolabunia with his brother where they selected their respective blocks. He married Edith Latcham, the daughter of another of the region's early selectors. He was a well known cattle expert and dairy farmer, he retired to Redcliffe circa 1927 but later returned to Kingaroy where he resided until his death on Thursday 16 December, 1937.⁸

The Coolabunia School was opened on 16 June, 1891, with thirteen pupils. Fred Horne was its first teacher. A report of the opening of this institution later stated: 'As a result of agitation from the settlers, the Government sent an inspector to report on the possibility of opening a school at the settlement. On the report the Government agreed to provide slates and books, plus £40 per year for the salary of a half-time teacher, providing the settlers supplied the building, forms and desks. A local collection raised £24 and the building, twenty feet long and twelve feet wide, slab-walled, shingle roofed and earthen-floored, was erected at a cost of £20.'⁹ The school was closed from June 1893 to May 1894 and reopened with Thomas Lonergan as its head teacher.

Like almost all other rural centres of the South Burnett the rapid increase in population placed an enormous strain on school facilities at Coolabunia and a new school was constructed in 1896. It became a state school in 1909 and the original building was eventually moved to become a private dwelling.¹⁰

When the school celebrated its golden jubilee in June 1941, five of the original thirteen students attended the function, these were Mrs Marie Carl (nee Wittmann) of Boovie, John Wittmann of Coolabunia, George Wittmann of Greenslopes, Brisbane, Mrs A. Dahms (nee Otto) of Coolabunia and Mrs Edith Pickels (nee Latcham) of Kingaroy. Edith Pickels died in June 1968. The widow of

Fred Horne was also in attendance at the function, as was Nora Raabe (daughter of J.G. Wittmann), the first white child to be born at Coolabunia and who was also the only new pupil to be enrolled at the school following the Christmas holidays of 1892. Eighteen pupils of the school fought during the Great War, four of them were killed.¹¹

Other schools have included those at Coolabunia West, opened in June 1904 with Florence Martin as its head teacher, and Corndale, opened in 1912.

As closer settlement took place throughout the region, selectors moved their families onto their small holdings where they constructed rough huts of logs and bark. The scrub was well named, it was, at first, thickly forested, and before the selectors could even begin to think of sowing their first crops the scrub had to be cleared by hand.

Most of the maize harvesting and husking was, at first, done by hand, but later, with the application of a horse drawn threshing machine, the work was made much easier. A correspondent writing of this process recorded: 'Mr (Fred) Randell will yoke up four horses, set a youngster to keep them going, and then feed a machine as fast as he can with corn husks ... in that state it goes in at one end and almost immediately drops into a bag at the other, having in the meantime been husked, shelled, winnowed and finally bagged all ready for market with the trifling exception of sewing the sacks. Seventy to eighty sacks are considered a fair day's work and give some idea of the area under crop on the farm ... Mr Randell confidently expects to turn out some 800 or 900 sacks ... This in the height of a record drought.'¹²

Some of the early residents of the region included Mr and Mrs George Strohmeyer who arrived in 1887, Mrs A. Strohmeyer, or Granny as she was affectionately known, was the local midwife and was reputed to have delivered the first white child in the area.¹³ Mr C. Butt opened the first store. Thomas Nielson operated a modest bacon factory, Fred Otto was the region's blacksmith. F. Otto and his wife Emilie arrived at Coolabunia from Lowood and in addition to operating his blacksmith's business he also ran a general farm. Otto died in 1925 and his wife died suddenly in 1932, aged sixty-four years.¹⁴

Some of the first children of the district were only days or weeks old when they arrived in the colony with their parents, some, in fact had been born at sea during the long and difficult journey from their mother countries. For example Martin Fred Carl was born on a sailing ship in October 1878 while his parents were en-route to Australia. He later selected land at Malar and in 1898 married Miss M. Wittmann at her parents' home at Coolabunia. He became very active in the Lutheran Church, early services being conducted at private homes in both Boobie and Malar. Martin Carl died on Wednesday 6 March 1968 and was buried at the Taabinga cemetery the following day.¹⁵

As the years progressed the main structure of the region's economy altered, firstly taking in the production of pigs, and later moving to dairying, peanuts, navy beans, grain sorghum and dubosia.¹⁶

Among the more well known residents of the Coolabunia region was the Brandt family, including the brothers Charles, Albert and Richard, the sons of C.W.J.F. (Carl) Brandt. The family



Mrs A. Strohmeyer, affectionately known as Granny Strohmeyer, a local midwife.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

came to Australia aboard the ship *Jumna*, landing in Queensland. They went firstly to the Logan district and subsequently took up land at Coolabunia. While at Laidley Albert Brandt joined the Education Department and taught at Ravenshoe, however, according to a subsequent report: '... the conditions there were such a strain on his health that he resigned and joined his people in Toowoomba.'¹⁷ After leaving the Education Department Albert joined his brother, taking up an adjoining selection. During his boyhood Albert had suffered a leg injury, the results of which plagued him all his life, the problems becoming more severe as he became older. During the last ten years of his life he suffered chronic illness and spent much of that time in hospitals at Kingaroy or Brisbane. He died in 1940.

Charles and his son, William, were among the region's more enduring settlers, William began working full time on the land at the age of twelve years and remaining on it all his life.¹⁸

Another of the early residents in the Coolabunia region was Anton Steffensen. Steffensen was born in Ludwig, Denmark and first arrived in Australia in 1900. He worked firstly in the Laidley district and was married there to Miss Lillie Woodall. In 1904 the couple moved to the Nanango region and in 1934 they moved again to Coolabunia. Anton Steffensen died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Sunday 22 August, 1954.¹⁹

Arnold Royle was another of the early selectors of the Coolabunia region. He was born in England, the son of a men's outfitter in London, and after serving his apprenticeship in the same profession he emigrated to Australia where he took up that profession. After spending some time with the retailing company of David Jones, he moved to the company of Gowings at Sydney where he remained until he decided to begin farming. Before leaving Gowings he was offered a partnership in the firm but this he refused. He moved initially to the Richmond River region where he 'received his grounding' and later put in for a ballot of land in the Gympie region. However, before the ballot he took up land in the Coolabunia area, and was reputed to have driven a bull from the Richmond River region to his new property at Coolabunia. He and his wife, Mavis, spent the remainder of their lives in the region. Arnold Royle died at the Kingaroy Hospital, aged eighty-nine, in June 1970.²⁰



The Greer brothers loading hoop pine logs on Carl Brandt's property West Coolabunia in 1905. Photograph by Arthur Beck. Greer's holding whips, Alf Brooks (pipe) Carl (Charlie) Brandt, Gus Schultz and William Brandt standing on the load.

Source — Harold and Lila Adlem

Hans Larsen first visited the region in 1898. He was born at Laidley Creek on 9 November, 1878, his father was the first person to manufacture cheese in that region and did so commercially for many years. Hans Larsen's first visit to the South Burnett region was by push-bike, the bicycle was a fixed wheel model so Larsen had to push it up the hills and walk down the other side. He returned to Laidley Creek soon afterwards but in 1900 he again came to the South Burnett to select his own land and to join his brothers, Christen and Peter. On this second occasion Hans Larsen came by horse team, the journey taking four days. He married Clara Woodall on 28 June, 1911, and later became a member of the Kingaroy Shire Council, serving for ten years, he died, aged ninety years, on 11 October, 1969, his wife having predeceased him on 5 August, 1932.²¹

Albert Arthur and his wife Elizabeth Jane were also settlers at Coolabunia arriving to take up a selection in the region circa 1909. Elizabeth was born on the Isle of Man circa 1876 and came to Australia with her parents when she was still a child. The family settled initially in New South Wales and Elizabeth married Albert at Tenterfield. After spending some time in the Richmond River district the family moved up to Coolabunia. Elizabeth Jane Arthur died at her home after a long illness on Saturday 7 March, 1936, her husband died in 1965 and was interred beside her.²²

Henry Terkelsen was an early businessman of the region, he was born at Springsure and arrived at Nanango in 1902. He later purchased the mixed business store at Coolabunia from the Butt Brothers. The store was sold during the Second World War but Terkelsen remained in Coolabunia to conduct the local post office and telephone exchange until his retirement in 1957. The press later claimed: 'He was well known throughout the district being a draper, hawker for approximately fourteen years and several times took the censorship throughout the electorate. During the war years his store was the Civilian Air Warden Centre.'²³

Notes and Sources

Chapter Seventy-nine

Closer Settlement and Coolabunia

1. *Progressive Land Settlement in Queensland*, by A.G. Muller, 1960, p 3.
2. For further details on the career of Walter Sawtell see: K/G. 11 September, 1936.
3. M/C. 1 July, 1901, p 2.
4. M/C. 27 June, 1901, p 3.
5. M/C. 9 September, 1902, p 4.
6. SBT. 26 November, 1964, p 9.
7. SBT. 6 June, 1973, p 3.
8. K/G. 23 December, 1937.
9. SBT. 3 December, 1964, p 12.
10. *Register of Historic Sites*, K 29, Kingaroy Shire Council.
11. N/N. 26 June, 1941, p 5, K/H. 19 June, 1941, p 1 and SBT 3 July, 1968, p 23.
12. M/C. 9 September, 1902, p 4.
13. N/N. 5 September, 1913.
14. For an obituary on Mrs Emilie Otto see: K/G. 22 April, 1932.
15. SBT. 13 March, 1968, p 5.
16. For a detailed history of the region, including listings of the first settlers, see: *Coolabunia, From the Beginning, 1883-1983*.
17. N/N. 14 March, 1940.
18. For further details of the Brandt family see: *Pioneers of Coolabunia*, pp 36.
19. K/H. 26 August, 1954, p 2.
20. K/H. 24 June, 1970, p 12.
21. K/H. 22 October, 1969, p 11.
22. K/G. 13 March, 1936, and Taabinga cemetery records.
23. 20 August, 1964, p 7.

Kingaroy and District

As we have seen in previous chapters, prior to the coming of the railway and the discovery of gold at Kilkivan the entire South Burnett region was an area in which there was only one small township, Nanango. When gold was discovered near *Kilkivan* station the township of Kilkivan soon sprang up, and with the eventual progression of the rail system the towns of Murgon, Wondai and Kingaroy also came into existence.

The first permanent resident of what was later to become known as Kingaroy was Daniel Carroll. His parents were Timothy and Mary Carroll of Boherbee, County Cork, Ireland. Dan was the fifth of thirteen children and was born on 7 May, 1865. He arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1887 aboard the steamer *Dacca*, when he was twenty-two years of age. The *Dacca*, under the command of Captain Johnstone, left London on 22 October, 1887, and arrived at Brisbane on 14 December that year.¹

Dan Carroll moved almost immediately to the South Burnett region where he was employed by Michael Collins in driving coaches between Jondaryan, Nanango and Kilkivan. In 1892, long before the rail line arrived at the 56 mile peg and despite the fact that the lack of water discouraged many would-be selectors from taking up land in the region, Dan Carroll constructed a rough hut on the site of what later became the town of Kingaroy, the lands between Coolabunia and Wooroolin having been opened up for selection. He applied for his historic selection in April 1891, the site described as being: '... on the northern side of *Kingaroy Paddock*.' The dwelling he later established there was the first permanent structure on the site of Kingaroy.

Dan Carroll was regarded as something of an eccentric for selecting land in such a location, during a press interview he gave in 1935 he claimed that the people of Nanango were very sarcastic over the choice of his selection and many people strongly advised him to abandon it. His talk of a possible township on the site elicited bouts of laughter and was a standing joke in Nanango at the time.²

In July 1901 Dan Carroll married Bridget Pender at Ipswich and brought his bride to a new cottage he had constructed in the bush, the cottage is still in existence in Edward Street Kingaroy.³ Dan Carroll's small holding and his business as a butcher must have been modestly successful, for in 1904, with the coming of the rail line, he built the Carrollee Hotel, this building was constructed by Hans Peter Hansen, a second storey was constructed in 1906.

Dan Carroll, was an exceptionally public-minded figure and did much for the community. He also served on the council from 1919 and was a financial supporter of the foundation of the butter factory. In 1910 he and Bridget moved to a new home in Albert Street where they raised a large family.

In 1913 a fire destroyed the original Carrollee Hotel which, however was insured for £1100 with other substantial insurance policies over furniture and stock.⁴ Dan Carroll, almost immediately made plans for the construction of another hotel, the press reporting: 'Mr Dan Carroll is erecting a very fine and commodious brick hotel but slightly nearer than the old one. This will enhance the beauty and solidarity of the town. The cost will be over £3000. He is also erecting a very fine brick hall and billiard room on the same allotment, and intends building a brick shop as an oyster saloon.'⁵ The hotel was completed by 1915 and was trading by 11 June that year at which time the licensee was Mrs E.F. Miller.⁶

Retiring from business, Dan Carroll spent the remainder of his life on the land and was particularly interested in the production of stud horses and his work in this area greatly aided in

the establishment of better horse breeds in the region. Dan Carroll was a foundation member of the show society, was a supporter of St Mary's Catholic Church and he donated several blocks of land to the Repatriation Committee in order to aid returned soldiers. The press later reported of him: 'Though naturally of a hearty and cordial disposition, he was a man of resolute character, and was one of the type all too rare today in public life who refused to sacrifice his convictions for the sake of so-called popular opinion or to curry favour in any quarter. His spontaneous and unfailing generosity was evident in every deserving and charitable cause but it was characteristic of him that many of his numerous acts of benevolence are known only to the recipients. His fund of Irish wit and gift of ready repartee were widely appreciated. He won the confidence, right from the early days, of the German and Danish settlers many of whom were handicapped by a lack of knowledge of the language and local conditions and his advice and assistance were ever at their disposal.'⁷

Dan Carroll died on 10 January, 1936, and Bridget died in June 1944. Both were interred at the Taabinga cemetery.⁸ A plaque was later set in place at Kingaroy in memory of the town's first resident. In 1990 Dan Carroll's original cottage was handed over to the Kingaroy Historical Society by descendants of Dan and Bridget Carroll.⁹

Dan Carroll left an estate valued at £14,694, quite a considerable sum in those days.¹⁰ One of his sons, Daniel Noel Carroll, became a well known solicitor of Kingaroy. A keen supporter of the Labor Party he was also vice president of the show society and deputy-chairman of the South Burnett Hospitals Board, a member of the Kingaroy Fire Brigade and the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce. In addition to his legal practice he also had farming interests. He died, aged forty-four years in March 1953.¹¹ Another son, John Anthony Carroll, also a solicitor, later became chairman of the Kingaroy Shire Council.¹²

Hans Peter Hansen, the man who constructed the Carrollee Hotel for Dan Carroll, had arrived in the district in 1898 and after the construction of the Carrollee Hotel moved onto the land, selecting a farm on the Booie Road. Soon after he selected his farm he was offered £200 for it but refused as he realised the district had great growth potential. Interviewed for a press article in 1935 he claimed to have the honour of being the first man to load maize onto the train at Kingaroy.¹³

Hans Peter Hansen was one of Kingaroy's first settlers, D.F. Hansen, who later wrote the family history stated:

Hans Peter Hansen, the oldest surviving child of Rasmus and Sinnet was born at Aabenraa, North Schleswig, (now Sønderjylland) Denmark on the 21st March, 1863 ... Peter Hansen was the first member of the Hansen family to set foot on Australian soil. His exact date of arrival is not known, but it is believed to have been about September/October, 1879. Upon his arrival in Queensland, he worked for several years in the Ipswich and Lockyer districts. After engaging in work on *Tarampa* and *Rosewood* stations for five years, he purchased land at Gatton, near the site of the present Queensland Agricultural College, which had been part of the *Rosewood* station Estate.

In 1890, Peter became a member of the Gatton Mounted Infantry No 5 Company, and in 1894, he joined the Supernumerary Police Force in connection with the Government Peace Preservation Act, and served in the Longreach and Winton areas during the Shearers' Strike of that period.

In 1896, he settled at Freestone, where he married Anne Andersen. They had one child, a girl, who is today Mrs E. Liesegang of Gordonbrook. Sadly, Anne died a short time later. In 1898, he selected land in the Kingaroy district, in the area now known as Booie Road, where he lived until his death.

In October, 1901, Peter, in company with other Danish settlers, erected the Danish Lutheran Church at Edenvale, which was the first church to be erected at the settlement. On the 5th April, 1905, he married Inger Marie Jensen ...

Like all his brothers, Peter Hansen was a very versatile man. Being a competent blacksmith, in 1921, he built a cow-pea thresher, and four years later, his first maize-thresher. Later, several peanut threshers were built by him, and were recognised as being among the best in the district.

For many years, Peter held several offices as a member of the committee of the Lutheran Church, of which he was an ardent and devoted member until his death on the 8th April, 1939.¹⁴

Other early selectors in the shire included William Carew and his brother Thomas, Irishmen from Tipperary, Oscar Nielsen from Laidley whose parents had emigrated from Denmark, Heinrich Carl Binzer, a cabinetmaker and carpenter and his wife Caroline came with their children from Yangan, near Warwick, Hugo Julius May and his wife Hermina Wilhelmina, and Arthur George Salmon who was a highly reputed actor and singer in the district.

The town of Kingaroy was blessed with several early names, sometimes referred to simply as, 'The Bog', due to the state of the main street which ran up to the railway station. This street was almost impassable in wet weather, the heavily laden bullock wagons cutting deep tracks in the mud, the animals' hooves further churning up the quagmire made worse with the addition of seemingly limitless quantities of bullock faeces and urine. Other people preferred to call the tiny community, then hardly even a village, 'Carrollee' after Dan Carroll, the owner of the Carrollee Hotel. Another name was 'Reenlee', after D. Reen's hotel that later became the Kingaroy Hotel, although following the extension of the rail line all these names were eventually dropped in favour of Kingaroy.¹⁵

In addition to Dan Carroll, other early settlers included E. Jensen, James Harris, H. Larsen and Friedrich W. Sprenger and his wife Hannah.¹⁶

Friedrich Wilhelm (Bill) Sprenger arrived in Australia with his family when he was a young man. He joined the Queensland Garrison Artillery in 1891 and subsequently served at various locations including Thursday Island. He resigned from the army in 1896 and married Hannah Beckman of Laidley. The couple lived at *Auburn* station near Eidsvold for a while and subsequently returned to Laidley prior to selecting land at Coolabunia West, arriving there with three children in 1899. Sprenger was involved in the establishment of the school at Coolabunia West, he also served on the first Kingaroy Shire Council in 1912. Hannah Sprenger was among those early women settlers who struggled with the difficult conditions that formed the embryonic Kingaroy district. Hannah was well known for her medical abilities, the press later claiming: 'Mrs Sprenger was ever ready day and night to give a helping hand to the sick and distressed. So well was this known that the calls on her services were very frequent.' Hannah Sprenger died, aged fifty-eight years, in February 1931 and was buried at the Taabinga cemetery, Friedrich Sprenger died in 1954, aged eighty-four years.¹⁷

Niels Jensen (senior) and his two stepsons, Marcus and Soren Hansen selected a property which they named *Hazelmount* in the late 1890s. A letter to the Kingaroy Shire Council later claimed: '... After selling their property at Tiaro the rest of the family moved to Kingaroy arriving on 1st September, 1900, and lived in a slab home with a shingle roof erected in a clearing in the scrub by Mr Jensen and his two stepsons. Mr and Mrs Jensen lived there until they were able to erect a new home of sawn timber in 1906 ... Mr and Mrs Jensen, after living there for many years, when they became old sold the farm to their youngest son Andrew and lived in a small cottage alongside their old home. Mr Jensen died there, that street is now Moore Street ... Mr Jensen and his two stepsons had to clear a track through the scrub and blast rocks away on top of the hill to where the village dam is now, for water, which they carried in tins with a yoke across their shoulders, that street is now named Fisher Street.'¹⁸

F.C. Petersen was also among the first of the non-indigenous inhabitants of Kingaroy. Petersen came from Brisbane, where he had been operating a store, and set up a small store a few miles outside Kingaroy, the store was located on what is now known as the D'Aguilar Highway on the corner of Ushers Road. In order to obtain a direct mail bag the locality had to have a name and so he named it Edenvale. Petersen later opened the first store in Kingaroy on the corner of Kingaroy and Haly Streets at the site that later became known as Miller's Corner, opposite the 56 mile peg.¹⁹ The site was commercially redeveloped in the 1930s and the original store was destroyed.²⁰ Petersen later retired from his successful business ventures and purchased land, 320 acres on Hospital Hill.

Following the coming of the rail and the initial survey of the township the growth of Kingaroy was extremely rapid. The railway line arrived at the township on 19 December, 1904, the official opening ceremony was performed by the Hon. A.J. Jones and the location of the station featured a decorated arch over the railway gate with the words: 'Welcome to the Railway, and Prosperity,' and, 'We Rejoice,' a banquet was later held in Carroll's paddock. (For full details of the rail extension from Kilkivan to Kingaroy see Chapter 42).

In 1904 John Darley conducted the first auction of town allotments on behalf of Arthur Youngman. On 9 July that year, 67 allotments, each of a quarter acre, at 'Carrollee' owned by Dan Carroll, were also auctioned by Darley, Darley offering a free luncheon in order to attract bidders.²¹

The police 'station' was among the town's first institutions, the first police officers were Constable G. Loch (also reported as Lock, later inspector) and Constable P. Cronin (also reported as Croner), their first headquarters was an old railway carriage situated on the railway property. The carriage had previously served as a mobile police station at both Goomeri and Wondai prior to its being moved to Kingaroy. A reserve for a police station was gazetted on 8 September, 1906, the land fronting Kingaroy and Alford Streets had been donated by Arthur Youngman. In July 1906 the government accepted the tender of Messrs Neilsen and Petersen for the construction of a police station, cells, stables and fencing, the contract price was £424/10/-. The contract was completed on 25 February, 1907, Constable Gilday was in charge of the station from 25 March, 1907.²²

Selections were now taken up at a frantic pace, wagons carrying families could frequently be seen on the narrow tracks leading not only to Kingaroy but also to many of the contiguous places such as Coolabunia, Taabinga, Booie, Crawford, Ironpot and several others.

One of these early residents and selectors was William George Hood, who had assisted in the original survey of Kingaroy. Hood was born in Nanango where he received his early education, later attending the school at Booie where his parents had selected land. After leaving school he worked with survey teams and also participated in the cartage of produce to and from the railheads at Esk and Kilkivan, frequently camping at the then well known old Stone House at Moore. Hood was reputed to have been an expert scrub-feller and timber worker, he constructed the sale yards for the O'Neill brothers that once stood beside the Commercial Hotel.

Hood married Alice Coulson in 1905, his bride also coming from a family of early selectors, her parents having taken up land at Coolabunia. Hood and his wife then took up a selection in the highest part of the Booie range. They lived on their selection until their retirement to Duke Street Kingaroy when William Hood was eighty years of age. For the last eighteen months of his life William Hood suffered from illness, he died, aged eighty-eight, at the Kingaroy Hospital on 21 February, 1970.²³ His wife Alice was born at Walloon near Ipswich and eighty-one years after arriving at Coolabunia she recalled that when she and her husband had first selected their land they sold some of the trees and went in for dairying and pig production.²⁴

An example of the enterprise with which the selectors and businessmen of the region tackled their problems may be seen in the exploits of two men, P. Larsen and T. Johnstone who, in 1906, travelled to Brisbane to purchase a new tractor and corn sheller which they intended to take to the various farms on contract work. However, simply getting the machinery to Kingaroy was an enormous task, as the following account describes:

Two of our enterprising young selectors, Messrs P. Larsen and T. Johnstone, have purchase an Allchin Tractor Engine and Corn Sheller and Husker, capable of putting through 300 bags per day. The engine is a high class British ... agricultural type traction engine of 6 normal horse-power, the very best available, and travels at ordinary speed 4 miles per hour, though it is capable of doing up to 6 miles on fairly good roads ... The total cost is close upon £900. Messrs Johnstone and Larsen started by road from Brisbane a month ago, and reached Ipswich the first day. Since then, owing to the constant rains, they have had an unenviable time, as the roads are in a frightful state ... Some days they travelled no more than 2 or 3 miles working hard the whole time. In many places not only were the wheels buried, but half the engine as well. On one occasion with 140 lbs of steam and 18 bullocks they were unable to extricate the engine until they secured double purchase blocks. They are now this side of Esk, and have still the Blackbutt, Cooyar, and Yarraman ranges to negotiate, but granted fine weather they expect to arrive in a very short time. Should the farmers support local industry, and this they should do in their own interests the plucky young fellows will be rewarded for their spirit of enterprise, as there will be a tremendous maize crop to be harvested.²⁵

Also in 1906 there was an outcry from the selectors of the region when it was decided to close the shops in Kingaroy on Saturday afternoons, rather than Thursday afternoons, this meant great inconvenience for the selectors who frequently travelled into Kingaroy on Saturdays to conduct their business and to obtain their weekly supplies. One visitor to the town commenting in March that year: 'There is an outcry against the closing of the stores in Kingaroy on Saturday afternoon.

Many farmers and timber men have ridden in for many miles only to find that they had only had their journey for their pains. This Saturday half-holiday is most inconvenient to people living at a distance from the terminus.²⁶

There was also great concern that the railway station had not been placed in a logical position, and with the huge increase in teamster traffic, coupled with long periods of wet weather, the small town became a muddy bog through which people had to struggle. An eyewitness account of this inconvenience was written in March 1906 and claimed: 'Kingaroy at the present time is simply a quagmire, the inhabitants having to go about barefooted or otherwise run the risk of losing their boots. The teamsters, the main-stay of Kingaroy, are not having a very good time, as to get within half a mile of the railway station with their teams is simply impossible. The terminus could not have been built in a worse position as the natural formation of Kingaroy is a saucer shape with the railway station in the centre.'²⁷

At that time the progress of the small community was quite remarkable. New buildings were springing up everywhere. By October 1906 the new butter factory was under construction and a railway siding was being constructed to the factory site. A 12,000 gallon well had been established at the factory and it was envisaged that the factory would be in operation by November that year, although, as will be seen in Chapter 97, the construction of the factory was delayed for a lengthy period due to the difficulties in obtaining machinery. The factory was opened in 1907. At the same time several new stores were being built in the main business section of the town, and the contractors Neilsen and Petersen were carrying out work on the new police barracks.²⁸ In June 1908 a visitor to Kingaroy stated:

How time flies, bringing in its wake the advancement of progress! It is 4 or 5 years since the opening of the Kingaroy railway station. At that time there were in Kingaroy only 2 hotels, scarcely finished and a few straggling buildings erected anyhow, and anywhere, and lo! after a 4 years' absence ... what do I behold at my return? A progressive town with 4 hotels, a police station, with a Court House, a first-class Post and Telegraph Office, Chemist, Saddlers, Wheelwrights, Baker, Butcher, numerous stores, Boarding houses, Refreshment Rooms, Dress-makers, Milliners, and one whole paraphernalia of a thriving township, including a local Brass Band. The only drawback is that the town has been built in a very bad spot, in the very centre of the basin formed by the surrounding ridges, and every visitor will acknowledge that Kingaroy township during the raining season is a spot to be avoided. Thick, black, sticking mud, several inches deep; in fact, a miniature quagmire extending the whole length and breadth of the principal streets.²⁹

By August 1908 there was a plethora of businesses established in the town. These included Miss Bunsworth's refreshments rooms, and close by a stationery shop owned by Miss E. Hansford. This shop not only offered the standard forms of books and stationery but also ran a lending library and was a newsagent. Mr A. Bell was a jeweller and watch-maker who had come from the company of Hardy Brothers of Brisbane. The Central Boarding House was opened by Mrs Norman and her daughter in Markwell Street, the couple advertising that they had first class meals and accommodation available. Mrs Norman's husband kept a hairdressing salon and a fruit shop in the town. A.J. Stirling, formerly of Bundaberg, ran an auction mart, this was situated in the most central part of the town, close to the Club Hotel and just opposite the post office.³⁰

Henry Warren, formerly of Taabinga, started a business as a storekeeper about June 1908, his shop adjoined that of the Greer brothers, Thomas and William Greer, the butchers. F.G. Hester, opposite the Club Hotel, sold gramophones and records, books, fruit and confectionery and evidently had a shooting gallery. F.J. Pearse was a produce dealer, established about June 1908, he was the agent for agricultural machinery and acted as a wholesale storekeeper to farmers. Many of the town's early buildings, including the butter factory had been constructed by George Wood, formerly of Gympie. Mr M.J. Brady was a general storekeeper and produce merchant who had established his business circa February 1906. In addition to offering the 'highest prices' to farmers for their goods, he also specialised in picture framing. The firm of O'Neill Brothers was a land and commission agency. This firm was comprised of three brothers, Thomas William, John and Daniel, who also owned three selections in the region. Thomas William O'Neill was the first chairman of the Kingaroy Shire Council. Mr Grant was the postmaster, with an assistant named John Callan. Another commission agent was James Henry Sigley who arrived at Kingaroy from Nanango in 1904.



The Club Hotel, circa 1913, with an array of early model motor cars. The first car, at left, is a French Darracq, with the owner, Archibald Blue, at the wheel.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

The Club Hotel was owned by Ferdinand Holmsen. A visitor to the hotel later wrote: 'The Club Hotel is situated in the most central part of Kingaroy facing the Post Office on one side, police station on the second side and Mr Hester and printing office on the third side. Coffee and public tables. Some 8 or 9 female servants are employed besides two men. It is the rendezvous of the commercial and sporting community. I found Mr F. Holmsen, the genial proprietor of the Club, civil, courteous and very obliging. Some people would not at first take to him but I suppose he is like a good wine, he improves with acquaintance. The hotel includes about sixty rooms and Mr Holmsen intends still improving it by the addition of a large and commodious sample room, which is a very long-felt want, and also his intention to erect a new and far larger billiard room. About seven months ago he entered the bonds of matrimony for the second time. Everyone who meets Mrs Holmsen, I am sure, will find her a lady ... when Mr Holmsen married his present wife he drew a lucky number in the marriage lottery.'³¹

The Club Hotel later boasted the privilege of having the prime minister, Andrew Fisher, stay at one of its rooms. Fisher arrived with his entourage in Kingaroy by pony and trap from Wooroolin at 4 p.m. on Friday 22 January, 1909. He was ushered to the Club Hotel and that evening a special reception was given him in Evans' Hall. The prime minister left the following morning for Nanango.³²

Yet the hotel seems to have been out of favour with the Commercial Travellers' Association of Queensland. In October 1929 the acting secretary of the association wrote to the Kingaroy Shire Council complaining of conditions at the hotel. His letter, in part stated: 'The Committee has received serious complaints from Members of the insanitary and indeed filthy conditions of the lavatories of the Club Hotel, Kingaroy ...'³³

In 1932 the hotel was the scene of a tragedy when a man named Robert Forsyth Thallon, who was known to be in the habit of walking in his sleep, fell from the verandah of the hotel and died shortly afterwards as a result of the injuries he received. The accident occurred at 4 a.m. on 15 March, 1932. Thallon was a married man from Brisbane, his wife later testified that he had previously fallen from the verandah of the Gayndah Hotel while walking in his sleep.³⁴ Another man, Arthur Eastick, a local blacksmith and wheelwright, also died at the hotel, his body was found beneath a tank stand at the rear of the hotel on Sunday 10 April, 1938, and a subsequent post mortem examination revealed that Eastick had accidentally strangled himself while suffering an epileptic fit.³⁵

The Club Hotel, situated on the corner of Kingaroy and Alford Streets, was demolished in 1941 to make way for a new, two-storey hotel that was to be constructed on the site. At that time the press reported of the old hotel: "The old Club Hotel was erected by Mr Ferdinand Holmsen on land given to him by the late Mr Arthur Youngman. It was then only half its present size, the rear wing and side additions being added by Mr Holmsen in 1909."³⁶

Other business people and residents included John Johnston a solicitor, A.V. Neilsen a saddler and John William Barbeler the baker, with his wife Hilda Caroline Edverdinah Baker who were early settlers of the Benair district. H. Seng was the tailor, there were two blacksmiths, F. Bowler and Julius Olsen. Julius Olsen was found dead at the wheel of his car about a mile from his house on the Home Creek road on Friday 31 July, 1936. Olsen was a well known local resident, he was born in Denmark in 1870 and came to Australia with his parents when he was just three years of age. The vessel that brought them to Australia was the ill-fated *Quetta* which later sank with massive loss of life in the Torres Straits. The family first settled at Yangan where Julius Olsen's father operated as a blacksmith and several years later they moved to Brisbane where Julius became apprenticed to his father. He married Olive Moody while in Brisbane and arrived on the South Burnett in 1902 where he commenced business as a blacksmith at Edenvale. However, realising that with the coming of the rail lines the site of Kingaroy would be the more prosperous centre, he gave up his business at Edenvale and moved to Kingaroy where he operated another blacksmith's shop. He was active in public affairs and was a foundation member of the show society and the progress association, for many years he was the ringmaster at the annual Kingaroy show. Circa 1908 he again returned to the land, selecting a property at Tingoora.³⁷ Olive Olsen died in February 1949.

David Moore Cullen was the dentist at Kingaroy, he was born in Brisbane in 1878, was educated at the Brisbane Grammar School and after working in a bank and with a surveying team, subsequently served an apprenticeship with a dentist. After attaining his dentist's licence he practiced at Childers and Maryborough, frequently travelling by train to Kingaroy where he operated his surgery at Ockelford's Pharmacy. He commenced a full time practice in rented premises at Kingaroy in 1908. His shop was twice destroyed by fire. He married Ann Cant in 1915



Early Kingaroy street scene. From left: Row & Neilsen's cafe, with various tenants in the building including J. Johnson, solicitor, and Alfred Lilley, auctioneer, then J. Murray's refreshment rooms, Staines Brothers, auctioneers and V.A. Neilsen, saddler.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

and subsequently constructed his own surgery in Haly Street, he remained in practice until 1952 when he sold the practice to C.R.D. Wenck. David Cullen died in 1967, aged eighty-nine years, his wife died in 1974.³⁸

Included in the role of early business people in the Kingaroy/Taabingia district were S.J. Elliott (also reported as Elliot) an auctioneer, James Christian Raffin owned the aerated water works. A. Jorgensen, Hans Peter Hansen, P. Neilsen, E. Randell, G. Woods and A. Jones were the town's first builders and were all kept particularly busy. G. Muller and Arthur Freshwater were the town's wheelwrights, J. Barkle and C. Hall were the general carriers. T. Reen, James Gleeson and Dan Carroll were the butchers, Gleeson also owned a butcher's shop at Taabingia, J. Harris operated the milk run, C. Sager was the watch-maker, there were three bootmakers, H. Beyer, T. Randell and Healy and Son, Miss Lake operated the boarding house, G. Norman was the hairdresser, R. Sexton was the mail carrier and C. Gray operated the passenger coach between Kingaroy and Nanango, J. Johnston was a solicitor, J.C. Aboud was a store owner, the O'Neill brothers and G. Lindley were auctioneers, Miss Bunsworth was the confectioner, E. Dobson and E. Crittenden were painters, William Hodge was a saddler who started business in Taabingia and later transferred to Kingaroy, J.W. Gillies was a cabinet-maker and undertaker, and the plumbers included L.R. Stehbens, C. Wittkopp and W. Goodwin. Thomas Preston and W.S. Johnston were sawmillers, timber merchants included A. Boldery, B. Appel, J. Hart of Wilson Hart, Maryborough, and the Jarrah Company. The first medical practitioner to reside and practice in Kingaroy was Dr Richard Rendle, however Dr John Tarleton of Nanango also visited the township during those formative years.³⁹

Richard Pook and John Shoecraft were the contract threshers, in 1965, when he was eighty-seven years of age, John Shoecraft recalled that he used a steam traction engine as his power plant and towed a corn thresher behind, a water cart also accompanied them on their rounds of the farms, the steam engine required one hundred gallons of water to travel six miles. The engine had originally been brought to the Kingaroy region by Tom Christensen and Shoecraft had purchased it from Christensen in 1907. The price of maize was then two shillings per bushel and Shoecraft was paid fourpence per bag for threshing. In later years John Shoecraft drove a steam roller for the Wondai Shire Council and also worked a steam stone crusher. The steam traction engine was sold at Gayndah in 1913 and was reportedly still in use in the Biggenden region in 1957.⁴⁰



In 1912 Ockellford's Chambers were completed by adding a second floor over the existing shops. Neilsen's saddlery shop was removed to Haly Street and Staines Brothers' shop was pulled down to make way for the Q.N. Bank erected in 1914.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.



Kingaroy's first post office, erected in 1907, on land donated by Arthur Youngman, on the corner of Kingaroy and Alford Streets. The photograph depicts the building with extensions and improvements as it was on 21 March, 1935. It was replaced by a new post office on the same site, opened on 31 March, 1958. The town's first telephone exchange was opened on 4 October, 1911; this was a manual switchboard with 32 subscribers' services. On 8 December, 1953, magneto type telephone exchange equipment was replaced by common battery equipment. 785 subscribers' services were transferred to the new exchange.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

In 1908 there was an urgent need for a large sawmill in Kingaroy. One small mill, Richard Pook and Thomas Preston's, was operating, but it was more of a domestic affair, supplying timber for their own trades of wheelwright and blacksmiths. Richard Pook was one of the region's earlier settlers, he was born in Devon, England, circa 1862, and came to Queensland with his parents when he was just four years of age. The family settled on land at Moggill, and following the death of his father, Richard carried on operating their small farm. During the massive flood of 1893 the farm, close to the Brisbane River, was inundated, and the family lost their home and stock. Now married, Richard moved his wife and family to Yangan, near Warwick on the Darling Downs, but after the death of his wife he disposed of the Yangan property and in 1906 moved to Kingaroy when the township was very much in its embryonic state. In partnership with Thomas Preston, Pook commenced sawmilling on the Booie road and also became a threshing contractor, the press later claiming: '... Being a handy man with machinery he was able to build threshing plants for other contractors and was regarded as an expert in this class of work.' Pook later opened a blacksmith's business in King Street and also purchased a block of land at Durong where he lived for a while. In about 1924, experiencing failing health he retired to Southport, and lived there until his death on 19 July, 1937. His body was taken to Yangan where he was interred with his wife.⁴¹

Yet the mill owned by Pook and Preston was certainly not a large one and so it came as a welcome relief when the Kingaroy sawmill was soon afterwards opened, the press claiming: 'It is satisfactory to know that the Kingaroy sawmill situated at three quarters of a mile from the railway station has been for the past two months run under new management, Mr Thomas Preston being the sole proprietor. He caters exclusively for the public in hard and pine wood, either rough or dressed. Not less than ten hands are already employed but the number will be increased. New and up to date machinery has been purchased.'⁴²

The 'London House' was an establishment owned and operated by Charles A. Spring and his wife. It was situated next to Stirling's Auction Mart opposite the post office and sold drapery, mercery, crockery boots and shoes. Mr and Mrs Spring were reported to have previously had fifteen years' experience in retailing at Brisbane prior to coming to Kingaroy.

The arrival of the rail at the 56 mile peg had brought with it the necessity for banking institutions to set up business to cater for the rapidly expanding population.

The Kingaroy branch of the Royal Bank of Queensland was, in its formative years, beginning in 1904, operated only as a receiving branch of the larger Nanango office. Mr W. Moffat, manager of Nanango, made frequent visits to Kingaroy. It appears that a small office was opened in Kingaroy on 8 February, 1906, in the building later occupied by Mr C. Hill.⁴³ The bank began constructing its first building in Kingaroy on Friday 28 October, 1910, the manager, a Mr Hoffman, performing the ceremony of capping the first stump, the press claiming: '... a large number of the residents being there by invitation, Mr Hoffman stated that he hoped the other banks on opening here would do the same as the Union and Royal Banks have done to start building proper premises and he said he had much pleasure in driving the first nail. He then called upon Mr Townson, President of the Chamber of Commerce, to drive the second nail. In doing so Mr Townson said he hoped they could now get an extra overdraft. An adjournment was then made to the Commercial Hotel to drive another nail.'⁴⁴

Receiving offices were opened at Coolabunia in 1913 and Brooklands in 1923. The Coolabunia branch closed in 1914 and the Brooklands branch closed in 1926.⁴⁵

Managers of the Q.N.B. since 1914 included C.W. Davis (1914–26), W.R.K. Black (1926–27), T.W. Beer (1927–30), R.H. Wickham (1930–34), W.C. Harvey (1934–42), E.J. Chester (1942–44), and J.W. McCombe (1944–50).

Managers of the National Bank since 1922 have included G.L. Pope (1922–26), David Morgan (1926–37), C.L. Rudder (1937–40), J.C.N. Ferguson (1940–46), E.R. Heers (1946–49), L.R. Hall (1949–54), T.C. Garland (1954–58).⁴⁶ The bank has also operated receiving offices at Memerambi, closed in 1950, and Wooroolin, closed in 1973.⁴⁷

Other banks at Kingaroy have included the Union Bank, the first to open a branch in Kingaroy, on 7 February, 1906, the Commercial Bank, opened in December 1909, the Bank of Australasia in 1911, the Bank of New South Wales and the Commonwealth which both opened in 1937.

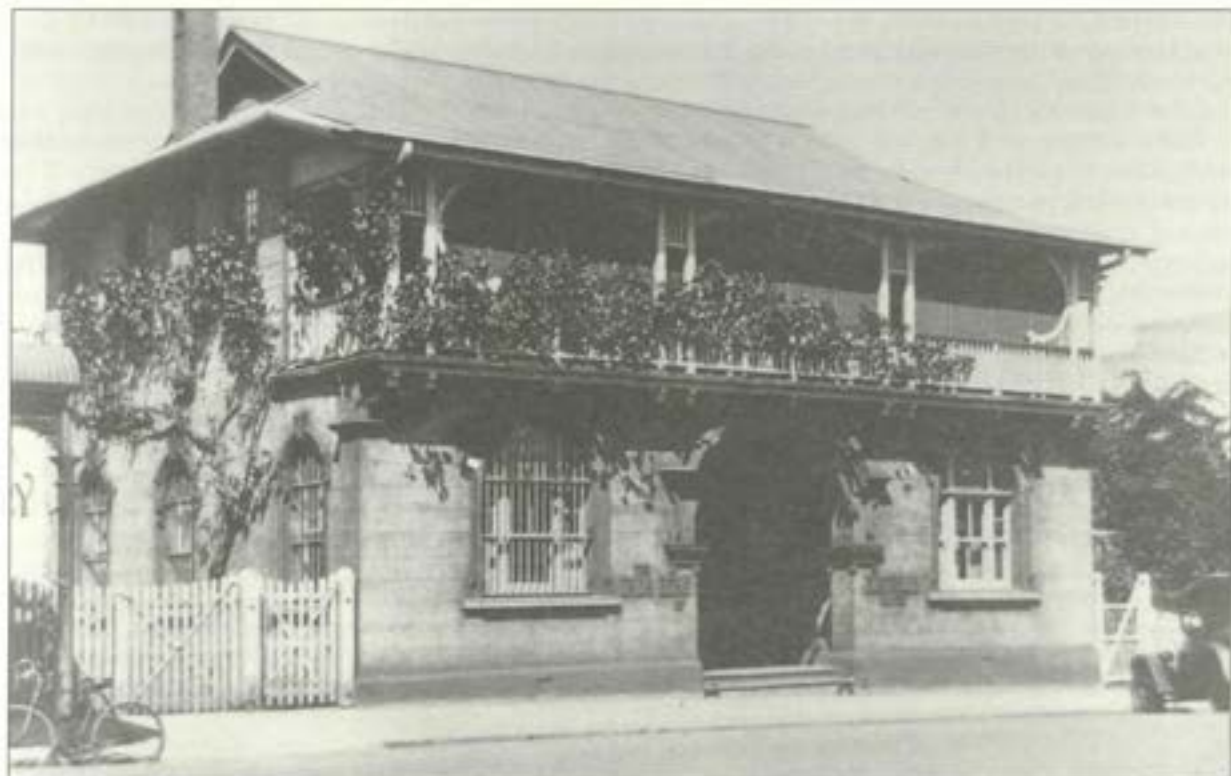
Dan Carroll, as we have seen, was the owner of the Carrollee Hotel, in 1908 he leased the hotel to a man named Barry, Barry paying £1500 for goodwill and a rent of £6 per week. At that time too there were three churches in Kingaroy with a fourth, the Presbyterian Church being constructed, and so with four hotels and four churches the press delightedly proclaimed that there was one church to cater for the customers of each hotel. A new Catholic Church was then under construction. The proprietor of the Kingaroy Hotel was Thomas Henry Evans who had come from England in 1885. He was engaged with the Queensland Railway Department as an engine driver to the goldfields in Carpentaria. Due to ill health he resigned from the Railways Department in 1892 and then lived in a variety of places including Maryborough, Kilkivan, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Killarney, Brisbane and finally Kingaroy.⁴⁸

Other pioneering businesses including the saddlery of James Hodge, the chemist W.H. Ockelford, next door to whom was Hester's booksellers. Greer Brothers butchery, operated by Thomas and William Greer, had recently opened 'new and up-to date butchery premises', their motto was, 'Tender steaks and juicy joints'.⁴⁹ W.H. Ockelford was the first chemist at Kingaroy, he conducted his pharmacy from circa 1908 until after the end of the Second World War, occupying premises on each side of Kingaroy Street at different times, he also owned about thirty acres of land at Red Hill. He died in Brisbane, aged eighty years, in November 1955.⁵⁰

One of the more impressive businesses to prosper in the town was the South Burnett Importing Company which became the largest trading concern in the region.

Ludwig Rudolph Stehbens and his wife, Amy Matilda (nee Melville) were the owners of this business for many years. Stehbens began his plumbing business in 1905 and in 1918 purchased shares in the South Burnett Importing Company, acquiring the company in 1922. The shop was destroyed by fire in 1926 but Stehbens rebuilt the business and it was taken over by his sons in 1927.

Mrs Stehbens was a native of Toowoomba and at the age of twelve years she moved with her parents to Bundaberg, it was there that she married Ludwig Rudolph Stehbens. The couple



The Union Bank of Australia Ltd., in Kingaroy Street, combined business offices and residential quarters erected circa 1909 or 1910. It operated the first full-time branch of a bank in Kingaroy, originally conducted in the old Carrolllee Hall in 1906. (The Royal Bank had a receiving agency for two years prior to this and opened a branch in Kingaroy one day later than the Union Bank.)

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.



The South Burnett Importing Company's substantial premises and large staff.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

retired in 1927 and lived on the old Kumbia road, Mrs Stehbens died on 30 November, 1937, and was buried at the Taabinga cemetery, her husband, Ludwig, died in 1952 and was buried with his wife.⁵¹

Lars Larsen and his wife Christine Sophia Caroline operated a carrying business in the embryonic township, having purchased the business in 1905 for £150 from Mr H. Patterson. The sale included two horses and a buckboard. Christine Larsen was the daughter of a Danish couple named Sunstrup who had come to Australia with their children from Copenhagen, yet the early experiences of the family were to be somewhat tragic. Mrs Sunstrup died at sea en-route to Australia, and Mr Sunstrup died in quarantine two weeks after landing at Brisbane, there having been an outbreak of cholera on board the immigrant vessel. This left five young children, the eldest being about ten years of age, none of whom could speak any English. Christine finally married Lars Larsen in 1904 and in addition to operating the carrying business in Kingaroy the couple also carried on a livery stable. Lars Larsen died in 1932 and Christine Larsen died at the Brisbane Hospital on 6 July, 1959.⁵²

Another well known business in early Kingaroy was Eisentrager and Yappa's owned by Gervyn Yappa and Bill Eisentrager who opened their store in June 1926. The store, which sold groceries, general household goods and hardware was situated in Kingaroy Street.⁵³

One of the early selectors of the Kingaroy region was an interesting man named John Cross, of *Mascotte* who, in 1908, was reported to have run one of the best farms in the area. This was a 160 acres selection situated approximately 1³/₄ miles from the railway station. A visitor to the farm later wrote:

Mr John Cross is one of the most travelled farmers that I have ever come across ... Born in Liverpool, England, he went to sea when only 15 or 16 years' old. Wandered in New Zealand and worked at different odd jobs in the country. Back to England, then a trip to Texas where he worked on a sheep run for some time and did the United States. Back to England again, his next move was the southern hemisphere and he knocked about all through the Australian colonies working as a timber-getter, fencer and so on until he met his wife in Laidley when he married her 23 years ago. They came to Kingaroy 11 years ago when they selected the *Mascotte* selection.⁵⁴

Neil Neilsen was an early businessman in Kingaroy who served on many public bodies and is reputed to have introduced the first soda fountain to the town. In 1911 when Neilsen was the shire clerk at Mullumbimby he travelled to Kingaroy to inspect the town and when he returned home his report of the region was so glowing that many of his friends and associates immediately packed up and travelled to Kingaroy to begin a new life for themselves on the South Burnett. These included L.N. Freeman, Frank Row, H. Livingstone and H. Ford. Neilsen and Freeman, then both young men, set up an auctioneering business, their modest office operating from behind the Carrollee Hotel. Neilsen sold his interest in this business and opened a bakery known as Row and Neilsen Bakers, Caterers-Refreshment Rooms, with Frank Row as a silent partner, it was during this time that Neilsen introduced the first soda fountain to the town. In 1920 he sold this business and moved to Wondai where he purchased the Wondai Hotel, later moving to Maryborough where he purchased the freehold of the Custom House Hotel.⁵⁵

The quest for water was one of the major problems of the region's early settlers, a report of this difficulty later claimed: 'The most discouraging drawback at the time, was the apparent lack of water, and was the cause of many selectors abandoning their blocks, believing that the district was one of nature's paradoxes. To the late Mr Tom Cleary, for his courage and enterprise in securing the services and boring plant of Mr Elgin Porter, to successfully undertake what seemed almost a forlorn hope, may be credited in a large measure the ultimate successful settlement of Kingaroy's now famous scrub land. It was only after many set-backs and disappointments, that he was able to prove that ample water of good quality could be procured by boring on the waterless scrub areas. With characteristic generosity of the pioneers, Mr Cleary made the water available to his neighbours, and it proved a great boon in dry times. The first outward sign that the settlers were gradually mastering their difficulties was the opening of the Butter Factory in February, 1907. From that date progress was more rapid.'⁵⁶

This was a time of the great land boom on the South Burnett, selections that had been taken up in the 1890s for 2/6d per acre, with ten or twenty years to pay off the debt, were now selling for more than £5 or £6 per acre, ensuring enormous profits for those speculators, so despised at the land sales, who had been fortunate enough to win their selections at the ballots and to hold them for a decade or so.⁵⁷

Both rural and town blocks were at premium prices and the land hunger generated further business, more building and even more general prosperity for the region.

The Commercial Hotel in Kingaroy was opened on Wednesday 6 January, 1909, the press claiming:

The Commercial Hotel erected by O'Neill Bros. at the corner of Haly and Glendon streets was opened for business on Wednesday last. It is a handsome building and reflects great credit upon the contractor Mr Alex Miller of Maryborough who ably executed a very neat design. The position being a central one opposite the railway yards should bring to the hostelry a large share of support. The building is two storey, covers 76 feet by 48 feet and contains 14 bedrooms five sitting rooms, large dining room and bar all high and well ventilated. A special feature is the width of the balconies which ensures a cool retreat at any time of the year. Right throughout, the rooms are replete with the best of furniture which was supplied by Finney Isles and Coy. Maryborough and Brisbane. The lessee, Mr C. Hernon of Brisbane, has installed a powerful Frackson acetylene gas plant of twenty lights which illuminate the whole premises brilliantly and have a pretty effect on the coloured glass doors within the building.⁵⁸

The Commercial Hotel was destroyed by fire in 1935.

The first school in the region was established at Mount Jones (Hospital Hill) in 1902, it was opened as a provisional school with about twenty pupils and the first teacher was Miss Olive Kathleen Armitage, she later married Mr H. Patterson who had once managed the Union Bank in Kingaroy. The first school committee comprised of J. Ferguson, T. Carew, J.B. Herrod, A. Jones and Dan Carroll who was the secretary. In 1904 the building was moved from Mount Jones to a site in Haly Street, opposite the Booie road windmill where the Stolzenberg Engineering Works was later established.⁵⁹

On 5 June, 1905, Dan Carroll wrote to the Department of Public Instruction requesting that the name of the school be changed from Mount Jones to Kingaroy.⁶⁰ Ernest Krebs, who had come from Augathella, was placed in charge of the school and a Miss Bow of Greenview School near Wondai was transferred to become his assistant.⁶¹

Over the following few years the township grew quite dramatically and it soon became apparent that the school should be moved to a more central site. For some time there was considerable controversy over the siting of the school and eventually the Department of Public Instruction sent Mr W. Gripp, the inspector of schools, to investigate the situation. Upon Gripp's recommendation the new site was chosen and a building was constructed on that block of land, the land being donated by Arthur Youngman.⁶²

In 1915 Ernest Krebs was succeeded by James Jeffrey who in turn was replaced in 1917 by James Richard Denis Mahoney. The first scholarship winners at the school were G.C. Townson and W.J. Wiley in 1913.⁶³

A high school at Kingaroy was established after considerable deputations to the Department of Education. An account of the events leading up to the opening of the school, printed in 1935, stated:

The guarantee of a specified enrolment was essential before the Department would even consider the proposal. The first list presented was queried, which procedure naturally did not help the cause. Later a committee with Mr F.C. Petersen as chairman took the matter up with renewed vigour. At the commencement of the 1917 Christmas vacation, Mr Petersen made a personal canvass and obtained thirty-five names of intending scholars, his list being verified by the signatures of the parents.

Mr Petersen followed up this advantage by an interview with Mr J.D. Story in Brisbane, and pressed for the establishment of the high school immediately. He returned with the good tidings that an endeavour would be made to do so. Ultimately in 1918, the school was opened with 42 students, one week after the primary school had recommenced work.

Miss E. Fitzpatrick, B.A. was the first teacher appointed, under Mr J.R.D. Mahoney.⁶⁴

J.R.D. Mahoney was one of the state's leading educationalists, he was born at Yengarie, near Maryborough, in 1871 and served the Department of Public Instruction (later the Department of Education) for more than fifty years, his schools ranged from Croydon in the north-west to Roma. He was a regular writer and lecturer on education, a president of the Queensland Teachers' Federation and for several years a member of the Queensland Educational Committee of the Repatriation Commission which dealt with the education of sons and daughters of deceased soldiers. He served as head teacher at Kingaroy until December 1920. His last teaching post was at Yeronga where he served for sixteen years. J.R.D. Mahoney died in Brisbane on Sunday 17 April, 1938, his wife having predeceased him about a year previously.⁶⁵ His son, Professor James Charles Mahoney, once a student at the school, later became a highly qualified lecturer at Queensland University. He died in 1997.⁶⁶

A new state high school was opened in Kingaroy in August 1959, the school was officially opened by J.A. Heading M.L.A. in the presence of Professor J.C. Mahoney. The Education Department was represented by G.K.D. Murphy, deputy director general of education in Queensland and also a past student of the Kingaroy State School.⁶⁷

The new Catholic Church was opened by Archbishop Duhig on Thursday 15 April, 1909. The archbishop had arrived at Nanango on the previous Tuesday, had travelled to Nanango to hold a confirmation service there and had returned to Kingaroy that night. Mass was held in the new church on the morning of the 15th. The press reported: 'Then his (the archbishop's) rich full voice was heard to advantage, exhorting the young people to lead clean pure lives and appealing to the parents to make the home influence all that could be desired. He warned the young men about crowding into the towns and strongly urged them to settle on the land, making peaceful and happy homes for themselves. The evils of drink were dwelt upon.'⁶⁸ After the service a luncheon was served by the ladies' committee in a large marquee in the grounds of the church, approximately three hundred people attended the meal.⁶⁹

The St Mary's Convent School in Albert Street was formed when the Sisters of Charity arrived at Kingaroy in February 1929 at the invitation of Reverend Father J. Rawlings. The order was succeeded in 1934 by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan.⁷⁰

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eighty

Kingaroy and District

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9. SBT. 28 March, 1990, p 5.
10. K/H. 23 July, 1937, p 2.
11. SBT. 26 March, 1953, p 6.
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27. M/C. 7 March, 1906, p 4.
28. M/C. 22 October, 1906, p 4.
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33. A series of correspondence on this matter may be located in file: General correspondence, 1929, Kingaroy Shire Council archives.
34. For details of this case see: K/G. 29 July, 1932 and 5 August, 1932.
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36. K/H. 9 June, 1941, p 2.
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The Great Fires of Kingaroy

There have been numerous destructive fires in Kingaroy, the infamous fire of 1910, the 1927 fire that destroyed a block of shops at Scurr's corner, the conflagration of September 1930 during which five shops were destroyed, two years later came the fire that started in Advanx Tyre Company and destroyed ten premises, the destruction of the Commercial Hotel in 1935, and many others.

As we have seen, by 1910 Kingaroy was growing dramatically. Selections continued to be opened up and dozens of new settlers were arriving monthly. In the town itself the building and real estate boom was creating huge profits for business people and speculators, however, just as the town was coming of age, it experienced its first major fire, a fire that resulted in enormous destruction and large scale financial losses for many early Kingaroy business people.

At 1 o'clock on the morning of 29 January, 1910, the fire broke out in Mr J. Brady's store in the main street. The fire was reported to have started in the rear of the store where quantities of goods and produce were stored, these included several cases of kerosene. The fire rapidly spread to the shop of a jeweller named A. Bell. This shop was situated on one side of Brady's store. The flames quickly moved to the buildings on the other side of the store, these included Cullen's dentist's surgery, the Commercial Bank of Australia, and James Henry Sigley's auctioneering business, all those premises were destroyed despite the endeavours of a hastily formed bucket brigade. Some nearby stables belonging to a Mr Townson were also damaged by the fire, although as these stables also contained a quantity of kerosene the damage could have been far worse, the fuel simply evaporated or burnt away without affecting the building. The chemist, W.H. Ockelford, had all his stock destroyed by the fire and water, although due to a change in the direction of the wind his shop was largely saved from the flames. A reporter at the scene later wrote: 'In fact an axe brigade were on the point of pulling down some of the shops to prevent the Club Hotel taking fire. When the wind shifted it looked as though the corner store was going, but as in Mr Ockelford's case, the willing bucket brigade saved this place.'¹

There was plenty of water available at the scene of the fire but with only a bucket brigade to fight the flames, rather than hoses or any kind of efficient fire brigade, it was a lost cause from the very beginning. Several other businessmen lost their stock and the explosion of a gas cylinder caused considerable consternation among the fire-fighters. The bank's furniture was saved but other items still among the debris were, as the press later reported: '... too hot to handle.' Sigley and his associates managed to save almost all their stock, Sigley was the owner of the destroyed shops which were almost new, having been completed only a few months prior to the fire. The press later lamented: 'It is about time something was done towards the formation of a volunteer fire brigade.'²

Another enormous conflagration, the most disastrous in the history of Kingaroy to that date, occurred at 10.30 p.m. on Monday 12 September, 1932, about ten years prior to the fire brigade coming into existence. Ten business premises were destroyed. This was particularly tragic from a historical point of view as one of the buildings had housed the offices and archives of the *Kingaroy Herald* and all the copies of the newspaper since its first edition, publications that provided the everyday wealth of the region's past, were also destroyed. Its sister journal, the *Nanango News* soon afterwards published: 'The most disastrous fire in the history of Kingaroy broke out about 10.30 p.m. on Monday, and only for the heroic and gigantic efforts of the voluntary fire-fighters in demolishing a building, the damage would have been much greater. Had the flames spread to Messrs Townson and Heaslip's garage no idea of the loss that would have resulted could have been gauged. The fight put up by the fire-fighters was magnificent and will long be remembered

by those who witnessed the deplorable spectacle. The damage is estimated at £10,000, and the buildings destroyed comprise the following: The Advanx Tyre Company, J. Nash proprietor; Canberra Cafe, Mrs Mackenzie, proprietress; W.J. Lang & Son, produce merchants; H. Russell, silk merchant; Meyers Bros., plumbers; *Kingaroy Herald* newspaper office; L.J.F. Cowan, solicitor; John Wilson, commission agent; and two vacant shops.¹

The whole block of buildings was a mass of burning debris within an hour. The Advanx Company's premises and the two vacant shops first destroyed were owned by F.W. Lee, of Kingaroy. The premises of the Canberra Cafe, W.J. Lang & Son, Russell, and Meyers Bros. were all owned by Meyers Bros. The other buildings were owned by the estate of the late Archibald Blue, former editor and owner of the *Kingaroy Herald*.³

One of the Meyers brothers was Virgil Oscar, the business he and his brother operated was a plumbing and hardware supplies. V.O. Meyers was prominent on public affairs and worked tirelessly for his church, St Michael and All Angels Church of England. He was president of the Kingaroy branch of the R.A.C.Q. and a foundation member of the bowls club. In later years he became part owner in the Broadway Hotel building. He died, aged seventy-six, in Brisbane in January 1968 and was cremated at the Albany Creek crematorium.⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eighty-one

The Great Fires of Kingaroy

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Continued Progress in The Kingaroy Region

The area we now know as Kingaroy was originally populated by a rich pastiche of people from a wide variety of backgrounds, both geographic and social, who selected in equally diverse regions throughout the shire. Among some of the early settlers and business-people at Kingaroy were Joseph and James Coyne, two well known local residents, Joseph Arnold Hodge who arrived in 1910 and purchased Hans Poulsen's butcher's business. Other business people were John Samuel Mickan and his wife Henrietta. J.S. Mickan joined the army during the First World War and was trained at Duntroon, later serving as an instructor in Brisbane. He subsequently returned to Kingaroy where he and his wife conducted a mixed business in Kingaroy Street.¹ James and Louisa Mary Fortune were well known local identities, they farmed firstly at Booie and Crawford, later acquiring land at Redvale. James died in 1950 and his wife passed on ten years later.

William Abraham McGill was an early selector in the Ironpot region. Having come from Yarraman and Nanango, G.H. Simpson was a Booie settler who owned *Wattle Glen* which was sold in 1939 to Peter Schilling. John and William Meiers and their families took up selections at Home Creek, Patrick Kearney was born in Ireland in 1879, he lost his sight in one eye due to blight and selected land on the 'Taabinga Resumption' in 1911. He then returned to England where he married Ann Weir in 1912 and the couple returned to Australia soon afterwards.² Niels and Jensine Johansen were selectors at Edenvale who had originally come to Australia from Denmark,



Les Wieden's mail car travelling up the Blackbutt range. This form of transportation was vital to residents in rural areas such as the South Burnett, providing communication and transport facilities to the cities. The cars were licensed through the local government authorities.

Source — Allan Wieden.

Niels was well known in the district as a blacksmith and carpenter. Francis James Greenslade came from Somerset, England, in 1885. A carpenter by trade he purchased two butcher's shops in Kingaroy and later moved onto the land at various locations including properties at Redvale, Brooklands, and Boobie. He died in 1940 and his wife, Emily Mary Greenslade, passed away in 1967. Thomas Bowling and his family were other early settlers, arriving at Kingaroy in June 1910. Thomas Bowling was a carpenter, he constructed a house on the Crawford Road, Rudolph Wieden came to Australia in 1881 from Prussia and lived and worked in numerous regions including Gordonbrook and Chahpingah. He married Daisy Bridgeman in Toowoomba in 1905. Rudolph Wieden died in 1965 and his wife passed away in 1968. Christopher Henry Hooper and his wife Louisa Matilda and their two sons came to Australia in 1885 to begin farming in the Corndale region, later opening a blacksmith's shop. He died in 1917 and Mrs Hooper died in 1935.³

As with all other rural centres it became necessary early in Kingaroy's history to have a show society and show-grounds established in order to promote the region's produce. The show society came into being in 1905, the first very modest show was held at Reen's Hall at the rear of the Kingaroy Hotel in July 1906 and Arthur Youngman later donated fifteen acres of land to the society for use as a show-grounds.

The School of Arts at Kingaroy was established in 1910. In October that year the first School of Arts was opened in Warren's Buildings on the site of J.H. Hodge's shops. The leading instigators in the establishment of the School of Arts were J.D. Lee, T. Cornish and O.S. Bond. There were two reading rooms and a billiard room, the school was subsequently moved to Kingaroy Street where the Central Cafe later became established. Another School of Arts was constructed in 1916 on a site that had been donated by Arthur Youngman of *Taabinga* station, the building was opened the following year. An electric clock dedicated to the memory of Archibald Blue was installed in April 1918. Blue was the proprietor of the *Kingaroy Herald*, he was killed by a German immigrant during the Great War after accusing the immigrant of treacherous conduct. The first president of the School of Arts was Joseph Deuchar Lee, the second son of Archibald Lee.⁴ The School of Arts was demolished during the mid 1960s to make way for 'a park like setting' for the new court house. Library services were then moved to the old council offices behind the council chambers. The Kingaroy Rotary Club undertook to preserve the original clock which had been set into the tower of the building.⁵ The clock was removed and reconditioned and placed in the foyer of the



Kingaroy School of Arts which was established in October 1910 in what was then Warren's Buildings. J.D. Lee was president of the original committee. In 1916, the institute was transferred to the enlarged premises on the site donated by Arthur Youngman.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

town hall in honour of the early settlers of the region. A plaque on the case of the clock's movement reads: 'The Archibald Blue Memorial Clock. Erected in 1918 at the School of Arts in honour of the pioneers of Kingaroy and districts. This clock was removed when the School of Arts was demolished in 1967 to make way for the new court-house.'⁶

A private school known as the Kingaroy Collegiate Private School was established at Kingaroy circa 1911, this was owned by a Miss Winifred Shrapnel and situated in Edward Street.

The Kingaroy ambulance was formed in 1920 as an affiliate of the Maryborough Q.A.T.B., its first superintendent was Mr P. Loth.⁷

By 1923 the growing town of Kingaroy was being likened to that of Toowoomba, a centre that would vie with Toowoomba as one of the leading business and industrial centres of the state. From the *Taabinga* resumptions approximately two thousand people had made their homes on fertile selections, fields of maize and other crops were growing plentifully in the rich red soil, the railways had been opened bringing further wealth, the butter factory had been completed and the fledgling peanut industry, started so tenuously many years previously, had by 1923 grown into a strong industry. The town boasted numerous banks, excellent motor transport facilities, an electric light service had been installed, the district hospital was open, and many other facilities were either being constructed or had already been built.⁸

Further evidence of progression and business confidence in Kingaroy was demonstrated by the opening of a bulk petrol depot in 1927. Opening what was only the second such depot in rural Queensland, the Vacuum Oil Company selected a site for their operations close to the butter factory. The depot was supplied with two overhead tanks, each of ten thousand gallons capacity. Fuel was brought by rail from Brisbane and trucked to the tanks on a specially constructed rail siding that ran into the company's enclosure. Mr B.J. Baxter was the depot-keeper and the wagon driver was Mr W. Redmond. The complex was opened on Thursday 17 March, 1927, the ceremony being performed by Robert Stephen Brown, the retiring chairman of the Kingaroy Shire Council. A ribbon had been strung across the entrance to the complex in Factory Street, and the company manager said that the function would mark an important step in the history of the Kingaroy district.⁹

One of the town's early police officers was Robert George Christie, a courageous and dedicated man who was awarded the King's Medal for bravery for disarming a mentally deranged man while he himself was unarmed. Christie was the sergeant of police at Kingaroy until his retirement in 1935 and he died in 1944. His wife, Mary J. Christie, also led an interesting life, as the press later reported:

Mrs Christie was a daughter of the late Mr and Mrs James Lucas of Ipswich. In the early days Mr Lucas had a grazing property at Sandy Creek in the Fassifern district and grew cotton on the home property at Purga (near Ipswich). He also had a small vineyard and made excellent wine. Mrs Christie was very proud of her link with the first Governor of Queensland, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, her mother being a Ferguson.

Mrs Christie was rescued from drowning in Purga Creek when a school girl, being dragged out by her long hair, wrapped in a blanket and galloped on horse-back by her father to a doctor in Ipswich, seven miles away.

As a child she had recollections of a tribe of wild Aborigines that periodically went 'walkabout' past their property and of her mother with gun trained on them until they were out of sight. One day the Aborigines came when her parents were away in town. She and her brothers and sisters scrambled up a huge tree and stayed in the branches 'quiet as mice' until they departed.

During her youth Mrs Christie stayed at home helping her mother. She was noted for her good cheese and bread-baking ability. Later she took up nursing and was at the Ipswich General Hospital for four years. She married a young police constable, Robert Christie, and it was then she became one of the pioneer women of the great Outback, her husband being stationed in various places in the far West and far North West for 10 years. She experienced all the hardships and heartbreaks of the 'Never Never' — floods, bush fires, snakes, scorpions, flies, heat, Barcoo, the dreaded willy willies that threatened to carry off the roof — everything that went with the outback, where it was '102 deg. in the water-bag.'

She could tell how, at times, she was the only white woman for hundreds of miles and no doctor for the same distances; how she was called upon to stitch gaping wounds with her sewing needle and silk thread. She was left alone for weeks while her policeman husband patrolled his territory on horseback or perhaps was away seeking cattle duffers with black trackers and pack horse.

At one place Mrs Christie had a small stream running through her yard. Specks of gold could clearly be seen glistening in the sun on its bed. Spare moments were spent picking out the specks on a penknife and placing in a pickle bottle. Eventually she filled the bottle.¹⁰

Another of the town's early police officers was Sergeant Patrick McCormack, who had been in charge of the Kingaroy police station from 1914 until 1917. He had previously seen service in many parts of Queensland and upon leaving Kingaroy retired from the force and lived in Brisbane. He died in 1930.¹¹

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eighty-two

Continued Progress in The Kingaroy Region

1. For further details on the Mickan family, see: F.D. Maudsley's entry in Murray, pp 310–12.
2. A more detailed article on the history of the Kearney family may be read in Murray, pp 326–28.
3. Further details on this family may be found in Murray, p 438.
4. K/G. supplement, 5 April, 1935.
5. K/H. 25 August, 1966, p 8.
6. An interesting article on the history of the School of Arts at Kingaroy may be read in SBT 1 April, 1997, p 2.
7. For further details on this brigade see: WW. p 177.
8. M/C. 16 October, 1926, p 5.
9. M/C. 22 March, 1927, p 6.
10. *Herald News*, 23 June, 1971, p 4.
11. K/G. 26 December, 1930.

Taabinga Village

During the 1880s, following further resumptions of most of the stations throughout the South Burnett, portions of *Taabinga* station were again resumed, as were sections of *Nanango* station, and the Queensland government introduced a settlement scheme known as community holdings, whereby settlers who took up forty acre blocks would also be entitled to select a town block in the new village of Taabinga which was originally a part of the Boonenne run of *Taabinga* station. This was an experiment that had previously been carried out at Ravensbourne. However, the scheme was doomed to failure from the beginning, most of the selectors preferred to live on their farms rather than travelling from a home in Taabinga Village each day.

The town reserve was gazetted in 1887. The first settlers in the region were reported to have been Fred Geritz and his family.¹ Following Geritz's arrival in 1888 he was quickly followed by James Cooley, Jack Borchardt, Christopher Knudsen and Charles Christian Madsen. Charles Christian Madsen was born at Fredericia, Jutland circa 1856, and in his early years trained as a naval seaman. He came to Australia in 1875 aboard the sailing vessel *William Wallace*, landing at Brisbane, the voyage had been a difficult one, and Madsen often later spoke of the mutiny that had occurred aboard the ship. He worked initially in the Logan district and was employed on the construction of the first bridge across the Waterford River. He later moved south where he worked at tin mining in the Glen Innes region. Returning to Queensland he worked in the timber industry, supplying sleepers for the construction of the Gympie railways. He married Caroline Maria Geritz, the daughter of Mr and Mrs August Geritz who were in charge of the receiving post office at Taabinga Village, and upon the recommendation of the Geritz family Madsen and his wife took up land at the village. Caroline Madsen was killed in a car accident on the Kumbia road in 1936 while she and a number of other women were travelling to Toowoomba, her husband never fully recovered from the shock and he died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Monday 15 November, 1937. They were buried together at the Taabinga cemetery.²

Niels (also reported as Nils) Peter Svendsen was another of the region's early settlers, he was born in Denmark in 1861 and at the age of twenty-one years joined the Danish Army, serving for two years. In 1884 he left Denmark for Greenland where he worked in the mining industry, returning to Denmark in 1886. In December that year he boarded ship for Australia, landing at Melbourne in March 1887. He travelled extensively in Queensland where he was engaged in bush work and was also employed in railway line construction prior to selecting land at Taabinga. In addition to his farming Svendsen also worked in the carrying business, taking loads between Kilkivan, Nanango and Esk and supplying the Taabinga store with goods. He usually completed one trip each week with a german wagon drawn by three horses and also worked for a while at *Taabinga* station. Svendsen was one of the first settlers to agitate for a school at Taabinga. In 1908 he and his wife moved to another property on the Booie road that he purchased from Oliver Jones. Niels Svendsen died at his home on Sunday 1 November, 1936, and was interred at the Taabinga cemetery.³

Other selectors included John Svendsen, S. Jonsson, Leonard Gradwell, H. Freshwater, Hans Poulsen, J. Freshwater, Michael Haydon, Sven Peterson and H. and J. Jeppesen (also given as Jeppsen).⁴

Early selectors at Taabinga lived firstly in tents while more solid constructions were built. Like all other small rural areas being opened up to settlement, life on these early selections was primitive. Stores had to come from Nanango, Kilkivan or Dalby, there were no medical facilities, and the residents had to contend with isolation and poor living conditions. Despite this, by 1907 Taabinga Village boasted two hotels, two stores and a fruit and fancy goods shop, a butcher and a sawmill. Some of the residents of Taabinga Village included James Christian Raffin, a cordial

manufacturer who had his business in Kingaroy. Raffin's business had operated from Taabinga Village and was later moved to Kingaroy. According to a press report dated 1908 a modern factory was constructed: '... on the grounds of the Club Hotel.' This factory was: '... fitted out by Mr Raffin with new and up-to date machinery.' Aerated waters and cordials of every description were made at the factory. It was later sold to Ambrose Sawtell.⁵ J.C. Raffin died in 1955.

Mrs Anthilde Marie Christine Boge and her daughter were also early residents of the village, they combined dressmaking with millinery to earn a living. Mrs Boge was born in Schleswig-Holstein and came to Australia with her parents in 1871, the family landing at Maryborough. She married Marcus Boge, a sugar planter on the Mary River, they later purchased a farm and constructed a sugar mill at Aurora plantation and were instrumental in the establishment of the Tiaro sawmill. Marcus Boge also carried on a boot-making and importing business. The family moved to Taabinga circa 1902, Marcus Boge having previously died in Maryborough. Mrs Boge opened a store in the village at the corner of Coolabunia and Goodger Roads, a post office later operated from this shop. She lived until October 1937 when she died at her daughter's residence in Bundaberg.⁶

Horace Mortimer-Evans was an early photographer at Taabinga Village, and practiced his craft in conjunction with farming interests. His wife, Ruth, was a well known dressmaker, she taught dressmaking from a rented room at George Warren's refreshment rooms and also sold drapery. The couple later moved into Kingaroy where Horace Mortimer-Evans went to work as an accountant with the *Kingaroy Herald*, he subsequently became a teacher and was secretary of the School of Arts. He died in 1921 and Ruth Mortimer-Evans died in 1938.

Charles and Kate Johnson were early residents of the Taabinga region and later moved to Mackay where Charles died in 1945. Other Taabinga residents included Ola Akesson and his family who lived on the site where the Kingaroy airport was later established. Akesson was born in Sweden in October 1848, he arrived in Brisbane aboard the vessel *Dacca* in November 1888, his wife, Karna, and their son, Herman, following him in 1890.⁷

James Hodge, another early resident, was born at Dalby and at the age of nineteen years went to Nanango to begin a saddlery business. After ten years in Nanango he selected land at Taabinga Village, but when the rail line went through to Kingaroy in 1904 he decided that he would move into the fledgling township where he opened another saddlery, the first in Kingaroy. The saddlery with a billiard room was situated in the Kingaroy Hotel premises. James Hodge died in August 1941.⁸



Ola Akesson and his family at their Taabinga Village home.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Means' collection.

Another of the early businessmen at Taabinga Village was James Lyons, a storekeeper and farmer who came to Queensland aboard the *Indus* in 1874 from County Mayo in Ireland. Lyons later selected land at Cecil Plains and subsequently sold that land to select a property near Mount Wooroolin which he and his brother named *Logboy*.

Lyons later moved to Taabinga where he purchased a property from Leonard Gradwell which he and his wife, Catherine, named *Mayo Vale*, this is the site of the present T.A.F.E. college. James Lyons opened a general store at Taabinga Village and served on the Kingaroy Shire Council from 1914 until 1921. His shop was, reputedly, '... replete with a complete assortment of goods in the various lines of his trade.'⁹

James Lyons' brother was Austin Lyons, who was born at Logboy, County Mayo, and at the age of twenty-eight years decided to follow his brother to Australia. He sailed aboard the *Earl Douglas* and landed in Queensland in February 1881. Travelling firstly to the Darling Downs he worked with his brother-in-law on a pastoral property, later moving to work on the Roma-Mitchell rail line. He subsequently worked on the Highfields line and then went on to the Tenterfield-Glen Innes construction. Coming eventually to the South Burnett he selected 1280 acres of land fronting the Stuart River. He and his wife, Anora, called their property *Logboy* after Lyons' birthplace in Ireland, the couple lived there for approximately thirty-five years. Lyons engaged firstly in sheep rearing, later changing to grazing and general farming. The press subsequently reported of them: 'Both Mr & Mrs Lyons could speak feelingly of those early days of settlement and of the hardships endured, not the least being the scarcity of water. For miles on either side the Stuart River was often dry except for pools fronting their home. Until the line came through to Kilkivan; Ipswich, Toowoomba and Maryborough were the nearest railheads. It was necessary to procure everything in bulk and the teams coming to take the wool away would bring supplies for many months with them. Mr Lyons often related how he grew a few acres of wheat to forward to Toowoomba and received it back as flour ... When the Great War broke out, two of his sons, John and Austin, were among the first to enlist from this district, the former being awarded the Military Medal. Mr Lyons was a staunch member of St Mary's Catholic Church and was one of the guarantors for the erection of that church in Kingaroy.'

Austin Lyons died at the Clydebank Private Hospital on Tuesday 31 March, 1963, his wife Anora having predeceased him three months earlier, they were buried together at the Taabinga cemetery.¹⁰



The Grand Hotel at Taabinga Village, with bullock team and mill logs.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

One of the stores at Taabinga was owned by the Warren Brothers who later dissolved the partnership and sold their business.

An eyewitness account of the small village, written in 1901 claimed: 'I notice in the village several new buildings in the course of erection. A new school is going up. Mr Fred Cawtell is the contractor ... A nice store has been erected by Mr G. Ware, late of Childers, besides a neat little building which I understand is for the saddler. There are many other improvements to be seen here ...'¹¹

There were two hotels at Taabinga, the Grand Hotel and the Taabinga Hotel, both were subsequently destroyed by fire, the first fire at the Grand was reportedly in 1899, after which it was rebuilt by Ola Akesson.¹²

The Grand Hotel, then owned by Ola Akesson, was described in 1908 as being, '... a very large and up to date hotel. A first-class billiard table, spacious and well ventilated dining rooms, bars etc can be found at the Grand. A hall attached to the hotel recently erected in the latest style can easily accommodate 200 or 250 people'.¹³

Ola Akesson's hotel, leased to Frank Howell, was destroyed by fire early in the morning of Wednesday 1 August, 1923, the hall situated next to the hotel was, however saved from the flames.¹⁴

Among the first residents of Taabinga were George Warren and his wife Ellen Edith, owners of the Taabinga Village Hotel. The couple were particularly industrious business people, as the press later reported:

Mrs Warren was born at Colchester, England, 72 years ago. She came out on her own from England to her sister at Eidsvold, landing in Queensland early in 1890. Towards the end of the same year she was married to Mr George Warren in Bundaberg. Mr Warren had been mining with his two brothers, and at the time of his marriage had a grazing property, and also engaged in carrying, with horse teams, to Eidsvold. In 1894 Mr Warren sold out and took his family to Childers, where he opened a general grocery business. In the ensuing five years he built four stores in Childers, and in 1900 he disposed of his interests in that town to the White Bros. Coming to this district he opened a general store at Taabinga Village (the date has also been recorded as 1889). Kilkivan then was the railway terminus, and the family travelled from there to Nanango, via Booie in Bob Sexton's coach, Mr Warren meeting them in Nanango, and driving them across to the Village in a buggy and pair. Later on Mr Warren built the Taabinga Hotel, which was conducted by Mr Paddy Meehan and Mr Charles Harris ... During all these busy pioneering years, Mr Warren found a tireless, capable, and devoted helpmate in his wife. Besides being at her husband's right hand, the late Mrs Warren also found time to devote to other activities. She was intimately associated with the establishment of the Church of England in this district, being one of the prime movers in raising funds to build the first church, which was erected at Taabinga Village. Later the church was removed to Kumbia.¹⁵

Mrs Ellen Warren died in a private hospital in August 1942.¹⁶

George and Ellen Warren's Taabinga Village Hotel mentioned in the above report was the second hotel at the village. In 1908 it was described as a place where one could find first class drinks and accommodation. A press report claimed: 'A great inducement to that hotel is the billiard table, which is free of charge; of course the table is not too good and not up to date, but what is that — that is only a trifle in the country. They play for drinks, they know they will get the full value of their money. If the table is bad for one it is also bad for the other'.¹⁷

This hotel was also destroyed by fire, the *Nanango News* in July 1913 stating, 'The Taabinga Hotel at Taabinga which was destroyed by fire on Thursday morning of last week, (10 July, 1913) was owned by Mr George Warren and leased to Mr Angus McKay. The origin of the fire is unknown. One occupant had a very narrow escape from the burning building. Willing helpers were soon on the scene, but nothing was saved as the fire had a good start before it was discovered. The owner had just added a new wing to the building, the value of which was between £200 and £300. The building was only partially insured and the damage is estimated at £1500'.¹⁸ The hotel was rebuilt on the corner of Nanango and Tarong roads, but it too was destroyed by fire

on 8 February, 1929. According to the *Nanango News* of 15 February that year the hotel was owned by a Mrs Robinson of Sydney, both the hotel, the adjoining post office and all the interior fixtures and fittings were destroyed.¹⁹ The licensee of the hotel at that time, Cyril Stephen Petty, decided that the name Taabinga Hotel must have been a bad omen and the name was subsequently changed to the Broadway Hotel.²⁰ However, this hotel was also destroyed by fire. The hotel, situated at the junction of the Nanango and Goodger roads, was completely destroyed at two o'clock on the morning of Monday 14 March, 1932. Mr T. Anderson, the owner and licensee, managed to escape from the burning building together with his wife and family and several other occupants. The licence was later transferred to the Broadway Hotel in Kingaroy Street, Kingaroy.²¹

One man who served the residents of the village, and, indeed, over a far larger area, was Lutheran minister Carl George Bjelke-Petersen. With his parents, sister and three brothers, Carl Bjelke-Petersen came to Australia from Denmark as a young man, the family leaving their homeland in 1891 to board the steamship *R.M.S. Doric* at London for the voyage to Hobart. Once in Tasmania the family was able to rent a home while they sought a block of land on which to establish themselves and to construct a modest home which was later built by Carl.²²

Once in Tasmania and after constructing the sturdy family home, Carl took a position as a teacher of mathematics with Scots College, Hobart. He later travelled to New Zealand where, on 12 March, 1894, he was ordained as a Lutheran minister. He remained in New Zealand for seven years before travelling to Brisbane where he was employed in looking after immigrants who had recently arrived at the port. Every six months he would travel from Brisbane by train or coach into various country centres, particularly the South Burnett. It was during one of these visits that Carl Bjelke-Petersen met his future bride, Maren Poulsen. Carl Bjelke-Petersen returned to New Zealand, working in the Hawkes Bay district among early Scandinavian settlers of that region. Maren Poulsen joined him in New Zealand in 1904 and they were married there that year. Their first child was Christian, followed three years later by Johannes, who was born at Dannevirke on 13 January, 1911. However, suffering declining health, Carl decided to leave the ministry and to attempt farming in New Zealand. The couple purchased a farm of one thousand acres but as the cold climate appeared to be detrimental to Carl's health, the family returned to Queensland in 1913 and settled on a property at Taabinga which they named *Bethany*. The holding was conveniently close to the selection that had been taken up by Maren's parents, Hans and Agnete Poulsen.

Upon his return to the South Burnett, Carl Bjelke-Petersen lived a quiet life, his primary interest being literary work, devoting his time to writing articles for church publications in the United States and Denmark, he also carried out some translation work.

Christian Bjelke-Petersen, Carl's son, also suffered ill health, his brother, Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, recalls that Christian was very much an academic and a designer of machinery and engines, his engine designs are in wide use today within the aviation industry.²³ Christian, however, developed stomach ulcers and, despite an operation, sickened and finally died in 1929. He was buried at the Taabinga cemetery and a tree, still in existence, was planted in his memory at *Bethany*.

Carl Bjelke-Petersen died on 1 October, 1954. He was buried at the Taabinga cemetery following a service at the Bethany Lutheran Church in Youngman Street.²⁴ His wife, Maren, was born in Denmark in December 1880, she emigrated with her parents to Australia and they were among the first settlers on the South Burnett. Maren died in her sleep at *Bethany* on Thursday 30 July, 1970.²⁵

Hans and Agnete Poulsen, Maren's parents, were among the region's early settlers. The couple arrived from Denmark in 1888 and lived initially at Laidley. Hans Poulsen subsequently selected land at Taabinga. A report of this family later concluded: 'Mrs Poulsen was for almost two years at the homestead before seeing any horse drawn vehicle other than their own, but the aborigines were plentiful and many a night the family could hear their wild corroborees being held on the village camping place to the nightly accompaniment of the dingoes' serenade. Mrs Poulsen was a versatile personality, a wonderful mother and helpmate, and a friend in need to hundreds in those days who needed a helping hand in times of stress and sickness. There were few trained nurses or doctors in the nineties and Mrs Poulsen was looked upon as the mother of all in trouble and

never refused to go cheerfully at any hours of the day or night to render whatever services lay within her power, and to the time of her passing away, she was looked upon as a personality of love and sympathy by all who knew her.' Hans Poulsen died in 1922 and Agnete died in March 1936, both were interred at the Taabinga cemetery.²⁶

The Taabinga Village School was constructed in 1897, its first teacher being Miss Bertha Albion — then just twenty-one years of age. The school, with an initial enrolment of eighteen students, was situated amid towering gums on the village flat, one early resident later stated: 'The opening of the school made Taabinga Village a community centre in reality. The school was the meeting place for all social functions, political meetings and church services. As the population of the district increased the school roll grew and very soon the original building was far too small to accommodate them all. The Department then built the present school. It too was well filled with scholars and was still the "town hall" as and when required ... In 1903 the district inspector of schools (Mr Kennedy) wrote in the *Education Office Gazette*: "Special mention deserves to be made of the Provisional School at Taabinga Village where a teacher (Bertha Albion) is working single handed with an attendance of fifty pupils". The outcome was the appointment of an assistant teacher, Miss Eleanor Leamy.²⁷

Following the arrival of the rail line to Kingaroy and the proposed extension of that line to Tarong through Taabinga, a survey of the line was made and by September 1912 the pegs had been laid for the line. Yet there was considerable discontent from a number of villagers and settlers in the region who believed that the line should run closer to their own selections. One report at that time stating, "The Kingaroy-Tarong railway survey is still agitating some of our prominent villagers who want the line to take all sorts of fancy curves in order that it shall pass through their property. The survey has already passed through the village and the pegs are all in, and it is hardly likely that the Minister for Railways will order another permanent survey to please a few monomaniacs ... the surveyor has been so worried with local advice that his camp is now surrounded by barbed wire entanglement a-la Boer War."²⁸ (The comment regarding the Boer War was in reference to the practice Lord Kitchener's troops had used in South Africa during the war to isolate Boer soldiers and to prevent them from infiltrating into certain areas).

Following the arrival of the rail line it appeared, for a few years at least, that the village would survive economically, local selectors would bring their produce to the station at Taabinga and while there purchase their supplies from the village stores. The aerated water factory did reasonably well, as did the sawmill. This mill was a real boon to the people of the region, as one resident stated just prior to its construction: 'I hear a sawmill will be erected in the vicinity of the dam which will be welcome to the settlers of this end of the scrub as they have to fetch all their building materials from Nanango, a distance of 16 miles, and Stewart River (sic) people have about 30 miles to haul their material for building.'²⁹ By October that year the sawmilling plant, owned by George Muller, had been completed, and was ready to begin operations. Muller told the press that in addition to cutting timber for the local market he was also about to install a planing machine so that the timbers could be dressed.³⁰

However, due to a combination of drought and the lack of labour, the village went into serious decline.

While the settlers of this, and every other region, were subjected to numerous hardships, it was particularly galling for one of those hardships to come in the form of an officious bureaucracy. In June 1909 the people of the Taabinga Village region were the subject of the unwelcome attention of the local authority's inspector of nuisances. A report of this visit hotly stated:

After sleeping peacefully for some time the village has awakened with a start. A cyclone has swept down upon us in the shape of that important official, the newly-appointed Inspector of Nuisances — a hireling of the Nanango Shire Council. This individual apparently filled with zeal has issued commands to householders and others, which, if carried out, will alter the landscape altogether. No one has escaped his eagle eye. With haughty mien and commanding air he has ordered one to burn his fowl house, another to cut down the weeds in his back yard, while one unfortunate was told that his firewood heap was breeding microbes and must be removed or burnt immediately. A little boy who was carting cow-yard manure to his father's cabbage patch was terrified on hearing that his little hand-cart was not in a sanitary condition and that it must be deodorized or consigned to the flames. After harrying the householders our hero next turned his attention to the tent and humpy

dwellers camped on the reserve. These were told they must either build a sawn timber W.C. (the specifications of which he would provide) or be hauled before the beak (magistrate). When the Inspector made these visits to the camps the 'bullockies' were away with their teams, their wives receiving the autocrat. During the evening several muscular, fierce-eyed wielders of the double-handed whip were looking for the nuisance man.³¹

Over the following years the decline in the village became more apparent. In 1910 records of the Lands Department show that blocks of land were being forfeited and surrendered and that the demand for land at the village was nil, the belief that the Kingaroy-Tarong rail line would bring prosperity to the village proved hopelessly incorrect, and by the end of that decade all hope had gone of every seeing Taabinga as the capital of the South Burnett.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eighty-three

Taabinga Village

1. M/C. 24 March, 1911, p 6.
2. K/G. 17 April, 1936; 19 November, 1937, and Taabinga cemetery records.
3. K/G. 6 November, 1936.
4. Mears, p 62 and Murray, p 1.
5. M/C. 1 October, 1908, p 3.
6. K/G. 5 November, 1937.
7. 1905 Roll of Electors, Taabinga Village, Bernie Carroll collection, Kumbia Historical Society.
8. K/H. 21 August, 1941, p 1.
9. M/C. 1 October, 1908, p 3 and SBT. 27 February, 1964, p 4.
10. K/G. 14 June, 1935, 3 April, 1936, and Taabinga cemetery records.
11. M/C. 1 July, 1901, p 2.
12. Murray, p 24.
13. M/C. 1 October, 1908, p 3.
14. M/C. 2 August, 1923, p 4.
15. K/H. 3 September, 1942, p 2.
16. *Ibid.*
17. M/C. 1 October, 1908, p 3.
18. N/N. 18 July, 1913.
19. N/N. 15 February, 1929.
20. SBT. 13 May, 1981, p 18.
21. For details of this fire see: K/G. 18 March, 1932.
22. Author interview with Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, recorded at *Bethany*, 2 June, 1997. For full details on the voyage to Tasmania and the first experiences of the Bjelke-Petersen family see: *Jigsaw, a Biography of Johannes Bjelke-Petersen*, by Derek Townsend, pp 36–45.
23. Author interview with Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, recorded at *Bethany*, 2 June, 1997.
24. K/H. 7 October, 1954, p 8 and Taabinga cemetery records.
25. *The Leader*, 5 August, 1970, p 1.
26. Supplement to K/G. 13 March, 1936, and Taabinga cemetery records.
27. K/H. 24 July, 1947, p 1. For further memoirs of this school including those of its first teacher see: K/H. 7 August, 1947, p 1.
28. M/C. 23 September, 1912, p 8.
29. M/C. 17 July, 1901, p 3.
30. M/C. 22 October, 1901, p 3.
31. M/C. 24 June, 1909, p 6.

Booie and Adjacent Areas

It appears the village of Booie first came into existence as a teamster's camp, its first inhabitants being Fred and James Birch who earned their living as carriers, carting goods firstly from Nanango to Esk and later from Nanango to Kilkivan. The Birch family later won the contract to construct the dam at the site of the Golden King mine at Nanango. (See Chapter 20 for details on the history of this mine).¹

In 1976, David Birch, the son of Fred and Elizabeth Birch, wrote his memoirs of those early days at Booie, claiming:

... there were two Birch families — Fred and Jim. These two brothers who were immigrants from England, married two sisters from Gayndah, their names were Tina and Elizabeth Puckholz. They were married in about 1882 or 1883. At that time the two brothers did odd jobs on the stations around Nanango, such as fencing, ring barking and general stock work. They gradually acquired saddle and draught horses and started a carrying business of their own. At first from Esk to Nanango and then later on from Kilkivan to Nanango and surrounding districts. On these occasions they would be at a different camping site each night unless they were held up by rain. They would have to camp where there was water, and their only shelter would be under the waggons.

In about the year 1884 the Birch brothers took up blocks of land at Booie. They were the first white settlers at Booie. Having acquired these blocks, they set to work building their little slab and shingle roofed dwelling in which to rear their families. Their dwellings were about quarter of a mile apart, so you can imagine the close contact there was between the two families. There was a good deal of borrowing went on — if one family ran out of food they would borrow from the other family ...

My father and mother erected their little home from timber split and dressed on the property with the very limited tools they had in their possession. Some of the floor boards of our old home were sawn with a pit saw. Up to the time of our mother's death which was when I was two years' old, she only had an open fire and camp oven with which to do the cooking for the family. Sometimes our father would be away from home for several weeks with his team and if our mother ran out of food during his absence, she would have to saddle a horse (side-saddle) put a split bag across the saddle, and set off for Nanango which was 14 miles distance each way and collect rations to keep us going until our dad returned. Our mother used to make her own bread in the camp-oven and we used to kill our own meat ...

Later on as new settlers began to settle on Booie and surrounding districts, there was a mail service started up from Nanango to Booie. My Uncle Jim kept the first post office at his place. He also was the first person to own a cream separator on Booie ...

There was a little provisional school not far from our place which the elder members of the family attended, but I did not go to school until I was six years' old. By that time there was a state school erected at the top end of Booie where quite a lot of new settlers began to arrive ...

At that time of my life, the Nanango butter factory had just started to operate — that was in 1905. My father had the first contract to cart cream from Booie and surrounding districts also along the road to Nanango. One of my older brothers drove a three horse van to pick up the cream for the factory ...

In about 1909 or 1910 our teams shifted from Kingaroy and Memerambi districts to Nanango where the Timber Corporation sawmill had just started operating on what was known as the Golden King mine — site about one mile east of Nanango. It was while our teams were hauling timber to this mill from the east Nanango scrub that we had the famous Lynch sisters falling timber for us. There was quite a lot of teamsters and pine fellers camped together at some very fine water-holes close to what was known as Jim Green's property.²



1914 vintage Ford utility being used to cart lucerne hay by Ralph Perrett, at Booie.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mearns' collection.

Other settlers followed in circa 1892, these included W. Hosier, Sealy Perrett, Henry Freshwater, Walter Burton, Steven Hood and many others. William Franklin is reputed to have been the first settler at West Booie. He was born in Northamptonshire, England and came to Australia when he was just eleven years of age. No family or friends travelled with him, despite his age — although an elder brother had earlier emigrated and was supposed to meet the young boy when he landed at Brisbane. However, when William landed at that port there was no one to greet him and with little money he was unable to purchase a rail ticket to Laidley, where his brother was then living. A kindly station master took pity on the boy, stranded in a strange country, and gave him a ticket to Laidley where William was assisted by locals in obtaining directions to the property where his brother was then living. At the age of just sixteen years William Franklin selected his first block of land at West Booie, and it was here that he remained for the following seventy-three years. When he selected the land he had no money and would work on other farms and stations in order to earn enough to fence his own property. He married Annie Otto circa 1897 and died on Thursday 12 October, 1961, his remains being interred at the Booie cemetery.³

Charles and Constance Holmes came to the region from Cordalba, originally settling at Taabinga Village and later taking up a block of land at Booie which they called *Majuba Hill* — the name being derived from the site of the famous Boer War battle. Another early selector was Ben (Percival Proctor) Farr, who, with his wife, Frances Alice, (nee Barfoot), a school teacher, selected a square mile of land with a boundary to Barker Creek. Ben Farr was a carpenter by trade and using the timber on his land was soon able to construct a home. They named their farm *Reedsdale*. Ben Farr died during the late 1920s and was interred at the Nanango cemetery, his wife died in 1930 shortly after their property became freehold land — an achievement for which the couple had worked all their lives.⁴

John Seng was another of the early selectors. A native of Germany he selected land at Booie when he was about twenty-five years of age. He was well known in the region for his tobacco growing and his excellent cellar of home made wines. Peter Jorgensen was a native of Denmark. He arrived in Australia at the age of fifteen years and in 1905 reportedly rode a bicycle from Minden to Booie where he selected land.⁵

John August Nystrom was an early selector at Booie, he was born in Sweden circa 1866 and came to Queensland as a young man, settling initially at Laidley where he was married. In 1899 he arrived on the South Burnett and selected land at Booie where he lived with his wife and

family for the remainder of his life. He became well known in pastoral circles as the organiser of the Kingaroy exhibit at the Royal National Show where he was also a keen competitor. He was twice elected to the Kingaroy Shire Council as a member for Number Two Division. He died on Tuesday 16 May, 1933, and was interred at the Booie cemetery.⁶

Like all other regions in the South Burnett the early selectors were faced with almost insurmountable problems of survival. Having selected their farms the land had to be cleared, crops grown and a market for the produce found. Transport was unreliable, at least until the coming of the rail, life was isolated, facilities few. Selectors lived firstly under canvas until they could construct more permanent residences, the lack of water was a perennial problem, much of it came from the waterhole at Hosier's Lagoon. The expansion of the region and its promotion was largely the responsibility of the Booie Progress Association which, in September 1892, was successful in having a provisional school opened at Booie, its first teacher was Edward Thompson who also taught at the provisional school at Kunioon. The school became a full time provisional school in 1897 and a state school in 1907. Thompson was succeeded by Mr A.W. Davidson who in turn passed on his responsibilities to Mary Jane McNicol (later Mrs Alben Perrett). Miss McNicol took up her duties in January 1896 at the age of nineteen years.⁷

Arthur Birch, one of the first pupils of the school later told the press: 'I did not learn much from this teacher. I was getting on in years then, and I'm afraid I spent more time looking at the teacher than at my lessons.'⁸

Miss McNicol, also remembered those days when in 1942 she said: 'I will never forget the first time I walked into the school. I straightaway wished I had never put in an application. But those were pioneering days, and everyone had to show grit. There were only three desks and four forms in the old building, and it soon became too small for the increasing population of the district. It was a big responsibility being in charge of children in the bush, but I endeavoured to do my duty, and to instil into the children the basic principles of honesty, truthfulness, integrity, and hard work. I loved the children, and when it came to leaving to get married, I felt the wrench.'⁹

Mary Jane McNicol was one of the region's interesting personalities. She was born at Milbong near Ipswich and arrived on the South Burnett with her parents when she was fifteen years of age, the family settling at *Wattle Camp*. J.E. Murphy records that *Wattle Camp* was owned by J.A. McNicol and was so named because it was a wattle shaded camp for musterers of *Barambah* station.¹⁰ A press report concerning the life of Mary Jane McNicol later included: 'She told the story of how, when bringing their personal belongings per bullock wagon, heavy rain fell and they were forced to camp for some weeks on the Fernvale Flats. All was dense bush in those days ... All provisions were brought by drays and wagons from either Kilkivan or Ipswich, there being no railway lines here then. Before her marriage (to Alben Perrett) Mrs Perrett was a school teacher and taught alternatively week about at the Booie School and a provisional school called Hollbrook near her home.'¹¹ Miss McNicol was aged just nineteen years when she took over as headmistress of the Booie School in January 1896. When the Hollbrook School closed Miss McNicol taught full time at Booie. In 1901 she married Alben Perrett at *Wattle Camp* and the couple made their home at *Mount Hope*. Her husband died in 1936 and Mary Jane later moved to Kingaroy. She died, aged eighty-eight, in August 1964 and was interred at the Booie cemetery.¹²

For the early selectors of the region it was difficult to make a living from their farms, poor weather, floods and droughts, invasions of insects and a host of other problems plagued the farmers. In order to make ends meet some frequently took employment at larger stations such as *Nanango* or *Taabinga*.

Some of the early selectors to Booie were included in a colourful report written in 1908 which gives us an indication of the lives those selectors were then leading and what had brought them to the South Burnett. The report listed a number of early selectors including Otto Nelson, a Swede by birth, who came to Queensland circa 1900 and for seven years worked in the bush, felling scrub, splitting posts and making fences prior to selecting land at Booie.

Alexander McLennan owned a property named *Brodie*, 150 acres of forest with the exception of a few acres of scrub behind the house, the property was situated one mile from the Booie School. McLennan had worked as a plough hand on *Barambah* station for many years. He took up *Brodie* circa 1896 with his wife and family, but had to leave because of a shortage of water and returned

to *Barambah* station for a while. On his return to *Brodie* he and his wife dug a well, a task that took many months, reaching water at a depth of eighty feet, some of which had been through rock.

The McLennan family also selected two agricultural farms of 160 acres each on the Ten Chain Road, 5 miles from Memerambi railway station, this combined property was known as *Fox Hill* and a cottage with front and back verandahs was constructed there. Alexander McLennan's three eldest sons worked this farm.

Andrew Brewer owned *Wiston*, at Boobie, a property of 160 acres where a homestead was quickly constructed. Under the terms of the immigration policy then in force, 107 acres had been allotted as a compensation for the family's passage money. Brewer and his wife had left England in 1890 with three children, landing several months later in Brisbane. They paid £75 for their passage money and in return were given an order for £70 worth of land. When Andrew Brewer later selected *Wiston* as a homestead, 107 additional acres were made freehold in return for his passage money order. *Wiston* was composed of both forest and scrub land of good quality suitable for any produce. The family's house was built on a tableland at the top of a mountain and there were extended views of the surrounding flats and hills. Andrew Brewer's past life had been an adventurous one, the press later reporting: 'Andrew Brewer, a native of Devonshire, England, joined the English Navy in 1865, when 14 years' old, in the training ship *Impregnable* — a three-decker wooden ship of the old school, on board of which he stayed for 12 months, was ordered to British Columbia on the *Zealous* for a while. Then went to the Channel Fleet which was engaged in an expedition round the United Kingdom coast. It was during that ill-fated expedition that *H.M.S. Captain* on her trial trip, went down with 660 hands on board. Back to England he was ordered to Malta, and finally once more back to England. He got his exemplary discharge as an A.B. seaman in 1878, after 13 years of faithful service to his country. Was employed for nine years on the North Western Railway in England and left (as an experienced shunter) on account of ill health. (He) Left England with his wife and three children and landed in Brisbane in 1890. Resided in Ipswich for a certain number of years until his departure for Boobie. At his discharge from the Navy (1878) Mr Brewer married Miss Ellen Willmer, daughter of a late Mr Henry Willmer, who for nearly 50 years acted as park and game-keeper to the late Reverend John Coring, of *Wiston Park* (Sussex).'



All that remained of water in the Taabinga Village dam during the severe drought of 1902.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection

John Gray was another of the early selectors at Booie, a Victorian by birth, Gray had travelled throughout New South Wales, New Zealand, and Queensland, following various bush pursuits such as farming and mining, including a period at Bamford (first called Lappa Lappa) on the Chillagoe railway line in the North of Queensland where he had worked in partnership on a wolfram mine. Gray sold out in 1907 and from a portion of the proceeds of the sale bought *The Little Wonder*, a property at Booie composed of two farms of 160 acres each. *The Little Wonder* adjoined *Wiston*. John Gray's first job was to sink a well and at a depth of 80 feet he found 50 feet of water, the bottom of the well had been sunk through ten feet of rock.

William Franklyn owned *Bunya Bunya* farm, 210 acres of scrub and forest, where he carried on dairying and mixed farming. This farm was situated one mile from *The Little Wonder*. William Franklyn and his wife were reported to have come to the region circa 1899.

Hugh Fitzpatrick owned *Vitality*, a 160 acres farm, half scrub, half forest, *Vitality* was situated 1½ miles from Booie School. It adjoined *Booie* farm on one side and *Paspalum* on the other. Hugh Fitzpatrick, his wife and family came to Booie circa 1899 from *Barambah* station where he had previously been employed.

Hans Hammelswang owned the adjoining property of *Paspalum* 160 acres of scrub. The land was reported to have been selected in 1900. In 1909 the press claimed that Hans Hammelswang and his wife (nee Fechner) were heavily involved in clearing the land and getting it under plough.

Wilhelm Fechner had been farming for fourteen years in the Davidson district in the West with 160 head of cattle. During the 1902 drought he lost every head of cattle and also his horses, the press later reporting: '... money he had saved during his 14 years' farming went in the buying of fodder, and in spite of everything that was done and expensive outlay in the providing of feed, his last head of cattle died a month before the breaking of the drought. Under such disastrous circumstances Mr Fechner was compelled to almost give his farm away. From the ashes of his ruin he collected just enough to shift him, his wife and family, composed of 9 children, to Booie, where he purchased from his sister-in-law half of her 160 acre homestead at the original price she paid for it.'

Walter Pigott Burton was the local butcher, and an 'old Booie identity'. He came to the district with a wife, four children, and '£100 of debts.' To support his wife and family he initially worked for wages on a farm at 2/6 a day. Then a Mr Sexton of Barker Creek gave him his first start by leasing him a team of horses enabling him to work as a carrier between Nanango and Kilkivan. His next venture was dairying and cheese making. At that time he was able to pay back the £100 he owed. He continued with his cheese-making and dairying and circa 1905 started butchering. Burton had carts constantly on the road, and on Saturdays his sons were employed carting meat to farmers as far as 12 miles from *Brindee*, the family property, situated near the Booie School.¹³

John Delaney Burton was another of the region's settlers, although both he and his wife were to experience tragic deaths. They lived at a property called *The Central*, 91 acres of land situated 1½ miles from the Booie School. In addition to his farm, Burton also carried out contract work and had worked a horse team between Nanango and Kilkivan. The family home was described as: '... a tidy little 4 roomed cottage in front of which there is a small but well kept flower and vegetable garden, and in the back a miniature yard with a miniature kitchen, the whole enclosed by a paling fence. The home is neat, tidy and compact, evidently the work of a busy bee, represented in the person of his better half. Mr John Delaney Burton was married last September 9 years to Miss Emma Hutchman, of *Bunya Pocket* ... Mr John Delaney Burton is a nephew to Mr Walter Pigott Burton, the local butcher.'¹⁴

Burton committed suicide at his farm in 1925 and was buried at the Booie cemetery. His wife, Emma Elizabeth, described as being extremely depressed after the death of her husband, frequently visited John Delaney's grave. She was found hanging from a camphor laurel tree at the rear of her home in November 1935 and the coroner found that she too had committed suicide.¹⁵

Alfred Hayden and his brothers were among the very early selectors of the Booie region. Alfred was the son of James Hayden and his wife, Jane, who emigrated from England in 1874, arriving at Maryborough aboard the immigrant vessel *Tim Wiffler*. They selected a property known as

Deborah near Tiaro. There were, in fact five sons to the marriage, all of whom were involved in the early history of the Booie region, these were Arthur James, Frederick, Alfred, James and Eli — (who died of peritonitis, aged twenty-seven years in 1904).

Alfred Hayden was born during the great flood of 1875, the family was forced to evacuate their home and faced great danger getting to higher ground.

As a young man Alfred Hayden became well known in the sugar growing regions around Bauple, Childers and later Mackay where he was a skilled driver of the horse-drawn cane trams. He selected land at Booie in 1898 and moved there in 1900. His brothers also selected land in the region, travelling from Tiaro with pack horses. On 20 May, 1908, Alfred Hayden married Ethel M. Brown at *Deborah* and she returned to Booie with him. They called their farm *Fairview* and lived there until their retirement when they made their home at the property of their son, Leslie John Hayden, at Memerambi. In 1955 Alfred and his wife Ethel were considered to be the oldest surviving settlers in the Kingaroy district. Alfred Hayden died at St Aubyn's Hospital on Tuesday 7 November, 1955, his wife having predeceased him just ten days earlier.¹⁶

Hayden was the owner of a horse of which he was particularly fond. A little over a month after his death the press reported: 'There is a poignancy, yet something touching in the death of a mare, said to be 38 years' old, just five weeks after the passing of its master. Mr Alfred Hayden, for many years a farmer at Booie, and who latterly lived with his son at Memerambi, had a mare which he valued highly and held dearly. The mare was believed to have been the astounding age of 38. Mr Hayden was eighty when he died on November 7 last.'¹⁷

Among the early residents of Booie was Andrew R.W. Horne, who was born in the north of Scotland. As a young man he worked with his parents in their horse-hiring business at Banff. He emigrated to Australia in 1906 and was followed by his wife a year later. He worked on stations in western New South Wales and moved to the South Burnett in 1910 with the intention of taking up land at *Burrandowan*. However, this plan did not eventuate and he purchased a selection at Booie that had originally been taken up by Charles Holmes. Horne worked his land until 1944 when he retired and the selection was taken over by his son, Herbert Horne. Andrew Horne died at the Kingaroy General Hospital on Monday 14 June, 1954, aged almost eighty-two years.¹⁸

By 1910 the situation for selectors at Booie had improved dramatically, the convenience of a close rail service and the opening of the butter factory at Kingaroy, coupled with several years of good weather meant greater prosperity for those early selectors. In February 1910 one visitor to Booie remarked: 'There is a great future for this district. I know most of Queensland and a great portion of the Southern States but no place do I know that is before this district ... Corn stalks seventeen feet high, grass up to the height of the fences; in fact crops and feed could not be better. All stock are in the best condition. Our local butcher has lowered the (price of) beef, the very best cuts of beef are only 3½d. per pound.'¹⁹

The Booie cemetery where many of these early selectors now lay at rest was gazetted in 1900 and is situated on the Coolabunia-Booie road.²⁰

One of the more well known settlers in the Booie district was Alben Perrett (senior) of *Mount Hope*. He was born at Pennant Hills near Sydney on 7 September, 1853. His father died at Ipswich when Alben was just seven years of age, and, as the press later reported: '... his boyhood was spent in a struggle to comfort and help his widowed mother.'²¹

When he was fifteen years of age Alben Perrett assisted in taking a large mob of cattle from a western station to Yandina, travelling through the South Burnett as he did so. Over the following years he travelled extensively throughout the state, moving cattle to various stations and also following the discoveries of gold at Charters Towers. While in the north he undertook to help relieve the starving settlements at Charters Towers and Ravenswood, the *Nanango News* later reported of him:

He was asked to assist in the venture to take a number of tons of flour to 'The Towers' and Ravenswood, where a famine raged. Being a man who never refused to assist any just cause and who never considered self first, he consented. The experience was a rough one. There were no railways in those days. They had only bullock waggons and drays. They were

frequently bogged, the latter down to the axles. However, through sheer perseverance, and a desire to relieve his fellow-men, the flour was eventually landed amidst the appreciation and gratitude of those in want.

During the following years ... Alben Perrett set out to gain a practical experience — tin mining at Stanthorpe, shearing sheds, cattle stations; went into business with a brother in Sydney where he only stayed six months. Country life called him. He went north again to a gold rush; travelled practically all the principal centres in Queensland, finally renting country on *Durham Downs*; left that centre at the age of 30, selected *Springwater*, a large area of grazing country, 70 miles from Roma, being a neighbour of the Scott brothers of *Hornet Bank* ...

The blacks were then wild. He could tell of the massacre of the Fraser family at *Hornet Bank* and knew the survivor of that family. Once, when he and his mate were travelling from a northern gold venture through dangerous country towards *Oxford Downs*, a couple of blacks hailed them for tobacco. The late Mr Perrett, for protection, pulled a Meerschaum pipe case, and pointed it at them. They screamed and immediately the bush was alive with blacks. The travellers galloped off and found out afterwards that a man and his wife had been stripped of all their clothing the previous week — whilst shortly before that two men had been speared to death.

Mr Perrett remained 16 years at *Springwater*, following grazing pursuits, working up and excellent breed of stock horses. He sold *Springwater* station and was on his way to retire in Sydney, the place of his birth, when he was induced to select *Mount Hope*. At the age of 48 years, he married Miss M.J. McNicol.²²

Perrett's property, *Mount Hope*, was approximately 1280 acres of forest and sandy soil situated about one mile from the Booie School. His wife, Mary Jane, was, as we have seen, formerly a teacher of the provisional school at Booie. When the school was later converted to a state school and a new building constructed, Alben Perrett purchased the old building for use as a kitchen, thus Mary Jane subsequently spent her married life cooking in the building in which she had originally taught the local school children. Upon the death of Alben Perrett his second son, John, took over the management of the property. Alben Perrett's wife, Mary Jane, was born at Milbong in July 1876 and married Alben Perrett at *Wattle Camp* when she was twenty-five years of age. She was a foundation member of the Church of Christ at Kingaroy and was an active worker for such organisations as the Q.C.W.A. and the Women's Christian Temperance Union.²³

Like many other small rural centres in the South Burnett region there was always a strong community spirit at Booie. Dances were frequently held on several of the neighbourhood farms, the dancing taking place in barns, women provided refreshments and men drank from bottles in the darkness outside. As these functions became increasingly more popular, too popular to house all the dancers in the small barns then available, the people of the region decided to construct a hall and a small entry charge was levied on future dances in order to pay for the costs of constructing such a building. The committee formed to oversee the fund-raising and construction of the hall was chaired by William (Bill) Abrahamson with George Lee as the secretary and treasurer. Abrahamson owned a store at Coolabunia prior to settling at Booie and Lee served in the First World War. Fund raising dances were held in the barn belonging to Harry Levick and his family until the Levick farm was sold. After that date dances continued at the farm of Bill Abe, music was supplied free of charge by Jim Ross who reportedly rode thirty miles to attend the functions.²⁴

Timber for the hall was cut from April to June, 1928, by a steam traction engine travelling mill belonging to E.N. Ferguson and J.S. Ewart, the mill was parked at William Abrahamson's dam, the timber, including the crows ash for the floor, being donated. Harry and Jack McAuliffe felled and barked the trees, Charles and Les Knowles, who owned a bullock team, hauled the logs to the mill, the logs were donated by William Abrahamson, Arthur Seiler and Jock Ross. By 1929 there was sufficient money to have the hall constructed, although there was a long delay due to wet weather. The hall, constructed by P.O. Hansen, was completed in the early 1930s and opened by James Braidwood Edwards, then M.L.A. for Nanango.²⁵

The dances at Booie immediately became even more popular than before, refreshments were always served, although there was no refrigerator and the heating of the water for tea and coffee was by wood fire. Hurricane lanterns provided the lighting. During the Second World War the

hall was packed on dance night as an army camp had been situated on a nearby recreation reserve, dances were then held twice weekly and young women were brought out by buses from Nanango and other centres.²⁶

South of Boole are the areas of Hillsdale, Redvale and Malar, also regions concerned with early farming settlement. The school at Hillsdale was the centre of the community and, like all such rural educational establishments was important to the social structure and fabric of the community. A report of the school's history, written in 1966, shortly before its closure claimed:

... the first school was started in an old house owned by Mr C. Jorgensen while awaiting the school. According to the records of the history of the school it was in 1916 that the early settlers in the Hillsdale district applied to the Department of Public Instruction regarding the establishment of a school. On the Department's suggestion the names of prospective pupils (26) between ages of five and ten were submitted. Later in the same year approval was given for the removal of portion of the Murgon School building to Hillsdale. This was brought by rail to Coolabunia and then by wagon, driven by Mr J. Wittman to the present site.

The building was not occupied until November 12, 1916. In August of the same year school teaching was carried out in a private house, rented from Mr C. Jorgensen. Various names were suggested for the school and after some discussion the name 'Hillsdale' was approved.

The first teacher was Miss Frances Laverty, who boarded with Mrs Shipway, and had to walk two miles to school.²⁷

The school at Malar was among the earliest of schools in the Kingaroy region, it was opened in 1901 with G.D. Templeton as its head teacher, Templeton served until 1902 when Alice Beatrice Colvin Clark took up that position. The school eventually closed in 1955.²⁸

At Redvale a school was opened in 1911 by Archibald Blue, the proprietor of the *Kingaroy Herald*, its first teacher was A. Monaghan who remained in that post until the following year when H. Perroux became teacher.²⁹



Malar selection — October 1914. From right: Bill Greaves using broad axe, Ollie Dowsett, (axeman), Ted Tardent, E. Gillespie, assistant surveyor. Boole area.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society

Notes and Sources
Chapter Eighty-four
Booie and Adjacent Areas

1. SBT. 7 November, 1973, p 14.
2. *Memoirs of David Birch*, file: reminiscences, David Birch, Nanango Shire Council archives.
3. For further details on the life of William Franklin see: K/H. 19 October, 1961, p 7.
4. For further details on this family see: *Booie Hall Golden Jubilee Celebrations* booklet, pp 16–17, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
5. *Ibid*, pp 16–18.
6. K/G. 19 May, 1933.
7. WW. p 151 and Murray, p 50.
8. K/H. 1 October, 1942, p 1.
9. *Ibid*.
10. WW. p 154.
11. SBT. 3 September, 1964, p 6.
12. *Ibid*.
13. M/C. 23 October, 1908, p 4.
14. *Ibid*.
15. For further details of this case see: K/G. 22 November, 1935 and Booie cemetery records.
16. K/H. 24 February, 1955, p 1 and 24 November, 1955, p 2.
17. K/H. 29 December, 1955, p 4.
18. K/H. 24 June, 1954, p 7.
19. M/C. 25 February, 1910, p 6.
20. *Register of Historic Sites*, file K 39, Kingaroy Shire Council.
21. N/N. 23 July, 1936.
22. *Ibid*, p 3. See also: K/G. 24 July, 1936.
23. For further details on the lives of Alben Perrett and his wife Mary Jane, see: *Bush Telegraph*, Vol. 2, No. 7, 1995, pp 18–20, 24 and K/H. 27 August, 1964, p 11.
24. SBT. 21 January, 1981, p 9 and: *Booie Hall Golden Jubilee Celebrations* booklet, pp 6–7, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
25. SBT. 21 January, 1981, p 9 and: *Booie Hall Golden Jubilee Celebrations* booklet, pp 6–7, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
26. SBT. 21 January, 1981, p 9.
27. K/H. 17 November, 1966, p 12.
28. For a listing of teachers for this school see: Murray, p 305.
29. For a listing of teachers to 1939 see: Murray, p 364.

Kumbia, Mannuem and Benair Districts

The history of Kumbia and district reflects the histories of other regions in the Kingaroy area and followed much the same pattern of settlement. With the arrival of the settlers came the need for services, including transport and education. The name of Kumbia appears in the Land Court files in 1890 when Arthur Youngman applied for permission to ringbark 1400 acres of the 'Coombia Block'. Among the first residents were Herb Janetzki, who had been working on *Taabinga* station when the Kumbia area came up for resumption. Other names synonymous with early settlement included Priebbenow, Noller, Winter and Henseleit.¹

Among the first selectors of the region was Patrick Tuite of Toogoolawah who acquired four blocks along the Stuart River. Harry Hayden selected on Reedy Creek and later began a butchering business.²

A report of the region later claimed: 'In 1909, Mr F.G. Palethorpe formed what was called the "Horton Group" comprising fifteen settlers (some with families) mostly from Toowoomba to take up a piece of country the west boundary of which was Mannuem Creek and the eastern *Taabinga* resumption. This land was occupied in January, 1910 by Mr Palethorpe and his brother, Mr H.P. Palethorpe, who were the first to reside on their blocks.'

The Horton Group Jubilee Souvenir Booklet, published in 1959 stated: 'In 1906 the extreme north-western portion of *Taabinga* resumption was thrown open for selection and in 1906 settlers began to arrive. Part of this area lay along the eastern side of, and bordered on, the now Mannuem Road and was known as Reedy Creek. The original settlers along the road in this area were August Abeshouse, Mrs A. Andersen, F.H.W. Tegge, August B. Olsen and Sons, Eric Erickson, Carson Erickson, Godfrey Christenson, Robert E. Horton, Arthur Davies, J. Voll, Herman Stanke.'³

The families that comprised the Horton Group, a group established to settle on the Mannuem scrub, were also among the first selectors of the district. Among these were Mr Robert Kefford and his wife Annie. Annie was a native of Scotland, born circa 1860. In 1863 she emigrated with her parents, Mr and Mrs R. McDowell, and the family settled on land at Cleveland where her father became a gardener on the property of Captain Louis Hope, the first man to grow sugar cane in Queensland. In 1884 Annie married Constable Robert Kefford in Brisbane and the couple subsequently lived at Warwick, Brisbane and Toowoomba. Kefford attained the rank of sergeant and upon his retirement moved his family to the South Burnett to join the Horton Group. Robert Kefford died in 1918, and the same year their son, Joseph Leslie, died of wounds in France. Annie Kefford died in October 1937.⁴

Settlers in this group included Carl Suszbier, William Schwenke, James W. Attwood, Alfred Dascombe, George Kruger, George Collier, Harold Leonard Vidler, Gilbert Abraham, Frank Horton, David Shannon Parker, George Allen, Thomas Parker, Frederick Gordon Palethorpe, Robert Kefford and Harry P. Palethorpe. Of the original selectors nine were bachelors and six were married men with families.⁵

The origins of the Horton Group are worth recording. In 1909 the area known as Mannuem was something of a no-man's land situated between *Taabinga* and *Burrandowan* stations. The press subsequently reported: 'Mr F.G. Palethorpe of Toowoomba was enquiring about land about this time and was told of the area near Mr Horton's home. He decided to inspect it so set out from Toowoomba on a bicycle. At Cooyar he borrowed a horse and saddle and rode out to Mr Horton's home at Reedy Creek. It was decided to request the Department of Lands to have the area

surveyed and set apart for a group of settlers. The name Horton's Group was given as a tribute to Mr Horton's hospitality to newcomers. Negotiations, begun in 1908, took some time. It was not until March 1909 that the Minister for Lands wrote approving formation of the group.⁶

Interested persons met in Pember's fruit shop, Toowoomba, before Mr C. Robertson, J.P. and an initial ballot was conducted, after the ballot the members of the new group toasted each other with cordial they purchased from Mr Pember. Some of the members set out for their blocks of land even before official recognition was given by the Lands Court at Nanango, they constructed their rough huts along the banks of the creek. Robert Kefford rode with George Kruger from Toowoomba in January 1910, during the journey they met the Gowlett brothers who had selected land, the brothers were dissatisfied with their blocks and were abandoning them. Kefford and Kruger continued their journey and after inspecting their respective blocks travelled to Nanango for the Land Court which was held at 9 a.m. on 16 January, 1910. The amount to be paid for the blocks varied from 23/4d for the lower blocks to 18/- for the upper blocks, the terms were for five years with continuous occupation. The two blocks abandoned by the Gowlett brothers were taken up by the Parker brothers.⁷

Extracts from documents discovered in Frederick Palethorpe's papers and subsequently printed in the family history reveal:

Frederick Gordon Palethorpe (born Toowoomba 14 March, 1878) was a shop assistant in Toowoomba, and as a young married man (in his early twenties) with three children was advised by his doctor that he should get out of shop work and get into the country or he would not live much longer. He left the shop about 1911 and took his wife and three kids to a farm at Mannuem Creek about 7 miles from Kumbia which was later established and about 20 miles west of Kingaroy. Frederick Palethorpe organised the group of sixteen men who selected the sixteen farms as virgin scrub land on what was a resumption of part of *Taabinga* station. The farm was about 640 acres and was mainly dense scrub. All the selectors of the group (known as 'Horton's Group') except Frederick Palethorpe and his brother, Harry, were previously farmers and were aware of farming requirements and practices, but Frederick Palethorpe and his brother had to learn these through hard experience.

Frederick Palethorpe cleared a small patch of scrub, enough to build a hut on, making sure the trees left standing would not fall on it. He then split slabs from scrub timber and made the walls and floor of the hut from the slabs. He got some galvanised iron for the roof. The hut had only one room, the stove and kitchen were outside with a ground floor and skillion roof.

There were a lot of possums in the scrub and Frederick Palethorpe caught some and made enough money from selling their skins to keep himself in food until he had cleared enough scrub to get a farm going.

Frederick Palethorpe was the prime mover in most community activity amongst the Group. He was an ambulance man and obtained a 'litter' (a mobile stretcher) for transporting disabled persons to hospital. The litter had iron tyres on its two wheels and on some occasions it had to be pushed and pulled for 20 miles to Kingaroy.⁸

The first baby born at Mannuem was Alfred Dascombe, whose mother had reached the camp on 1 January, 1910, and whose father had commenced work at the camp two months earlier. The press later reported: 'Mrs Collier acted as mid-wife and Mr Kefford rode down with food as there was a flood at the time, milk was needed, but, as water was several feet deep, he and Rhoda Collier (later Mrs Dave Parker) had a difficult job catching and milking cows. The situation was made worse by thousands of ants swarming on rails and from there on to the cows' backs.'⁹

Mr C. Hooper was the first official mail carrier. Bread was purchased from the bake-house at *Taabinga*, many of the settlers walking there in order to obtain a change from the monotonous diet of meat and damper.¹⁰

The school at Mannuem was opened on 29 May, 1911, as a half time provisional school with Reedy Creek, its first teacher was Miss Dinah Allen and the first child enrolled at the school was Janet Allen, the teacher's sister. The school first operated in the partly completed home of Mr and Mrs R.A. Johnston but was moved to a barn on Mr A.B. Olsen's property, several hundred yards south east, about four weeks later. The school opened with sixteen students. The school became

a full time provisional school at the end of 1912. In 1913 a schoolhouse was constructed on Mr R.A. Johnston's property and it then became a state school. Like many other rural schools this institution was closed at various times, 3 April to 22 June, 1914, 16 February, 1916, to 13 May, 1917, and 1 September, 1917, to 30 October, 1921.

In 1921 the school building was moved to its permanent site and was opened there on 31 October, 1921, with Miss Eileen Schaefer as its head teacher. The school finally closed in 1983, at that time John Mouritz was its principal.¹¹

Another school to service the region in association with the Mannuem School was at Reedy Creek. According to the history of Reedy Creek, published in 1961: 'The drawing for the blocks of land in the northern area of *Taabinga*, known as Reedy Creek, took place in the tiny Kingaroy Hotel Hall right next to the old Kingaroy Hotel in November 1907 ... The first settler to arrive and take up residence was Mr Robert Grant. After the drawing of the blocks had taken place R. Grant returned to Crow's Nest to finalise his interests there and prepare to move to his new selection. Mr F. Lederhose (senior) had also selected in Reedy Creek area.'

Robert Grant died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Sunday 17 May, 1964. A biographical report of Grant later claimed:

Robert Grant was born at Keith, in Northern Scotland on October 17, 1875. He arrived in Brisbane on the *Jumna* on June 10, 1899, and shortly afterwards moved to the Crows Nest district, where he bought a farm on the Plainlands road. On April 3, 1907, he married Mary Lederhose at St George's Church of England, Crows Nest, and in October of that year sold his farm and moved to Kingaroy, where he had selected a block of the *Taabinga* Resumption at Reedy Creek.

He arrived at Kingaroy with his wife on January 6, 1908, and while Mrs Grant stayed at the Kingaroy Hotel, he went out to the new selection. Owing to a complete lack of transportation in the young settlement at that time and the absence of roads on the resumed land at *Taabinga*, he had to walk from Kingaroy to *Taabinga* Homestead and then along the Burrandowan road to Reedy Creek and then across country to his new selection.

Mrs Grant was the first settler to take up residence at Reedy Creek, but was followed a few days later by father-in-law, and a brother who had brought horses and a wagon overland from Crows Nest.

He left Reedy Creek in 1927, but returned again to Kingaroy in 1951 to live at 37 Arthur St, and has resided there ever since.¹²

Other selectors quickly followed as the selections were taken up and occupied. A meeting of parents with the object of forming a school committee was held on 31 May, 1911. Mr A. Brown was voted to the Chair. The committee included Robert Grant, as both president and secretary, Frederick Henrick Wilhelm Tegge as treasurer, Carl Otto Rosentreter, Frederick Lederhose, and Carl Frederick Damro.¹³

A later report claimed: 'The Reedy Creek School was opened as a half-time provisional school with Mannuem Creek School on May 29, 1911. A week of schooling at each school alternated. The first day of school at Reedy Creek was on June 5, 1911. The first teacher was Miss Dinah Allen, now Mrs T. Walters of Scarborough, (who was also, of course, the teacher at Mannuem). She travelled by horse and spring cart from Mannuem Creek, bringing seven Mannuem Creek children with her. Miss D. Allen resigned in June, 1912, and Miss Martha Allen was appointed.'¹⁴

The Department of Public Instruction closed the school in December 1912, recommending the implementation of a Saturday School and this created considerable agitation, the school minutes reveal: 'Mr Damro moved that the Secretary write to the Department stating that we decline to have anything to do with a Saturday School and ask the Department to send a teacher to Reedy Creek and the Committee are prepared to pay the difference in salary if any. The Committee also wish to know how the Department can grant a full time school at Mannuem Creek where there are only nine children and close Reedy Creek where there are twelve children.'¹⁵

The school was eventually re-opened on 27 July, 1916, with Miss Bertha May Ahearn the teacher. There were 21 first-year pupils.¹⁶

The school building was lined and sealed in January 1917. A back verandah was later added to the building and the verandah subsequently closed in. The back wall of the first building was also taken out to make more room for the children.

In 1930 a new school building was constructed, it was opened on 28 February, 1931, the original building was sold to Mr F. Spann for £10 and subsequently removed.¹⁷

Another school to serve the residents of the region was at Benair, opened in July 1911 with Dorothea Mediecke as its first teacher. A report of its establishment later concluded:

Benair ... was thrown open for settlement in 1908. Early in 1910 a meeting was held with a view to having a school established in the district. Prime movers in this were Messrs C. and O. Fleischfresser, W. Jenkins and J. McErlean, with Mr Jenkins acting as secretary. Mr Dunn offered to give the land, and the Department of Public Instruction sent up an inspector to report on the proposal and site ... a deputation met the inspector and the site first inspected was the corner block. The site was unsuitable, and the present site was chosen and approved.

A working bee was organised and the ground was cleared. The Department moved quickly, and very soon the little school was erected. July 31 was the opening day, when 25 pupils were enrolled. The celebrations lasted all day and night, with the last reveller leaving as the sun was rising.

The original name of the school was Bonara. The department suggested that this be altered as there was already a Bonara. The name 'Benair' was adopted ...

The first committee comprised Messrs John Toomey (chairman), William Jenkins (secretary), Charles Oberle (treasurer), Heinrich Spann, August Desjardins, Carl Fleischfresser, and James McErlean ...

The school was a community centre and many different bodies, such as the *Taabinga* Resumption Progress Assn., the Reedy Creek Tennis Club, and the Kurrajong Cricket Club, used the school for meetings and functions.

For the first ten years the enrolment varied from 32 to 42.

During 1914 the school was closed from March 31 to May 27 as there was no teacher, and again in 1921 for a month for the same reason. During the 'flu epidemic of 1919, the teacher succumbed to the disease for the month of May, and then the school was closed from June 5 to August 4. In 1926 the attendance was affected by dengue fever ...

The teacher who had the longest stay at Benair was Mr J.C. Thomas, who was head teacher from 1929 to 1949. It was in his term that the school residence was erected. The residence was built at a cost of £539, approval for its construction was given in March 1935. A Department of Public Works letter dated March 1935 described the residence as being: '... of the standard type Number 3, containing three bedrooms, living room, kitchen, pantry, bathroom and store with 8' wide verandahs front and side. The construction will be of timber with galvanised corrugated iron roof covering.'¹⁸

The James McErlean mentioned in the above report was one of the first residents of the district, he and his wife, Rachael Margaret, (nee Diamond) were widely known and highly respected in the region. James was born in County Derry, Ireland, and arrived in Australia in 1884 aboard the vessel *Duke of Sutherland*, to join his brother at Ravensbourne. Rachael McErlean was born in Toowoomba and after her marriage to James McErlean in 1898 the couple lived for a while at Ravensbourne until the '*Taabinga* Resumption' was thrown open for selection and they moved to Benair. James McErlean died in 1930 and Rachael died, aged sixty-five years, on 9 October, 1936, they were buried together at the *Taabinga* cemetery.¹⁹

Benair, like many other regions of the South Burnett, suffered difficulties with water supply. The drilling of the Benair bore was contracted to Ernest Robinson by the Kingaroy Shire Council in October 1926, Robinson was paid fifteen shillings per foot for soft formation drilling and £1/5/- for rock boring.²⁰

The first minister of religion in the Mannuem region was Reverend A.A. Mills, who, with the assistance of his sister, Phoebe, conducted Methodist services in a private home, the organist was Rhoda Collier. A Methodist Church was constructed in 1912.

Other early residents of the Mannuam region were Joseph Henry Crawford and his wife Mary Evelyn. Joseph Crawford and his wife arrived in the Mannuam district from the Shoalhaven River region circa 1910. Mary Crawford was born at Candelo, New South Wales circa 1879, the daughter of Mr and Mrs W. Keys. She later moved with her family to Clifton and it was there that she met Joseph Crawford. They were married at Toowoomba and also lived at Glencoe for a while. After arriving in the Mannuam region the couple lived in a camp until they were able to construct a modest home. Crawford was a successful farmer and was able to purchase other properties, he was a foundation member of the district show society, a councillor on the Kingaroy Shire Council and president of the Kumbia and District Patriotic Committee. His wife was active in the Q.C.W.A. and other local bodies, she died at her home on 10 October, 1936, and Crawford died at the Maryborough Hospital in September 1943.²¹

Harry Leonard Vidler was, as we have seen, one of the original Horton Group to select land at Mannuam. He was born in New South Wales on 27 August, 1887, arriving in Queensland to select *Mannuam Park* in 1909. He was single when he selected the land but married Sophia Bormann of Highfields in 1914 and the couple had ten children. Their property was sub-divided in 1920, one portion being sold to Harold's brother, Oliver. During the Second World War Harold Vidler was head of the civil defence in the region. Harold and Sophia retired to Hervey Bay in 1947, Harold Vidler died on 19 June, 1968 and his wife passed away in June 1973.²²

In 1911 the Reedy and Mannuam Creek Progress Association was formed and it was this association that did much to establish the township of Kumbia. The first town blocks at Kumbia were sold on 30 July, 1912, after the Reedy and Mannuam Creek Progress Association had convinced the Lands Department of the need to reserve an area for a local township. The upset price of the land was between six and ten shillings per acre.²³

Those purchasing land at Kumbia during that first sale included Michael Jeremiah Collins, George Edward Levinge, Patrick Thomas Quirk, F. Olsen, John Toomey, Harold Leonard Vidler, James Wright, Alfred Hawley, Robert Frank Horton, Henry Hyland Hayden, Mary Irving Bett and William Joseph Francis.²⁴

The Kumbia State School was opened in 1914 with Miss Johanna E. Gibson as its first teacher.²⁵ The school building committee was first formed in 1912 and consisted of A. Martin, A. Dascombe, H. Hayden, W. Adams, T. Kenway, J. Missingham and B. Prothero. The golden jubilee publication of the school later claimed: 'Although preparations in the form of a basket picnic were made to officially open the school on Tuesday 27th January, 1914, apparently the school did not begin to function until Monday 2nd February, 1914, under the control of Miss Gibson, with a first day enrolment of 21 children.'²⁶

The original school building proved quite adequate to the requirements of the region until 1922 when the front verandah was enclosed with canvas blinds and due to the increasing number of children an assistant teacher was appointed, the school had also employed two sewing mistresses prior to this date. In 1927 a second room was added to the original building and over the following years there were several other additions.²⁷

Other schools in the general region and listed within the Kumbia State School 75th jubilee booklet included Alice Creek, opened 1927, Boonyouin, 1924, Boyneside, 1927, Ellesmere, 1916, Glencliffe, 1923 and Haly Creek, 1909.²⁸

The Royal Bank, later the Bank of Queensland and subsequently the National Bank of Australasia, was established at Kumbia on 6 July, 1914, in a room at the Kumbia Hotel — although a bank building was later constructed. The first bank manager was Richard Watson followed the same year by A. Dangerfield. The branch was downgraded to a branch agency of the Kingaroy branch on 5 November, 1975, when A.E. Wain was its manager. The agency was closed on 22 January, 1980.²⁹

The first police officer at Kumbia was apparently Constable Dan Brennan who visited the small community from Kingaroy. He died in 1960.



Members of the first progress association formed in Kumbia, 1913.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection

Among the early selectors in the Kumbia area was Alfred Henry Ebenezer Black. Black was a native of Tatura, Victoria, on 8 January, 1908, he married Emily Mitchell and the couple travelled to Queensland, settling at Kumbia circa 1907. The press later reported of him:

He established the Kyabram Illawarra stud of diary cattle in 1921 and carried it on until 1939 when his son took it over and formed the Ventnor stud. This stud is now carried on by the grandson of the one who originally established it. Mr Black took a keen interest in public affairs, for some time being a member of the Kingaroy Shire Council. It was on his suggestion that a move was made for the establishment of the Kumbia School of Arts, and, in actual fact, it was he who made the first donation of money to promote it. His enterprise is borne out by his being the first to own a motor car at Kumbia. Often he used it in missions of charity in bringing sick people to Kingaroy or in cases of urgency to do a good turn for a neighbour or, for that matter, anyone needing help in this way.

He was a pioneer of the Kumbia district in many ways, one being that he was the first to have a telephone installed at a farm. Again he unhesitatingly allowed his neighbours and the people of the locality to use it ... Three of his children predeceased him.³⁰

A.H.E. Black died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Saturday 29 October, 1955, aged seventy-one years.

Henry Valentine Somers and Harry Gadd carried out share farming at Reedy Creek near Kumbia and were successful farmers, although the partnership came to a tragic conclusion when Somers shot himself on 21 September, 1931. There appeared to be no motive for the suicide, Somers, a native of England, had been a well liked resident of the area, he had no financial problems and in fact left £180 to his father and sister in England. The farm, leased from a Sydney man named Archibald Brown, was doing well, the partners had taken up the lease on the land on 1 September, 1927, for a period of five years and they lived in a small house on the property. The previous day Somers had been in a good mood and had played tennis with friends. He was discovered lying on his bed with a shotgun wound to the left breast, a note on a nearby table apologised for his action and expressing regret for having committed the suicide. Somers was interred at the Taabinga cemetery the following day.³¹

Another of the early selectors to the region was Ronald Norman Findlay who selected land between Kumbia and Kingaroy in partnership with Stan Leslie — a relative of Darling Downs

pastoralist and explorer Patrick Leslie. The property, *Abergeldie* — named after Abergeldie Street in Aberdeen — was operated as most other farms, clearing the scrub, planting basic crops and keeping a dairy herd. Ronald Findlay later suffered a sulky accident and broke his leg, the doctor who set the leg was allegedly drunk at the time and the damaged leg was to be an impediment for the rest of Findlay's life. He died in September 1981, his wife having predeceased him in 1956.³²

Jim Dickenson was a Victorian whose father was a jeweller in Melbourne. Jim and his wife Ellen travelled to Haly Creek, near Kumbia, to select 160 acres of scrub and forest land in 1912. Four years later Ellen gave birth to twins. The family lived in a galvanised iron and slab house with a galvanised iron roof, hot in summer and cold in winter, but a feature of this modest home was an open fireplace. Mrs Dickenson cooked in a slab-walled galley at the rear of the building that had a wood stove and an ant bed floor. The family carried on a dairy farm, and ran a few pigs, most of the work being carried out by Mrs Dickenson as Jim Dickenson died in 1922 when the twins were just six years of age. Ellen Dickenson died in 1958.³³

Thomas James Hancock and his wife, Sarah, arrived from New South Wales in 1912 and acquired land on the Stuart River. Hancock remained on the property for only a short while before installing his daughter and son-in-law on the farm and returning to Maitland for two years. He then travelled back to his holding on the South Burnett, the family living initially in a group of tents until a weatherboard house could be constructed. The holding was operated as a dairy farm with several pigs. T.J. Hancock was an enthusiastic builder and constructed homes on several properties. He moved to Calliope, leaving most of his family at the South Burnett holding, and there established another farm with several buildings. After selling this property he returned to the South Burnett and later became a publican. He died in July 1975 and was buried at the Kumbia cemetery, his wife, Sarah, having predeceased him in 1963.³⁴

Daniel Porter was another of the region's early selectors, he was born at Ipswich circa 1864 and spent his early life in the Mount Walker region where his parents were among the first selectors. Porter arrived in the Kumbia district circa 1917 where he purchased a block of land and where he lived for the remainder of his life. Daniel Porter suffered from a weak heart and he died, after collapsing at his home, on 22 October, 1937.³⁵

The Francis brothers, George, William and Charles were also early selectors of the region.

William Joseph (Bill) Francis had been just four years of age when his parents had settled firstly on land at Ipswich and later at Biarra which they selected in 1887. Bill Francis owned *Glenmorey* in the Harlin district and he purchased land at Kumbia during the sale of the first town allotments on 30 July, 1912. After a lifetime on the land conducting a grazing and general farming property he retired to First Avenue, Kingaroy in 1943, having sold his property to his nephew, Alwyn. He married Alma Amelia Suszbier in 1929 but the couple did not have any children. During his life Bill Francis suffered from deafness and was consequently a very retiring person. He died, aged seventy-four years, at St Aubyn's Private Hospital, Kingaroy, on Thursday 14 October, 1954, his wife having predeceased him in 1947.³⁶

George Francis, with his brother Charles, selected land at Kumbia during the ballot of 1911. He was born at Tivoli, Ipswich in 1885 and moved with his family when they took up land at Biarra near Esk in 1887. A portion of the land selected by George Francis now forms a part of the township of Kumbia. The property was operated as a dairy and later changed to peanut cultivation and mixed crops. Mr Francis was one of the original founders of the Anglican Church in the region and subsequently held the post of warden. His first wife, Harriet May, (nee Taylor) died in 1959 and George Francis remarried in 1967, his bride being Millie Keaton. Two years later the couple moved to Kingaroy. George Francis died just three weeks before his 101st birthday in 1986.³⁷

Charles Francis was born at Biarra in 1890 and was educated at the Biarra State School. He worked initially at the Esk butter factory and later for the Esk Shire Council as a labourer. In 1911 he selected land near Kumbia and while he was improving his property earned a living working with a horse and dray on the Kingaroy-Bunya Mountains road. He surrendered his selection in 1914 and returned to Biarra where he became a successful farmer. He married Elsie Rose Taylor in 1915.³⁸



Kumbia Hotel, erected in 1913 by Henry Hayden.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

James Francis selected land at Kumbia in 1911 but soon afterwards sold the land to his son, Frank, who named the property *Hillvue*. Frank became a successful dairy farmer, raised pigs and cattle and carried out a mixed farming operation. He married Ethel May Crisp in 1918 and was an active member of the local community. He leased his property to a share farmer in 1955 and the family moved into Kingaroy. Frank Francis became a member of the Kingaroy Shire Council in 1944, serving until 1967. He sold his property in 1969 and died in 1973. His wife also died that year, predeceasing him, she had been an active member of the Q.C.W.A. and was instrumental in the establishment of the Maternal and Child Welfare Centre at Kumbia.³⁹

Other residents and farmers in the Kumbia and Mannuam district included W.J. Parker, the well known auctioneer and president of the Bunya Mountain Road Club which did much to promote the tourist possibilities of the Bunya Mountains. H.H. Ford had a selection of some two hundred acres growing corn, pumpkins oats and even bananas. T. Turner grew lucerne and oats. Other settlers were W.J. Adams, the Noller brothers, F. Truss, C.A. Stock, H. Janetzki, Mr A. Winter, John Woods and Oscar Winter. In 1936 the proprietor of the Kumbia Hotel was John Tuite, this hotel was originally opened in 1913 and conducted by Henry Hayden.⁴⁰

One of the more well known personalities of the district was Harold Mears, a freelance photographer and historian who did much to collect and collate the history of the Kingaroy shire. He was born at Wimbledon, England, on 1 February, 1896, and arrived in Australia with his parents, two brothers and a sister, in 1910. The family settled for a while at Toogoolawah, on part of *Cressbrook* station, and later his parents purchased a property known as *Morden*. When the 1911 resumption from *Taabinga* was opened up for selection



Harold Mears.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council.

Mears acquired land there and lived on his selection for the remainder of his life. The press later reported of him: 'He specialised in animal and landscape studies and for many years was a familiar figure on almost every showground throughout the Burnett and Wide Bay areas, as well as the Brisbane Royal Exhibitions. He always strove for perfection and the high standard of his work ensured a ready acceptance, particularly contributions to magazines and stock journals throughout the country.' Mears wrote a history of the Kingaroy shire, *The First 100 Years*, and donated funding to the council so that it could be published. Unfortunately he died in May 1977 before his book was released.⁴¹

The Kumbia School of Arts Memorial Hall was constructed at a cost of £1200 as a memorial to the district's fallen. It was opened by N.H. Booth in 1922 and has served as the social centre of the region ever since. Extensions were added in 1934, these extensions were opened by John Anthony Carroll, chairman of the Kingaroy Shire Council, on the evening of Monday 29 January, 1934.⁴²

The Kumbia cemetery was gazetted in February 1913 and is located off the Bunya Highway south of the town.⁴³

One of the more well known business enterprises of the region was that of the Mannuem Maize Company which was formed in 1920, seven years later the farm belonging to the company on the Mannuem Creek road was the largest maize farm in Australia, it was a self sufficient property having its own blacksmith and other facilities, a considerable work-force, horses and a great deal of other equipment.⁴⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eighty-five

Kumbia, Mannuem and Benair Districts

1. *Kumbia State School, 75 Years*, p 1.
2. WW. p 165.
3. *The Horton Group Jubilee, Souvenir Booklet, 1909-1959*, p 4, courtesy Aileen Findlay, Kumbia Historical Society.
4. K/G. 22 October, 1937.
5. K/H. 2 July, 1959, p 1 and 20 August, 1959, p 5.
6. K/H. 20 August, 1959, p 2.
7. K/G. 30 July, 1959, p 1.
8. Extracts, Palethorpe family history, Wondai Museum archives.
9. K/G. 30 July, 1959, p 1.
10. Ibid.
11. For further details on this school see: K/H. 25 May, 1961, p 5 and *Mannuem Creek State School Souvenir Booklet, 1911-1983*, Doreen Smallbone, M.B.E. (Ed).
12. K/H. 28 May, 1964, p 6. For further details of these two selectors and also on other settlers of the region see: *A History of the Reedy Creek District and School, 1911-1961*.
13. Minute book, Reedy Creek School, Kumbia Historical Society.
14. K/H. 19 October, 1961, p 8, quoting *A History of the Reedy Creek District and School, 1911-1961*, p 12.
15. Minute book, 14 December, 1912, Kumbia Historical Society.
16. Minute book, 27 July, 1916, Kumbia Historical Society.
17. Minute book, 9 February, 1931 and K/H. 19 October, 1961, p 8. For comprehensive details on the history of this school see the school minute book, 1911-1963, Kumbia Historical Society and *A History of the Reedy Creek District and School, 1911-1961*.
18. K/H. 10 August, 1961, p 5. See also: correspondence, Department of Public Works letter to J.B. Edwards, M.L.A, reference 1281a, dated 7 March, 1935, file: General Correspondence, 1934-1935, Kingaroy Shire Council archives.

19. K/G. 16 October, 1936, and Taabinga cemetery records.
20. A copy of this contract may be found in file: General Correspondence, 1924–1927, Kingaroy Shire Council archives.
21. K/G. 16 October, 1936, K/H. 23 September, 1943, p 2.
22. Author interview with Joyce Dickenson, Kumbia Historical Society, recorded 8 September, 1996, with additional details provided by Lyle Vidler.
23. SBT. 13 September, 1967, p 5.
24. Mears, p 71, quoting PLQ., archives section, correspondence reference DW/BC M173.505/6.
25. SBT. 31 May, 1989, p 21.
26. *Kumbia State School Golden Jubilee, 1914–1964*, pp 2–3, Kumbia Historical Society and K/H. 6 February, 1964, p 9.
27. For full details of this school see: *Kumbia State School Golden Jubilee, 1914–1964*, pp 2–3, Kumbia Historical Society and K/H. 6 February, 1964, p 9.
28. For further details on these schools see: *Kumbia State School, 75 Years*, pp 68–69.
29. N.A.B. Group Archives.
30. K/H. 3 November, 1955, p 2.
31. For details of this case see: K/G. 25 September, 1931 and 16 October, 1931.
32. Author interview with Nell Casswell, recorded 5 September, 1996, interview with Doug Findlay, recorded 8 September, 1996, and Kingaroy Shire Council cemetery records.
33. Author interview with Dudley Dickenson, recorded 8 September, 1996 and Taabinga cemetery records.
34. Author interview with Ernie Hancock, recorded 8 September, 1996 and Kumbia cemetery records.
35. K/G. 29 October, 1937.
36. K/H. 21 October, 1954, p 7 and *South to Australia*, 1984, pp 9–10.
37. SBT. 5 November, 1986, p 17 and *South to Australia*, 1984, p 11.
38. *South to Australia*, 1984, p 12.
39. *Ibid*, p 13–14.
40. For a detailed description of the region, including the farms operated by those mentioned in this paragraph, see: K/H. 27 March, 1936.
41. SBT. 18 May, 1977, p 24 and 31 May, 1978, p 7.
42. K/G. 2 February, 1934.
43. *Register of Historical Sites*, file K 02, Kingaroy Shire Council.
44. *Ibid*, file K 56. See also: Mears, p 76.

Some Early Selectors of the Stuart Valley, Inverlaw, Wattlegrove, Gordonbrook and Dangore Districts

The above named regions are all important rural centres serviced by Kingaroy, from Gordonbrook in the north-west to Stuart Valley in the south-west. The Stuart Valley School was first opened in July 1911 as the Erin Vale School with Beatrice Curtis as its teacher, the name was changed to Stuart Valley the following year. The school closed in 1961.¹

Originally named Four Mile Gully, the Inverlaw region has, like most other areas of the South Burnett, grown from modest and humble beginnings to become a rich agricultural centre.

The name of Inverlaw came about due to a request from the Postmaster General's Department. Initially a meeting of local residents was held on 2 April, 1910, and it was decided to form a local progress association — the Four Mile Gully Progress Association. At a meeting of the association held on 9 April that year, it was decided to request the Postmaster General's Department to establish a receiving office at a private residence in the district. The department later replied that it was willing to establish such a depot but asked if the name could be changed from Four Mile Gully. Another meeting of the association was held on 27 August, 1910, and three names were submitted for the area, these were Yandah, Armidale and Inverlaw. Of the votes cast, nine went to Inverlaw, Yandah five and Armidale two. The association then again communicated with the postal authorities to advise that the name of Inverlaw had been chosen for the region.²

The Inverlaw School (Four Mile Gully) was opened as a provisional school on 12 November, 1907, but was closed at the end of the following month, its first principal was Anne Jane Lewis. The school was reopened on 31 August, 1908, it became a state school in 1909 and was finally closed on 24 May, 1968.³

There were many early settlers in the district, including Thomas Carr and his wife Agnes. Thomas Carr was born in Glasgow in 1860 and came to Australia with his brother Robert landing at Mackay. They were cobblers by trade and for a few years earned their living in that business in the Mackay district, later moving to Brisbane. Thomas Carr married Agnes Mitchell in Brisbane when he was twenty-nine years of age, later moving to a rented farm on the Boobie road prior to taking up their selection at Four Mile Gully.⁴

J.D. McAlpine was the caretaker of the Inverlaw bore, that precious source of water so vital to the region's farmers. George and Bella Reed were also important settlers. George Reed was born at Normanby reserve via Harrisville on 20 May, 1879, and during the difficult drought years at the turn of the century earned a modest living by shooting possums, the skins being sold for six shillings per dozen. He arrived in the Kingaroy district in 1907 to ballot for land, but his attempts were unsuccessful and he returned home. He later returned to Kingaroy and was successful in balloting for land. In 1908 he brought twenty-five head of cattle from his home near Harrisville and two years later he purchased a small thresher and began to thresh maize for farmers in the Inverlaw, Benair, Mannuem, Kumbia, Haly Creek, Ellesmere and Wattlegrove regions. He was the caretaker of the Inverlaw Hall from 1921 until 1946, the hall having been opened on 3 June, 1921. His wife, Bella, was also involved in community events and served on the hall's ladies' committee. George Reed died in 1982 at the age of 103 years.⁵

Roland Cross was born at Upton on Severn in England on 16 November, 1880, and emigrated with his family in 1884, landing at Brisbane in October that year. He lived with his family at Mount Berryman in the Laidley district and married Minnie Amelia Engel at the Methodist Church Blenheim on 9 January, 1907. The couple moved to Four Mile Gully where Roland Cross is said to have been one of the first to start dairying in the region.⁶

Carl Edward Engel was born in Germany on 11 April, 1841. His first wife died, leaving Carl to bring up their baby daughter. Carl married his second wife, Bertha Banditt on 30 January, 1876, another daughter was born in 1880 and the family emigrated in 1881, arriving in October that year. Carl Engel died in 1908 and Bertha later moved to Inverlaw where members of her family were then living, she died on 31 January, 1934.⁷

Brothers Bob and Richard Yarrow were both early residents of the Inverlaw region. Bob Yarrow arrived at Inverlaw circa 1916 and his brother came in 1917. Together they ran a property called *Ashfield*. Richard married Susan Yates in 1918, Bob married Linda Graham in 1934. Both men were public minded and were on the committee that eventually managed to have the Inverlaw Hall constructed in 1921. Richard Yarrow was elected to the Kingaroy Shire Council and served for several years, he also bought out Bob's share of the farm. Bob Yarrow died in 1966 and his wife Linda died in 1974. Dick Yarrow and his wife retired to Kingaroy, Susan died in 1959 and Dick died ten years later.⁸

Robert John (Jack) Crawford was born at Shoalhaven River, New South Wales in 1884. He married Annie Addison at Chatsworth on 2 August 1911 and after farming for a while at Westbrook on the Darling Downs, moved to Inverlaw. Jack Crawford with Reuben Robinson operated a cream run from Inverlaw through Mannuem, he also carried on a mixed farming operation and owned a Jersey stud herd. He gave land on the corner of his farm for the construction of the Methodist Church where his wife was organist for many years, he was also instrumental in the construction of the Inverlaw Hall and was the chairman on its committee.⁹

J.W. Beil and his wife arrived at Inverlaw in July 1904 from Thanos Creek in the Warwick district where J.W. Beil had run a butcher's shop. They came with a number of stock, Mrs Beil bringing their children in a sulky, the journey taking about a week. Like many other early residents they were involved in local community affairs, the Inverlaw School was constructed on their property in 1907. The couple later retired to Kingaroy.¹⁰

Joseph Steele and his wife Rachel were among the Inverlaw region's early selectors. Joseph Steele left Ireland at the age of nineteen years and came to Australia aboard the *S.S. Norseman* in 1911. After marrying Rachel the couple moved onto their property at Inverlaw in 1921, acquiring the farm that had been previously owned by J.B. Edwards.¹¹

Morris and George Reed came to Inverlaw from the Ipswich district, driving a herd of cattle and carrying their stores and equipment on the back of a wagon — the journey taking about a week to complete. The first years were difficult — as they were for almost all early selectors in the South Burnett, they constructed a rough dwelling and spent most of their energy hand clearing the scrub and planting corn between the stumps. Morris married Agnes Nugent in 1914 and in 1925, while constructing a new dairy he suffered a serious accident when a circular saw cut off all the toes of his left foot. He was later able to walk normally with the aid of a specially designed boot.¹²

There were many other early selectors of the region including well known politician J.B. Edwards, John Evan Woods, John Oliver and Helen Maud Willmer, Hieronymus (Ronnie) Seng, John Thomas Griffiths, Soren Hansen, Harold Cross, Benjamin Carr, John Freshwater and his son Arthur, who was killed during the First World War, Paul Carl Fritz and his wife Edith Agnes, Harry Blythman, Bridget and Joseph Magee, William Coulson, Elizabeth Mary Knudsen and her husband Paul, Silas Butcher and his wife Lily, Reuben Robinson, his wife and son, Claude, who had come from Canada.

Hermann Otto and his wife Martha moved to Inverlaw from Taabinga circa 1922, the property had originally been selected by his brother. Later the couple moved to another farm where they lived until they retired to Kingaroy. Hermann Otto was a member of the Kingaroy and Inverlaw brass bands and for several years served on the Inverlaw School Committee. He was well known for his skills with timber, he milled his own logs and was a talented carpenter.¹³

Arthur Gosper opened a sawmill at Inverlaw circa 1929. He and his wife Anne and their children came to the region from the Casino district. The sawmill was established initially at Deep Creek but was subsequently moved to the Bunya Mountains where it operated at Dandabah. Arthur Gosper later had a diversified career, going in for gold prospecting and working with his brother on a cane farm.¹⁴

The first settlers at Gordonbrook were the Pointons. Prior to resumption Gordonbrook was a part of *Taabinga* station, it was listed in the *Queensland Government Gazette* on 11 August, 1852, as having an area of sixteen thousand acres.¹⁵

Abel Pointon and his brother, Charles, arrived at Gordonbrook in 1888, the brothers were in partnership with both *Gordonbrook* and another station called *Hereford Hills* near Kilcoy. The partnership was dissolved in 1899, Abel Pointon retained ownership of *Gordonbrook* and Charles took over the station at Kilcoy. Abel Pointon married Alice White, the daughter of Joseph and Mary Ann White, in 1879. Abel Pointon, like so many other early rural residents of the South Burnett, was a community minded man and was the first patron of the Kingaroy Show Society. The first family home at *Gordonbrook* was a small house with a shingle roof, it was surrounded with gardens and trees, the second, larger, home was constructed in 1901. *Gordonbrook* was sold in 1907 to M.W. O'Rourke, and Abel and Alice Pointon retired to Brisbane.

The lease on the homestead block of the property expired during O'Rourke's tenure and the holding reverted to the Crown for soldier settlements. Upon his return from the Great War Robert Ellwood balloted for the homestead block which then included improvements valued at around £1200. His ballot was successful and the holding passed to Ellwood in 1919. The original homestead was twenty-eight squares in size, there were also servants' quarters and a landing. Ellwood sold the servants' quarters and the building was moved to Memerambi for use as a boarding house. Robert Ellwood began dairying on the property and later added other holdings, including that of Alf Anderson, who had previously shot himself. It was on this property that the school was later established. Ellwood also purchased another deserted dairy farm which included yards and a hut. Robert Ellwood was recalled to command the 5th Light Horse during the Second World War and the holding was managed by Bill Barkle and his family. The homestead was moved in 1948 to First Avenue Kingaroy and the holding was sold in 1961 to W. Woltmann.¹⁶

As we have seen, following the Great War, *Gordonbrook* and parts of *Wyuna* were resumed for soldier settlements and with the increase in population it was evident that the region would require added facilities such as a school. The *Gordonbrook* Provisional School was opened in 1924 although it was closed in June 1928. Following the formation of a committee and a series of letters to the Education Department, approval was given for the opening of a half time provisional school at *Gordonbrook* and for another half time provisional school at *Gordonbrook* South, Miss Norah McKee was appointed teacher and she alternated weeks at each school. However, with changing populations it soon became evident that there were not sufficient children to keep both schools open, the *Gordonbrook* School closed and on 1 April, 1929, the *Gordonbrook* South School became a full time provisional school. The building in which the school operated was a settler's cottage owned by Robert Ellwood who lent it to the Education Department. In 1935, when Ellwood required the building for share farming tenancy, moves were made to have the Education Department provide a school building and the old school at *Kinleymore* was moved to the site. The school finally closed in 1945 when the building was moved once again, this time to *Durrall Creek*.¹⁷

Wyuna was originally a part of both *Taabinga* and *Burrandowan* stations, and was purchased by Albert Leonard and Abel Pointon in 1905, the resumptions following the Great War reduced the holding to 12,000 acres. Albert Leonard Pointon died in 1952 and is buried at the *Taabinga* cemetery.¹⁸

In 1947 the south portion of *Wyuna* was purchased by J.R. Penning and this property, 4800 acres in size, was named *Brigadoon*. The holding was sold to R.W. Cameron in 1961 and subdivided in 1964.¹⁹

Robert Stephen Brown selected *Findowie*, a block of almost five thousand acres which was itself cut up circa 1912, his brother, Thomas Brown, followed him and selected *Belgrove*. *Findowie* was later acquired by Niels and Elizabeth Jensen and *Belgrove* was acquired by Sam Staines in 1923, it was renowned as a bullock fattening property and with a five and a half mile frontage to the *Stuart River* it boasted one of the best lagoons in the *Kingaroy* district.²⁰

Oakdean was owned by Hubert Smith and his wife Dorothy, who arrived at their holding in 1920, their property had been selected under the Soldier Settlement Scheme and their first home on the banks of the *Stuart River* was a canvas dwelling. They built up a herd of *Illawarra* *Shorthorn* cows and later operated the farm as a grazing property and for peanut production.

Hubert and Dorothy retired in 1954 to Point Vernon, Hervey Bay and the holding was taken over by their sons, Stephen Scudamore-Smith M.B.E. and William Scudamore-Smith. Hubert Smith died at Point Vernon in 1960 and Dorothy died at Toowoomba nine years later.²¹

At Dangore the sequence of early settlement followed in much the same pattern as other regions. The area was considered to be somewhat remote, although a sawmill operated in the region and was located at the junction of Hurst Creek and the Stuart River.²²

Percy and Kate Taylor with their family of four children and Kate's mother arrived at Dangore in 1935 where they began share farming with Ernie Berlin, later acquiring the land belonging to William Berlin.²³

Mel Sparkes took over his property from Chris Jorgensen in 1938 and at one time he and his wife, Ivy, ran a dairy herd of 140 cows. The couple later retired to Hervey Bay. Other residents of these contiguous regions included August Knopke and his wife, Mary, Robert and Johanna Lind and Herman Olsson and his wife, Elfriede Ethel, of *Wooden Hut*.

Michael Carew and his wife Bridget owned *Klondyke* at Wattle Grove. A school was established in the region in 1915 with Gwendoline Sprath as its teacher, it closed in December 1963. William Percy Nugent and his wife, Mrs E.F. Nugent arrived in the region in 1917. Carl Loving and his wife Lydia, Carl Sorensen, Peter Sorensen, Wilhelm Frederick Stibbe and his wife Bertha Wilhemina were also early selectors of the Wattle Grove region.²⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eighty-six

Some Early Selectors of the Stuart Valley, Inverlaw, Wattlegrove, Gordonbrook and Dangore Districts

1. For a listing of teachers at this school see: Murray, pp 365–66.
2. Minutes of the Four Mile Gully Association, quoted in: *One Step of Progress — Back to Inverlaw*, Merv Nugent (Ed), 1985, p 6.
3. For further details of this school, including a listing of principals see: *One Step of Progress — Back to Inverlaw*, Merv Nugent (Ed), 1985, p 18.
4. *One Step of Progress — Back to Inverlaw*, Merv Nugent (Ed), 1985, p 26.
5. *Ibid*, p 29–30.
6. *Ibid*, p 35.
7. *Ibid*, p 37.
8. *Ibid*, p 38.
9. *Ibid*, p 39.
10. *Ibid*, p 45.
11. For further details of this family see the article written by Arthur Steele in Murray, pp 382–83.
12. *One Step of Progress — Back to Inverlaw*, Merv Nugent (Ed), 1985, p 50–51.
13. *Ibid*, p 65.
14. Author interview with daughter, Daphne Bloomfield, recorded 8 September, 1996.
15. QGG 11 August, 1852, p 1223.
16. *One Step of Progress — Back to Inverlaw*, Merv Nugent (Ed), 1985, p 69, 75–76.
17. *Ibid*, p 71–72.
18. Taabinga cemetery records and *One Step of Progress — Back to Inverlaw*, Merv Nugent (Ed), 1985, pp 73–74.
19. *One Step of Progress — Back to Inverlaw*, Merv Nugent (Ed), 1985, pp 81–82.
20. *Ibid*, pp 78–79. See also: K/H. 2 April, 1964, p 1 for some details on the history of Belgrove station.
21. *One Step of Progress — Back to Inverlaw*, Merv Nugent (Ed), 1985, p 83.
22. *Ibid*, p 80.
23. For details on this family see Thelma Pedersen's article in Murray, p 431.
24. *One Step of Progress — Back to Inverlaw*, Merv Nugent (Ed), 1985, pp 96–102.

Ironpot, Chahpingah and Burrandowan Districts

Like so many other small regional centres surrounding the larger communities such as Kingaroy, Nanango, Murgon and Wondai, the tiny settlement of Ironpot and its contiguous districts consisted of little more than a scattering of houses and farms, largely relying on agricultural production. As we have seen earlier in this history, the region now called Ironpot once formed a part of historic *Burrandowan* station, established by Henry Stuart Russell. In 1966, Ironpot resident R.J. (Bob) Downes wrote: 'There is no authoritative record as to the origin of the name Ironpot, though the creek was probably named prior to 1880 when *Burrandowan* still ran sheep. One legend has it that a party of shepherds discovered a large three-legged iron cooking pot on the banks of the creek and thereafter referred to the creek as Ironpot Creek.'¹

The National Trust listed home *Wylarah* is one of the architectural features of the region, the property was originally selected by Alfred Greenup in 1890. Plans for the home were drawn up on 16 March, 1890, and the home itself was under construction from March 1891, when the first post was sawn, to July 1892, when Greenup recorded in his diary that the house had been completed and that he was planting ornamental and fruit trees.²

The Greenup family came originally from England, Dr Richard Greenup, Alfred's father, came to Australia with his wife and family aboard the vessel *John Knox* in April 1850, arriving at Sydney, their youngest child, just ten months' old, having died during the voyage. Richard had studied medicine in London and had later entered Queen's College Cambridge where he studied



Wylarah homestead in the Ironpot district, it features an attractive great hall.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews

literature, history and philosophy, graduating with a master of arts degree in 1831. After arriving in Australia, Richard inspected several properties with a view to engaging in farming pursuits but eventually continued with his medical career and was also the first registrar and secretary of Sydney University. He practiced at Parramatta and became superintendent of the lunatic asylum there, his appointment taking effect from 25 March, 1852. In July 1866 he was stabbed in the lower abdomen by an inmate at the asylum who had armed himself with a pair of scissors. Richard died the following day, 19 July. James Cameron, the inmate who had stabbed Richard Greenup, was known to have had homicidal tendencies and had previously committed two murders. He was later sent for trial on the charge of wilful murder.

Alfred Greenup, one of Richard's sons, left school at the age of fifteen years to take up a pastoral life, subsequently being appointed to the position of manager of *Maryland* station near Stanthorpe, a station he later came to own. Hearing of the *Burrandowan* resumptions, Alfred travelled by rail and coach to Nanango to attend the Land Court. He finally selected two blocks of land in the Ironpot region in 1890, a nine thousand acres block he would later use for grazing and an agricultural block of more than 1200 acres where the family home, *Wylarah*, would subsequently be constructed.

Alfred and his eldest son, Richard, visited the selection in 1890, taking the train from Stanthorpe to Dalby and riding the remainder of the distance. At that time a small hut was constructed on the property. The following year they again came to the selection and a slab hut was built on a ridge near the site of the present homestead. The impressive homestead itself was built in 1891/92 by a builder named J. Gibbs who took about eighteen months to complete his task. Apart from some help with the framework and assistance in sawing the verandah floorboards, Gibbs constructed the home entirely by himself. The bricks of the chimneys, a kitchen wall, the brick base of the boiling copper, the oven, the sink and a brick drain were all manufactured on site from clay obtained at a nearby gully. The initial plan of the building was to have included a U-shaped courtyard with the rooms constructed around three sides, these rooms would then be shaded by wide verandahs. However, during the construction of the house it was decided that the courtyard would be too small and it was roofed with twin gables. It now forms what is certainly the most impressive room in the homestead, a great hall measuring fifty feet by thirty-five feet.



Alfred Sotherton Greenup.

Source — John & Joan O'Shanesy, *Wylarah*.



Marion Greenup, (nee Marsh).

Source — John & Joan O'Shanesy, *Wylarah*.

Alfred Greenup moved his wife, Marion, (nee Marsh, who was also his cousin) and their children to *Wylarah* in 1897. His eldest son, Richard, attended the Toowoomba Grammar School and two other sons, Harold and Victor, went to the Armidale School. Victor attempted to enlist at the outbreak of war in 1914 but failed his medical examination because he had false teeth. He was successful in joining the army in 1917 and after training was sent to France. He was killed in action in April 1918.

In May 1916 Alfred went to Brisbane where he caught a cold that later developed into pneumonia. He was nursed by his daughter, Mary, but died at *Wylarah* soon afterwards. Prior to his death Alfred had obtained some beautifully grained timber which was to be used for his coffin, the timber was stored for years in the loft of the station's coach shed. Upon Alfred's death a carpenter from Coolabunia was sent for in order to make the coffin. Alfred had also selected a family graveyard on the property and had it fenced and planted with trees and shrubs, the enclosure was situated just outside the east garden. However, when it came time to dig his grave it was discovered that the ground was too stony and so another site was selected, farther down the hill near the old orchard. Alfred's grave and those of several other family members can still be seen at the site and are clearly visible from the road that runs past the homestead. Alfred's daughter, Mary, who had nursed him during his illness, suffered from a weak heart. She was taken to hospital in Kingaroy and died there on 28 May, 1916, a week after her father's death.

One of Alfred's sons, Harold Greenup, eventually took over the homestead block and the beautiful old house. The great hall in the building has frequently been used to conduct church services, private dances and balls, some of which were used to raise money for the Kingaroy Hospital. Harold was born at Maryland in 1884 and he married Ruby Bassingthwaite in 1912. Harold died in 1957. The home was left to Harold's second daughter, Frances, who later (early 1940s), married Gordon O'Shanesy. She died suddenly in 1964, aged forty-nine years and was buried at *Wylarah* in the family cemetery. Her son, John O'Shanesy, and his wife, Joan, currently live in the building and are carrying out important preservation work.³

Other properties in the Ironpot region include *Sarum*, originally belonging to E.L. Salisbury, and *Greystonelea*, taken up by William Billington. Mark Cockerill was an early selector, he and his wife, Jessie, were graziers, taking up their land in 1890. Their son, Frederick Henry Cockerill, married Gladys Webster of *Sarum* and later became a well known horse breeder, he purchased *Glenrock* from James Isaac Markwell in 1913.

Local historian and grazier R.J. Downes, (and later the mayor of Kingaroy Shire) covered the early settlement of the region in some detail when, in 1966, he published:

Sarum was purchased by Mr William Webster shortly after it was originally selected. The price for the ten thousand acres was about £450. The country was virgin forest, and all supplies had to be carted from Dalby. Timber for the homestead was all pit-sawn on the property. In those days *Sarum* was unstocked and had cattle on agistment, and the original herd, mostly shorthorns, was built up by the payment of cattle in lieu of agistment fees.

After some years, William Webster sold to Nason and Bottomley and returned to England. During the 1901 drought stock losses were very heavy and Nason and Bottomley were glad to sell *Sarum* back to Mr Webster, who had returned to Australia. Incidentally, the waterhole on the Ironpot Creek at *Sarum* was one of the few watering places which did not fail in that disastrous drought.

After William Webster retired to England in 1914, the management of *Sarum* was taken over by Eaton and his brother, Tom. Their first sale was a consignment of fat bullocks, dressed weight about 800lbs., which sold for £3/7/6 per head. (*William Webster's son, Eaton Webster, served on the Kingaroy Shire Council for twenty-eight years, he died at the Chermiside Hospital on 2 June, 1978. His other son, Tom, joined the Light Horse during the First World War, rose to the rank of lieutenant, but was killed in action.*)⁴

During the post-war slump in cattle prices, dairying was undertaken for some time.

The first Angus bulls were introduced in 1922, and the *Sarum* stud was established in 1933 and has grown to one of the finest in the state. Cattle bearing the duck brand have been sold in every state in Australia. A Cheviot sheep stud was started in 1958, and recently *Sarum* has undertaken a new venture — the breeding of Brangus cattle.

With the further resumption of *Burrandowan* station, the Ironpot scrub country, Parish of Mannuem, was thrown open for selection by the Lands Office, Dalby, on the 9th September, 1910. Size of the selections varied from 450 acres to over 1000 acres, averaging about 700 acres. Most blocks consisted of part scrub and part forest country.

Portions of the Ironpot district on the western watershed of the range were thrown open slightly earlier.

From early Lands Department records, the first settlers would appear to be W.E. Nunn and H.C. Gooderham, both of whom had taken up their selection before the close of 1910 ...

The early selectors came from many different directions. Teddy Nunn came originally from England by way of New Zealand. He selected portion 24 from a map, as he considered that he would be assured of a good water supply from Sandy Creek which, according to the map, flowed through the block. He and his wife eked out a living for a number of years by raising fowls and running a few cows, selling the eggs and butter around the district.

Harry Gooderham rode up from Bowenville when the district was being surveyed in about 1905. He selected his block when the area was thrown open, and commenced dairying soon afterwards.

Lewis Plackett, a Canadian, purchased his block, portion 18, from Daniel O'Neill in 1911. He sold out shortly after the outbreak of the First World War and joined the army.

Robert Hatrick, a sailor, selected portion 10, but rejoined the navy when war broke out. Other original selectors in the year 1911 were T.W. Evans, A. Blue, C.E. Evans, F.O.H. Manton, R. Barton, junior, J.H. Sigley, G. Cooke, F.J. Pearse, D.S. O'Neill and J.D. Ellwood.

The Kerr brothers were originally bailiffing for Archie Blue and Thomas Evans. They did a lot of hunting and, to protect the feet of their dogs from stones and thorns, had leather boots made for them.

Hunting and snaring played an important role in those early years, providing meat for the table and skins for sale. Possums were plentiful and, with super blue skins bringing up to 15/-, many a profitable night was spent with rifle and snares.

Other bailiffs about the same time were Jacksons, portion 12; Smiths, portion 10; and Cherrys.

In February, 1913, George Ogilvie arrived from Blackbutt, by buggy, with a team of men, and a contract to fell 1000 acres of scrub for Youngmans. His wife and family accompanied him and for six months, until the bullock waggons bringing their stores arrived, Mrs Ogilvie cooked for up to twelve men in a camp oven — surely a remarkable feat.

Some of the men employed by Mr Ogilvie were: Jim Kuhn, Walter Watson, Bill Smith, Tiny Waldock, Hans Kunst, Harry Cameron, D. Frame, Hunter, Lindsay, Patterson, Bert Praske, and John and Joe Simpson. Some of these men later selected blocks. Jim Kuhn selected portion 30, Walter Watson selected portion 29, and later sold to Paddy Lawlor, another employee of George Ogilvie. All three men were associated with the district for a number of years.

George Ogilvie purchased portion 12, *Pineview*, in 1915, and was one of the earliest to commence dairying.

In 1914, Mr J.F. Downes arrived from Bell and purchased portion 25 from Archie Blue for approximately £350. Only a few acres of scrub had been felled on the block at that time. Shortly afterwards he enlisted in the army and went to the war. Returning to his block after the war, he commenced clearing, fencing and grassing it, and undertook breeding and fattening cattle. He is one of the few early pioneers to retain an interest in his block to the present day. His brother Keith purchased Nunn's block, portion 24, in 1919, and was another of the earliest dairy-farmers.

Also in 1919, Bill Northcott arrived from the Stuart River area and settled at the Chahpingah end of Ironpot.

Bob (Robert) Cross, from Esk, first came to the Kingaroy district about 1901 and, for many years, managed *Old Greystonelea*. In 1917, he settled on *Bungara*, which in the aboriginal dialect means bottle tree.

Other names associated with those early days are: Jack Simpson, who selected portion 27, and later sold to Dan Moloney; John A. White, Beeby; Pollock brothers; and Dave Holmes.⁵

Another of the early names associated with Ironpot was William Thomas Henschen who donated land where the Ironpot Hall was constructed in 1932. The Ironpot School was situated on the banks of the nearby creek and the hall was built next to it by Henry Seng. After its construction the children from the school were used to polish the dance-floor, the floor was sprinkled with sawdust and the students pulled each other around seated on sacking. The hall was opened with a gala day of sports and dancing on 23 July, 1932, the day even featured the landing of an aircraft on the grounds and spent the day giving joy-flights.

Over the years the hall was the centre of the district's social life, religious services were performed there, dances were frequently held, the hall was used as a cinema and people were even married there. A 32 volt power generator was installed in 1940 and 240 volt power was connected in 1963. That same year the hall was lined by voluntary labour. The hall celebrated its 60th anniversary in July 1992 and many of the descendants of original residents attended.⁶

Moves to establish a school at Ironpot began circa 1913 when Mr L. Plackett wrote to the Department of Public Instruction in Brisbane regarding the possibility of establishing a school in the district. A public meeting to discuss the issue was held on 14 February, 1914, at the home of Mr G. Jackson. During that meeting a building committee was elected and the department was subsequently advised that twelve children in the region were of school age. There were two possible sites for the school, one was opposite *Sarum*, on a government reserve, the other was at Waterlily Gully where G. Jackson was willing to donate three acres of land for use as a school reserve. The area was visited by the district inspector, W.H. Smith, in 1914, and that same year the department approved the expenditure of £125 for the construction of a school at Ironpot Creek. However, there were further problems, the committee was advised that the school fund was over appropriated and residents had to wait until the following year for new approval. Following the calling of tenders the contract to construct the school went to E.B. Taylor for a price of £125. The school was opened on 7 February, 1916, the first teacher at the school was Miss Maud Gooderham. It was moved in 1917 and as with most other rural centres the basic school building construction soon became too small and inadequate for the growing population of the district. In 1937 a new school was constructed and opened towards the end of that year. Historian R.J. Downes later wrote: 'Around this time and for several years after, controversy raged over the position of the school. Because of the increasing number of school age children towards the Chahpingah end of the district, many parents wanted a more central school ... Several sites were offered and after much negotiation and numerous inspections the present site, donated by Mr H.V. Castledine, was agreed upon.'⁷ The school was moved in 1943 and Robert Ferguson became its new teacher.⁸

The school celebrated its golden jubilee in 1966 and its first teacher, Maud Gooderham, attended to cut the anniversary cake, three of her first day pupils, Nancy Northcott, Hilda Royle and George Ogilvie, were also in attendance. The teacher then in charge was Andre Hoesman.⁹

In addition to the school and hall there was a commercial sawmill operating at Ironpot. This mill was owned by the partnership of Hayden Shire and Co., which also owned a mill at Kingaroy. On 10 March, 1944, the Ironpot mill was the scene of one of the worst recorded accidents in the history of the South Burnett timber industry when a mill hand named William Anderson Smith died after having both legs and an arm amputated by the saw on the Canadian bench. (For further details on this accident see Chapter 95).¹⁰

The death at the mill was not the first such tragedy at Ironpot, in July 1938 the small community was shaken to learn of the death of George Bernard Burton, aged nineteen, who was discovered shot dead with a rifle beside his body near his home, it was evident that the young man had shot himself. A subsequent enquiry failed to discover a cause of the suicide but it was believed that Burton had been extremely depressed because a young woman, of whom he was fond, was due to leave the region.¹¹

There was once a Bush Nursing Centre in the Chahpingah district, this centre was vital to residents of the entire district and served the community for all important medical services.

Most of the local holdings in the Ironpot district were dairy farms until expenses and cartage problems forced all the farmers to change to other forms of primary production. One of the last dairy farms to operate in the region was owned by Herb Henschen and his wife. Mr Henschen was the son of the man who donated the land for the Ironpot Hall.¹²

The population of Ironpot peaked during the 1940s when it was more than double its present size. This was at the peak of the dairying industry with most of the scrub cleared and planted to Rhodes grass which grew higher than the fences of the paddocks. Almost all properties were dairying and cropping was becoming more wide-spread. It was claimed that the Ironpot cream run was the largest in Queensland with two trucks collecting cream three days a week in winter and four days a week in summer. Many farms employed share farmers. The school enrolment peaked at about thirty pupils and the district fielded two or three tennis teams playing in the Kumbia association fixtures.¹³

Closely associated with the Ironpot region is the Jarail Creek district and the schools at Ironpot and Jarail Creek have much in common. While an earlier half time provisional school was reportedly operating from 1925 to 1932, the permanent Jarail Creek School was moved to the region in late 1949. It had originally been constructed in 1914 as the Kinleymore School and was later moved to Gordonbrook before finally arriving at Jarail Creek. Henry Seng, of *Nulla* donated five acres of land for the school grounds. It was originally anticipated that the school would open for the school year in 1950, however, the first enrolment did not take place until 14 March, 1950, the first teacher was Don Simpson. On 13 March, 1950, the day before the opening of the school, a meeting was held to form a school committee, L. Perkins, J. Wheeler, L. Skerman, T. Alexander, G. Gooderham, H. Gossow and M. Freshwater formed that first committee. The school opened with an enrolment of just six pupils and by the end of that year twelve pupils were enrolled. In March 1965 the school committee was abandoned and the Jarail Creek Parents' and Citizens' Association was formed. With the closure of the Ironpot School in 1975 some students at that school began attending the school at Jarail Creek which itself closed in 1978.¹⁴

The school at Burrandowan was opened in May 1923 and was originally constructed to serve the children of soldier settlers at Burrandowan, its first teacher was Edith Wockner, the school closed in 1942.¹⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eighty-seven

Ironpot, Chahpingah and Burrandowan Districts

1. Downes, R.J., *Ironpot Creek State School Golden Jubilee, 1916-1966*, p 3.
2. Interview with Mrs Joan O'Shanesy, 18 April, 1997, diary extracts, courtesy family historian Bessie Wilshire, and *Register of Historic Sites*, Kingaroy Shire Council.
3. *Historic Homesteads of Australia*, Vol 2, Australian Council of National Trusts, Reed Books, 1985, pp 282-289; *Australian Country Houses*, Lansdowne Press, 1987; *A History of the Greenup Family* by Bessie Wilshire; private correspondence, Greenup family, and author interview with John and Joan O'Shanesy, conducted at Wylarah, 6 May, 1997.
4. For further information see: SBT. 21 June, 1978, p 3.
5. Downes, R.J., *Ironpot State School Golden Jubilee, 1916-1966*, pp 4-5.
6. SBT. 28 July, 1992, pp 1-2 and Downes, R.J., pp 8-9.
7. Downes, R.J. p 13.
8. For a more detailed history of this school, including listings of teachers and a roll of pupils, see: Downes, R.J. pp 10-17.
9. SBT. 16 March, 1966, p 26.
10. K/H. 30 March, 1944, p 1.
11. K/G. 29 July, 1938. For details of the enquiry into Burton's death see: K/H. 18 August, 1938, p 5.
12. Letter to the author from Val Walters, treasurer of the Ironpot Hall Committee, 3 August, 1985.
13. Letter to the author from Robert (Bob) Downes, dated 22 May, 1997.
14. *Jarail Creek State School Silver Jubilee, 1950-1975*, by Wynne Perkins and Lew Skerman, pp 2-3, 6, 7 and letter to the author from Bob Downes, dated 22 May, 1997.
15. Murray, p 81.

Memerambi

Memerambi was first opened up in 1889 with further resumptions being made the following year. The first selectors of the region were the Meehan and Hayden families who took up land along the Stuart River although John Meehan later selected land closer to the township. William Shailer and his family arrived in the region from the Christmas Creek area of Beaudesert in 1893, one of their sons, J.E. Shailer was the first white child born in the area. Early selectors grew maize and pumpkins, cleared the first of the dense forest lands and used the crops to raise pigs which were driven to the rail head at Kilkivan.



Memerambi railway station. The extension of the railway from Wondai to Kingaroy gave Memerambi its rail connection when the line was opened on 19 December, 1904. Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

Yet the region remained something of a wilderness until the coming of the railway in 1904, many of the farmers having difficulty in getting their produce to market in any financially equitable quantity.

While Kingaroy moved quickly ahead following the arrival of the rail line, some of the stations on the line were somewhat slower to develop. One of these was evidently Memerambi which, for four years after the completion of the line to Kingaroy, remained largely in a state of wilderness. One visitor to the village later recording:

At last Memerambi is coming to the fore. At its origin four years ago there was a small platform at the railway siding to which was added a few tarpaulins to cover the goods and chattels belonging to the residents of the district, such as cream cans, letter box, &c. Sometimes hundreds of pounds of cream cheques were lying about, under stones or pieces of

wood to secure them. The next step was the erection of a cream shed, finished about 12 months ago — decidedly an improvement on the old system. Then 5 or 6 months ago a first-class goods shed was built, and equipped recently with a weighing machine (to weigh a ton) and two hand trucks, addressed to Memerambi station-master. That is where the trouble came from. Who is the station-master of Memerambi? Some will reply he is a myth. Others will tell you that the station and postmaster of Memerambi are nobody, anybody and everybody, if you can understand that puzzle. To make it clearer, the Memerambi station-master, or caretaker, or postmaster is shining here by his absence. It is true that sometime ago the Railway Commissioners, or their representative, promised the local residents a man or woman to take charge of the station and post-office, and it is but fair to add that some efforts on the Railway Department's part were made towards redeeming their promise. A load or so of timber made its appearance at the station for the erection of a residence for the local caretaker, but no more was heard of it ...

In the meantime it is a disgrace and a shame to those who are responsible for such a display of culpable neglect, carelessness, indifference or incapability; and at time of writing local residents complain bitterly of the off-hand manner in which they are treated by the Department ...

Last week, on my arrival at Memerambi, I was shown an open box nailed inside the cream shed, into which every passer by has access and from this latter receptacle was extracted a handful of correspondence. There were three letters belonging to Colman (sic) Siding, (five or six stations further down the line), and two other missives addressed Crawford Siding. There were also one or two, I don't remember which, open letters. Some neglect occurs in the goods shed. Parcels of bread or meat disappear or are interfered with if the owner is not present at the arrival of the train. Therefore, people even at a distance of two or three miles from the station, prefer walking or riding that distance to and fro, to be the recipients of their own parcels than to chance the possibility of the latter being the property of petty pilferers ...

(However), at last Memerambi has awakened from its four years' sleep. They are now clearing the ground across (from) the goods shed for the erection of a hotel. Mr Hogg, owner. Nearby and on the same side of the goods shed the ground is also cleared for the building of a general store. Mr Schluter, of Booie, owner. This is the beginning; more will follow.¹

The Memerambi Hotel was constructed in 1908 by Victor Hogg who was formerly a magician in a circus, his wife had also performed in the circus as a 'globe walker'. The hotel was subsequently destroyed by fire.²

Some of the earliest selectors of the area, many of whom had taken up their selections long before the coming of the rail, included John Meehan and his wife, Anastasia, with a 640 acre property. Meehan had left Ireland with his parents in 1882, travelling to England where they remained for two years prior to taking ship for Australia. They subsequently came to Kingaroy to take up their property, *Oakdale*.

Another early selector was John Long of *High View*, a selection approximately four miles from Memerambi Siding. This mixed farm was reputed to have the best views in the district. John Long gave employment to approximately six men all year around, he was renowned for his fruits, including oranges, mandarins, plums, peaches and figs. Long had resided in Maryborough for twenty-eight years, firstly as a storekeeper, but when he lost money on that venture he went farming, then started cabinet-making with six employees. Again he lost money and finally moved to the Memerambi region to take up his selection.

Mr A.E. Birt and his wife selected *Pine View*, approximately five miles from Memerambi. *Pine View* was a frost free region and Birt was successful in growing a host of commercial crops, including tomatoes, sugar-cane, African cucumbers, and even wild gooseberries which grew among the cane.

Nicol McNicoll had selected *Millsdale*, and by the time the rail passed though he had been working his land for about fourteen years. In 1906 he married a Miss Petersen of Coolabunia.³

Other selectors included J. Bourke, formerly of the Wooroolin Hotel, J. Nolan, formerly of Strathpine in Brisbane, and John Knipe, whose property joined with Nolan's.

John Dalton from Childers had selected *Redlands* in about 1904, a property just half a mile from the railway siding. Another selector named James McKenzie had left Scotland in 1887 travelling to Queensland where he settled in Bundaberg for twelve years and later spent six years in the Isis district and three years at Wooroolin before finally selecting his property, *Hillfoot* at Memerambi in February 1908, where he immediately constructed a '... spacious and comfortable residence.'

Among the very early residents of the region was John Coe, a man who was active in many public circles. Coe was a native of the Strathpine district and worked at an early age on the Queensland Railways, selecting his land at Memerambi in 1904. It was in this district that he met and married Ella Doris Shailer, one of the first women settlers of the Memerambi region. Coe was amongst the first to experiment with a peanut crop, he also ran his farm as a successful dairy. He was managing director of the small cooperative cheese factory at Memerambi. In 1918 he purchased a property at Durong but did not move his family there until 1936. John Coe was an active member of the Queensland Dairymen's Association and the Bush Nursing Association. In 1950 he suffered from a series of seizures and never completely recovered, his condition requiring constant care from his wife and family. He died at the Wondai Hospital, aged sixty-eight years on 26 November, 1952.⁴

William Weick formerly of Boonah, and his wife, purchased and settled on *Hillgrove Farm*, a 160 acre property for which he reportedly paid £1 per acre. This property was one and a half miles from the siding. Otto Weick and Hugo Weick were also early settlers, as were George McNicoll, his brother James, S.F. Woltman of *Graceville* William Dickie of *Balgownie* and Neill McBride of *Springburn*.

Pork production was one of the major occupations of many district farmers, the local pig buyer for the region was Daniel Murphy, of *Ivanhoe Farm*, who purchased animals for the company of Foggitt and Jones in Brisbane.⁵ Murphy was well known throughout the entire region, he was born at Spring Creek in the Lowood-Esk region and spent his early years working on cattle properties. He arrived on the South Burnett in 1905 taking up land at Memerambi where he lived for fifty-four years. In 1906, while retaining his farm, he also accepted the position of cattle buyer and later pig buyer for Q.M.E., subsequently transferring to Foggitt and Jones with whom he worked until 1921. Visiting most of the South Burnett regions on horseback, Murphy was widely known and highly respected, he also travelled through the Gympie, Central Burnett, Maryborough and Bundaberg districts and was one of the South Burnett's early peanut growers. His wife, Violet, (nee Fielding) died in 1932, and Murphy died at the Kingaroy Hospital, aged eighty-three years in November 1959.⁶

T.J. Kingston founded the 'Pioneer Store' at Memerambi, the post office was operated from this store by Vera Simpson. Another store was operated by Fred Grant who later sold it to Charles Grant, the building was subsequently destroyed by fire. Walter Burton conducted a butcher's shop in the village, this was later taken over by Harry Freshwater. Another of the early businesses in the village was a store belonging to M.A. Jesberg, the verandah of the store was a popular meeting place, on the front of the store Jesberg advertised that his business was: 'The New Cash Store'.⁷

At this time too a school had been constructed at the village, a report of it claiming that it was: '... attended by 40 children. Within two months new pupils will be added to the roll.' The head teacher in 1908 was reported in the press as being B. Breusch (in fact his name was Burnett Bruce, who was later to become a director of primary education), formerly of Bundaberg, who, according to a report in the *Maryborough Chronicle* of 1908 had been six years attached to the Department of Public Instruction.⁸ The school had been opened on 16 October, 1905, with Miss R. Cordwell as its first teacher.⁹

Among the early head teachers of the school were Miss R. Cordwell, Burnett Bruce, Leopold Sherlock Boninson Steele, (who served a period of war service with the A.I.F., attained the rank of captain and later opened a newsagency in Kingaroy), Neville Charles Herbert and Thomas Hilton Jackson. The first pupil enrolled at the school was Annie Shailer.¹⁰ During Burnett Bruce's tenure as head teacher the school was visited by Prime Minister Andrew Fisher.¹¹

In 1924 the school had the honour of hosting a meeting of peanut growers and it was in the school building that the decision was made to form the Peanut Marketing Board. The first school

building was moved to Dulong during the mid 1920s and was replaced with a larger and more modern construction which was opened in 1927.¹²

By 1910 the improvements made at Memerambi were remarkable. When travellers had passed through the railway station three years previously, all they had seen in the way of construction had been an old tarpaulin strung over a makeshift wooden frame. This had done duty as the cream shed, station house and post office. Within a few years, however, the Railways Department had constructed a modern facility and the number of passengers using the facility had increased dramatically. In 1906 the number of passengers who had embarked or disembarked at Memerambi had been just 68, hardly a worthwhile financial proposition for the Railways Department, although most of its revenue came from the carriage of goods such as cream and timber. However, during the first six months of 1909, the number of passengers using the same service from Memerambi was reported to have been 1863, a striking indication of the success of closer settlement following the arrival of a rail system. For the year ending 1906 the railways revenue from the station had been just £670, yet for the six months ending December 1909 that revenue had risen to £1639.

The township was evidently progressing quickly. By 1910 there was a hotel, two general stores, a saddlery, butchery, refreshment rooms and a branch of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. A grain shed with the capacity to store 5000 bags was being constructed in February that year, the state school had been enlarged and refurbished and a residence had been constructed for the head teacher. The Methodist Church had been constructed, described as being, '... a substantial building' it had been built free of any debt. A Church of England church was in the planning stage but by February 1910 no moves had been made to actually build the structure. Other impending improvements for the township included the opening of a baker's shop and the construction of another hotel.¹³

The co-operative cheese factory was established at Memerambi in 1916 on land surveyed from a property owned by George Darrow, the factory actually commenced operations in 1917 and the first manager and cheese maker was E.T. Howse. The factory became well known for its cheeses, it produced its famed Te Kuti cheese, named probably by one of the factory directors, a New Zealander, George Darrow. Other directors included Joe Nolan, Frank Maguire, Bert Lamperd, John Coe, A.B. Postle and Bill Weick, John Coe was chairman of directors for many years.¹⁴ Blocks of cheese weighing ten pounds were manufactured for local consumption while sixteen pound blocks were made for export. The factory was closed in 1929.

One of the more well known personalities of the township was that of Ted Weller, the baker. Mr Weller baked his bread at Wooroolin and delivered it to Memerambi by horse drawn cart.¹⁵

Arthur Postle, (senior) who owned a produce store at Memerambi, was a member of the first Kingaroy council, both he and his wife, Frances, were extremely highly regarded in the district — so much so that they had been awarded an illuminated address by the residents of Kingaroy. Mrs Postle was born in England, the daughter of Mr and Mrs William Honor. She came to Australia at the age of seventeen years on the sailing vessel, *Indus*, after a voyage lasting five months. She was twenty-one years of age when she married Arthur Postle in 1877, later moving to the Kingaroy region, with their family where they purchased *Kia-Ora*. Arthur Postle was born at St Kilda, Melbourne and worked initially in the telegraph office in Melbourne, later moving to Pittsworth on the Darling Downs.

Frances Postle died in January 1937 and her husband died in December 1937, aged eighty-one years, they were buried together at the Memerambi cemetery.¹⁶ One of their children was Arthur Benjamin Postle, the world famous professional sprinter who became known as The Crimson Flash. Even at an early age, A.B. Postle became deeply involved in sprinting and proved his worth at many country races. In 1906 he was acclaimed: 'the fastest man in the world', and in 1909 was awarded the 220 yards World Championship Cup. Until 1910 he remained unbeaten in Australia, holding the world records for the 50, 60 and 80 yards sprints. He died in 1969, aged eighty-three.¹⁷

Arthur Postle's sons included Percival Alfred Postle who was born at Pittsworth in 1885 and with his family crossed the Bunya Mountains in 1908 to take up land at Memerambi. Percy and his brother Frank were among the region's first peanut farmers. Percy later also farmed at

Boonenne. He was a church warden at Memerambi and also a justice of the peace. His wife Hilda predeceased him in 1969 and Percy himself died on 8 March, 1970, and was buried in the Memerambi cemetery.¹⁸ Another son, Edgar, was killed at the Somme during the First World War.¹⁹

The cemetery at Memerambi is situated at the corner of the Bunya Highway and the Memerambi-Gordonbrook road, the cemetery was gazetted in 1904 following the arrival of the rail lines.²⁰

As with many other centres the Memerambi region was important for its timber, a travelling sawmill operated during the early 1920s and later that decade and into the 1930s Jacob Dossel operated a sawmill at Memerambi, he also operated a threshing machine, driven by a steam traction engine, and he would contract himself out, travelling with his machinery from farm to farm.²¹

Notes and Sources

Chapter Eighty-eight

Memerambi

1. M/C. 16 July, 1908, p 3.
2. *Memerambi, 1900-1980*, by G. Jones, p 7.
3. M/C. 16 July, 1908, p 3.
4. SBT. 4 December, 1952, p 7.
5. M/C. 23 July, 1908, p 3.
6. K/H. 19 November, 1959, P 3.
7. SBT. 18 October, 1967, p 5.
8. M/C. 23 July, 1908, p 3.
9. K/H. 7 July, 1955, p 1 and 4 August, 1955, p 5.
10. K/H. 13 October, 1955, p 1. For full details of the teachers and their terms of tenure see: *Memerambi, 1900-1980*.
11. K/H. 27 October, 1955, p 1.
12. K/H. 13 October, 1955, p 1.
13. M/C. 12 February, 1910, p 6.
14. SBT. 18 October, 1967, p 5.
15. SBT. 15 October, 1980, p 6.
16. K/H. 5 February, 1937, p 2, K/G. 5 February, 1937 and K/G. 17 December, 1937 and Memerambi cemetery records.
17. For a detailed history of A.B. Postle's career as a sprinter see the *Telegraph*, 30 November, 1987, p 21.
18. K/H. 15 April, 1970, p 2.
19. *The Family History of Benjamin and Mary Ann Postle*, p 6.
20. *Register of Historic Sites*, Kingaroy Shire Council.
21. *Memerambi, 1900-1980*, G. Jones, p 11.

Crawford

Another of the region's progressive rural communities was situated at Crawford a region, like many others, dependent upon its agriculture and its timber in order to forge some kind of civilization from the harsh surrounding bush. The Drumanon Hotel (also reported as Drumannon and Drummanon) at Crawford was constructed by Malcolm Redman in 1909.¹

A report of the Crawford district later stated:

The dam on Mr Con. Liesegang's place was the only watering place for bullock teams and cattle in the very early days, and, of course, it developed into a much used camping site. Even after white settlement the aborigines held corroborees not far from this dam. Their eerie music and appearance in the firelight were very frightening to onlookers.

When the Government had the bore put down in 1912 near the road where Wingfields now live, Mr Jack Noon was put in charge of the windmill. His allowance of £5 per year for maintenance included the cost of oil as well as payment for his services. This bore was a virtual life-saver for much of the local stock before settlers could put down their own wells, and in times of drought when their water supplies were low. From the time of its erection this wonderful bore has maintained its flow, and often, today people are thankful to be still able to use it ...

The early yields of maize were transported by wagon to Kilkivan, whence it was sent to Maryborough and Brisbane. Later the building of the railway through Crawford meant that the new grain shed was a very busy centre ...

The first station mistress at Crawford was Mrs Hoskings. Very often the widows of railway workers were given charge of small country stations such as Crawford.

With the settlement and development of the district came a more settled centre at Crawford. Besides the hotel there was the hall, in which dances and social functions were held. Later this hall was shifted from the old Kingaroy Road site closer to the hotel, where it served as a store run by Mr Gibbons, the proprietor of the hotel. This building also acted as a temporary school after Logboy was closed.²

One of the leading characters at Crawford was Mr F.H. Johnson who became the licensee of the Drumanon Hotel. Johnson, a native of England, died at the age of forty-three years. He contracted a cold which developed into double pneumonia and died at the Kingaroy Hospital in July 1927.³ The fifty-three years' old hotel was destroyed by fire shortly before 6 a.m. on Monday 3 March, 1958, the fire also destroyed an adjoining garage and an outbuilding that had formed a section of the hotel complex. The owner of the hotel at that time was E.L. Reeves, of Brisbane, the occupier of the hotel was Ian Oliver Lawrence. Nothing was saved from the fire although the hotel was insured for £6000 and the contents for a further £3000. The Kingaroy fire brigade did not attend the fire, a spokes-person for the brigade later stated that even had the brigade been on the scene there was nothing they could have done to save the building.⁴

The township of Crawford is said to be named after H.R. Crawford, the railway engineer who was in charge of the construction of the line from Wondai to Kingaroy. Crawford was surveyed on 29 October, 1910, by Surveyor E.R. Warren and the first land sale in the town took place on 3 May, 1911.⁵ The Crawford School was opened in 1911, among the first day pupils were Pearl and Vera Redman, both of whom attended the school's 75th jubilee in March 1986.⁶

The establishment of the school came about following public agitation and a series of correspondence to the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Lands. On

30 August, 1909, Mr J. Green, the secretary of the local residents' groups pressing for the establishment of the school, wrote from Crawford Siding to the secretary of the Department of Public Instruction stating: 'Sir, it is proposed to hold a meeting of parents re the establishing of a school here. Would you please forward any information or forms that may be required in connection with same.' On 7 October, 1909, Green again wrote to the department forwarding the application forms for the establishment of a school and stating that there were thirty-four children likely to attend such a school. The establishment of the school moved ahead only very slowly. On 20 April, 1910, Mr W. Muir, secretary of the School Building Committee wrote to the department stating: 'Please find enclosed filled in forms prescribed by your Department. My committee desire to point out the great possibilities of this district, water supplies of 10,000 gals daily has been struck by bore in two instances recently ... The idea of my committee in pointing out these benefits is ... to show the reason for our faith.' The department later advised that approval had been given for the establishment of a school stating that the school building at Logbooy (opened in 1902 and closed in 1910) would have to be removed to Crawford Siding. On 23 January, 1911, the school committee wrote to the department recommending Miss Blanche Ethel Maud La Barte, a private teacher of Childers, as the first teacher, and after a short period of probation she was appointed the school's teacher. The first classes were held in the hall and Miss La Barte experienced problems with dance patrons damaging school equipment. When the old Logbooy School was ready for occupancy the pupils and teacher moved in, the school was opened on 28 March, 1911.⁷

Among some of the more well known settlers in the Crawford region were Sarah Staines and her husband Joseph. Sarah was born in County Fermanagh, in the north of Ireland. She came to Australia with her brother and settled on the south coast of New South Wales. She married Joseph circa 1873 and the couple settled in the Richmond River region. The family moved to Crawford circa 1912, and apart from a brief period in the Dawson Valley region, remained there for the rest of their lives. Upon the death of her husband, Sarah moved into Kingaroy and lived in Haly Street. She was a dedicated worker for the Methodist Church and was heavily involved in many other charitable and social events. Her family was noted for its longevity, her grand-father lived until he was 108 years of age and both her mother and father lived into advanced old age. Sarah Staines died at mid-day on Wednesday, 20 September, 1939, aged ninety-seven years.⁸

Other very early settlers in the Crawford region were Malcolm and Isabella Redman. Malcolm Redman was born at Portadown, Northern Ireland, on 27 February, 1870. Isabella Redman was born Isabella Slater at Lilyvale, Peak Downs, in 1876. They farmed at Crawford for many years and also had farming interests in the Durong region. Mrs Redman was a staunch supporter of the Presbyterian Church and pursued a long career with the Q.C.W.A., being a foundation member of the Kingaroy branch. The farm at Crawford was sold in 1938 and the couple retired to Bargara, near Bundaberg. Malcolm Redman died in 1953 and Isabella died at the St Aubyn's Private Hospital on Tuesday 31 August, 1954.⁹

Ernest Herman (Bill) Liesegang and his wife, Bertha Amelia, were among Crawford's early selectors. Mrs Bertha Liesegang (nee Hoppe) was born at Danzig, Germany and arrived in Australia by arrangement with her uncle, she lived for a while in Brisbane. On 6 October, 1892, she married Bill Liesegang at Minden where they then lived. They made their home at Summer Hill in the Laidley district and in 1909 Bill Liesegang took up land at Crawford, moving his family there the following year. Bill Liesegang died in 1939 and Bertha died at the Kingaroy Hospital, aged eighty-nine years, in February 1954.¹⁰

Another man who initially settled at Crawford was David Smallbone, born at Crows Nest on 2 November, 1889. Smallbone selected land at Crawford in 1908 and after several years sold his property to commence a contract harvesting business. In 1914 he married Christina Jan Alcorn, a nurse at the Ontario Nursing Home in Kingaroy, whose mother, Ann Gunn Alcorn, owned the hospital. The couple later made their home in Kingaroy and David Smallbone continued with his threshing business. He was badly injured when he was fifty years of age as the result of a tractor accident and died in December 1945, aged fifty-six years. His wife died in 1949.¹¹

Notes and Sources
Chapter Eighty-nine
Crawford

1. *Crawford State School 75th Jubilee, 1911-1986*, p 105.
2. *Crawford State School, Golden Jubilee, 1911-1961*, by Jeanette Arthur, pp 8-9, 12.
3. SBT. 5 August, 1927, p 8.
4. SBT. 6 March, 1958, p 1.
5. *Crawford State School 75th Jubilee, 1911-1986*, p 7.
6. SBT. 26 March, 1986, p 4.
7. For details of correspondence see: K/H. 6 April, 1961, p 4. Details of the school's jubilee celebrations may be read in K/H. 23 March, 1961, p 10, for further details of the school including listings of teachers and their tenures see: *Crawford State School, Golden Jubilee, 1911-1961*, by Jeanette Arthur and *Crawford State School 75th Jubilee, 1911-1986*.
8. N/N. 21 September, 1939.
9. K/H. 2 September, 1954, p 2.
10. K/H. 25 February, 1954, p 2.
11. Full details of this family's history may be found in Doreen Smallbone's account published in Murray, pp 441-45.

90

Edenvale

The establishment of Edenvale, south-east of Kingaroy, at the turn of the century was a difficult undertaking for those men and women who settled there. Early selectors included Christen Larsen, J. Jensen, T.C. Neilsen, and L. Svendsen. Christopher (also recorded in cemetery records as Christoffer) Jensen and his wife, Annie, were well known in the district. Annie Jensen had been born at Freestone, near Warwick, and came to the South Burnett with her parents when she was seventeen years of age. After her marriage to Mr Jensen the couple went to Edenvale to live and remained there for the rest of their lives. Annie Jensen died at her home on 6 December, 1933, and was interred at the Taabinga cemetery, her husband died in 1940 and was buried beside her.¹

The early selectors of Edenvale took up their selections knowing that the lack of water was going to be a perennial problem, however, the drought of 1901/02 profoundly affected the production of their selections. Water was brought from the state-owned well at Coolabunia, and there were many attempts to sink wells on the selections at Edenvale. J.F. Goesling sunk a well to approximately 147 feet in 1902 but at that depth the excavation was abandoned. In 1906 a boring plant was used to further explore the well and this quickly resulted in the discovery of water.

One of these selectors, Christen Larsen, was to have a tragic death. He was born at Mulgowie, Laidley, his parents being early settlers of that region. His father was one of the men to work on the historic rail line from Ipswich to Brisbane. At the age of nineteen years Christen Larsen travelled on a push-bike from Laidley to Edenvale. In 1902 he married Miss Sylvia Amelia Sophia Goesling. On 30 September, 1943, Christen Larsen was involved in a car accident, he was rushed to Brisbane for medical treatment but never recovered consciousness for any length of time until his death which occurred a month later on 29 October, 1943. He was interred at the Taabinga cemetery, his wife, Sylvia, died in 1964 and was interred next to him.²

Selectors at Edenvale grew mainly maize, the staple crop of that period, some also grew vegetables, mainly for home consumption and the raising of pigs was also a widely accepted practice. Meat was scarce, many of the settlers living from the land, shooting or trapping kangaroos and wallabies.

The first small store at Edenvale was opened in 1900 by F.C. Petersen. Petersen was something of a catalyst for the region and was certainly one of Edenvale's more prominent residents. It was as a result of his forceful endeavours that saw the first consignment of cream from the region, just two gallons, which was sent to Kilkivan and then Maryborough by rail. This move proved to be the genesis of the dairy industry in the area.³

The first station mistress at Edenvale railway station was Eileen Love, (nee Coonan) who took up the position because her mother, Mrs Pat Coonan, refused to take on the job. Eileen Love's father was a railway ganger. Eileen was also something of a local legend as she was selected to play in the local cricket team. She later moved to Armidale where her husband, Percy Love, became mayor for four years.⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter Ninety

Edenvale

1. K/G. 15 December, 1933, and Taabinga cemetery records.
2. K/H. 4 November, 1943, p 2 and Taabinga cemetery records.
3. WW. pp 148–49.
4. SBT. 26 April, 1973, p 3.

Wooroolin

The tiny community of Wooroolin really did not come into existence until 1898 and 1899 when selections in the district began to be taken up. However, the region certainly did not achieve any significant improvement until the rail arrived at Wondai in 1903. Among the region's early residents were H. Short, James Logan, D. Rainey, A. Hogg, N. Jorgensen, A. Jessen, M. Trahy, F. Marshall, H. Christesen, J. May, Thomas West and Joe Davis.

Alex Hogg, one of the region's foremost settlers, had a rich selection in the district, a visitor to his selection in October 1903 remarking: 'Mr Hogg has a considerable acreage under cultivation, chiefly wheat, barley and rye ... At this farm also we saw a machine for cutting up cobs of corn, husk and all, into very small pieces for fodder, thus enabling the user to save a very considerable chaff bill, Mr Hogg informed us that he fed his horses on this alone.'¹ Hogg is reported to have also constructed the first store at Wooroolin.²

Other selectors in the region included W. Shailer who had taken up a heavily forested selection which, in 1903, he was in the process of clearing. Another selector, Mr R. Gataker, had settled on 120 acres of land on which he grew a number of crops including oats and maize. Selections such as these owed their existence to the establishment of the rail line to Wondai where the community was rapidly growing at that time.

By 1906 a report of Wooroolin reveals details of some of the people who lived there and the problems they were faced with. The report claimed:

The little townling of Wooroolin, the other day burst upon us as a complete surprise, after an absence of 2 or 3 years. When we last saw it, it could boast of only Mr Hogg's house, in the way of buildings, and save for a few small clearings the scrub encroached from all sides, except that of the swamp. Now behold! the railway line of civilization, two hotels, a big store and all other things that go to form the nucleus of what may yet be a thriving bush township. Hundreds of acres of what then was tangled standing scrub, now show smiling crops of almost embarrassing plenty and great variety. From Mr Hooper's blacksmiths and wheelwright's shop comes sound of 'merry mirth and labour' that go to show that he has by no means forgotten the manly crafts ... Mrs and Mr Evans too, have just started business in a little store, which is just the thing needed ... There would appear to be a fair opening for a butcher's shop at Wooroolin, as at present all meat is got by train from Kilkivan ... Postal arrangements, in our opinion are capable of much improvement.³

One of the early businessmen at Wooroolin was Daniel Richard Dalton who, with his wife, Lily, ran a general store and produce merchants in the village. Daniel Dalton was born near Rockhampton circa 1868 and after living for several years at Ipswich, where he married, the couple moved to the South Burnett opening their store at Wooroolin, the store was later taken over by their son. Daniel Dalton was a public spirited man, he was involved in the School of Arts Committee, the Returned Soldiers' League and various sporting clubs. He suffered a severe illness in 1932 but later recovered, in August 1934 he was visiting his son at Gayndah when he again became ill and was taken to the Gayndah Hospital where he died on 14 August, 1934.⁴ His wife, Lily Dalton, was born in England circa 1872 and emigrated to Australia with her parents, settling initially at Ipswich. Mrs Dalton died at the Clydebank Private Hospital on 18 October, 1933, after undergoing an operation for appendicitis. She was interred at the Memerambi cemetery.⁵

Robert Charles Geale and his wife, Mary, were also early selectors at Wooroolin. Mary Geale was born in 1875 in the Cootamundra district of New South Wales, the daughter of Mr and Mrs Michael O'Brien. After marrying Robert Geale the couple lived in Wellington New South Wales

until they heard reports of the fresh new country being opened up in the South Burnett region. They arrived at Wooroolin in 1909 and lived on their property there for ten years before moving into Kingaroy. Mary Geale died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Thursday 1 July, 1943, and was buried at the Taabinga cemetery, her husband died in 1950 and was buried alongside his wife.⁶

The Wooroolin Hotel was destroyed by fire early in the morning of 29 June, 1915. During the fire a man named Christian Andersen was killed.

The entire series of events was steeped in misfortune and tragedy. Christian Andersen, described as a thick-set man aged fifty-nine years, had come to Australia from Denmark. He and his wife had ten children, they lived on a selection near the village and had come into Wooroolin in order to collect a debt. That evening he had stayed at the hotel where he had consumed a quantity of alcohol, sufficient for the hotel licensee to have to help him to his room.



Dave Holmes' Wooroolin Hotel, 1915, it was destroyed by fire on 29 June that year, during which a man named Christian Andersen was killed.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

Other people staying in the hotel at that time included Paul Simon, Fred Fiedler, John Jessen, William Warren, William Fellows, Miss Daisy Pope, Louis Duff, and a labourer named William Ward. All the guests were sleeping in rooms on the second floor of the hotel, however, Ward, who was of aboriginal extraction, was given a small room on the ground floor. He had arrived from Kingaroy on the night of 28 June, the day before the fire, and on the night of the fire he had drunk heavily and later admitted that he was, '... the worse for liquor that night.'

The licensee of the hotel, David Holmes, stated at the subsequent enquiry — held at the Police Court Wondai — that on the evening of the fire all had been normal at the hotel. He had checked that all the guests and staff were in their rooms, including the cook and housemaid who were both sleeping on the ground floor on the western side of the building. He checked the kitchen to ensure that the cooking fire was out, and then after seeing Christian Andersen to his room and putting out the lamp there, he too went to bed. Holmes continued with his statement, saying:

I retired to my bed about 11 p.m.; was awakened about 1.45 next morning by William Warren calling out: 'Get up! Get up quickly!' I jumped out of bed more or less half suffocated, as my room was full of smoke. When I went out the side door I saw flames coming round the eastern side of the building. I then threw some of my clothes over the balcony, and with the aid of a rug got through the flames and got downstairs. I then made

enquiries as to whether all the occupants were out of the building, and was told they were. I afterwards found that ... (Andersen) was missing. The whole of the house was then in flames and it was too late to make any attempt to rescue (Andersen). When I wakened I did not think of Andersen. About three-quarters of an hour after I could see the figure of a man in the flames just under where his (Andersen's) room was. After the fire was out the police took possession of the remains from where I had seen the figure in the flames. I believe I was the last to leave the building. I had no idea of the cause of the fire ... there was no inflammable material about that could catch fire of itself. Ward occupied the room whence the fire seemed to come. He (Ward) was under the influence of liquor when he went to bed.⁷

Ward also gave evidence at the hearing, stating that on the night of the fire he had been drunk and that he could not remember striking any matches or using a lamp. He had been awakened by the smoke, and getting quickly out of bed he had shouted: 'Fire.' He admitted that the fire appeared to be coming from the floor of his room and running up the walls.⁸

The building was owned by A.F. Jessen and insured for £1120, the furniture was insured for £500.⁹

The school at Wooroolin came about as a result of pressure from the residents of the village who formed the Wooroolin Lagoon School Committee, its secretary was Reginald Gataker. In 1900, Gataker, on behalf of the committee, wrote to the authorities requesting that a school be opened in the region. The school was eventually constructed at a cost of £108/18/6, the successful tenderer being A. Jorgensen. The school was ready for opening by 1901, its first teacher was Miss Fanny Moore, but by 1911 the building had become so overcrowded that the education authorities decided to have another school built.¹⁰ The school at West Wooroolin was opened in April 1929 with Bernice Christina McMillan as its teacher.

One of the more well known selectors of Wooroolin was George Alfred Champney. Champney was a native of the Beaudesert district, after completing his education he enlisted in the A.I.F. and served in the First World War until the armistice in 1918. After being discharged he worked in the butchering and timber business for a number of years. On 28 November, 1928, he married Esther Lucas at Beaudesert and they soon afterwards moved to Wooroolin where they remained for the rest of their lives. Champney was appointed to the Kingaroy Shire Council in January 1943 and was also the council representative on the Kingaroy Hospital Board, he was deputy chairman of the council for a term and the chairman of the works committee. The press later stated that he was a successful farmer: '... justifiably proud of the rich areas which he worked and supervised for many years and from which one of the South Burnett's most beautiful views may be had.' Champney was a breeder of Jersey cattle and was accepted as one of Queensland's most reliable judges in that field. During the Second World War he served in the Volunteer Defence Corps. George Champney died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Thursday 18 November, 1954, and was buried the following day, flags were flown at half mast at the Kingaroy Shire Council.¹¹

Champney was succeeded on the council by another well known Wooroolin identity, a farmer named John Alexander Moore, who was appointed to Number One Division by the council in December 1954. His late father, Paul Moore, had also served on the council.¹²

One of the foremost breeders of dairy cattle in the Wooroolin region was J.W. Johnston whose bull, 'Lord Kitchener', twice won the A.I.S. championship at the Brisbane Royal Show.

Johnston was born at Kangaloon, New South Wales, on 2 September, 1874, the youngest son of Mr and Mrs William Johnston. His father died in 1882 and the family moved to Wollongong to live with relatives, later J.W. Johnston spent some time living with his brother, Thomas Johnston at Berrima, Thomas was the head teacher of the Berrima State School.

After leaving school J.W. Johnston started working for his uncle as an apprentice, several years later he selected land at Dorrigo when the crown lands there were thrown open for selection in 1894. He married Frances Margaret Staines of the Richmond River District in 1899 and spent seven years in that district growing sugar cane before returning to Dorrigo. It was at Dorrigo that he established his first Illawarra Shorthorn stud, *Montrose*, Johnston became the first president of the Dorrigo Show Society and for several years was president of the dairy association. After spending thirteen years in the Dorrigo region he moved to Queensland, taking up his property

Werona at Wooroolin. He and his wife remained there for about twenty years before moving into Haly Street Kingaroy. They sold *Werona* in 1954. J.W. Johnston was in failing health for some time prior to his death which took place at his home on 26 May, 1955.¹³

Henry Catch Alcock was also an early selector of the Wooroolin region. He was born in Bega, New South Wales in 1869 and grew up in that region, spending several years in the Northern Rivers district. He married Miss Beatrice Ralph at Sydney and the couple made their first home in the Northern Rivers area. In 1911 they moved to Queensland, Alcock taking up a farm at Wooroolin. He was closely associated with the district shows and was a trustee of the Kingaroy show-grounds. Beatrice Alcock died in 1931 and in 1935 Henry Alcock married Miss Ann Logan of Wooroolin, they moved to Memerambi in 1944. Henry Alcock died at the Kingaroy Hospital, aged eighty five years, on Monday 2 August, 1954.¹⁴

One man who achieved some fame for himself and was also an early selector of Wooroolin, and later at Crawford, was Matthew Horan. Horan was of Irish extraction, he was born in March 1879 and received his education by private tuition at his parents' homestead at Christmas Creek, in the Beaudesert district. There were two brothers in the family, Matthew and Joseph, the sons of Matthew Horan (Senior) who had come to Australia with his parents in 1862. Matthew Horan (Senior) died at Beaudesert on 13 April, 1931.¹⁵



Maize growing was one of the principal crops of the early settlers. Here is a typical scene of maize threshing at Wooroolin, 1906.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection

Matthew Horan (Junior) was an expert with horses and was brought up in the horse rearing profession, horses bred at Beaudesert were sold through the Walker's saleyards in Brisbane, in the vicinity of the city hall, they were in demand as cab, army and police mounts. The press later reported of him:

He was a great bushman and also in his early teens was known far and wide as a rough rider, and would travel miles on occasions to master a local outlaw. He was a kindly natured man and very modest in his talks of himself.

When the States Federated in 1901 he was one of a number of horsemen who rode before the Duke and Duchess of York. He was chosen on account of his superb horsemanship.

In 1903 the wanderlust hit him and with a pack horse and riding his favourite hack he struck out overland for the South Burnett where good lands were being thrown open for selection. After looking the country over he decided to try the ballot for some blocks in the Wooroolin area. He was fortunate to secure some good lands and, to keep going, broke in large numbers of saddle horses for the graziers that were then settling in, and in addition he bought many re-mounts for the Indian Army, these had to be ridden and taught to lead for shipment to India ...

He married Winifred Jane Madden, one of a large pioneer family, also of the Booie district, near Kingaroy. They spent their honeymoon at the Drumannon Hotel, owned and conducted by the late Malcolm Redman. It was a great timber centre in those days, and as many as 30 horse and bullock teams often camped on Cresley Flats, later known as Crawford Hotel area.

After some years in the Wooroolin district which in those times took in the area where 4SB stands today, he sold out and came to Kingaroy where with his brother the late Joe Horan, they pioneered the Crawford Road property, together with the property now owned by his nephew, Bill Kenny.¹⁶

Matthew Horan died on 27 April, 1970, aged ninety-one years.¹⁷

The Wooroolin Memorial Hall was an initiative of the Wooroolin Patriotic League and came about following the Great War, the site was gazetted as a School of Arts reserve in 1920 and the building was opened in 1922 by Cyril Corser. It was extended in 1928.¹⁸



Unusual type of circular corn crib in use on J. Petersen's farm at Home Creek, photographed 23 September, 1934. It had a circumference of 45 yards, 10 ft. wall with crown 4 ft. higher, giving a capacity of about 1300 bags. It was loaded with nets and a crane from a wagon; unloading was done from a self-feeding passage. One man fed 660 bags in 1½ days.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

Notes and Sources
Chapter Ninety-one
Wooroolin

1. M/C. 13 October, 1903, p 2.
2. WW. p 158.
3. M/C. 18 May, 1906, p 4.
4. K/G. 17 August, 1934.
5. K/G. 27 October, 1933 and Memerambi cemetery records.
6. K/H. 8 July, 1943, p 3 and Taabinga cemetery records.
7. M/C. 19 July, 1915, p 8.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid. See also: M/C. 3 July, 1915, p 12.
10. SBT. 8 November, 1972, p 14.
11. K/H. 25 November, 1954, p 7.
12. K/H. 16 December, 1954, p 2. The Paul Moore mentioned in this report died at the Wondai Hospital in December 1942. For details of his career see: K/H. 23 December, 1942, p 2.
13. K/H. 2 June, 1955, p 2.
14. K/H. 5 August, 1954, p 2 and 12 August, 1954, p 4.
15. For details of Matthew Horan's (Senior) career see: K/G. 15 May, 1931.
16. K/H. 20 May, 1970, p 7.
17. Ibid.
18. *Register of Historic Sites*, file K 62, Kingaroy Shire Council. For interesting details of more contemporary history of the Wooroolin district see: *Peanuts and People, Wooroolin, 1952-1963*, this booklet is based upon the diaries of Raymond T. Champney.

Goodger to Kunioon West

Hans Larsen is generally credited as being the first settler in the Goodger region, arriving with his brothers circa 1892 or 1893. Other early selectors included Thomas Patteson, (also reported as Patterson), who arrived in 1900, Andrew Knox, John Peter Nord, John Buttsworth, Robert Snare and Harry Proctor.

The region is named after the Goodger family who had come from the Gawler River district of South Australia. The family was comprised of William Goodger, his daughter, Ellen, with son James Elliott, and his family, Herbert, Howard, Albert and Walter George. Mrs Emily Goodger, William's wife, had previously died and was buried at Gawler. James was married to Janet McKenzie, when she died in December 1954 the press reported:

The death of Mrs Janet Goodger, at St. Aubyn's Hospital, on Thursday, December 23, took from our midst one who had been a resident for over half a century. She was the widow of the late James Elliott Goodger, who, with his late brothers George and Howard, settled in Barker Creek area on *Wyuna Vale* property. The three brothers selected other land as years went on. When the line to Tarong was built it passed through the late Mr James Goodger's property, and it was after the family that the railway station 'Goodger' was named, and hence the locality is called the Goodger district, as it is known today.

Mrs Goodger was only a few days in hospital before she died. She was 97 years and seven months. She was born on May 17, 1857, at Tuppal Creek in New South Wales. Later she went to Victoria. At the age of 32 she married Mr James Elliott Goodger on January 2, 1889, at John's Wood, Victoria. The marriage was registered at St Germaine. In 1900 Mr James Goodger came to this district and shortly after came Mrs Goodger and their children, followed by Mr Goodger's brothers, who subsequently took up land.

The 1902 drought was a big set-back, but perseverance won out and the Goodger family became very successful farmers. The late Mr James Goodger was a member of the Nanango Shire Council ... In his public activities his wife aided him and they shared many pleasant experiences in assisting the district's activities.

A member of the Kunioon Methodist Church, Mrs Goodger was organist for the choir.¹

Other members of the family included Howard and Elizabeth Goodger, Elizabeth had come to Australia with her parents in 1885. The family began farming at Ipswich and later at Kunioon. After her marriage, Elizabeth and her husband selected *Rotherwood*. Mrs Elizabeth Goodger died, aged eighty-eight years, in August 1969 and was buried at the Nanango cemetery.²

The Goodger lands were heavily covered in trees at the time of early settlement and much time was spent by those early selectors in clearing their holdings. The rail line to Tarong passed through Goodger, the school was opened in 1915, a general store in 1919 which also acted as a post office and bank agency.³

John Buttsworth, another of the early residents, was born in 1858, he married Mary Cave Clarke in 1885 and the family moved to Goodger in 1908. John Buttsworth was the grandson of a convict named Henry Buttsworth who had arrived in Australia aboard the convict vessel *Guildford* in 1812. Sara Sutherland moved to Goodger with her family of seven in 1929 as share farmers with J.P. Nord. T.A.E. (Arthur) Black rode to the South Burnett from Victoria on a bicycle and later balloted for land at Goodger. Soren Nielsen and his wife Louise were other early residents of Goodger and constructed the store there, later opening a bakery in Kingaroy. John Peter Nord was born in Sweden and arrived in Australia in 1858. He returned to Sweden in

1898 and married Thelma Backstrom. With his wife and brother, Oscar Nord, he later returned to Australia and in 1906 purchased land at Goodger.⁴

Well known South Burnett resident was Ferdinand Seng, a native of Germany, who operated a blacksmith's shop at Goodger. He and his wife, Agnes and their two children were popular residents of the region, the blacksmith's shop operated by Seng was later taken over by his sons.⁵

With the arrival of the railway at Goodger in 1915 the small township really began to prosper and it was then that the name of Goodger was given to the railway station after Howard and Elizabeth Goodger, through whose property, *Rotherwood* the line ran.⁶

The school at Goodger was originally the Thinoomba Provisional School and was moved to Goodger in 1915, the tender for the work being won by J.G. Jacobson. The school was erected in the north east corner of reserve 53, Taabinga east, and was named Stratharlie, after the property opposite the school site. It was a weatherboard building but was classified as a tent school as it had canvas roll up blinds on each side. Its first teacher was Miss S. Dunn, who was replaced that same year by Mavis Lewis. Olivia Malynn took over in 1916. As with most other schools in the rural regions it soon became too small for the growing population and a new school was constructed by the Works Department in 1920. The school was first occupied on 25 October that year and the opening was celebrated with a picnic on 26 November, 1920. Due to the eventual decline in population at Goodger the school was forced to close on 10 August, 1962, the building was purchased by the school committee and became the Goodger School of Arts.⁷

To the east of Goodger lies the rural district known as Kunioon West, some parts of the general Kunioon region fall within the Nanango shire while others such as the school grounds of Kunioon West, are in Kingaroy shire, in fact the grounds of Kunioon West School front the road which delineates the border between the two shires.

The school was opened in 1902, its first teacher was Timothy Sullivan whose son, T.J. (Timothy junior) later became a well known poet of the South Burnett.

Timothy Sullivan (senior) came from the Rockhampton region to become the first teacher at Kunioon West, he was succeeded by Emilie Bertelsen in 1914, and thereafter there was a succession of teachers. The school closed in 1946.

Tim Sullivan (junior) was born at Bajool near Rockhampton on 2 September, 1891, the third child of Mr and Mrs Timothy Sullivan (senior) who had a family of nine children. As a young man Tim Sullivan worked on cattle stations in western Queensland, he married Alice Murphy at Clermont in 1922. Until 1925 he worked at the Chillagoe smelters and later at cane farms in North Queensland. In 1925 he purchased a farm in the Maidenwell district and lived there with his family until moving to Knight Street Kingaroy in 1944. During his years in the region he was also employed by the Kingaroy Shire Council. Yet his memory is perpetuated through his many poems. He wrote *In the Shade of a Native Tree*, published in 1971 and later reprinted, many of his poems were of historical subjects depicting life in early country Queensland, he also published poems about Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen and the long serving matron of the Kingaroy Hospital, Matron A.E. Farr. Tim Sullivan died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Tuesday 1 May, 1973, aged eighty-one years.⁸

Notes and Sources
Chapter Ninety-two
Goodger to Kunioon West

1. K/H. 30 December, 1954, p 2. For details on the Goodger family and their descendants see: *Back to Goodger, 1990, a Part History of the Goodger District*, Kingaroy Shire Council, pp 11–13.
2. N/A. 14 August, 1969, p 1.
3. *Register of Historic Sites*, Kingaroy Shire Council.
4. *Back to Goodger, a Part History of the Goodger District*, pp 14–18.
5. *Ibid*, p 38.
6. *Ibid*, p 45.
7. *Back to Goodger, a Part History of the Goodger District*, pp 20–27.
8. SBT. 16 May, 1973, p 2.

Local Government at Kingaroy

What appears to have been one of the first serious public indications of a break-away movement from the administrative control of Nanango, came on 24 March, 1908, when the Kingaroy Progress Association called a meeting to discuss the advisability of such a move. Thomas William O'Neill was voted to the Chair. The meeting resulted in a resolution being passed calling for a public meeting so that the issue could be fully discussed. That meeting was held about two weeks later, however, no decisions could be reached and little progress was made.¹

Over the following years, as the town grew rapidly, it soon became evident that the distant control of the local government authorities that then administered the region could pay only lip service to the requirements of this rapidly burgeoning centre. During these years those in favour of separation kept up a steady pressure on those against, and slowly many of the former sceptics began to believe that separation might be good for the region. By 1911 the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce and the various progress associations were moving ahead with plans to gain separation.² That year proposed boundaries were drawn up and approved by the Home Department.

On 12 January, 1912, a separate Kingaroy shire was gazetted with an area of 412 square miles the area being excised from the Wambo, Nanango and Wienholt shires.³ The area of the shire was later added to, about doubling its size, with additions of regions from both Wondai and Wambo shires. The first elections were held on 12 March, 1912, the first council meeting was held on 20 March in Miller's Hall and the first council chambers were constructed in 1913.⁴



T.W. O'Neill, first chairman of the Kingaroy Shire Council.
Source — Kingaroy Shire Council.



G.S. Venman, first shire clerk of the Kingaroy Shire Council.
Source — Kingaroy Shire Council.

The first council was comprised of Thomas William O'Neill, as its chairman, J.H. Sigley, James Braidwood Edwards, Carl August Schultz, J. Toomey, M. Baker, H. Short, A.B. Postle, H.A. Goodger, F.W. Sprenger, Luke Reilly and H.C.G. Spann. The first shire clerk was G.S. Venman who was appointed with a salary of £170 per year.⁵



Councillors and staff of the first Kingaroy Shire Council, March 1912. **Standing:** A Stoodley (overseer), J. Toomey, H.C.G. Spann, Luke Reilly, H.A. Goodger, J.H. Sigley. **Sitting:** Carl August Schultz, M. Baker, Thomas William O'Neill (chairman) H. Short, James Braidwood Edwards. **Front:** F. W. Sprenger, A.B. Postle. **Insert:** G.S. Venman (clerk).

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council.

O'Neill Square at the intersection of King and Haly Streets Kingaroy is named after the shire's first chairman, a memorial plaque is affixed to the base of a light stand in the park near the Carrollee Hotel.

The family of one of these councillors, H. Spann, later suffered a tragic episode when Spann's foster son, Stephen George Spann and another man named Hartley Brian Wadell, were convicted of murdering Mrs Annie Caroline Spann, the Councillor's widow. The murder took place at Spann's farm at Kumbia in January 1955.⁶

Luke Reilly was a native of Ireland who arrived in Australia at the age of twenty-one years where he soon became involved in gold mining. He was so successful in this venture that several years later he was able to travel again to Ireland. Upon his return to Australia he came to Queensland and selected land at Ingham, however, he did not remain long in that district and soon afterwards selected a property at Coolabunia. He again visited Ireland circa 1910 and returned with his niece, Miss M.A. Reilly, who lived with him until her death more than twenty years later. Luke Reilly died on Friday 14 May, 1937.⁷

In addition to serving on the first Kingaroy Shire Council James Braidwood Edwards of *Spring Valley* near Kingaroy was one of the region's foremost politicians, as the press later claimed:



The first offices of the Kingaroy Shire Council, 1913.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council.

After playing a prominent part in the early settlement of ... Victoria, he came to Queensland in 1900. He farmed on the Downs for eight years, and then crossed the range into the South Burnett, and turned his experienced hand to assisting in the pioneering work then going on in Kingaroy. He threw himself zestfully into the public life of the growing town. His name is on the list of foundation committee-men of the Kingaroy Show Society, and he has been a member and exhibitor for 33 years. He was an active member on the first Hospital Committee, and a member of the first Kingaroy Shire Council. For many years he was president of the South Burnett District Council of the Farmers' union which under his leadership, experienced its most successful period in this area.

In 1920 he was elected to Parliament as the member for Nanango, and has represented this constituency ever since. His work in the House won him the Chairmanship of the Public Works Commission from 1929 to 1932, and he is still a member of that Commission. He accompanied it in its tour of investigation into the proposed extension of the Great Northern Railway ... to Cammooweal ... He was Whip of the Opposition in the last Parliament.⁸

Mrs M.E. Edwards, the wife of J.B. Edwards, later wrote an account of the arrival of the family in 1908. She stated that they arrived in January that year, her husband came overland with a horse and sulky while Mrs Edwards and her three small children travelled by train. She wrote:

The night I came it had rained and there were inches of mud on the platform. We stayed at the Kingaroy Hotel the first night ... Where the peanut silos now stand, a timber loading allotment stood, and great piles of pine and hardwood were loaded and sent to various sawmills ...

The street then was quite funny, one had to walk up steps to get under a verandah to enter a shop. In present days one sees the type in western picture shows. However, the late Mr F.C. Petersen had built a more modern general store, and it was burnt down, on what is now known as Miller's Corner.

With heavy rains this town was a muddy quagmire, and when the first Shire Council tried to get a loan of £4000 there was a pretty big dissension amongst the public. The Council won, and the beginning of doing up the streets followed. It has been said that many young women's shoes are buried between the Post Office and Club Hotel.⁹

Another of the first councillors, Carl August Schultz, was a powerful and highly respected figure in the community. He was born at Highfields on 4 May, 1876, and lived there during his childhood. On 8 March, 1899, he married Elizabeth Trost, the couple lived for a while at Silverleigh on the Darling Downs. In 1907 they moved to Inverlaw, but Mrs Schultz died in 1920. Carl Schultz married again on 7 March, 1922, his second wife being Annie Natalier from Ropely near Gatton. Carl Schultz conducted a farming property at Inverlaw until six years before his retirement when he moved into Kingaroy. He was a member of the Inverlaw School Committee and the show society and also served on the Kingaroy Hospital Committee. He left the council in 1914 but during his retirement years he maintained an active interest in council affairs. He died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Saturday 22 January, 1955, aged seventy-eight years.¹⁰

Meetings of the shire council continued to be held in the Miller's Hall and on 18 January, 1913, ten months after that first historic council meeting, a tender from a Mr Richardson was accepted for the construction of the first shire office. The first meeting in the new offices was held on 2 June, 1913.

In 1918 M. Baker was appointed chairman and the following year J.H. Hodge took over the Chair. He was again appointed to the Chair in 1920 and that same year the council began an investigation of the possibilities of an electricity scheme being introduced to the town. (For comprehensive details on the introduction of electricity into the South Burnett region see Chapter 120).

T.W. O'Neill was returned to the Chair in 1921 and two years later the council continued investigating the question of an electricity authority to supply power to Kingaroy, Wondai, Murgon and Nanango. On 18 July 1923 the first female councillor in Queensland, Cr. E.M.K. Wilson, (Dr Ellen Kent-Hughes) was welcomed to the Kingaroy Shire Council by the chairman, Cr. T.W. O'Neill.

In May 1924 Cr. Robert Stephen Brown became chairman and in December 1924 the first shire clerk, G.S. Venman, was replaced by H.W. Sanderson. Henry Ainsley Hull took over from Sanderson in June the following year.

On 24 January, 1925, the electricity authority came into being and in 1927 the chairmanship of the council passed to J.H. Hodge. Hodge was unanimously re-elected in 1930 and in September 1930 former shire chairman Robert Stephen Brown died, he was replaced on the council by Cr. D. Gallagher.

In 1932 there was considerable unrest among many of the townspeople who believed that the council should have been dissolved. A petition from the Kingaroy and District rate-payers' Association demanded the dissolution of the council but the council managed to survive the crisis.

In 1933 John Anthony Carroll was elected chairman, he was again elected in May 1936 and in October that year Cecil George Audley Done succeeded Henry Ainsley Hull as shire clerk. Hull left the council under acrimonious circumstances and allegations of incompetence, he was given one month's notice as from 30 September, 1936.¹¹

Hull's replacement, Cecil Done, was appointed shire clerk from a field of thirty-nine applicants and prior to his appointment to Kingaroy was town clerk at Thursday Island. At the time he was thirty-nine years of age, a married man and a returned soldier who had served four years in Palestine during the Great War where he had been awarded a Military Medal on 4 August, 1916.¹²

In 1937 the council decided to proceed with the construction of new shire council chambers, the original timber building having become completely outdated. The new chambers were completed by the following year at a total cost of £5000 and opened by the minister for agriculture and stock, Mr F.W. Bulcock in 1938, the ceremony being broadcast on Radio 4SB.¹³

In May 1939 Cr. C.F. Adermann entered the council as its chairman and in January the following year the council adopted the Memerambi Water Supply Scheme. By 30 January 1942 the dam at Gordonbrook was filled to capacity and soon afterwards the scheme came into operation.

Cr. C.F. Adermann was elected to the Chair for a second term in May 1943 and in March 1946 he was replaced by Cr. Oliver Stuart Bond, Bond became the council representative on the South

Burnett Regional Electricity Board when it was constituted in April 1947. Two months later, in July that year, Mr A.V. Angove took over the position of shire clerk from Cecil Done. Angove had qualified as a shire clerk, aged twenty years, in 1937.¹⁴

In October 1947 Cr. O.S. Bond died in office and was replaced by Cr. W.J. Lang. Lang was elected for a further term in May 1949 and the following year, on 11 November, 1950, a proclamation was issued resuming land for the civic centre. In June 1952 Cr. W.J. Lang began his third term as chairman of the council and in September 1953 the new council library was opened. Two months later, on 4 November, 1953, the new council swimming pool, constructed at a cost of £40,000 was officially opened.

In May 1955 T.J. O'Neill, the nephew of the first shire council chairman, was elected to the Chair and in August that year W.S. Anderson was awarded the contract for the construction of the sewerage treatment works, the contract price being £38,868/19/-. The first sewerage connection was made on 25 May, 1957.

During the triennial elections of 1958 Cr. T.J. O'Neill was re-elected to the Chair, he was again elected in 1961. On 26 May, 1961, the council accepted a tender from C.H. Cathcart for the construction of a new shire hall, the tender price being £69,797. In September 1961 the foundation stone for the new Kingaroy Shire Hall was laid by the state premier, George Francis Reuben Nicklin. Following the ceremony Nicklin was presented with an inscribed silver trowel as a memento of the event. Inscribed on the foundation stone were the words: 'This stone was laid by the Honourable G.F.R. Nicklin, M.M., M.L.A., Premier of Queensland, this 22nd day of September, 1961.' Behind the stone was placed a copper casket containing a copy of the local newspaper dated 1923, minutes of the first meeting of the Kingaroy council on 20 March, 1912, attendance rolls of the council meetings for the period 1912 to 1961, coins, stamps, and a copy of the region's first history, *Wilderness to Wealth*.¹⁵



Opening of Kingaroy Town Hall, 2 March, 1963. The hall was constructed at a cost of £117,055.

Source — Radio 1071 archives

The hall was officially opened, also by Premier Nicklin, on the afternoon of Saturday 2 March, 1963.¹⁶ However, it was criticised for running over budget, the estimated cost of the building had been £110,320, but the final costs had totalled £117,055.¹⁷ Criticism was also levelled at the hall because of its poor acoustics, and in 1972 the Kingaroy Shire Council appointed Brisbane based architect S. Marquis-Kyle, an expert on such problems, to investigate the matter. Marquis-Kyle later stated that the hall was too large for acoustics over a wide range of different uses and that due to several errors of design there were 'dead spots' in the hall. The consultant also recommended various measures that could be taken to provide better acoustic results.¹⁸ The work

carried out by the council in an effort to improve acoustics included the installation of a complete new ceiling using acoustic tiles, sound boards were placed on the stage and a new heavy curtain was hung backstage.¹⁹

In 1965 the council lost in office one of its most popular chairmen when Councillor T.J. O'Neill suddenly died at the age of fifty. O'Neill had been a very highly respected member of the council and community who had done much to increase services. His achievements during his ten years' term of office as shire chairman included the provision of a vigorous street development and road-works programme, a major augmentation to the town's water supply system, the introduction of the Kumbia water scheme, the expansion of the sewerage system which was introduced in 1955 and completed in 1958, improvements to the saleyards and additions to the civic centre. Upon his death in July 1965, shire clerk, Mr Ron Knopke, stated: 'It was a privilege for me to work with Councillor O'Neill. He was a man of high integrity and well versed in local government affairs. The shire has progressed under his leadership and he will be sadly missed both as a leader and a citizen.'²⁰

In 1978 the council decided to proceed with the construction of new administrative chambers, the estimated cost of the building being \$564,300. The plan to build new chambers had first been mooted some three years previously.²¹ The new offices and chambers were opened on 16 November, 1979.

Some Personalities of Local Government

Mantle Baker

Mantle Baker was one of the region's more well known residents, primarily due to his life in public service. He was born at Bridlington, England, in 1842 and came to Australia when he was eighteen years of age. At first he found work on various farms and soon took up farming himself in the Childers region. On 16 August, 1891, he married Mary Halliday who had also emigrated from England and for the following ten years the family continued farming in the Childers district. However, with the opening up of the South Burnett following the construction of the rail line, in 1901, Baker brought his family to the Kingaroy region, selecting a block of land at Crawford. He represented Kingaroy when it was controlled by the local authority at Nanango and was instrumental in working towards autonomy, which was achieved with the formation of the Kingaroy Shire Council in 1912, being elected to that first council and later (1918-19), became the second chairman of the council. His wife died in 1906 and Baker then married Eva Moore of Kingaroy. He died in August 1941.²²

Joseph Henry Hodge

Joseph Henry Hodge was the council's third chairman, he served in that position from 1919 to 1921 and again from 1927 to 1933. Hodge, who was also a justice of the peace, arrived on the South Burnett from Grantham circa 1910 and opened a butchering business in Kingaroy, he carried on in that line of work until his retirement when his sons took over the business. Hodge was a strong supporter of the Liberal and Country parties, a member of the Masonic fraternity and a supporter of the Church of England. He served on the Kingaroy Hospital Committee and took an active interest in the Kingaroy Jockey Club and the Kingaroy Show Society. He died at the Kingaroy Hospital, aged eighty years, on 2 November, 1950.²³

Robert Stephen Brown

Robert Stephen Brown was among the first of the early residents of Kingaroy, arriving from the North Pine district. As we have seen, he took up *Findowie* where he carried on a grazing property, and upon the resumption of that holding for closer settlement he moved into Kingaroy where he operated as a wine and spirit merchant in association with Mr R.A. Pearse. He was a member of the Nanango Shire Council when that council controlled the area which now encompasses Kingaroy and was on that council when the Kingaroy Shire Council came into existence in 1912. He was vice president of the Kingaroy District Hospital Board and served on a number of other public bodies including the Kingaroy Agricultural, Pastoral and Industrial Society, the School of Arts, the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce, and was a member of the local

Masonic Lodge. He served as chairman of the council from 1924 to 1927, and died in September 1930.²⁴ His wife was Ellen Elizabeth, a native of Gawler, South Australia. In 1901, accompanied by her three brothers, Walter, James and Howard Goodger, she arrived at the South Burnett and was engaged in dressmaking at Nanango, it was during this time that she met and married Robert Brown. She died, aged seventy-four years, on Monday 2 November, 1936, and was buried beside her husband at the Taabinga cemetery.²⁵

Charles Adermann

For biographical details on Charles Adermann see Chapter 117.

Johannes and Florence Bjelke-Petersen

Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen is a well known Queensland politician and volumes have been written on his career, therefore it is not the intention of this brief entry to detail an in-depth biography of his political and private life.

Johannes Bjelke-Petersen was born on 13 January, 1911, at Dannevirke, New Zealand, where his Danish-born father was a Lutheran pastor. He came to Queensland as an infant in 1913 when his parents settled in the Taabinga region.

Johannes was educated at the Taabinga School and, as we have seen earlier in this history, his parents established *Bethany*, the now well known property near Kingaroy. As a young man Johannes was a keen student who, in addition to attending school at Taabinga, later extended his education through correspondence courses and private studies.

At *Bethany* he became closely involved in rural work, the family was initially extremely poor, as were so many other settlers, yet finally conditions improved, they were dairying, grain cropping, growing peanuts and much of their own food, but the years of the Great Depression deeply affected the family, the price of grain dropped dramatically and was no longer economical to grow. The difficulties being experienced by the family were largely responsible for the determination of Johannes to do well in order to escape from the poverty, as he later stated: 'It developed my initiative, it put in me a tremendous urge to get out of the poverty, we were the last ones to buy a motor car in this district, but it developed your initiative, you get forward thinking, forward planning, you've got to become a good organiser to run your property.'²⁶

The family purchased a tractor, the first in that area, and Johannes, in addition to completing his own extensive farm work, carried out contract ploughing, and the financial situation of the family looked somewhat brighter. He designed and constructed a peanut thresher which proved to be so successful that he was soon threshing peanuts for many farmers in the region. Over the following years the fortunes of the Bjelke-Petersen family improved dramatically and they were able to acquire land from adjoining properties.

More ambitious projects were to follow. Johannes founded a prosperous earth-moving business using army disposal equipment and was the first man to bring heavy earth-moving machinery into the South Burnett. His scrub-pulling dozers cleared thousands of acres through the chain-felling system.

He started an aerial spraying business and with a fleet of light aircraft and a group of pilots began aerial spraying and seeding. Johannes operated his air spraying business for more than twelve years but he lost money quite dramatically on the venture and during that period he also lost sixteen aircraft in various accidents. Fortunately, his bulldozer business carried the losses.²⁷

In 1946 he was elected to the Kingaroy Shire Council and became the council's representative on the Wide Bay-Burnett Regional Electricity Board. He entered state politics (on the Opposition benches) in 1947 as Country Party member for the electorate of Nanango (later Barambah).

Johannes Bjelke-Petersen met his future wife, Florence Gilmour, in 1950, when Florence was working as a secretary to the commissioner for main roads. They were engaged in January 1952 and married at the Fortitude Valley Presbyterian Church on 31 May that year.

During the mid-1950s, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen began prospecting for oil, he studied geology and explored hundreds of square miles of country in the far north and west and along the coast. He invested heavily in oil exploration, the press later reporting: 'It was a time of intense personal effort and financial risk. He believed that oil was to be found in Queensland. It is due to his personal vision that at least one major exploration company has a considerable Australian equity.'²⁸

Sir Francis Nicklin, who was Queensland premier for a record term, chose Johannes Bjelke-Petersen in 1963 (after he had served sixteen years on the back benches) to administer the Public Works and Housing portfolio. Frank Nicklin resigned in January 1968 and the deputy premier, Jack Pizzey, became premier. Johannes Bjelke-Petersen was subsequently elected deputy leader of the Country Party. Pizzey died of a heart attack on 31 July, 1968. Gordon William Wesley Chalk, the leader of the Liberal Party, served as premier for just a week, (1 August, 1968 to 8 August, 1968) and Johannes Bjelke-Petersen became premier on 8 August, 1968.²⁹

Throughout his political career Sir Johannes was certainly one of the more powerful, outspoken and single-minded politicians in the country, and his straight-forward approach to political problems was sometimes considered to have been dictatorial, especially by the press. However, Sir Johannes displayed significant courage during particularly difficult political crises such as union strikes which he dealt with decisively and positively. During his nineteen years as premier he contributed greatly to the state, promoting and aiding industrial growth and economic development. He is also remembered as the man who dispensed with the imposition of death and gift duties, a move later followed by all the other states. Sir Johannes later recalled that death duties provided significant revenue for the government but during the annual conferences of the National Party he would regularly raise the issue of the abolition of such duties. The initiative was strongly contested by other party members but the premier, who had been subjected to unjust death duties when his parents had died, was determined to push such legislation through parliament. Sir Johannes later recalled: 'In the early days, when we were young, we automatically put everything in father's name, it was the sort of thing you did. Then the day came when he died and it took me ten years to pay off the debt ... Then mother died twelve years after father died, two years after I'd finished paying the first lot off, and I had to do it all over again, it was awful, and I was determined to get rid of death duties.'³⁰

The duties had to be paid, even though Sir Johannes had himself purchased and improved much of the land that then composed the farm, but because it was still in his parents' name, duties had to be paid on the full amount.

Facing stiff opposition from his colleagues over the abolition of death duties, the premier threatened to have published the names of all those politicians who wished to retain death duties. Opposition to his plan quickly folded and Johannes was able to push through with his initiative. The loss in revenue that was expected following the abolition of death duties never eventuated, increased investments in a stimulated real estate market and in other investments created sufficient taxation benefits to more than compensate for the loss created through the death duties abolition.³¹

Other significant projects that were completed during his tenure in office include the construction of the Burdekin and Wivenhoe Dams and the construction of the Gateway Bridge in Brisbane.

Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen has also pursued her own political career. Often dubbed the 'unofficial member for Barambah' Florence Bjelke-Petersen was elected to the Senate in October 1980. She retired from politics in 1993.³²

Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen was replaced as state premier by Mike Ahearn in 1987, after which he pursued his merchant banking interests in Tasmania and other business ventures.³³

Oliver Stuart Bond

Oliver Stuart Bond, a Kingaroy solicitor, was a powerful local politician well known for his forthright attitude and his profound determination to serve local causes. He was born at MacLean, New South Wales, in 1886 and served his articles with a solicitor's firm in Gympie known as

Sykes and Sykes. He moved to Kingaroy in 1911 where he set up his own firm. He later invited Mr J.H. Feather to join him in partnership and when Feather left to begin a practice in Brisbane, Bond was joined by Mr H.J. Wagner. Wagner lost his life while serving with the R.A.A.F. during the Second World War. Later Mr D.W. Rea joined Bond in his practice.

Almost immediately upon arriving at Kingaroy Bond had become deeply involved in local community affairs, he was a member of the first committee formed to create the new Kingaroy shire, he served on the first provisional committee to establish a district hospital, was on the first School of Arts Committee and chairman of the State School Committee for ten years. He launched the move which later resulted in the establishment of the ambulance brigade and was the first chairman of its committee, he supported the show society, the progress association and the chamber of commerce, he was also first president of the Kingaroy Fire Brigade Board. In addition to these exhaustive duties Bond also maintained extensive farming interests in the region. Bond was married to Alice Townson, the daughter of Mr and Mrs Thomas Townson who kept a store in Kingaroy, the couple had four children. He died in office on Monday 6 October, 1947, and was interred at the Taabinga cemetery.³⁴

George Leslie Crawford

The longest serving shire chairman of Kingaroy Shire Council was George Leslie Crawford. One of four children, Crawford was born at Kingaroy on 3 February, 1916, his parents had a mixed farm, *Kurrawah*, at Mannuem. The family later moved to another farm, *Glenvillan* about three miles from *Kurrawah*. He and his brother both worked on the farm. G.L. Crawford was married in Kingaroy on 24 May, 1939, he and his wife, Clarice, had six children. Les Crawford maintained a long association with Jersey cattle, he was a member of the Jersey Cattle Society of Queensland, later becoming state, then national, president. He travelled extensively in this capacity and once met Queen Elizabeth during a tour of her Jersey estate. He served on the Kingaroy Shire Council for twenty-one years, being first elected in 1958, he was shire chairman for fourteen years, from 1965 to 1979. He did not nominate for re-election during the March 1979 elections. G.L. Crawford died on Monday 1 August, 1994 at the age of seventy-eight years.³⁵

Warren Truss

Warren Truss's family date back to the early days of settlement of the South Burnett, his father, Errol was heavily involved in community affairs and was the chairman of the Navy Bean Marketing Board for twenty-five years. Like his father, Warren has moved into public office, he was elected to the Kingaroy Shire Council in 1976 and became chairman in 1983, a position he filled until after his election to federal parliament. In addition to his council responsibilities he served on a number of other bodies including the Fraser Coast, South Burnett Regional Tourism Board, filling the position of chairman for four years. He was district council president of the Queensland Graingrowers' Association and later the deputy chairman of Grainco. His wife, Lynn, also comes from a historic family, her ancestors settling in the Murgon district, her father was the well known radio engineer Archie Caswell, her great-grandfather served on the first Murgon Shire Council in 1914, her grandfather was a former shire chairman of that council.³⁶

Robert (Bob) Downes

Robert (Bob) Downes is the son of John F. Downes of Ironpot, one of the original settlers of that region. John F. Downes and his father before him had interesting careers. Born at Clunes, Victoria, in 1883, John F. Downes moved with his parents to western New South Wales. His father, Hugh, was a police trooper and had almost taken part in the Battle of Glenrowan where Ned Kelly was captured and his gang destroyed. According to grandson Bob, Hugh Downes had been one of the youngest members of the police detachment, there is some uncertainty over why he missed the action at Glenrowan, he was either ordered to guard the bank at Glenrowan or was left in charge of the police station in the town up the line, his grandson later recording: 'He missed out on the action and he was very put out about that and it wasn't long afterwards that he resigned from the police force.'³⁷

Hugh's son, J.F. Downes, joined the P.M.G. as a telegraph messenger in 1898 and finally worked his way up to the position of postmaster, a position that took him all over the state. In about 1913 he left the post office and travelled to Bell, near Dalby, where his father, Hugh, conducted a small store. Finally his love of the land led him to purchase a block of scrub country at Ironpot from Archibald Blue, the managing director of the *Kingaroy Herald*, the date was 1914. The young farmer then began clearing the land using nothing more than an axe and crosscut saw. In 1915 he enlisted in the 31st Battalion of the A.I.F. and went to fight in the Great War, however, he was captured and spent two and a half years in a German prison camp. Upon being released and repatriated he continued to develop his farm, stocking it with a herd of Hereford cattle. In addition to his farming work he also undertook contracts for the clearing of prickly pear, he and two other men won the contract to clear 11,000 acres of pear at *Burrandowan* station.

J.F. Downes later injured his hand while clearing scrub and was hospitalised at St Aubyn's Private Hospital Kingaroy. While in the hospital he met Sister Florence Thompson and he married her in 1931. The couple continued to improve their property, *Werona*, until their retirement in 1959 when the farm was taken over by their son Robert (Bob), who became firstly the farm manager and later purchased it from his parents. John F. Downes and his wife then moved to Geebung in Brisbane. J.F. Downes died at the Kenmore Repatriation Hospital on 25 January, 1979.³⁸

Bob Downes was born in 1934. His first form of education was by correspondence, the courses being taught by his mother, he later attended the Ironpot School and for several years also boarded at Kingaroy. When the Ironpot School was moved during the Second World War, Bob Downes returned there for his education and later went to Gatton College to complete a four years' course, finishing in 1951. Bob Downes later recalled: 'It was at the tail end of the 1951 drought which was probably the worst drought we've ever experienced ... we lost most of our breeding herd, my first job used to be to ride around the dams every day and shoot all the cows that couldn't get up and pull anything out of the dams that I could, so that's how I started working, earning thirty shillings a week and keep.'³⁹

Bob Downes became interested in public affairs at an early stage of his career, he later stated: 'I always had an interest in public affairs and I used to go to meetings of various sorts and usually found myself getting hijacked as secretary and when one of the sitting councillors was about to resign from council he came and saw me and asked if I would stand, that was in the late 1960s, but as it turned out I didn't get in. I think it was the following year, 1969, that another vacancy occurred, George Woods retired, and George came to see me and I gave it a go, that time I was elected to council.'⁴⁰

Bob Downes was elected to the Chair of the Kingaroy Shire Council in August 1990.⁴¹ He later wrote: 'I had thought of retiring from council in the 1988 council elections but Warren Truss talked me into staying so I could take over (as chairman) when he won the seat of Barambah. In the event he was defeated by Trevor Perrett who stood for the Citizens' Electoral Council. In 1990 Clarric Miller retired as the member for the federal seat of Wide Bay and Warren won the plebiscite for the seat. He resigned from council some months later.'⁴² In January 1997 Bob Downes announced that he would not be contesting the mayoralty during the forthcoming elections for local government scheduled for 15 March that year. This move ended a public career that had spanned twenty-seven years. He stated at the time that his reasons for not contesting the seat were primarily because he required more time to run his farm which was suffering because he was spending up to five days a week at the council.⁴³

Roger Nunn

The present mayor of Kingaroy is Roger Nunn, who was elected to the position during the local government elections of March 1997.

Roger Nunn was born in Brisbane in 1943 when his father was serving as a commissioned officer in the Australian forces. After the war Roger's father returned to the Kilcoy region where he took over the family's dairy farm, at which time his grandparents moved to Brisbane.

Roger began his education by correspondence, completing grade one with the help of his mother, a qualified teacher. He then went to the Mount Kilcoy School, completing his scholarship, prior to going to the Brisbane Grammar School in 1957.

Upon completing his education in 1960, Roger Nunn undertook several vocational tests and it was decided that he could qualify as a surveyor. He was offered a position that year with a company named Bennett and Francis, a long established surveying business. Roger Nunn began his working life with this company as a cadet surveyor, articled to one of the business partners. He served his articles, sat for his examinations and subsequently qualified as a licensed surveyor in 1972, at which time he became a partner in the company, one of the previous partners having previously retired. In May that year Roger Nunn married Julie Semgreen, from Kingaroy, whose great-grandfather had come originally from Denmark to Australia. The marriage was celebrated at the Anglican Church in Kingaroy. By that time the business was expanding with an office on the Gold Coast another in Caboolture and a third on the Sunshine Coast. Roger Nunn was one of the first surveyors to work on high-rise buildings in Brisbane. By 1979 Roger Nunn had made the decision to sell his interests in the business and to begin farming on the South Burnett, taking over the dairy farm at West Coolabunia that had been operated by Julie's parents.

Roger Nunn's interest in local government affairs stems from significant family tradition, his father served as chairman of the Kilcoy Shire Council up until the time of his death and Cr. Nunn has always maintained an interest in local politics. Following several years on council he became deputy mayor in 1994.⁴⁴

Chairmen of the Kingaroy Shire Council are as follows:

T.W. O'Neill	1912–1918.
M. Baker	1918–1919.
J.H. Hodge	1919–1921.
T.W. O'Neill	1921–1924.
R.S. Brown	1924–1927.
J.H. Hodge	1927–1933.
J.A. Carroll	1933–1939.
C.F. Adermann	1939–1946.
O.S. Bond	1946–1947, (died in office).
W.J. Lang	1947–1955.
T.J. O'Neill	1955–1965, (died in office).
G.L. Crawford	1965–1979.
K.T. Peters	1979–1983.
W.E. Truss	1983–1990.
R.J. Downes	1990–1997.
K.R. Nunn	1997– ⁴⁵

Shire Clerks and Chief Executive Officers for the Kingaroy Shire Council:

To date there have been only seven shire clerks in the history of the Kingaroy Shire Council, as we have seen, G.S. Venman was the first shire clerk who served from 1912 to 1924. He was replaced by H.W. Sanderson, serving from 1924 to 1925, H.A. Hull occupied the position from 1925 to 1936 when he was superseded, under somewhat difficult circumstances, by Cecil Done, serving from 1936 to 1947. A.V. Angove served as shire clerk for more than seventeen years, from 1947 to 1964. A.V. Angove was born at Gympie on 18 August, 1917, the son of James and Marian Angove (nee Ingham). James had come to Australia from the north west of England when he was a young boy, he later became a butcher by trade. Marian was born at Gympie

A.V. Angove was educated at Gympie, leaving school in 1932 after which he worked for a short while on a farm prior to obtaining a position with the Widgee Shire Council at Gympie. He served there for four years, from 1933 to 1937, and it was during this term of employment that he qualified as an accountant. In 1937 he was appointed to the Kingaroy Shire Council as a senior clerk and qualified as a town clerk while at Kingaroy. In 1938 he moved to the Gympie City

Council as rate collector for that council. In 1941 he was appointed shire clerk at Herberton Shire Council, he enlisted in the A.I.F. in March 1942 and served in New Guinea, Borneo and in occupational duties in the Celebes where he held the rank of captain. He was demobbed at Redbank in February 1946 and returned to his position at Herberton. Approximately twelve months later he was appointed shire clerk of the Cardwell Shire Council at Tully, he was only there for a short period before Cecil Done at Kingaroy was appointed town clerk of Toowoomba and A.V. Angove was appointed shire clerk at Kingaroy, taking up the position in July 1947. Some of the major achievements of the council during Angove's tenure as shire clerk included the sealing of the roads, extensive road-works, the establishment of the civic centre, the construction of the municipal saleyards, the construction of the Olympic swimming pool, and the development of cooperation and understanding between all the local authorities of the South Burnett through the South Burnett Local Government Association.⁴⁶

Ron Knopke, the recently retired chief executive officer of the Kingaroy Shire Council, comes from Polish stock, his great-grandfather, Johann Ludwig Knopke, and his family, emigrating to Australia in 1878, arriving at Brisbane in April that year. Ron is the son of Theodore and Ruby Emily Knopke, who arrived in the South Burnett region in 1943. During the Second World War he served in the Civil Construction Corps and was later awarded a medal for that service. Upon arriving at Kingaroy he worked for a while at the butter factory and subsequently went into partnership with Frank Knopke as builders. In later years Theodore Knopke moved into a sole business practice and constructed many houses in Kingaroy.⁴⁷

Ron Knopke was born at Laidley and raised in that area and at Toowoomba until he was seven years of age. He was educated at Summerholm School in the Laidley district, beginning his education in 1942, later moving to Newtown School at Toowoomba and subsequently to Kingaroy where he continued his education at the Kingaroy State School. He completed his school education in December 1952 and successfully applied to the Kingaroy Shire Council for the position of junior office boy, commencing on 19 March, 1953, when Arthur Angove was shire clerk. It was under the influence of Angove, who helped his staff to study for examinations in local government, that Ron Knopke began to gain his qualifications under the Local Government Clerks' Board. He finally qualified as a shire clerk in 1961, at that time he held the position of accounts clerk at the council. After completing three months of relieving work at the Gayndah Shire Council, Ron Knopke returned to Kingaroy and was subsequently appointed deputy shire clerk, a position he held for a little more than two years, and when Arthur Angove was appointed deputy town clerk at the Gold Coast City Council, Ron Knopke was promoted to the position of shire clerk at Kingaroy on 5 October, 1964 when T.J. O'Neill was shire chairman.⁴⁸

Some of the achievements of the council during the tenure of Ron Knopke include the council's involvement with the growth of the navy bean industry, particularly through the provision of land under favourable terms for the site of the Navy Bean Marketing Board. Other features include the construction of the bitumen runway at the Kingaroy aerodrome, the transfer of freehold title of the aerodrome to the council and a major upgrade to the facility, the provision of new shire council chambers, opened in 1979, the construction of the library on its present site and subsequently an extension to the library, the removal of the cattle saleyards during the early 1980s to a more advantageous location, the relocation of the pig and calf saleyards to Coolabunia, the expansion of the industrial estate, the growth of promotion and economic development, the improvement in the appearance of Kingaroy which has resulted primarily from the council's decision to enter the tidy towns competition, and the dramatic growth in the region brought about through the establishment of the power station at Tarong.⁴⁹

In January 1997 Ron Knopke informed his council that he would be retiring in July 1997.⁵⁰

Ronald Harry Turner, the current chief executive officer, was appointed to the position following the retirement of Ron Knopke in 1997. He has extensive experience in local government affairs and prior to his appointment to the position as chief executive officer was the Kingaroy Shire Council's director of administration and finance.⁵¹

Ronald Turner was born at Dalby on 24 March, 1941, and was educated at the Kingaroy High School. He commenced his career with the council on 2 December, 1957, when he was appointed as a pay clerk. He was later elevated to the positions of cost clerk and accounts clerk prior to

being appointed deputy shire clerk/director of administration and finance, a position he held for the following thirty-two and a half years. He formally qualified as a shire clerk in November 1972 and is well known in the local community, particularly in sporting circles and through various organisations such as the P and C Associations, the Blue Sky Gallery, the regional Arts Development Fund Committee and many other sporting and recreational organisations. Between September 1964 and June 1990 he was secretary of the Kingaroy Fire Brigade Board. Ronald Turner is married, he and his wife, Barbara, have four children.⁵²

Notes and Sources

Chapter Ninety-three

Local Government at Kingaroy

1. M/C. 30 March, 1908, p 3.
2. M/C. 5 May, 1911, p 6.
3. QGG Number 14, Vol 98, 12 January, 1912.
4. Kingaroy Shire Council minutes, 20 March, 1912, Kingaroy Shire Council archives.
5. Ibid. See also: N/N. 11 April, 1935, p 1 and K/H. 21 April, 1941, p 2.
6. For details on this murder case see: K/H. 10 February, 1955, pp 1, 4, and 7; K/H. 10 March, 1955, p 1, 5 and 8.
7. K/G. 21 May, 1937.
8. K/H. 10 March, 1914, p 2. See also: K/G/ 19 September, 1930, p 1.
9. K/H. 4 June, 1959, p 5.
10. K/H. 27 January, 1955, p 2.
11. For comprehensive details on this issue, an issue that bitterly divided the council, see: K/G. 11 April, 19 June, 10 July, 28 August, 4 September, and 11 September, 1936.
12. For further details on the career of C. Done see: K/G. 23 October, 1936.
13. For comprehensive details on the opening of the new chambers see: K/H. 8 December, 1938.
14. K/G. 19 November, 1937.
15. SBT. 28 September, 1961, p 1.
16. SBT. 7 March, 1963, p 1.
17. For a full breakdown of costs see: SBT. 3 September, 1964, p 7.
18. For a copy of the architect's report see: SBT. 26 April, 1972, p 25.
19. SBT. 20 June, 1984, p 4.
20. SBT. 21 July, 1965, p 1 and 4 August, 1965, p 7. For an obituary on O'Neill see: K/H. 22 July, 1965, p 1.
21. SBT. 6 September, 1978, p 1.
22. K/H. 21 August, 1941, p 1.
23. K/H. 9 November, 1950, p 1.
24. K/G. 3 October, 1930.
25. K/G. 6 November, 1936, and Taabinga cemetery records.
26. Author interview with Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, recorded at *Bethany*, 2 June, 1997.
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29. Ibid. For comprehensive details of the career of Johannes Bjelke-Petersen see: *Don't You Worry About That, the Joh Bjelke-Petersen Memoirs*, Collins/Angus and Robertson, 1990.
30. Author interview with Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, recorded at *Bethany*, 2 June, 1997.
31. Ibid.
32. SBT. 22 October, 1980, p 1, 23 February, 1993, p 27 and 9 July, 1993, p 3.
33. Author interview with Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, recorded at *Bethany*, 2 June, 1997.

34. K/H. 9 October, 1947, p 2.
35. SBT. 5 August, 1994, p 5.
36. SBT. 9 March, 1993, p 37.
37. Author interview with Robert (Bob) Downes, 5 September, 1996.
38. SBT. 31 January, 1979, p 4, interviews with Bob Downes, February, 1996 and oral histories of J.F. Downes and Florence Downes recorded by the family 24 September, 1978.
39. Author interview with Bob Downes, 5 September, 1996.
40. Ibid.
41. SBT. 5 September, 1990, p 5.
42. Letter to the author from Bob Downes, dated 22 May, 1997.
43. Author interview with Bob Downes, 5 September, 1996, and SBT. 17 January, 1997.
44. Author interview with Roger Nunn, recorded at the Kingaroy Shire Council, 1 May, 1997.
45. Kingaroy Shire council listing.
46. Author interview with A.V. Angove, recorded September, 1996.
47. Author interview with Ron Knopke, recorded at Kingaroy, 5 September, 1996.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. SBT 24 January, 1997, p 3.
51. SBT 2 May, 1997, p 3.
52. SBT 6 May, 1997, p 2 and curriculum vitae of Ronald Harry Turner.

Contemporary Kingaroy

Since the first establishment of Kingaroy following the arrival of the rail line in 1904, the town has become the largest and most important centre of the South Burnett. This has occurred despite the belief of many early residents, particularly those living at Nanango, Taabinga and Kilkivan, who claimed that having the terminus of the rail line situated in the scrub could only lead to major problems for the people of the region and that as Nanango was already a well established centre, no other major centre could spring up at the site of the terminus. Yet those early residents were not making allowances for the fact that the closer settlement policy was bringing tens of thousands of people to the district and that with such a vast influx of people the growth of a new centre at the site of the 56 mile peg was almost inevitable.

Kingaroy now is the major service centre for the entire South Burnett, it has the largest population and provides facilities used throughout the area.

The addition of services since the Second World War has been dramatic, for example, the construction of the Gordonbrook Dam which commenced in 1940 and provided an abundance of town water to the residents of Kingaroy, water from the dam first being connected by 1942. The formation of a fire brigade, the opening of new facilities such as the new post office in 1953, the addition of a new swimming pool in the memorial park, opened in 1953, the augmentation of the town water supply which the council decided to continue in 1955, the commencement of the sewerage scheme the same year, additions to the hospital, upgrading of the butter factory, the construction of the drive-in theatre, the opening of the civic centre in 1963, the new courthouse in 1966 and the eventual establishment of the agricultural college, the opening of the new council chambers in 1979, the construction of a new shopping complex in 1984 which was opened that year by Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, the opening of the T.A.F.E. college in 1986, were all important benchmarks in the progress of the town.

Industry too plays a major part in the region's economic growth and the Kingaroy industrial estate includes many manufacturing and processing plants. One of these supports the fascinating kaolin industry.

Mineralogically, there was little hope of ever experiencing any booms in the Kingaroy region. One hope for the future, however, was the possible exploitation of rich kaolin deposits. Kaolin, more commonly known as Chinese clay, is a vital ingredient in the production of china, porcelain, and the manufacture of paper, rubber, paint and many other products. The name kaolin was derived from the Chinese, Kau-ling (high ridge) a mountain east of Fou-liang in China from where the earliest samples of the clay were sent to Europe more than two hundred years ago. Since then deposits of the mineral have been discovered in a number of other countries, including the United States, France, England, Brazil, Italy, South Africa and, of course, Australia.

Kaolin was first mined in the Kingaroy region circa 1949, but this was only a relatively small venture. J.A. Foley was reportedly the first person to discover kaolin deposits in the Goodger region, the deposits were discovered while Foley was digging a well, and while Foley attempted to create a market for the clay with the production of such items as shoe cleaner, cosmetics and soap, all with hand operated machinery, there was little demand for the product.

Neil Hansen of Jandowae took up leases in the deposits in the 1950s, the clay was being used in the small local pottery market and also in the production of fire bricks.¹ However, Hansen lacked the finance to properly develop the market and he approached Johannes Bjelke-Petersen with an offer to take a share in the business. With an injection of capital the project expanded,

somewhat, but still not successfully. Neil Hansen died of a heart attack, leaving his interests to his widow. From 1949 to 1966 only about one thousand tonnes of clay were mined from two pits.² In the early 1970s Ray Black purchased the share held by Mrs Hansen and in partnership with Johannes Bjelke-Petersen the project moved slowly ahead.

In 1971 the exciting news was received in the South Burnett that an American company, the Huber Corporation, was willing to expend up to \$10 million on the development and exploitation of the kaolin deposits, it was envisaged that the initial work-force would be comprised of around thirty men, rising to around 200 by the time the operation became fully functional. Over a period of ten years, from around 1961, the company had spent \$US1.8 million on exploration work in European and Asian countries and was the third largest producer of the clay on the massive kaolin fields at Georgia. The overseas markets for kaolin were diversified, with a ready demand in Japan, Thailand and the Philippines. The deposits in the Kingaroy district were reported to be of an excellent quality, similar to the rich deposits in Georgia. The Huber Corporation had carried out an extensive feasibility study which made provision for the restoration of the land once the entire clay deposits had been mined.³

The corporation planned to mine the deposits through the open cut method, the clay was reported to lie under thirty to eighty feet of overburden over an area covering approximately five thousand acres.⁴

The first major steps towards the establishment of a large scale kaolin mining industry were taken in 1974 when the Huber Corporation lodged applications for mining leases with the Nanango Mining Warden's Court, the applications were due to be heard on 26 November that year. The applications were lodged on behalf of the American corporation by the Sydney based firm of Newmetal Mining Company which had acquired the Australian interests of the American company. The applications were described as: 'Huber West — two miles west of Goodger; Huber South — about a quarter of a mile from the intersection of the Haly Creek-Ellesmere Road and the Archookoorra-Kumbia Road; and Huber North — half mile west of the Kingaroy-Cooyar Road.' Another application also included Huber East, all four applications were for a period of twenty-one years. However, objections to the leases were also lodged with the court.⁵

The Huber investment in the deposits languished and the deposits were reportedly taken over by Queensland Clay Supplies. In October 1975 four new applications were made to the court, these were made on behalf of Bjelke-Petersen Enterprises and R.E. Black for Queensland Clay Supplies.⁶ The mining warden's report for 1975 revealed that the four mineral leases of Bjelke-Petersen and Black had yielded 2,084 tonnes of the clay valued at \$37,540.⁷ Yet this was only a preliminary return and operations had not then got fully under way. During a press interview he gave in February 1976, R.E. Black stated that the company would be mining the clay on a smaller scale to that originally intended by the Huber Corporation and that the annual output of clay was expected to be in the vicinity of 50,000 tonnes per year, this would be packaged in 50 kg bags and sent by road to Kingaroy for rail transportation to Brisbane and then overseas.⁸ By January 1979 the project had still not proved to be as successful as had been originally anticipated, although R.E. Black was attempting to attract Japanese interest in the venture.⁹

Between 1949, when mining of the deposits first started, and 1988, approximately 38,000 tons of kaolin clay were mined from the deposits. In August that year Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen stated that he and his family had owned the rights to several leases in the region for thirty-four years, he said that the deposits would be valuable if an overseas market could be found for the clay, most of the clay then being mined was sold to state and interstate buyers.¹⁰

By that time all the major deposits of kaolin were controlled by a small group of companies and people, the companies and individuals owning these rights were Bjelke-Petersen Enterprises Pty. Ltd. and Ciasom Pty. Ltd., with five leases, Bjelke-Petersen Enterprises Pty. Ltd. and Raymond Edgar Black and Ruth Elaine Black with another five leases, ACA Mineral Products Pty. Ltd., Kenneth Noel Penfold and Nyora Co. Pty. Ltd. with two leases, Raymond Edgar Black and Ruth Elaine Black with one lease, Raymond Edgar Black with one lease and additional authorities to prospect were held by Ciasom Pty. Ltd.¹¹

In December 1989 the Foreign Investment Review Board announced its approval of the sale to Japanese investment companies of half the interests of the kaolin companies controlled by

Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen and Raymond Black. The former premier told the press that discussions were still continuing with the Japanese regarding the development of the project.¹²

Raymond Black and another of his partners, David Chadwick, of CQ Tec-Services, installed sophisticated processing equipment at their new kaolin factory in Kingaroy in September 1992. The factory, on the site of the Taabinga industrial estate was designed to refine the clay into a dry white powder or a wet slurry.¹³

Sustainable growth is envisaged and planned for the future and industries such as the mining and processing of kaolin provide the economic structure for such growth. Additionally, Kingaroy has a tourism and development board, situated in the old shire council offices opposite the peanut silos, and tourism plays a major part of the continued development of the region.

The wine industry on the South Burnett is growing dramatically with vineyards and wineries opening at a number of locations. In 1995 Chris and Jenny Leu of *Taabinga* homestead announced that they would begin producing wines at the station. The couple selected frost free land on the property and stated that in addition to an initial pressing of imported grapes, when the vineyards became established they would be producing Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon on the property.¹⁴

The establishment of the wine industry will have the added advantage of drawing tourists to the region, especially so when sufficient wineries have been opened to provide a 'wine trail' where visitors can sample the wines.

There have been some interesting characters associated with the arts in Kingaroy, not least of whom is David Bryce, more than eighty years of age and an artist who has been painting in Kingaroy for more than three decades. His first exhibition was held in a small shop in Haly Street in 1947, and since that time he has held two other exhibitions and several small showings. One of his exhibitions in Brisbane featured the Bunya Mountains and was held to raise funds for the Australian Conservation Foundation. He has painted many historical sites in the Kingaroy and Nanango regions and has completed a series of 'social comment' paintings with the destruction of social and moral values as their theme. The highlight of his artistic career came when his works were shown in the Queensland Art Gallery. His most recent exhibition was held at the Kingaroy Shire Art Gallery in Glendon Street in August 1996.¹⁵

In addition to being an early farmer of the Kingaroy district, Cecil Robert Small was, without doubt, one of the region's more important artists. He was born at Wynnum on Friday, 15 January, 1904, the youngest of the six children of Mary and Robert Small, who had initially migrated to Melbourne from Lancashire, England. When they moved to Brisbane they set up a general store in Wynnum. At a later date they were to win the contract to provide and deliver supplies via their boat to the convict settlement at St Helena Island. The parents established a close relationship with the superintendent and Cecil believed that he was the only child to set foot on St Helena when it was an active penal centre. Cecil's father died when he was only nine years of age and the mother together with the older children continued with the family business.



Cecil Robert Small, who was a dairy farmer in the Kingaroy district but is remembered for his outstanding work as a painter. During his life he won many awards for his art.

Source — Bob Small and Gloria Bleakley

The parents were strong advocates of education and Mary ensured that Cecil went to the high school at Wynnum, which was one of the six locations in Queensland where the first state high schools were established in 1912. He excelled in all phases of his schooling, but especially mathematics, science and French, and was one of the fortunate few for the period who was successful in the junior examination.

For several years Cecil travelled Queensland (as far north as Cairns) as a representative of dress and suit material manufacturers, D. & W. Murrays of Edward Street, Brisbane.

During 1925 he met Evaline Maude Port, daughter of well known Manly identity, Bert Port. Bert was one of the earlier commercial fishermen of Moreton Bay and was a member of the local council.

In 1932 his mother, sister Amelia and Cecil purchased a 300 acres dairy farm, which they named *Yorkleigh*, on Old Crawford Road (now called West Street) just outside Kingaroy. For several years family members provided fresh milk to much of the town.

Cecil and Evaline were married at Kingaroy on 5 January, 1935, and became the primary operators of the farm. During the Second World War they supplied milk daily to the R.A.A.F. and American air forces based at the Kingaroy aerodrome. The milk run was later sold to Don Hurran.

Cecil commenced his painting as a teenager in Wynnum. His first works were in water colour and it was clear from the outset that he had potential as an artist. When he moved to Kingaroy he met local artist Frank de Mouton. It was de Mouton who encouraged him to commence painting in oils, and who provided advice and support at this stage. Cecil now spent as much time as he could afford at the easel. It was from then through to the late 1950s that he established his first style and, in the opinion of family members, produced most of his better works, including a number of portraits and landscapes, a selection of which he donated to the Kingaroy Shire Council.

Unfortunately very few of his water colour paintings remain. Almost all were destroyed during a violent storm in 1940 which unroofed their house and scattered the contents across the farm.

During this period he exhibited in the local South Burnett, Toowoomba and Dalby shows as well as the Brisbane Exhibition, and in one four year period acquired 149 awards, most of them championship and first prizes.

One of Cecil's better known paintings is a portrait of Princess Marina (Duchess of Kent) which was one of those donated to the Kingaroy Shire Council.

During the mid-fifties Cecil taught art in the local Q.C.W.A. Hall but he never undertook it as a career. In 1957 Cecil and Evaline sold their property at Kingaroy and moved to Eagle Heights on Tamborine Mountain. By the early 1960s Cecil had joined a Brisbane art group and he began to make changes to his painting style. Initially it was simply the inclusion of additional colour and the use of bolder brush strokes. Later he was to experiment with a degree of surrealism, but in the opinion of family members he never again quite captured the qualities of his earlier works.

He retired to Kingaroy when in his seventies but failing eyesight and a decline in his health slowly ended his painting career, though he did produce a number of simpler paintings during this period. Evaline died on 5 August, 1990, and Cecil on 16 March, 1994.¹⁶

Notes and Sources
Chapter Ninety-four
Contemporary Kingaroy

1. SBT. 31 January, 1979, p 1.
2. SBT. 9 August, 1989, p 3.
3. SBT. 15 December, 1971, p 2.
4. SBT. 1 March, 1972, p 7.
5. SBT. 9 October, 1974, p 1 and 22 January, 1975, p 10.
6. SBT. 29 October, 1975, p 2.
7. SBT. 10 September, 1975, p 2.
8. SBT. 11 February, 1976, p 1.
9. SBT. 31 January, 1979, p 1.
10. SBT. 9 August, 1989, p 1.
11. For full details on these holdings see: SBT. 16 August, 1989, p 3.
12. SBT. 6 December, 1989, p 1.
13. SBT. 22 September, 1992, p 3.
14. SBT. 18 August, 1995, p 23.
15. SBT. 2 August, 1996, p 19.
16. Letter to the author from Bob Small and Gloria Beakley, dated 19 February, 1997.

95

Timber, Sawmills and the Timbermen

One of the richest natural resources of the South Burnett — far richer, in terms of long term profit generation than any of the minerals found in the area, such as gold or copper — was the wealth of forests that once thickly covered the region. This wealth was to be harvested with unrelenting determination by the early timber-getters and saw-millers, a determination that saw many of the forests completely destroyed, using harsh clear-felling methods, at least in the very early days, without any consideration or attempt at silviculture or any serious concerns over the ecological problems such felling would create for the biodiversity of the region.

This chapter will investigate the men who worked in the timber industry, the impact of timber harvesting on the economic and social growth of the South Burnett and document, where possible, many of the known sawmills that once operated in the South Burnett.

During the very early days of European settlement the timber was cleared simply in order to facilitate the sowing of crops or to aid the growth of pasture and improve water supply. Before economical forms of transport were made available much of the timber was simply cut or ringbarked and was burnt or left to rot where it fell. Entire forests of red cedar were destroyed in the Moreton Bay district and in the South Burnett thousands of tons of standing pine were simply cut and destroyed. The issue was broadly covered in the press over a period of many years, one report claiming: "The wanton waste in Australia of merchantable timber almost amounts to a national crime against posterity. And not against posterity only, for the ill effects of promiscuous clearing, burning and otherwise destroying useful and promising trees are being felt already."¹



Hauling timber at Branch Creek. Left: Benson's team, right: Con Iszlaub's team.

Source — Percy Iszlaub



David Lewis and son Tom at 'Ashmore', Brooyar.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

Even after crude forms of transport were made available following the increase in population and the corresponding increase in the numbers of teamsters working in the transportation industry, there were no concerted timber harvesting plans, no consideration of wilderness planning or selective logging, merchantable timber was simply any kind of tree worth cutting for the expanding market, mature woods, mixed forests, rain-forests and softwoods, all were seen as reserves of enormous wealth to be exploited at will. In his paper read before the Maryborough Chamber of Commerce in 1885, C.H. Barton stated that the government was to blame for allowing such destruction, adding that parliamentary irresponsibility was to blame for the: '... indiscriminate plunder by anybody who owns a team of bullocks and chooses to pay a trifling licence fee.'²

One cannot necessarily blame those early settlers for the way in which they cleared the land, concepts of timber preservation, intensive management and management plans, national estates, nature conservation plans, protected areas, timber reserves and the regeneration of forests were unheard of in the 1850s and 1860s, the non-indigenous settlers were concerned only with clearing the land, forest or scrub, in order to plant crops of maize, sweet potatoes or pumpkins — anything that would grow and show a modest profit.

Throughout the South Burnett at varying times there were literally dozens of sawmills, some were small operations cutting limited numbers of logs, while others, such as the mills at Nanango and later at Elgin Vale were large businesses processing vast quantities of logs. There were other mills at such diverse places as Black Snake, Kilkivan, Goomeri, Kabunga, Kinbombi, Manumbar, Gallangowan, Wondai, Barker Creek, Boondooma and many more.

Yet prior to the rail coming through to Kilkivan and later to Kingaroy and Nanango the sawmillers were faced with extensive problems of getting their timber to market, each log had to be laboriously loaded onto bullock carts and taken to ports such as Brisbane and Maryborough. Even getting the logs to the sawmills was dangerous and difficult work, the trees sometimes cut at distances far removed from the mills and then transported by bullock teams. Some of the most sought after timbers were hoop pine, ironbark, cedar, blue gum and spotted gum, but there were many other timbers including bunya and cypress pine, beech, crow's ash, yellow-wood, silky oak, rosewood and beantree, of these, the cypress pine, rosewood and beantree were considered to be of only limited commercial value.³

As the population of the South Burnett increased following closer settlement, the need for such timbers expanded dramatically. When towns such as Nanango and Kilkivan came into being, residents required timber to construct their homes, farmers needed timber to build barns, fences, stables and much more. The transportation of logs to the sawmills at Maryborough and Brisbane was a long, expensive and difficult journey that was often not economically viable and so there were relatively few such transports. However, after the arrival of the rail at Kilkivan, that small mining community became what J.E. Murphy accurately described as: '... the inland port for the (South Burnett) district.'⁴

A sawmill was opened at Taabinga in 1901, much of the timber being used locally in the burgeoning building industry while excess timber was transported to the rail head at Kilkivan. The mill was established by George Muller on the property of James Lyons, it was later sold to Sam Johnson.⁵

Yet the harvesting of the huge logs was a difficult and often a dangerous task. During drought conditions the health of their bullocks was a perennial problem for the teamsters, and during the wet seasons the rough roads became seas of mud where bullock wagons loaded with logs would become bogged.

Timbers in the Kilkivan district were harvested from a wide variety of areas including hoop pine at Mount Sinai and hardwoods from the Black Snake region. There were considerable reserves at Manumbar, Scrubby Paddock (Elgin Vale), Planted Creek, Dadamarine and Fawley.

There were several small sawmills operating in early Nanango, according to a report published in 1931 the first of these was constructed by a man named Kendall.⁶ Another early mill, possibly constructed even before Kendall's mill was owned by James Millis which, according to subsequent reports, commenced operations in 1880 cutting hardwoods and pines for the construction of buildings. One of the first sawmills in Nanango was reportedly established by John Heiner at Sandy Creek, a short distance to the south of the town. Three benches and a planing machine were installed.⁷ The mill was put up for auction at Nanango on 11 February, 1905, it then contained a variety of equipment including a vertical saw-frame bench and a 14 h.p. boiler. Also on the freehold block there were a number of rented cottages, the land was in Appin Street at the bottom of Fitzroy Street backing onto Sandy Creek.⁸

John Heiner was one of the earlier settlers in the Nanango district. He was born at Kuhrhessen, Germany, in August 1842, the son of John Heiner and his wife Catherine. John Heiner (Junior) married at Gayndah on 29 December, 1871, his wife's name was Emma (Amelia) Weimer, he died on 28 July, 1910.⁹

An idea of what the milling industry was like during the 1900s may be seen from a report written by Maud Wheeler in March that year. Mrs Wheeler who had recently visited the Nanango region commented:

... a great deal of the wealth of the Nanango district lies in its acres of valuable timber. For many miles around Nanango the scrub extends containing principally hoop pine and magnificent bunyas. In the forest land there is plenty of hardwood suitable for building railways. One enthusiast had many acres of hardwood which he offered to give freely to help to build the track ... Four miles beyond Nanango begins another great scrub, where some of the finest timber in the district is to be found. The Maryborough saw-millers had a timber expert here for three months. This gentleman (Mr J. Bartholomew) drove everywhere, and made an exhaustive report upon the timber supply to be obtained in the Nanango district. He estimates that the timber was sufficient to supply the four mills at present running in Maryborough for the next forty or fifty years. What will become of the forests, and what effect the felling of so much timber will have upon the rainfall is a question that will have to be gone into later on.¹⁰

By 1901 the township of Nanango was growing strongly and other South Burnett centres were beginning to expand, the need for timber was increasing and a new mill at Nanango, owned by Mr E. Fletcher was about to be constructed. The press reported:

The building craze would still appear to maintain its hold upon the minds and energies of the Nanangoites, and their persistent efforts in this direction would seem to argue a firm

and unbounded faith in its future prospects. Although to the resident, or frequent visitors, progress may appear to be pretty gradual, yet to the writer, whose intervals of absence are comparatively lengthy, a period of ten or twelve months is sufficient to alter — and we may add, improve — this one time pastoral little hamlet almost beyond recognition. By far the most conspicuous, and imposing object which at present greets the eye of the Nanango visitors, is the lofty, and architecturally tasteful, two-storey building which is now receiving its finishing touches at the hands of the enterprising proprietor Mr Collins of the old Star hotel. This new edifice will be called the Post Office Hotel ... Mr E. Fletcher is about to erect, upon the bank of the creek, and on a scale which we understand, will be an improvement on anything of the sort so far attempted here, a saw-mill, and planing plant. There would certainly appear to be work sufficient to justify such an undertaking, and the latter item will supply a long felt want in this locality, as such work has hitherto been performed by the old, slow, and laborious manual process. We have also seen a plan of a new boarding house, upon a pretty extensive scale, which is soon to be erected, and presided over by Mr and Mrs Gillespie, of *Bear* whilst a Coffee Palace, the building of which is in contemplation by Mr P.J. Macnamara, should together provide for the temporary or permanent accommodation of the rapidly increasing district population. Mr A.E. Dimmock, (late assistant of Mr Smith, Chemist, of Maryborough) has just started business in his new, central and commodious premises, close to the Commercial, and there is little doubt, in such a populous district that his enterprise will meet with a remunerative reward.¹¹

With the increasing numbers of settlers coming to the region there was a corresponding increase in business for the various sawmills. For example, in September 1900 the press claimed that Nanango was badly in need of extra facilities:

If the erection of a number of buildings in the town, some for business purposes and others for residences, is an indication of progress, we can still claim to be bowling the old chariot along. Besides the buildings which have recently been completed and occupied, there are others well under way, and only for the difficulty which exists of procuring sawn timber readily, I hear that other premises would speedily be erected. The two sawmills we have in the district are quite unable to cope with the demand for timber, and as all sawn stuff has to be hand-dressed, the process is both slow, costly, and cumbersome. One of our local mills is having a new and much more powerful boiler erected, and it is also intended to work a second saw when the increased engine power is available. This should help us a little, but still the demand for timber for building purposes in the town and district will far exceed the capacity of our local mills. There is any quantity of log timber to be got for the asking, and while the Maryborough mills are suffering from a timber famine, we are prodigally burning off daily thousands of feet, simply to clear the land for the plough. If we had a railway this scandalous waste of valuable raw material could not continue. So plentiful is timber all over the district on the new farms and in the scrubs, that it is hardly an exaggeration to say that all a timber-getter need do is to back his waggon up against a belt of trees and they will fall into it like over-ripe pears in a wind squall.¹²

As the building of shops and houses intensified throughout the South Burnett there was an increasing need to have local planing machines installed in the various sawmills. At the turn of the century orders for dressed timber were being sent either to Esk or Maryborough, thus considerably increasing the cost of building, cartage being an expensive item during those days prior to the coming of the railways. The press lamented: '... This circumstance has considerably mitigated against the erection of a good class of houses, the ancient and almost obsolete rough weather-board having ... to be used because nothing else could be got without great cost.'¹³

There was also considerable concern at this time due to the lack of railways and the wasting of valuable timber reserves on selectors' properties. Some critics believed that the clearing of the many selections in the South Burnett, the felling of highly prized trees and their subsequent burning, was a sad reminder that such a wealth of timber, rather than being wasted, should have been harvested and sent to the mills. One correspondent wrote:

There is another side, however, to this burning of valuable timber, which is seldom looked at in the present day; but before Queensland becomes many years older this widespread, but at present unavoidable, destruction of what should be profitable raw material will be severely felt. It is a thousand pities to see tens of thousands of feet of splendid pine and hardwood being regularly felled and reduced to ashes in clearing farming land, which would

have considerable commercial value if it could only be placed on a railway and conveyed to the sawmills, which are compelled to use much smaller and younger trees that ought to be left to grow for the needs of future generations. The entire cost of clearing and fencing many of our scrub and forest farms could easily be paid from the utilising of the timber which is now wasted, and which in time to come must make it much dearer artificially, and through sheer destructiveness, than would be the case if a little more prudence and forethought had been used in providing facilities for transportation to the existing markets. Magnificent timbers of all kinds, which ought to be a source of national wealth, are given to the flames with a prodigality for which there is hardly a parallel to be found anywhere else in these days, when forest conservation is becoming more and more urgent in the older States.¹⁴

Freight charges were always a problem for the timber-getters, but there were other costs those men had to consider when estimating the value of the logs they would harvest, including the cost of licences, royalty payments, wages, and even the expense of constructing rough roads in order to get the timber to the mills — often from wild areas with problems of difficult accessibility.¹⁵

There were also many other problems the timber-getters had to contend with, the dangers of the bush, snakes and scorpions, the dangers and difficulties of actually cutting the timbers and loading them onto the bullock wagons, and once the timber had arrived at the markets they had to obtain the best possible price in the face of open and mounting competition — especially from imported timber from the USA and Canada.

In 1905 the Western Australian Jarrah Company purchased vast quantities of log timber in numerous regions of the state and a mill was opened at Toomby. This operation lasted for eight years before the business was eventually closed down and in 1913 the Timber Corporation bought out the interests of the company, later establishing another large mill in Nanango. The Timber Corporation was established by George Watt in 1908 on the site of the Golden King mine and later moved into Nanango when the rail was established to the town. A report of this operation subsequently claimed: 'The corporation holds most of the timber areas in the Nanango district and pays a considerable sum yearly to the Government in the way of royalty charges. Every modern convenience for handling timber is installed in the mill and the daily output is between 15,000 and 16,000 superficial feet. The output for the year ending 1924 totalled two million feet, which is the maximum annual amount allowed by the Forestry Department. The mill also undertakes large contracts for cases, chiefly butter boxes and banana cases. The mill is in charge of Mr T. Leyden, who acts as secretary and manager, and about 70 hands are employed.'¹⁶



Timber Corporation sawmill on site of the Golden King mine at Nanango.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

The mill was one of the few in the state that did not ship logs away to other centres. A description of its operations, and the operations of Raverty's mill at Nanango in 1929 claimed:

The Timber Corporation, Ltd., of which Mr G. Watt is manager, was established 21 years ago. It is one of the few mills, at any rate in the south of Queensland, that does not ship logs away. A large jib crane lifts the logs from the yard to the mill, where a Canadian circular saw breaks them down. All boarding is cut by band resaws, with a couple of other circular saws for edging and for off-cuts. The planing mill, which is fitted with the latest type of ball-bearing machine for dressing building sizes and butter boxes, has a capacity of 20,000ft, a day. The sawmill can put through 15,000ft. Nothing is wasted, as there is a big demand for the fruit case made in the mill. Forty hands are employed about the mill alone, while probably nearly as many are employed in the scrub felling and hauling. Only pine is treated. The Central Sawmill, owned by Mr D. Raverty, treats only hardwood. It is fitted with a breaking-down frame and circular saws. The boiler was brought from one of the Gympie mines. A particularly handy piece of machinery for the district is a lathe 6ft between centres. The mill in normal times employs six men ...¹⁷

During the first twenty-five years of the timber industry on the South Burnett, a large percentage of the timber cut at the various mills was used in local building projects or for other local purposes. However, the situation had changed dramatically by 1904 after the rail line had been completed to Kingaroy. Timber could then be railed easily and relatively inexpensively to large milling centres such as Brisbane and Maryborough. A report of August 1906 clearly shows how the timber industry was growing rapidly through that period: 'This district at the present time is undoubtedly the most important source of supply of pine timber in the State, and for the next two or three years at least the rate at which it is being sent away will not only be maintained but will in all probability increase. There are now about fifty teams hauling into Kingaroy, and during last month considerably over one million feet of pine was sent away by the railway. Notwithstanding this big output, saw-millers are feverishly asking for more, and the keen rivalry for supplies is manifested in the frequent visits of sawmilling representatives and the fact that prices are offered in excess of the amount fixed by the Saw-millers' union.'¹⁸

Markets for timber were variable, and almost all the mills purchased varieties of timbers from a wide selection of timber-getters. Some timber-getters preferred to cut and supply logs for the local mills, but the particular requirement for specific logs was sometimes restrictive, depending upon local timber requirements. Others sent their logs by wagon and ship to Sydney, some supplied the large mills then operating at Maryborough, this was certainly the more attractive proposition after the railways had gone through to places such as Kilkivan, Kingaroy and, later, Nanango, but there were problems associated with supplying the Maryborough mills, the owners of which, at the turn of the century at least, were renowned for cutting the prices of timber and for obdurate business practices. A report in the *Maryborough Chronicle* dated February 1906 gives a clear understanding of the state of the timber industry at that time, and also of the problems associated with supplying the mills in that city compared to sending timber directly to the Sydney markets. The owners of the timber mills at Maryborough were primarily men with Scottish and staunch Presbyterian backgrounds and were notoriously thrifty when it came to matters of business. The 1906 report claimed:

Log timber is coming in freely now, and is going away as fast as it arrives. It may be thought that our scrubs would show an altered appearance owing to the enormous number of logs that have been taken out of them, and no doubt, in some places there is a difference; but if one ascends one of the hills, and gazes around he is at once impressed with the multitudes — I can find no better word — of pine tops that the eye rests upon. Seas, oceans of pine trees, stretching as far as the eye can see; billow after billow of hoop, and bunya uprearing their lofty heads on every side. There seems to be no end of them. In proximity to the railway there is a sensible diminution in the numbers of marketable pines, but further back there are enormous reserves of timber. At present the Maryborough millers are in bad odour with the majority of the timber-getters, owing partly to their very hostile attitude re the export of log timber, and partly because the men are beginning to feel that someone has been pocketing enormous profits in which they have had no share. Wherever one drops upon a group of haulers or cutters, he is sure to hear expressions of opinion which are the reverse of complimentary to the Maryborough Saw-millers. Men are beginning to ask how it is that other mills can pay better prices for timber. Also they are wondering why their measurements tally so well with the measurements of other mills, while their measurements are so often in

excess of what the Maryborough mills pay for. Again they are perplexed over certain facts which have lately been made known to them — viz., they cannot understand how Sydney millers can afford to sell timber from this district at cheaper rates than it is sold at in Maryborough. If the timber were taken from here to Sydney free of all freightage and charges, it would still puzzle us to understand how the Sydney men manage to sell cheaper than the local millers considering that the southern timber men pay their workers much higher wages than the Maryborough millers do. There is another grievance against the Maryborough mills. Men never know what they are going to get for their labours. Altogether too often when men enquire why they have had their measurements greatly reduced the reply they receive is most unsatisfactory. They are told that 'the timber cut up badly, or there were flaws in such and such logs, etc., etc.' When the logs for the Sydney mills are on the trucks the men can obtain credit notes for their measurements, provided that they tally with the loader's measurements, and the men get paid for those measurements; not for whatever measurements the Sydney men make of it. Maryborough millers, apparently buy the logs, not as logs, but as so many feet of sawn timber. At this rate men would need to wait until their logs had been milled before they would know what was due to them. Why can't they do the thing like the Sydney agents do? — buy the logs straight out and pay for log measurement.¹⁹

The polarization of the timber-getters and the millers, and the differences of opinion, particularly concerning fees, was a perennial problem. The millers at Maryborough believed they were justified in paying the minimum amounts possible for timber, claiming that they had massive overheads in the form of wages, buildings and machinery. They also had to bear the brunt of fires, common in many early mills, and floods, even more common along the banks of the Mary River. Yet despite these arguments, the timber-getters remained aggrieved over the practice of paying the absolute minimum and then finding ways to reduce this minimum even further. For example, the logs loaded onto the trains at Kingaroy would be a certain length at loading, but due to shrinkage, by the time they were due to go through the saws at the Maryborough mills they were often some inches shorter, and payments were made on the shorter measurement. It was also the practice of the Maryborough mills to retain the pence less than a shilling, a practice the timber-getters found particularly annoying. One commentator claimed:

The returns to hand from a mill on the southern and western railway are ... satisfactory. In nearly every instance the measurements at these mills have been the same as the loaders and cutters measurements here. In two or three instances the local measurements have been exceeded by those taken to the mills; due no doubt, to the local allowance for shrinkage being too large; and also to the fact that these mills pay for full measurement, i.e., they do not copy the Maryborough method of discounting the inches in length; nor do they retain the pence less than a shilling, as is done in Maryborough. In the returns from these mills even the half-pences are included. Timber men fail to understand why the Maryborough mills only should enjoy a monopoly of the above reductions when other mills are satisfied to pay full price. Cutters and haulers have the hardest part of the work to do, and they live under most unfavourable conditions; therefore it is only just and right that they should receive the full value of their work; they need the extra pence more than the millers do. All the talk about wastage at the mills is disbelieved as it is well known that millers use so-called waste for firewood, and they charge a big price for every load sent from the mills. They can also get something for the sawdust. The men who keep the millers in comfort and luxury, often have exceedingly hard times; and they live in discomfort. Men who are benefiting so largely by the worker's toil and wretchedness ought to have a little more consideration for their benefactors, even though these occupy a lowly position.²⁰

Demand for timber at that time was enormous and was, seemingly, growing almost daily. The timber-getters of the South Burnett were supplying not only the mills in Brisbane, Maryborough and Sydney, but were receiving orders for large quantities of logs from as far away as the Hunter River region where millers were prepared to pay top prices for logs and required regular supplies. Many mills had agents working in the area and the timber-getters were, quite naturally, exceedingly happy with the upturn in trade, especially so as some of the timber-getters were in debt, having borrowed money to set up their businesses, purchase bullocks, wagons and other equipment, and the buoyant state of the market meant that these debts could now be met. The press claimed: 'They have been struggling against every misfortune for many years but now they seem to be in a fair way of being able to keep themselves, their wives and families in decency. Some of them are even entertaining the hopes that they may be able to get out of debt.'²¹

Residents of Kingaroy, even if they were not directly connected with the timber industry, could clearly see that business was booming, hundreds of wagons loaded with logs were arriving at the station every week and people living close to the railway line could hear the whistles of the steam-engines at all hours as extra trains were scheduled to deal with the increase in timber exports.²²

In 1907 the Lands Department announced that a large quantity of pine on the Nanango goldfields reserve was to be opened up for cutting and as this constituted such a vast potential wealth there was considerable agitation over who should be allowed to cut and then mill the logs. As the railways had not at that time been extended to Nanango, a deputation comprising Alfred James Jones, M.L.A. for the Burnett (and later lord mayor of Brisbane), James Millis, chairman of the Nanango Shire Council, G. Harrison of the Ipswich Chamber of Commerce, Henry Plantagenet Somerset, M.L.A. for Stanley and A. Lee made a presentation to the lands minister. These men argued before the minister that the timber should not be sold until the rail line to Nanango had been decided and that the government stipulation that the timber be sold only to Queensland saw-millers was a poor decision that would have a detrimental impact on the timber-getters. A deputation of millers had previously claimed that there was a shortage of logs for the Queensland mills, this was clearly not the case, but the millers were attempting to force the government to reserve the rights to Queensland timber for Queensland mills. Interstate mills, especially those in New South Wales, were paying better rates for logs, and the Queensland millers were incensed that in order to obtain sufficient logs they would have to raise their rates to match those of New South Wales. There was, of course, no shortage of logs, a press report claimed that logs were, '... in heaps along the road at Coolabunia, there were 200 logs at Kingaroy (railway) yard.'²³ The report added that there were approximately 1200 logs at other centres in the South Burnett and that the railway was so busy it could not carry away all the timber that was ready for transportation. This being the case, the opening of the timber reserve at Nanango was not necessary.

There was also concern that the timber on the reserve was to be sold in one block, rather than being split up into smaller blocks so that individual timber-getters could purchase the trees. Most of these timber-getters were small businessmen with heavy debts to pay and they certainly could not afford to buy large tracts of timber reserves, whereas the millers, generally with far greater finances at their disposal, could purchase the reserves and then employ timber-getters at much lower rates to harvest the logs. A deputation consisting of S. Hack and A. Boldery, of the South Burnett Timber Workers' Union met with the lands minister to protest this action.²⁴



Alf Brooks, William Brandt, Gus Schultz and Carl Brandt felling hoop pine in natural scrub on Brandt property West Coolabunia 1905. Photograph by Arthur Beck.

Source — Harold and Lila Adlem.



Dick and Albert Brandt felling hoop pine on West Coolabunia property 1905. Photograph by Arthur Beck. Note canvas waterbag and tools.

Source — Harold and Lila Adlern.

One of the companies vying for the rights to the pine was Jarrah and Co., an interstate firm which promised to erect a large sawmill near Nanango, a mill that would employ up to one hundred men. Jarrah company directors also promised that they would financially guarantee the building of a rail line from Yarraman Creek to Nanango.²⁵

Jarrah was an enormous concern with a substantial amount of financial resources, they were also among the first to introduce steam traction engines into the region, a move that created considerable hostility among the teamster community. Yet it was progress, of sorts, and one that virtually guaranteed the company a constant supply of logs in all but the worse weather. A report of Jarrah's actions, written in October 1906, claimed:

The Company have had a representative resident at Kingaroy for some time, have paid top rates for timber, and cash on delivery in the railway yard, and in addition have secured standing pine throughout the district to the extent of seven million feet. The Queensland manager, Mr Walkeden, who has spent several days in the district during the week making his new arrangements, explains that despite the conditions enumerated, he has, owing to the local influence of competing interests, found it extremely difficult to either get his timber hauled to the railway or purchase other supplies. He is determined to secure supplies, and to accomplish that end has decided to introduce traction engines. Two have been purchased, and will arrive here via Jondaryan about the beginning of November. They are Fowler engines ... with a low speed of 2½ miles an hour, which can be altered by gearing to four miles per hour. With them will come a travelling camp-waggon and cook's outfit, an iron outfit waggon with spare parts and repair tools, a water cart and tanks, a horse team, tents, etc. A staff of seven men accompanies the caravan ... and when established in working order, it is expected that a staff of twelve men will be employed. The engines will for the present operate along the Coolabunia road and branches, and arrangements have been completed

with property owners for a private road through their property, leading from Kingaroy to near the Edenvale Church. Water supply has also been arranged for. Later on, it is intended to add a portable sawmill plant, so that in wet weather, or when the roads are unworkable, the mill will be taken to the timber, and the logs cut near where they are felled, the sawn timber being sent to Brisbane, or otherwise disposed of as occasion requires. The firm will continue their policy of working amicably with local teamsters and timber workers, and will continue taking supplies from them. The introduction of the traction engines is intended to make supplies certain, and widen the sphere of operations.

We have also to report that three other traction engines are also on the way from the Downs to Kingaroy. One recently purchased by Mr W. Ross is a 14 h.p. nominal engine, and will be here in about three weeks from Crow's Nest. It is to be used in hauling logs from Taabinga Village to the Kingaroy Railway Station. Two are en-route from Yangan, and are expected about the end of the week. One belongs to Mr R. Pook, and will be used for various operations. The other is being brought by Mr T. Preston, and will be used for corn threshing and water boring. Both left Yangan 8 days ago, and are travelling together.²⁶

The export trade to New South Wales was an extremely beneficial one for the timber-getters, at last the mills at Maryborough, Bundaberg and Brisbane were not dictating prices, the onus of profitability had flowed out of their hands, and with the advent of far fiercer competition, the timber-getters at last could play a part in their own financial destinies.

In February 1907, Mr A. Boldery, the secretary of the South Burnett Timber-getters' Union, a man who had done much to alleviate the problems then facing the timber-getters, claimed:

There are about 60 teamsters in our Union. About May 1905 the timber-getters found themselves in this position: There were about 900 logs of pine lying in the Kingaroy railway station yards, which the mills could not take; and so serious was the position, that the railway authorities locked the gates, and the timber-getters could not get any more in. This caused a stoppage in the industry. The saw millers took advantage of this position by reducing the prices by 2s., to 3s. per 100 feet on trucks at Kingaroy the prices today are 4s. 6d. for the same timber. The millers contended that the timber-getters had no right to cut more than the mills could take. But timber-getters arrange with selectors to take their pine, and, as the selectors want the scrub down so as to get in crops, the business cannot be delayed. The upshot was that a lot of timber went bad. It is well-known that once pine logs are cut they begin to deteriorate.

To overcome this matter of surplus stock, we opened up negotiations with the timber merchants in Sydney. We had ascertained that a Maryborough firm had exported logs to the South very profitably. So we got the services of Mr Fred Appel, of Maryborough and now we have opened up a very profitable export trade between Maryborough and Sydney.

We had received bad treatment from the local mills prior to the export trade being opened. We had to send our timber to them at the merchants' own prices; they paid us on their own measurement; and they made what deductions they pleased for small faults in the timber.

Now there is a great change. The timber-getter hauls in his logs. There is a buyer on hand who measures the logs, and if there are any faults a mutual arrangement is made on the spot. More important still, instead of waiting until the next month for his money, he gets a cheque straight away.²⁷

One of the many mills operating at this time was a steam-powered mill owned by Henry Parsons of *Bolinbroke* farm, almost ten miles from Nanango, a three hundred acres selection on the banks of Barker Creek which ran through the property. This was reported as being a particularly rich parcel of land and had been known to yield up to fourteen bags of wheat per acre. The western portion of the property was not quite as good and was used primarily for grazing purposes. The primary pursuits on the farm were dairying, horse breeding, hay making and general farming. Parsons, aided by one of his sons, designed and erected a six-roomed cottage on the farm in about 1902. This building had a detached kitchen with a covered communicating passageway, there were verandahs and railings on three sides of the house. Parson's sawmill was also a lucrative venture, the press later reporting: 'Attached to the farm is a steam sawmill, run by three sons of the owner. The mill cuts an average of 1200 to 1500 feet of timber daily. Mr Henry Parsons came from Warwickshire (England) to Queensland in 1863. (He) was married

in 1870 to Miss E. Dale of Dalby ... *Bolinbroke* was selected 15 years ago, but the family, who were residing at *Kingswood*, 160 acre selection near Parson's Bridge, 3 miles from Nanango, did not inhabit *Bolinbroke* until 5 or 6 years later ... Two horse teams carry timber to the mill.²⁸

According to the *Nanango News*, of Saturday 16 September, 1899, a man named James Lyons, while sharpening a saw at the mill, was badly injured when the saw suddenly flew into fragments, portions of which embedded in his arm. A work-mate named Bowes rendered first aid, which included liberal doses of brandy.²⁹

Henry Parsons was something of a local identity and was described as a very busy man with many interests. One person who knew him later writing:

This gentleman of many projects, would appear to have the industrial ambition of quite a dozen ordinary men, although having as matters stand, more irons in the fire than one would suppose he well could manage, he absolutely weeps for new worlds to conquer, and in his scanty spare moments is consequently a dreamer of dreams. We yarned by the camp-fire on sundry frosty nights, and it is truth that I state when I assure my readers, that Mr Parsons has ... (interests in) gold mining, coal mining, saw milling, sheep fattening, wheat growing; and in addition to these, he is an inventor of no mean order, and has just perfected an implement, something after the breed of a scarifier, for which he hopes to take out a patent when he gets time. Mr Parsons is the busiest of busy men; one whose brain works a long way ahead of his hands (although they are never idle), and those magnificent hundred acres or so, which he keeps under such perfect cultivation are a credit to both.³⁰

Both Henry Parsons and one of his sons, Benjamin, were to meet tragic deaths, his son being accidentally killed in February 1914 and Parsons also dying accidentally on 27 February, 1923. The press report of his death stating:

The tragic death of Mr H. Parsons, Senr., on Tuesday came as a rude shock to the community. During the day he was to be seen driving about in his sulky busily engaged assisting with the Salvation Army Harvest Festival preparations, and only a few minutes before his sad and violent death he had been content in his work, singing a hymn as he drove along to the butter factory where he was going for ice. As he reached the post office the winkers evidently broke, for the horse immediately bolted. As it raced past the Shire Office it could be seen that Mr Parsons had no control over it, the bit being out of the horse's mouth. The horse raced madly past the factory, and in attempting to turn up towards the railway crossing the vehicle overturned, throwing Mr Parsons heavily. Several people, including Dr McReddie, were soon on the scene, when it was found that Mr Parsons had sustained injuries to the right side of his head and right arm. He was placed upon a blanket and by the doctor's instructions he was carried to the Shire Office, but he never regained consciousness, and passed away within the half hour. It was a sad ending to a fine old gentleman.

Deceased, who was just on 76 years of age, was one of the pioneers of the district, coming to Nanango from the Dalby district a little over forty years ago. He first engaged in the occupation of teamster, carrying between this town and Esk, but later he turned to other pursuits. He took up land on the Barambah road close to town under the Land Act of '76, and he also selected at Ennis a very fine property now owned and farmed by one of his sons-in-law, Mr J. Roberts. Here he established a sawmill, and carried on business as a sawmiller for several years. He was also one of the district's first wheat growers, and was largely identified with the earlier mining activities of the place. The farm on Barker's Creek now owned by Mr F.W. Bowman originally belonged to deceased, and he also owned a valuable farm in the same locality at the time of his death, besides having house and land interests in Nanango. He has ever been a hard-working and industrious settler, a man held high in the esteem of a wide circle of acquaintances. Of recent years he had been a prominent member of the Salvation Army, keenly interested in its work and sincere in his efforts towards extending that body's influence ...

The funeral, which is said to have been the largest seen in Nanango, moved from deceased's residence on Wednesday afternoon. The cortège included over fifty vehicles, besides a number of horsemen and pedestrians. It was headed by a ... soldier carrying an Army banner followed by the local Army band, which played hymns on the way to the cemetery ... Deceased was laid to rest in the plot adjoining his son's grave, who also met his death by an accident on 19th February, 1914.³¹

There was another mill situated at Spooner's waterholes approximately three quarters of a mile beyond the school at Grindstone, near Nanango. This mill was owned by the company of Mangan and Heiner and opened on Monday 12 February, 1912. The press reported upon its opening:

The mill has a capacity of 4000 feet of log timber per day. At present, the sawn timber is brought into town by teams, but the firm's intention is to eventually use the traction engine for hauling and place a stationary engine in the mill. Including the two proprietors, there are seven hands employed at milling, while others are engaged hauling and at other work.

At the time of our visit there was a regular giant of the forest on the frame carrier — a dry, hard blue gum, 26 feet long and about 5 feet diameter. It almost filled the frame. It was broken down into five flitches by one operation of the machinery. This log alone was estimated to contain 1580 superficial feet of sawn timber.

The machinery was set in motion by Mrs H. Heiner, who in a neat little speech declared the Grindstone mill opened and wished it every success.

Dainty refreshments were provided and after partaking of them Doctor Tarleton proposed the health of Messrs Mangan and Heiner and success to their enterprise. The Doctor pointed out that the mill had been built for the local trade by local people and with local capital.

Messrs G. Watt, W. Lewis and W. Horsfall also spoke in congratulatory terms of the enterprise of Messrs Mangan and Heiner. Those two gentleman suitably replied, and asked for the support of the farmers of the district as well as the public of Nanango.

Other toasts followed, and a very pleasant afternoon was concluded at about 5 o'clock.³²

A description of the mill and its operations written the following year stated:

This sawmill which is intended and constructed for the cutting of hardwood only, is a go ahead little concern which lends quite an air of bustle and business to the otherwise very quiet locality, and this can the more readily be understood when it is considered that the daily output is 2000 super feet of sawn timber. The machinery is run by a Buffalo-Pitt 22 h.p. traction engine operating upon a vertical break-down frame and Haigh's circular saw-bench. The partners in the firm named are more than favourably situated regarding their particular industry, which, as stated, is the cutting of hardwood only. Each is the owner of a block of land in the vicinity which produces hardwood timbers in quantity and at a reasonable distance for haulage. This firm supplies hardwood timber right down the line as far as Theebine and beyond and even up the Gympie line.³³

The teams supplying logs to the mill were actually employed by the mill, rather than being contractors, the capacity of the mill, in 1913 at least, was 3500 super feet per day with ten employees. The plant was designed in such a way that the entire working floor could be seen by the engineer who could stop the machinery immediately in case of accident. The mill sometimes cut hardwoods on contract for the Timber Corporation's mill at Nanango.³⁴

The Tarong sawmill was owned by W. Denning, the *Nanango News* reported of this mill in 1913: 'A short visit was paid to Tarong sawmill owned by W. Denning and managed by his son, J.J. Denning. Here we found a well equipped little mill, but like other institutions it is feeling the slackness in the timber trade. A Canadian bench does the principal work and there are two hand benches, the power being a 12 h.p. steam engine. Both pine and hardwood are cut and a good deal of the timber finds its way over to Nanango to be railed away. There are six men and four or five haulers employed at the mill when going full steam.'³⁵ However, despite this rosy picture of the mill, another report of its operations, written just seven months later, pointed out that: 'This district, having large timber interests, is feeling the effects of the financial depression, just as other places, Mr Denning's mill is not working full time as some of us would like. It is a fine, well equipped little mill and farmers and others having timber (for sale) have found it a great boon to the district.'³⁶

At that time too another mill was being constructed on a reserve granted by the Nanango Shire Council. The mill, owned by A. and D. Munro, was in an advanced stage of construction, the framework of a large shed, 123 feet by 47 feet had already been erected and the pits for

the machinery had been dug. The boiler was in position although the remaining machinery had not, by March 1913, arrived at the location. The land surrounding the mill had been fenced, five cottages had been constructed for the mill managers and workers and seven other cottages were ready to be transported from Cooyar.³⁷

The problem of clearing the land was twofold, as closer settlement increased pace so too did the forestry industry grow, soon there were many sawmills dotted throughout the South Burnett, thus, in addition to scrub clearing, the natural forests were also being depleted, leading to public vilification, damning press articles and, in many areas — primarily the cities — considerable public outrage. The millers and timber cutters bore the brunt not only of the logs they were cutting for commercial purposes, but also for the indiscriminate scrub clearing that was still taking place on a grand scale throughout the South Burnett. Yet even the *Nanango News*, centred in an area that relied heavily upon its timber resources, was not afraid of publishing the headline, 'Our Forests — the Timber Butchers of Queensland'.³⁸ The article went on to state that despite a public outcry to have stronger regulatory controls over the logging industry, the minister for lands and the director of forests were doing nothing to prevent the 'timber butchery' that was taking place in Queensland. The article quoted famous writer H. Rider Haggard as commenting in trenchant terms on the destruction of the forests, adding: 'We notice that Mr Pagan, (deputy commissioner for railways) had been shocked at the slaughter. He was reported to have said ... "I have no fault to find with the legitimate use of the timber or with legitimate clearing for agricultural purposes; but it is a sin to see splendid ironbark timber ringbarked and destroyed merely for the sake of a little grass".'³⁹

During the years leading up to the Great War the timber industry in the South Burnett increased dramatically, and this increase was, in large part, responsible for the local wealth that generated sufficient prosperity for the towns and villages of the region to grow at a rapid rate. Thousands of tons of timber, soft and hard woods, were carried to the rail heads and trucked to Maryborough, Brisbane and Sydney. Hundreds of teamsters throughout the Wide Bay and Burnett also moved vast quantities of logs to local mills, dozens of which had, by that time, sprung up in areas close to the forests that were being cut.

Ross and Company established a sawmill at Elgin Vale circa 1908. Once the Boonara land sale had taken place in March 1911 and the township of Goomeri had become established, another mill belonging to Ross and Co, was built there, adding substantially to the region's growth. The mill at Goomeri which took logs from a wide diversity of region, was, in August 1911, just five months after the establishment of the town, described as:

Ross and Company's new sawmill is at present about the most conspicuous and promising feature in go-ahead Goomeri. It may be said to be all but complete in every essential detail. The big iron roofed shed is 60 x 114 feet and a branch line of apparently about 15 or 20 chains length leads from the main (rail) line alongside. The fine multitubular boiler is the work of Walkers Limited (of Maryborough) a fact which is in itself a sufficient guarantee of efficiency, and the engine, 60 h.p nominal. As this company is already the proprietor of another sawmill at Scrubby Paddock (Elgin Vale) in the Nanango direction, the Goomeri supply of pine will come from there. A good deal of it is already in the sawn state, and at Goomeri facilities have been provided for the rapid discharge of the same from the trucks. Nothing will be done here by hand that may be done by machinery. The mill will to a great extent depend on local sources for its supply of hardwood, and of this timber there are considerable quantities within a profit-giving radius.

Ross and Co. are deserving of high commendation for their plucky enterprise in launching a sawmilling concern which is bound to be an important factor in the development of Goomeri ... All milling appliances, saws, benches, planing machines etc are brand new and of the most modern pattern.⁴⁰

The mill at Elgin Vale was subsequently transferred to Goomeri. The Goomeri mill suffered a fire and severe wind-storm and was finally closed in 1958, the buildings later being dismantled.

There were also mills at Kabunga and Kinbombi. The Kabunga mill was constructed by that well known timber man A. Boldery, it was subsequently acquired by H.A. Skyring. Like so many other mills set in regional centres, a thriving community existed at the site of the mill complete with workers' homes, a boarding house, barracks and a school. The mill was destroyed by fire

circa 1925 and it was rebuilt at Kinbombi close to the rail siding. The work-force from Kabunga was transferred to Kinbombi, as was the school. The mill closed during the late 1920s.⁴¹

In February 1914, a twenty-six years' old sawmill worker named Benjamin Parsons, who, as we have seen, was the son of sawmill pioneer Henry Parsons, was killed at the Timber Corporation Ltd. sawmill in Nanango. Parsons, who was a well known personality in the South Burnett — especially in relation to the timber industry — had been employed at the mill as a benchman. The accident occurred while Parsons had been cutting boards, a large flitch was caught by the saw and flew backwards, hitting Parsons on his left shoulder and neck and, as the subsequent report of the accident claimed: '... crushing that part of his body practically to pulp and killing him instantaneously.' The case was a particularly sad one, as Parsons' wife had died only a month previously, and his brother, Harry Parsons, was still recovering from injuries he had received during an accident that had occurred while he had been handling log timber.⁴²

By 1914, as war loomed in Europe, the need for building materials was steadily increasing, and many of the timbers being exported from Queensland were finding ready markets in other states. In May 1914 Mr C.E. Owen Smyth, the permanent head of the Works Department of the South Australian government, and the superintendent of public buildings, visited Queensland with the object of securing added supplies of Queensland timbers. He said at the time that for years his government had been using timbers from New Zealand and America, but compared to the timbers of Queensland these had been sadly lacking in quality. It was also his government's policy to use, wherever possible, materials manufactured or produced 'under the British flag,' South Australian cement, British steel and iron, English glass and Queensland timbers. Queensland hoop pine was being used in the flooring of all South Australian public buildings at that time, and kauri was being used for fittings in government offices. Hundreds of thousands of feet of hoop pine were being used annually in the construction and maintenance of public schools. Much of this timber came from the South Burnett region.⁴³

With the outbreak of war that year, the demand for timber, world-wide, increased very dramatically, timber was needed for the war effort and it was sought with sometimes ruthless efficiency. Yet the sudden increase in demand also brought its own problems, especially that of supply. This problem was compounded by the lack of shipping. Ships too were required for the war effort and many were drafted into transporting war supplies. Some of these were sunk, either as a result of enemy action or because they were too old or too heavily laden for the difficult journeys they sometimes had to undertake. Despite the plethora of logs available in Australia, there was at that time a large amount of timber imported from the U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand and Scandinavian countries. The shortage of shipping and the dangerous shipping routes, sometimes patrolled by German submarines and warships, created problems of supply in Australia, and regardless of the rhetoric and boundless enthusiasm that Australia could supply its own timber requirements, this was not actually the case.

When the rail line to Kingaroy had been completed in 1904 there was, as we have seen, a vast over-supply of logs arriving at the railhead and this over-supply had created problems with pricing from the mills at places such as Maryborough and Brisbane. It was generally believed that with the arrival of the rail there would be at least forty or fifty years' supply of timber in the South Burnett. However, this was not to be. By 1916, when the requirement for timber was at an all time high, practically all the pine timber within marketable reach of the railhead had been cut and milled. A report of the dilemma claimed: '... There are, no doubt, large quantities of pine in Queensland, and even in this district, but the supply would soon be depleted if we had to take up the southern markets hitherto dependent on imported timber. It is rather questionable whether we should sell our pine as fast as we can, and without regard for our future needs, especially as we are doing virtually nothing in the way of replanting this valuable timber for the use of succeeding generations.'⁴⁴

Towards the end of the war the price of timbers had substantially risen, although this was as much due to increased government royalties as to demand. By the middle of 1918, with the continuing rise in royalties and the restriction of supply, the costs of purchasing log timber had affected a broad cross-section of Australian society. The higher cost of timber had forced up the prices of housing, rents and furniture. A large part of the privately owned forests had been sold off and the burden of supplying Australian (and overseas) timber needs fell to the state forests.

There was also, at last, a realisation that the state forests needed to be protected and some kind of regeneration programme placed into action. In August 1918, John Henry Coyne, M.L.A. for Warrego, stated: 'Most of the privately owned timber has now been cut off and the whole weight of the supplies falls on the State forests. Unless we are prepared to cut our forests out altogether and leave ourselves without timber, we must arrange for the cutting of the forests on scientific principles. We cannot denude our forests altogether. We must not take more timber than the forests reproduce — that is to say, when we take a tree away we must provide for another one to take its place.'⁴⁵

Teamsters were strongly objecting to the increased royalty rates. A deputation met with lands minister, John Henry Coyne, in November that year and pointed out to him that royalty rates had risen approximately 110 per cent in just six months. Coyne rejected their arguments claiming that the increased royalty was necessary and that it was doing no harm to the teamsters.⁴⁶

In June 1920 the Queensland government decided to place a ban on the export of some kinds of logs. A press statement claimed: 'The Cabinet today came to a decision in respect to the matter of preventing the exports of certain kinds of pine logs. The acting premier stated that a deputation had made it clear to him that owing to large quantities of log timber being sent from the State, certain mills were not working at their full capacity, and that had the effect of increasing the prices of pine timber thus reducing work in the building and cabinet-making trade. In order to properly control this business, a proclamation was issued that day under the Sugar Acquisition Act which would have the effect of seizing all logs of hoop and bunya pine now on trucks or to come on trucks at any railway within 25 miles of the General Post Office, Brisbane, or the Post Office at Maryborough. This timber thus became the property of the government, and any person having such logs and wishing to dispose of them would have to apply to the treasurer stating what they intended to do with them.'⁴⁷

In September the same year the federal government gave a considerable boost to the timber industry by investing heavily in the construction of war service homes, purchasing not only the timber but many mills, tramways and timber estates.⁴⁸

By 1923 the regions that were economically accessible for timber harvesting were becoming even more scarce, the timber reserves around the railways had been almost completely denuded and there was serious concern, especially in Maryborough where the mills played such an important part in the local economy, that if fresh reserves of timber were not made accessible through railways extensions, then the milling industry would ultimately die. Little consideration was given to reforestation.⁴⁹

By this time there were serious attempts being made at silviculture as it was becoming increasingly obvious that without some kind of reforestation programme the timber industry would quickly wither and die. Throughout the state there were vast areas of virgin bush, known as wallum country, and this wallum was considered to be ideal land for the purpose of growing trees — hardwoods and softwoods. In February 1924, W.R. Petrie, deputy forester and special officer in silviculture at the Department of Lands, stated that his department was about to embark on large scale experiments by planting the wallum country with varieties of trees, especially blackbutt; small scale experiments carried out over the preceding few years had shown that this type of tree was most suitable to reforestation programmes, using intensive management techniques.⁵⁰

It was clear at this time that the timber industry was in something of a quandary and the state government was moving to ensure that timber resources were preserved while, at the same time, attempting to maintain a viable logging and milling industry. Yet there were to be victims of such a difficult situation and these victims were invariably the smaller mills and some of the teamsters in country areas such as the South Burnett. At a meeting of millers held at Maryborough in March 1924 it was generally acknowledged that:

The crisis which has arrived in the timber industry of Queensland in respect to the supply of pine logs to enable the demands of saw-millers and incidentally, the needs of the public, to be met, makes it necessary for the whole position regarding the future of the industry to be carefully examined.

The recent deputation to the Minister for Lands (William McCormack) and subsequent conferences with the director of forests (Mr E.H.F. Swain) leave no room for doubt that the

policy of the Government is to endeavour to conserve the diminishing pine forests by rationing out the existing supplies in diminished proportion, and admittedly, in insufficient quantity, to enable all existing mills to continue working up to normal capacity.

A policy of partial starvation of the saw mills would have the effect of lessening the amount of employment, and would produce one of two results — a diminution of the wages earned by workers, or an increase in the hourly rate to make up for idle time, which would add to production costs and to the price of sawn timber.

The Minister expressed the opinion that at least some mills would have to discontinue, and he thought it better that, what he described as 'small coffee pot mills' which cannot be worked as economically as the larger and better equipped ones, should be closed up.⁵¹

The state of the timber industry at that time was certainly acute and the seriousness of the situation could not be over-estimated. When the annual forestry report was tabled in parliament in 1925, it: '... told a gloomy story of the outlook in relation to the quantities of softwoods available.'⁵² It was pointed out in the report that Queensland pine forests were in danger of becoming extinct within ten years, there being only approximately 800 million super feet of softwoods left in the state. A subsequent report claimed: 'It might well be said that we have grossly failed to appreciate the wonderful gift of nature in respect to timbers, in that forests have been ruthlessly depleted without any consideration of their replacement.'⁵³

For many years, ever since the railway lines had gone through to the South Burnett, the public had been aware of the massive logging program that had immediately taken place. At first there was little voice of reason, or caution, the logs had simply been stripped from the forests and railed to the mills in their thousands. However, by the 1920s this programme of clear-felling was having a traumatic and dramatic impact. In 1925 the *Maryborough Chronicle* castigated: 'The public mind has certainly been aroused periodically as to the possibilities, but as far as any practical efforts are concerned the results have been almost infinitesimal. Even at this stage, when (the) population is increasing and forests have been virtually denuded of their supplies of softwoods, the areas of (softwood) plantations in the various States are not such as to inspire much confidence as to the future ... the matter of renewing our forests has been almost utterly neglected, and now, when a serious shortage is being experienced, the task of replenishment resolves itself into a gigantic undertaking that must involve millions of pounds. It is some years ago since Mr J.H. Coyne, then minister for lands, issued a warning as to the threatened famine, but unfortunately little has been done towards meeting the situation'⁵⁴

It was not only business greed that was responsible for the over-cutting of the forests, much of the problem lay with government policy. The state government had for years contented itself with adding to its general revenue by allowing clear-felling, happy in the knowledge that a model Forestry Bill would one day be introduced that would go far in ameliorating the problem. Until then the royalties paid for state forests and the rail charges for carrying that timber were adding millions to governmental coffers. It was a gross action of misconduct for which there seems little, if any, excuse — especially so as the state government was aware of the New Zealand model whereby forests were being carefully used and lands extensively reforested, millions of young trees being issued to settlers in New Zealand.⁵⁵

The problem was further exacerbated by government policy of allowing small mills, 'coffee-pot mills', as William McCormack had called them, to set up their operations close to the rail lines and in scrub country near to the timber sources. Each mill that was granted a licence to cut logs further added to the now acute problem of softwood shortage. An investigation made into the question in 1927 described the situation as 'serious' and that the government policy in allowing small country mills to set up in business would ultimately spell the end for larger mills, especially those established at places such as Maryborough, Bundaberg, and Brisbane. The report claimed:

In the early days pine was plentiful, and perhaps the pioneers ... were prodigal in their use of soft timbers. The day came when the people were awakened to the fact that, at the rate pine forests were being denuded, in little over a decade none of this timber would remain standing. The consequence, of course, was obvious. Five years ago the Forestry Department stepped in, took almost complete control of pine forests, and formulated a scheme to eke out the existing supplies for a period of thirty years. By that time they hoped that their policy of re-afforestation would bear fruit, and at the expiration of the term the new 'cultivated'

forests would be capable of meeting the demand for soft woods. In theory the idea is good — and future generations will appreciate the foresight of the Government. (But) ... supply is not nearly equal to the demand, and the quantities of pine released by the Department at each quarterly sale are less than at the previous sale. (Yet) the Government has encouraged the establishment of new mills — 'coffee pot' mills — as the Premier (Mr McCormack), aptly described them. In the majority of cases they have been erected on the fringe of scrubs, and though such enterprise under ordinary circumstances would be commended ... their competition for supplies jeopardises the successful operation of the old concerns, to which so many workers have looked for steady work, and, in the face of success in the past, have established comfortable homes. That the department has encouraged these little mills is evidenced by the fact that it has seen its way clear to offer at times lots up to 10,000,000 feet. That has played into the hands of the owners of the small country mills, which are very favourably situated in many important directions. Once established, the small country mills have a big advantage over the bigger concerns in that they may secure all available grass rights for depasturing working teams of horses or bullocks engaged in the handling of timber. Therefore, they are in most cases assured of adequate supplies for periods up to twenty years, according to the quantities of timber available in the adjacent scrubs.

The competition for supplies on the part of country mills as against the important city mills is keen and after all it is only good business. But the city suffers. The supplies available five years ago in Maryborough, for instance, would keep the mills fully occupied for three-quarters of the year; since then they have been so reduced that now less than half the year is occupied in treating pine, and the fear arises that they will quickly reach vanishing point.⁵⁶

The warning signs were clearly evident, without some kind of relief chaos was looming for the timber industry, the mills were threatening to act independently thus forcing a crisis situation where men would be placed out of work, prices would rise dramatically and a number of the mills, especially smaller, less competitive mills, would be forced to close down. Larger mills, such as those at Maryborough and Brisbane, were particularly anxious that the smaller mills situated in the country were prevented from being allocated timber supplies that could have been sent to the cities. Owners of these larger mills sited a number of reasons why the small mills should be bypassed, these included the enormous waste, such as firewood, sawdust and shavings, for which there was little demand in the country, erratic and irregular cutting of timbers by inexperienced timber-cutters, thus causing even more waste, inferior machining of dressed timbers due to the lack of proper facilities and the inexperience of operators, inferior workmanship in the milling process itself, and labour problems created through the lack of modern city conveniences. The larger city mills claimed that they could provide a far better service, they could eliminate wastage of shavings and sawdust as there was a good demand for such products in the city, their milling operations were uniform and the finished product was far superior to that being produced at the country mills, the workers were well trained and reliable, there were few industrial labour problems and that a vast amount of money had been invested in the major city sawmilling plants.⁵⁷

The shortage of timbers was affecting the timber-getters as much as the millers, possibly even more so, as the millers were able to choose from a variety of suppliers but the timber-getters had to find the marketable timber, and, under increasingly more antagonistic negativity from the Forestry Department, gain permission to cut it. A report of July 1927 sited a typical example of the plight of the timber-getter, quoting the problems of one man who: '... had exhausted the timber supplies on a block he had been cutting for months past and applied to the Forestry Department for the right to remove timber from an adjacent block. In due course he received a reply from the department stating that for the time being there was no intention to open up further blocks and therefore the application could not be granted.' The report continued:

In the old language of officialdom this man was told that his source of livelihood was to be taken away from him, and furthermore no reason was assigned for this sudden decision. Thus a married man who has spent the best years of his life in a desolate and cheerless spot, had gathered together enough money to buy two wagons and teams valued approximately at £300 each. What is he now to do with them? He can now find no use for them. Is he therefore to sell at a loss? Most certainly he will lose on all the work he has performed in the matter of fencing paddocks and clearing roadways etc. Within a few miles' radius of this man's hut there will, in the near future, be eight idle teams and all the men dependent upon the industry in this locality will be thrown out of work.⁵⁸

Prices for timber had, over a period of twelve years, risen by around 140 per cent. In January 1915 the price of first quality timber had been 19/6d per 100 feet in the rough and 24/- dressed. In 1927 that had escalated to 46/6d rough and 57/6d dressed. The primary cause of this increase was added royalty.⁵⁹ Clearly, this was not a good time for businessmen to be considering investing in the logging or milling industry.

Yet despite this gloom, and amid a confusing array of state and federal government policies over the timber industry, the introduction of tariffs and the application of reforestation techniques, the timber industry on the South Burnett continued to struggle along. A 1928 report gives an idea of the industry at that time:

Though quantities of timber are also available from private properties in all parts of the district, the other important source of pine supply is the Manumbar Range country, outside Goomeri, on the Maryborough — Nanango line. The Manumbar timber industry is almost self-contained, as the pine logs, felled on the ranges, are delivered directly to the mills in the vicinity, and are cut and dressed or converted into plywood ...

In the South Burnett district the chief source of timber wealth is the Manumbar Range. Manumbar is an area of mountain ranges that extends out from the Burnett. The summits of the mountains are crowned with towering pine trees, which are outlined sharply against the sky. It is officially estimated that this region possesses at least 120,000,000 super feet of pine. Nestling in the midst of the bush, this little centre is a hive of activity. In the vicinity, also, is excellent farming country. In the past the Kinbombi Plywood Coy. Ltd. and the Manumbar Timber Company have been potent forces in the development of this area. The work carried on at a plywood mill is very interesting. Great pine logs, in the grip of a giant machine, are revolved and shaved by razor-like cutters. The wide thin sheets of pine which result are the first stage of what is known as ply. The sheets of pine are cut into regular lengths and widths, and taken out into racks to dry in the sun. They are then pressed and glued on to other lengths, or plys, as they are called — 2 ply, 3 ply, 4 ply, and so on — and then again pressed, finally trimmed and stacked ready for export. Kinbombi plywood is favourably known by builders throughout the Commonwealth. The preparation of ordinary sawn pine is also an important feature of the district's industry...

Messrs. Ross and Coy.'s Goomeri sawmills, established over fifteen years ago have also been a mainstay of the district. These mills, in addition to producing ordinary sawn timber, have also pursued profitable trade in the manufacture of timber for barrel staves, broom handles, cheese cases, and banana and other fruit cases.

For many years the sawmilling and timber industry has been a valuable asset to Nanango, and the spectacle of huge stacks of sawn timber at the mills of the Nanango Timber Corporation Ltd. has been a familiar sight to travellers. This mill in the past has contracted with the Forestry Department for the supply of 2,000,000 feet of pine a year from the pine forests of Marble Top and its vicinity ... Prominently associated with the timber industry in the Nanango district has been Mr H. Hunter, who has adopted the most modern methods of log haulage. A steam log hauling plant has been responsible for reducing costs to the minimum ... The Central Saw and Planing Mills, owned by D. Raverty, have also contributed to Nanango's prosperity. Murgon, Wondai, and Kingaroy, on the Maryborough-Nanango line, also support their thriving timber mills.⁶⁰

The Central mill mentioned in this report was established in 1912 by D. Raverty and was adjacent to the Timber Corporation's mill.

During the late 1920s country mills were not enjoying any kind of vigorous growth nor were they prosperous, although they were putting through various quantities of logs. For example in July 1928 logs were certainly being despatched from Kingaroy in some quantity, many of them were hardwoods, the previous month the Yarraman mill had put through a total of 356,000 super feet of log timber and the Taromeo mill had cut almost 200,000 super feet of logs. Yet these returns were, evidently, not financially acceptable, for the following year the Forestry Department announced that it would be closing a number of its mills, including the mill at Taromeo, and another at Imbil. These mills had originally been established as state sawmills but had been transferred to the Forestry Department in 1920. An account of the decision claimed: 'The change of forestry policy and this arrangement had placed them in a somewhat different category from ordinary State enterprises. However, the government in pursuance of its policy to eliminate state enterprises as far as possible, had determined upon the reduction of forestry sawmilling

operations to a minimum and accordingly had arrived at a decision that would leave in permanent operation only the forest service sawmill at Yarraman and its annexe, the Brisbane timber yards.⁶¹

The combination of high royalty rates and strict government control over the types and quantities of timber that could be logged had a strangling impact on the industry. The royalty costs alone meant that local consumers could purchase overseas milled timber for less than the local product. It was widely believed at the time that if royalties could be substantially reduced there were still sufficient stands of trees available to allow the timber industry to rapidly flourish, giving work to hundreds of men and boosting the local economies enormously.

By 1930 the federal government was moving to have foreign imports of timber restricted by increasing tariffs. Despite the continuing short supply of certain timbers, sawmills generally and the timber-getters supplying them, were pleased that a brake had been put on low cost imports from places such as Canada and Scandinavia. In July 1930 it was believed that another five hundred men would be employed in the timber industry by the end of that year.⁶² Yet even so, the foreign importers were not giving up so easily and they quickly moved to reduce the cost of their product to make up for the increase in tariffs, leaving the Queensland sawmilling industry virtually where it had started before the tariff imposition. A letter to all members of the state parliament from interested millers and businessmen claimed:

For some time past an agitation has been afoot to induce the Queensland Government to reduce the present excessively high royalties on timber growing on Crown lands to a rate that would be somewhat nearer present day market values ...

Within the last three months a Parliamentary Committee was appointed to go into the matter of reforestation and royalties. This committee concentrated on the question of royalties, and we understand that, after making exhaustive inquiries, has unanimously decided to recommend a substantial reduction in present rates ...

There is no gainsaying the fact that the cost of our native timbers is much too high. If a substantial reduction in prices could be brought about it would certainly tend to stimulate the building trade and give more work to our sawmills which at present are working less than half capacity. There are also very fair prospects for stimulating a trade with our pine in the Southern markets.

A largely attended meeting of the Brisbane Timber Merchants' Association was held in Brisbane last week, and a resolution was passed that a deputation wait upon the Premier and ask for a reduction of 5/- per 100 super feet on the key market rates on pine, and 3/- per 100 super on hardwood ...

It now behoves the Queensland Government to honour their election promises and grant substantial relief to the Queensland sawmilling industry, which, by reason of the impositions placed upon it in recent years, is now in a very serious condition.⁶³

Despite these problems some of the mills were certainly expanding their operations at this time, including the most important mill in Nanango, owned by the Timber Corporation, which had recently installed many new items of machinery. In 1928 a visitor to the mill described the mill claiming:

Mr George Watt, the manager, courteously showed us around the mill and explained the kind of work done at each particular saw bench, or other machines therein, as well as by any labour-saving devices in the mill yard which covers, by the way, about 13 acres. The main mill, it will be remembered, was destroyed by fire some 2 years ago, causing a heavy loss to the town during the interval between the burning and the erection of the new mill and starting thereof, by means of wages lost to employees. Since then, changes have taken place in the working of the mill, Mr Hancock of Messrs Hancock & Gore, Sawmillers, etc., of Brisbane, securing a big interest in the concern, with the result that Mr Watt was appointed Manager within the past 6 months or so. This gentleman, it may be said, is not a stranger to the town as he was a member of the firm, Messrs Watt, Muller & Co., who conducted a sawmill here 17 or 18 years ago, and the engine driving the machinery, at present, was put in by that firm in the early days, which speaks well for the workmanship in the engine and the care it has had during so many years — it working as smoothly and faithfully now as ever it did.

On entering the main mill ... an onlooker would think that everything was in a state of chaos, and that one man was in the other's road, and that timber was flying around anyhow and everyhow, 'looking' for someone to bump against, but a few minutes reflection steadied the eye and nerves, and showed that everything was in order, every man at his post, and every piece of timber sent to its particular dump.

A tramline runs right into mill and trucks thereon convey logs to the Canadian Bench to be cut up by the powerful saw into flitches suitable to be dealt with by the Re-saw (band-saw) lately installed. The trucks are hauled towards the bench by means of a wire cable, and back again by the same means, this going on until the log has been sawn into the sizes required. A mechanical log turner makes it an easy matter to turn the log on the trucks to the desired position, which saves much hard work; one time it had to be done by manual labour tacked onto the end of a crow-bar, or spud. The huge circular saw tears its way through a large log with swiftness and ease, so different to the old vertical saws ...

The flitches are then cut up into different sized planks by the wonderful Re-saw, which cost £2000 to install, it cutting through the timber as easily as one would run a knife through a pat of butter. This saw is made in one piece and is very thin, being practically a band of fine steel with the necessary teeth out on the edge of it ... Small pieces of timber left by the Re-saw are passed onto the next circular saw, near-by, to be cut into scantlings, and other light building stuff. What looks like waste timber from this saw is then treated by a little saw called The Scavenger and turned into fruit case timber, mostly. Next to this saw is a Pendulum Docking Saw, which is used for cutting off bad ends from small stuff, and an Automatic Cross-cut Saw severs the fruit case stuff into the required lengths. A log after going through the various saws, mentioned, ends up with, very little waste — the furnace eating up the latter.

The saw-dust is, also, used as fuel instead of being a waste product as of yore. The saw-dust from every bench, except the Scavenger one, is sucked up through pipes, finally being deposited near the doors of the furnaces, the work being done by a powerful fan driving the dust along the main pipe by a continuous blast of wind into the funnel-shaped Cyclone Separator suspended near the boilers, the dust falling down, as said, and the wind escaping at top through an aperture left for the purpose. The fan revolves at the rate of 2000 revs, per minute, it has ... not been installed very long and does away with wheeling the saw-dust from the benches.

Steam is generated by two 30 h.p. multitubular boilers, colonial type, and the engine which drives all the machinery is a 50 h.p. one, power being transmitted off a large 18 in. belt made full of life by a huge driving wheel which weighs 9 tons. The belt is connected from the big wheel to a smaller one on the counter shaft — thus giving the speed required. The engine is fixed on a very solid concrete foundation, ensuring great stability, and allows little or no vibration ...

Mr Stewart is the Chief Engineer of the mill, and on him rests the onus to see that the wheels are kept moving. We found everything neat and clean around the engine, it being well cared for.

Further along we came to the circular saw sharpener, an emery wheel driven by power doing the trick with uncanny precision as each tooth is automatically brought into position — a shower of sparks being emitted each time the emery kissed the steel. Mr Stewart, we understand, attends to this phase of the business.

A few yards further on an Automatic Band saw sharpener was in operation, being in charge of Mr Roy Hancock, and great care and patience is necessary to keep these intricate saws at the proper mark of sharpness and tension. An emery wheel, just at the right moment, touches each tooth as it comes along, giving a uniform sharp face to all of them. It's a most wonderful piece of machinery, the timing being perfect, and interesting to watch when in motion ...

At the time of our visit there were 13 men and 4 boys working in the main mill, and 6 men and 2 boys connected with the yard work and planing mill. Miss Hunter does the office work in a creditable manner ...

Two large dams and several wells supply the necessary water for the boilers, etc., and a blacksmith's shop attends to any repairs required ...

The planing mill is situated to the north of the main mill, and is in charge of Mr Praske who, also, controls the stacking yard. A new and up-to-date ball-bearing English machine has been installed, the old one having been sent away ...

The boiler for generating the steam is a 25 h.p. one, similar in design to the ones at the main mill. The engine is 30 h.p. and the driving-wheel is a huge one, 12 ft. in diameter. No waste in this mill, the furnace taking anything offering as fuel.

Running through the mill is the railway line, and 7 trucks may be loaded at once, therein, wet or dry weather, which is a great convenience ...

To supply the mill with logs there are dozens of cutters out in the scrubs, and haulers may be seen arriving at the mill on days when the weather permits with their teams, the waggons laden with fine logs to be used later, after being introduced to the saws, for building purposes. All told, we understand, the mill gives employment to about 70 persons.⁶⁴



Hancock & Gore mill, Nanango, with logs, mainly softwoods, from the Bunya Mountains.

Source — Gwen Scrace collection.



Edward (Ted) Casey's bullock team bringing logs to the Hancock & Gore mill at Nanango.

Source — Gwen Scrace collection.

There was also considerable concern at that time over the evident favouritism being offered to the Timber Corporation's mill at Nanango, which was paying less for its logs than were other mills, especially those at Maryborough, the operators of which were keenly competing for the logs being brought out of the South Burnett region. According to a subsequent report the agreement with the state government and the Nanango mill had commenced on 15 March, 1911, and was due to expire only when the mill could no longer obtain an annual supply of one million super feet of milling timber. The maximum quantity to be removed was two million super feet with a monthly removal of 83,000 super feet. The Nanango mill paid 4/2d per super foot while other mills were paying substantially more. When they discovered this, other millers immediately made representations to the government for a reduction in their own rates.⁶⁵ These representations resulted in a reduction of the rates in various kinds of timbers, one shilling per 100 super feet for hoop and bunya pine and 2/3d per 100 super feet for kauri, a reduction estimated to a writing down of £1.5 million of the capital of state forests. The reduction was announced by the lands minister, William Arthur Deacon, who said that the reductions would be made in the form of rebates on the existing price list.⁶⁶

The reduction was disappointing to the millers who claimed that it should have been far greater. They stated that the decision reflected a lack of business acumen and they disagreed that the reduction would reduce the state's forestry capital worth by £1.5 million. A voice of dissent claimed: '... This is an important matter, the government appointed a committee to investigate. No publicity is given to their recommendations, if they were brought forward ... What are we to think? Frankly we do not like it! We do not think we have been given a fair deal and an explanation is certainly due ... In view of the announcement that the Americans have decided to meet the tariff of 4/6d by dropping their price to importers by that amount, our millers are still unable to compete against them, consequently we still have to look at empty sawmills, further unemployment, more dole and less trains on our railways.'⁶⁷

The Timber Corporation's operations at Nanango were certainly one of the most influential in the state at that time, and were described as one of the largest. An advertisement in the *Nanango News* in 1934 claimed that the operations included three separate plants, the hardwood mill, with a frame and two benches, a pine mill with a band saw and four benches and the planing mill with four planers. Five boilers were kept under steam and railway trucks could come right into the planing mill.⁶⁸

The mills were supplying timber north and west, to almost every major town between Cairns and Mount Isa, and practically every centre, large and small from Nanango to northern Queensland. The plant was cutting approximately 32,000 super feet of pine and hardwood each day, employing 105 men with a total wages bill of £500 per week. Additionally, there were forty men logging for the mill. Timber was being hauled to the mill from as far away as the Bunya Mountains, a distance of thirty-four miles from the logging area. Other logging regions were to the east of Nanango, where pine was cut, the hardwoods coming from Barambah, Manumbar, Kunioon and numerous other local regions. In 1935 the manager of the mill, George Watt, stated that there were sufficient timber reserves in the vicinity to keep the mill in operation for at least fifteen years, adding, however, that due to the practice of the Forestry Department in allowing timber from the Nanango region to be taken directly to city mills at places such as Maryborough and Brisbane, this would ultimately shorten the life of the Nanango mill and therefore place a



Edward Casey and his sons were all early workers at Hancock & Gore's mill at Nanango. Edward Casey was born at Port Macquarie, he left home at fourteen years of age and rode a horse to Queensland. He worked in timber camps at Kaimkillenbun, and, with his wife, Ada, moved to Nanango in 1905. One of their sons, Albert, was killed when a bullock wagon ran over him. Photograph taken in 1946.

Source — Gwen Scrase collection.

shadow on the future of all mill employees. Watt stated that he hoped the Forestry would see the sense in allowing timber for city mills to be cut from regions where no local mills were operating.⁶⁹

George Watt remained manager of the mill until 1941 when his son, also George, took over the management of the mill. The family had originally come to the region circa 1908. George (junior) was an active member of Nanango society and public affairs. In 1942, the year after he took over the management of the mill, he was one of those responsible for the creation of the ambulance centre at Nanango and was appointed its president. He was one of the foundation members of the Nanango Chamber of Commerce and was its chairman for several years. He also interested himself with the running of the show society and was an elder of the Nanango Presbyterian Church.⁷⁰

In August 1957 Harry Brenton was accidentally killed at the Timber Corporation's mill, there were no witnesses to the accident, but mill manager, George Watt (junior), later told the press that from the evidence at the scene of the accident it appeared that Brenton had been in the process of unloading logs in the yards and while using a pinch bar to move one of the lower logs, the top logs had slipped and hit the bar which then struck Brenton on the head. The victim was rushed to the Nanango Hospital but died shortly afterwards. Brenton was well known in Nanango and was widely esteemed as being a hard worker. He had been associated with the mill for approximately twenty years.⁷¹

In 1960 Leo Lee took over as manager of the Timber Corporation's mill at Nanango, Lee had long experience in the timber industry and had come from Hancock and Gore's mill at Yeulba where he had worked for sixteen years, including a lengthy period as mill manager. He was appointed assistant manager at Nanango in December 1959 and took over as manager in April the following year.⁷²

A report written in 1930 concerning the timber industry in the Goomeri district is enlightening, for it gives a first hand account of the industry at that time and allows an insight into some of the characters who were working within the industry, especially in the Goomeri and Kilkivan districts. The report claimed:

Great softwood reserves, consisting mostly of hoop and bunya pine, are held by the Forestry Board at Manumbar, Elginvale, and the surrounding district, all within a radius of 30 miles of Goomeri, but only small portions are sold and allowed to be cut ... Several years ago employment was provided for a large number of men at those centres, but nowadays not half of the original number are in work, and stagnation is rife throughout the industry. This has naturally had its effect in the town of Goomeri, the railhead for these places.

The policy adopted by the Forestry Department and the large importations of foreign timber are mostly blamed by the industry for this state of affairs. Queensland possesses an aggregate of about 1,796,172 acres of State forests throughout Queensland, but some little time ago the Forestry Board estimated that there were only sufficient softwood supplies for 12 years, and rationing of the timber was introduced ...

The timber industry in the Goomeri district is represented by five sawmills, Messrs Ross and Coy's mill in Goomeri township itself, Messrs Wilson Hart and Coy's mill at Elginvale, Brims and Sons' mill near Manumbar, the Manumbar Timber Coy's mill at Manumbar, and the Kinbombi plymill at Manumbar.

A very interesting hour can be spent at the Kinbombi plywood mill at Manumbar ... The Kinbombi plymill treats 25,000 feet of timber per week, but it, too, is feeling the pinch owing to the dullness of trade, and its output has been considerably reduced. Previously, where 15 men were employed, the number has now been reduced to 12. This mill is under the capable management of Mr R.B. Nutting.

The Manumbar Timber Company's mill under the management of Mr H. Thomsett, is situated next to the plywood mill on the same grounds. Here the yards are piled high with sawn timber, and again the number of employees has been shortened, only the bare number required to work the mill being kept on. Previously there were 23 men working, but now there are only 15.⁷³

It was during this time that the timber industry marched into the Great Depression, yet the Depression, as hard as it was on many aspects of business and society, impacted variably on the

timber industry in the South Burnett. In November 1930 the press was lamenting that the industry was facing a world wide slump, adding: 'During these trying times it is well to be able to realise that the state of the timber trade is not due to anything which has been done or ought to have been done, but rather to a world-wide condition which is so complex as to be not understandable ... Like an epidemic, this depression is everywhere.'⁷⁴

The sawmill at Elgin Vale was established by well known Goomeri businessman, Thomas Herbert Spencer in 1926 on the first resumption of land from historic *Manumbar* station. The mill was situated on the banks of Moonda Waamba Creek, near *Elgin Vale* homestead



The Elgin Vale sawmill.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

Thomas Herbert Spencer was born on 13 June, 1884, at Bundaberg, the third of eleven children. His parents were John Williamson and Harriett Maria Spencer (nee Brown). They lived at Avondale north of Bundaberg.⁷⁵

The mill at Elgin Vale had been moved down from Sefton and was under construction through 1926, it was ready to cut its first commercial logs by 1927. That year Spencer sold the mill to Wilson Hart at Maryborough but retained the logging contract to supply the mill with logs, he also retained the contract to transport the sawn timber from Elgin Vale to the railway yards at Goomeri. In addition to the milling interests at Elgin Vale and Dadamarine, Spencer also conducted a general commission agency business and a garage in Goomeri.⁷⁶

Wilson Hart closed the Elgin Vale mill in 1930, due to a down-turn in the industry, this threw the entire work-force out of employment and severely affected the small community that had become established at Elgin Vale.⁷⁷

At the end of the Depression and the subsequent growth of the timber industry,



Thomas Herbert Spencer, Goomeri businessman and the man who was responsible for the construction of the sawmill at Elgin Vale.

Source — Dr H.C. (Larry) Spencer.

Wilson Hart again opened the mill and the village at the site once more sprang into life. During the Second World War Spencer sub-contracted his duties of log supply to another Goomeri resident, Jim Knipe, who continued carting logs to the mill until 1952 when the contract was taken over by the company of Summers and Zwisler.⁷⁸

There were two known fatalities at the mill, one was a man named Justo, although the date of this death is not recorded, the other fatality involved the mill's tally clerk, William Otto Schultz, who was killed at 1.30 on the afternoon of 22 September, 1972.⁷⁹

The mill was completely destroyed by fire in May 1944, although the exact cause of the fire remains unknown. It was almost immediately rebuilt, however, from that date it operated with only one boiler rather than two.

The first provisional school at Elgin Vale was opened in 1899, its teacher was Elizabeth Sheridan, the mother of Irene Coleman whose husband later carted the sawn timber from Elgin Vale to Goomeri, under contract for T.H. Spencer. The school was closed in 1906 and from that time until the mid 1920s there was no school operating at Elgin Vale until 1927 when T.H. Spencer constructed a new school at Elgin Vale and brought the teacher, Miss Kathleen Courtney, from Sefton to Elgin Vale.⁸⁰

The school was closed from 1933 to 1934 due to the depressed state of the timber industry, and reopened in 1935 with A.M. Bernier as its teacher. In 1948 the school was officially named the Elgin Vale State School, (other than a provisional school).⁸¹

In 1978 the Wilson Hart group, which still owned the mill at Elgin Vale, sold it to Carricks Ltd. and the final decline of the mill was firmly established. The assets of the mill at Elgin Vale were later distributed to a number of other purchasers and it was finally closed on Thursday 16 March, 1987, the reason for the closure was given as the lack of logs.⁸²

In 1988 the mill was eventually purchased by the Nanango and Kilkivan Shire Council from Sunstate Resources Ltd., the company which then owned the mill. The councils' objective was to preserve the site as a museum and tourist attraction.⁸³

In April 1993 the Nanango Shire Council wrote to the Kilkivan Shire Council advising that the council no longer wished to participate in joint ownership of the mill and suggesting that the Kilkivan Shire Council should take full responsibility for its ownership and operations. The mill is now owned by the Kilkivan Shire Council.⁸⁴

After his retirement Spencer and his wife, Ethel, travelled extensively and after suffering two strokes and other illnesses, he died at the Goomeri Memorial Hospital on 4 December, 1961.⁸⁵

Timber work has always been a dangerous task and many men have been badly injured or killed, either in the scrub, obtaining the timber, or in the mills. A well known Nanango man named Daniel Eaton, twenty-seven years, was killed at the Bunya mill during the morning of Thursday 13 May, 1926. Eaton had been employed at the mill as a benchman when a piece of timber flew off the saw and penetrated his skull. Doctor McReddie and the ambulance arrived from Nanango some time afterwards but Eaton was already dead. The body was taken to Nanango and buried the following day. Eaton had come to Australia from Manchester and had been in Queensland for about sixteen years.⁸⁶

Another fatal accident occurred to a scrub worker named Robert Walters on Friday 1 June, 1928. The accident occurred in deep scrub at Marble Top, approximately ten miles from Nanango. Walters had been in the process of felling a pine tree, the last tree of the day, and on giving the trunk of the tree its final cut it had bounced back and struck Walters a tremendous blow with such force that he was badly crushed and died twenty minutes later. As the accident occurred about seven hundred yards from the nearest track, a stretcher had to be improvised to carry the body to the closest transport. Walters was brought into Nanango in a truck belonging to Fred Gentry, arriving in town at about midnight. Walters was buried the following Sunday.⁸⁷

Shortly afterwards, on 28 July 1928, another accident occurred at the Cobb brothers mill at Cloyna, as the following report illustrated: 'On the morning of Friday last, the 28th ult.,

Mr Andrew Cobb, of Messrs Cobb Bros, when working at their sawmill at Cloyna, suffered the great misfortune of having his right hand severed at the wrist through its coming into contact with a circular saw. Mr Cobb was engaged in what is known to sawyers as 'warming-up the saw' by pressing a piece of wood hard against the revolving circular saw, when the timber slipped and, coming into contact with the teeth drew the arm in, and in a flash the injury was done, the first intimation his companion had of the accident being that the severed hand was observed on the sawdust. An improvised bandage was utilised and with commendable fortitude the injured man walked upwards of a mile before leaving by car in search of medical attention.⁸⁸

Over the following two years the bitter arguments regarding the reduction in timber prices continued to rage until October 1931 when the state government finally saw fit to substantially reduce its royalty charges. This reduction was something of a fillip to the industry, at last many of the mills could begin to compete with imported timbers, especially Oregon pine.⁸⁹ By July the following year the press was reporting: '... the timber industry, which, four years ago had been thriving, had slumped badly during the past two years, latterly it has revived to some extent. The Queensland plywood industry at the moment (is) active ... In addition an export trade to the United Kingdom (has) developed. The sawn timber industry (is) also improving.'⁹⁰

Many of the mills in the South Burnett at that time were involved in the manufacture of butter boxes for the burgeoning dairy industry. This was a highly lucrative trade, thousands of boxes of butter were being exported by sea to London every year, these boxes needed to be light and strong, and suitable for the long storage of butter under sometimes difficult circumstances. However, there was a perennial problem of butter taint, and this taint was, supposedly, traced to the hoop pine of which many of the butter boxes were manufactured. In September 1932 came the rather disturbing news that butter graders in Brisbane were moving to prohibit the packing of butter in Queensland hoop pine boxes. A consignment of butter ready for shipment had been re-packed, at the insistence of the graders, into boxes made of other woods before it had been passed for export, and a general banning of hoop pine boxes was expected within days. A press statement claimed: 'It was explained ... that there was no desire to injure the Queensland timber industry by reason of the action contemplated. The graders were, however, insistent that butter sent abroad should be entirely free of taint.'⁹¹ This news created considerable alarm, especially with the small millers in the South Burnett, many of whom were manufacturing butter boxes, and several millers immediately informed the Forestry Department that they no longer required supplies of hoop pine. Forestry officers claimed that the graders' accusations were false, adding that exhaustive tests had been made with a number of woods, including hoop pine, and while hoop pine was generally free of taint, the taint problem was usually caused through the use of imported woods.⁹²

It was a particularly alarming problem with some estimates claiming that if hoop pine butter boxes were banned then approximately two hundred people would be thrown out of work and several mills in the south of the state would have to close, including some of the small mills in the South Burnett. Approximately 1.5 million butter boxes were being manufactured each year and at the time of this crisis in 1932 that figure had risen to 1.75 million. The minister for agriculture, Frank William Bulcock, was reported as saying:

... that if the Commonwealth persisted in its attitude in the proposal to prohibit the use of Queensland hoop pine for butter boxes it would mean that 200 men at least would be thrown out of employment ... Queensland hoop pine did not taint the butter to a greater extent than any other type of timber that might be used.

It was conceivable that the trouble might not be wood taint at all. Consternation had been felt amongst the timber interests in Queensland at the action contemplated by the Federal Government and (Bulcock) understood that a strong protest to the Commonwealth authorities was going from that quarter ... If the Federal Government carried its intention into effect it would mean closing down several mills in South Queensland and the throwing idle of a big number of men. The department had been assured that a satisfactory solution other than by the prohibition of the use of hoop pine had been shown and though this was in the experimental stages there was great hope of success being achieved. As this was the position it was obviously unfair and unwise to interfere with the Queensland butter box industry.⁹³

The Timber Merchants' Association of Queensland had communicated with the acting agent-general for Queensland, Mr L. Pike, and Pike and instigated investigations. In a letter dated

13 April, 1932, Pike claimed scientific experiments had been carried out by Mr W. Wiley in Australia which indicated that the taint was caused through: '... volatile oils in certain timbers which became dissolved in the butter.' These oils, according to Wiley, were not confined to Queensland woods but were often present in woods from New Zealand and elsewhere. Pike concluded his letter by adding: 'My own investigations and experience in London confirms me in the view that Mr Wiley's conclusions are correct. It is important to note in this regard that New Zealand, Canadian and Irish butters have also been seriously affected by wood taint.'⁹⁴

It was a problem that needed to be solved quickly, the trade in butter boxes for Queensland was worth up to £100,000 each year and a healthy percentage of this money went to mills in the South Burnett.⁹⁵

The result of urgent telegrams to Canberra and governmental intervention stabilised the problem somewhat. On 7 September it was announced that there would be no prohibition on the boxes; a telegram from Dr Rivett of the Commonwealth Council of Scientific and Industrial Research to the minister for agriculture, F.W. Bulcock, claimed: 'On receiving your lettergram I immediately consulted the secretary to the Department of Commerce who gives me assurance that there is no intention of prohibiting the use of Queensland pine. He says the inspectors are only rejecting boxes showing evidence of taint.'⁹⁶

Over the following months the problem resolved itself — to a certain extent — and the situation for the timber millers and timber-getters became somewhat improved, especially after a further reduction in the state government royalty charges which came into effect in November 1932 — hardwoods being lowered in cost by one shilling per 100 super feet. It was also decided that in the case of small country mills, such as many of those operating throughout the South Burnett, the government would protect supply to those mills. A report of this claimed: '... where possible an established country mill dependent on a block of Crown land should be protected by granting, when the current agreement was nearing completion, a further block of timber to such mill as current market prices but without competition.'⁹⁷

One of the most impressive mills in the region was at Manumbar, which was, as we have seen, in fact twin mills, a timber mill and a ply-mill. The operation was opened circa 1922 and a visitor to the mills in September 1932 described them as:

Seen from a distance its twin black chimneys strike sky-wards like the twin minarets of a Mohammedan Mosque and these are crowned by their black turrets or spark-arresters. Something like five acres are covered by the large iron buildings of the sawmill and ply-mill with their adjacent yards, timber stacks and huts. In the centre of all a high, cabin-like building arises like the chart-house on a ship's bridge, it is the place where the glue is boiled for sticking together the sheets of ply-wood. There is rather a wonderful planing machine at work for cutting this wood, in fact there are three of them. The mill is a hive of human activity and there is a constant hiss of steam from the steam winch, whilst overhead mingle two streams of black and white smoke. About fifty men are at work here. The great band-saw, 40 feet in length, which requires a special machine for sharpening it, cuts swiftly and rhythmically through the logs. It sometimes has to be sharpened once an hour. There is a great driving wheel near the boiler house, and the engine develops 150 horse-power. There are two machines called 'dockers' and a machine which simultaneously cuts a groove in one side of the plank and a tongue on the other. A long overhead pipe removes dust from the sanding machine and conveys it to an everlasting bonfire on the hillside. The two managers are busy men who move swiftly about amongst the machines and the long neat parallelograms of stacked timber.

Manumbar is a small but compact country mill and is also a self-contained place with its own store, butcher's shop, school and dance hall. The acreage of bush-land belonging to the company is 5000 and the pine logs are drawn in by bullock teams from the scrub from two to five miles out.⁹⁸

The hall mentioned in the above report was originally the mill school and was constructed by volunteer labour. The precise date of the construction of the hall is not known, but the press in 1923 reported: 'The monthly meeting of the Manumbar Progress Association was held on the 6th inst ... A building committee was appointed to arrange for the building of the proposed hall.'⁹⁹ As a hall it served the community well, being fifty feet by twenty-five feet with a crow's ash floor, a

stage and an attached supper room. In 1961 while workers were burning a fire break around the mill, sparks from the fire set the hall alight and the old timbers of the building burned ferociously, completely destroying the hall. Little was saved from the flames, apart from a set of cutlery. The hall's piano, the honour board and all the community sporting equipment were destroyed.¹⁰⁰

The community at the mill site enjoyed several amenities, sporting events were well patronised and there was a quite adequate tennis court. Families were housed in small homes while single men lived in the barracks, a boarding house also provided some accommodation.¹⁰¹

By August 1933 the outlook for country sawmills had improved considerably, this had been achieved as a result of direct and indirect governmental action that had allowed the mills to seek new markets and to expand their operations. The industry had gone through a seesaw effect. The timber and milling industry had always been one of the most important industries of the state, especially during the early years of closer settlement, and after the railways had gone through, the timber industry had taken on gigantic proportions. However, as we have seen, there was a cost to be paid, and this cost was the stripping of forests with little thought, at least in the early years, of the ramifications of deforestation. Yet the benefits were huge, the rails had enjoyed large profits as a result of timber transport, thousands of men had been able to gain employment on both the railways and in the timber industry, towns like Kingaroy, Wondai, Murgon, Kilkivan and Nanango had grown dramatically and the economy of the state had generally boomed. Then had come gross governmental inadequacies, the royalty rates had risen too steeply sending many of the smaller mills into liquidation. The output of timbers gradually grew less, and this, combined with the diminishing forests, placed tremendous pressure on the timber industry generally and on individual operators in particular. However, by 1933, as a result of more educated government policies, the timber markets were opening up, especially in New South Wales and Victoria. It was a growth that was to continue over the following years. The press was reporting: 'To sum up the present position of the industry it might be stated that a distinctly better tone prevails. The mill employees, whilst not securing a full working week, are employed for considerably greater periods, whilst the increased demand in turn means more work for the timber-getters and teamsters working in the Goomeri and Biggenden districts.'¹⁰²

In Maryborough the industry was booming, large shipments being sent south, with most of the supplies being brought by rail from the Goomeri, Kingaroy and Nanango districts.¹⁰³ Press reports were headlining the state of the industry claiming that the timber trade was 'booming', and reforestation programmes were also heavily underway, a report for February 1934 claiming: '... reforestation operations (during) January (have) been very busy. Three hundred men (have) been given employment. The greater number (have) been engaged on hoop pine planting in the Mary Valley and Brisbane Valley districts.'¹⁰⁴

That month, sales of hoop and bunya pine from the Forestry Department had totalled 4.7 million super feet, almost double the quantity sold in the same month the previous year. The minister for lands, Mr P. Pease, claimed that there was great difficulty in meeting demand for logs in all districts and that logging plants were working to capacity. At Imbil, the main logging centre of the Mary Valley, the quantity of logs handled during February 1934 was the largest handled for any month during the previous three years. Timber contractors had earned a total of £5412, and Forestry Department revenue had also increased dramatically.¹⁰⁵

Yet for the mill workers it was still, at times, a difficult trade. In 1936 the state government appointed the Timber Advisory Committee with terms of reference to conduct an investigation into the conditions which then existed within the timber industry. The press later reported: '... that committee drew the attention of the government to the shocking conditions which then existed. Men with large plant to upkeep were earning a mere pittance and their families subjected necessarily to difficult living conditions.'¹⁰⁶

In order to create better working and financial conditions for themselves, in September 1937 timber workers formed the Timber-getters' Association. This association was formed not only by the timber-getters but also by their cutters, haulers, sniggers and included men working at loading log timbers at railways yards. Branches of the association were immediately formed at Kilcoy, Cooyar, Kalpower, Linville, Jimna, Blackbutt, Goomeri, Kilkivan, Imbil, Nanango, Yarraman and Many Peaks. The office of the association's executive was based at Goomeri.¹⁰⁷

In January 1938 another fatal accident occurred to a Goomeri timber worker, thus highlighting the dangers and difficulties involved in timber work. The victim was Stanley Jenkins. Jenkins and his brother, John, were cutting pine at Bunya Creek when one of the logs, a large tree containing some 1400 superficial feet and weighing about two tons, broke away and struck Stanley, pinning him against a tree. The upper portion of his body was crushed, killing him instantly. The two young men had been working alone at the time of the accident, John Jenkins called for help and two other timber-getters who were working some distance away in the scrub, hearing the calls, came rushing to the scene. The log had to be cut up and the tree against which the victim was pinned cut down before the body could be released. The body was later taken to Goomeri for burial. Stanley Jenkins had been the eldest son of Mr K. Jenkins, the secretary of the Goomeri branch of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A., and was just twenty-seven years of age at the time of his death.¹⁰⁸

The following year the boiler at Brett and Company's Manumbar plywood mill exploded which resulted in the engineer and foreman of the mill receiving extensive injuries. W. Horsfall sustained a fractured and lacerated right arm and the foreman, E. Roebig, received injuries to his right hip. They were taken to the Gympie Hospital by the Murgon ambulance.¹⁰⁹

Throughout the South Burnett region there were many sawmills of various sizes, including several travelling sawmills operated by men such as Fred Hoskins. These mills moved from location to location where timber prospects were the best and where there was a market for their product. Another mill was owned by E.N. Ferguson and J.S. Ewart, the mill functioning largely in the Booie district. Timber for the Booie Hall was processed through this mill. Many houses and bridges were constructed with timber cut on this mill, in 1936 it was set up on a permanent basis on land, purchased by Ferguson, approximately half a mile south of the Booie Hall and was moved again in 1946 to a position closer to Kingaroy.¹¹⁰



Dan Gallagher's sawmill in 1938. The sawmill was originally situated on Booie Road and owned by T.W. Parker, then Messrs Parker & Gallagher worked it as a partnership; later Gallagher obtained full ownership and removed it to the site on Youngman Street opposite the district hospital, about 1918 or 1919.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection

Frank Lincoln operated another travelling mill, this mill was somewhat unique, being powered by an oil engine. In October 1928 Lincoln wrote to the Kingaroy Shire Council requesting permission to set up the mill near a property belonging to Peter Assad, his letter stating: 'Can I set up a sawplant on the Deep Creek reserve in front of Mr Acids (sic) Property, it is not a matter

of water and I have no stock. I have an oil plant, all the water I require is for our own drinking purposes and I would like to sit there for about two months.' The council approved Lincoln's application the following month.¹¹¹

T.W. Parker owned a sawmill on the Booie Road, this was later operated in partnership with Dan Gallagher and Gallagher subsequently took full control. The mill was moved from the Booie Road to a site on Youngman Street opposite the hospital circa 1918/19.¹¹²

Arthur Gosper opened a sawmill at Inverlaw circa 1929. The mill was established on Deep Creek and Gosper's wife and family arrived on the South Burnett from the Casino district in 1930. The sawmill was later moved to the Bunya Mountains where it operated at Dandabah.¹¹³

The cutting of timber for the early settlers in the South Burnett was originally completed by pit sawyers, men who sawed the planks by hand, one man above and the other below in the pit. However, these methods were particularly primitive and as the region progressed it soon became apparent that newer and more modern methods of cutting the logs would have to be incorporated. These new methods came with the arrival on the South Burnett of the steam engine, the power source for all early mills before the advent of electricity. As we have seen, William McCormack had described these sawmills as 'coffee-pot mills' and the description was an apt one, the small mills dotted along river banks or rail lines or simply hidden in the bush close to their sources of timber, spluttered and billowed, bellowing steam, their boilers stoked with wood and sawdust, whistles blowing, it was a romantic vision of Queensland country life. Yet these mills were anything but romantic, the men who owned them were hard working country businessmen, often farmers themselves, who had invested large amounts of hard-earned money in order to harvest the timber wealth of the South Burnett. To them it was often a do or die situation, harvest the timber, mill it, send it to market and, hopefully, gain sufficient profit to keep the mill operating, no easy task in the early years of the region when markets were far distant, transportation unreliable and expensive, and methods of milling still primitive.

The men who worked in the mills were equally as tough. They worked long hours, usually forty-eight hours each week and often longer, they had little help in the way of machinery and all the moving of timber, getting it to the saw-blades and later stacking it had to be done by hand. For a few pounds each week they laboured in the mills, freezing in winter and stiflingly hot in summer, they brought to the areas their families who lived in remarkably primitive houses, often nothing more than huts or small cottages. There was little in the way of entertainment, few schools, no medical care, hardly any forms of communication, and for many of these families it was a harsh and lonely existence.



Breaking-down saw at Charles Baldwin's sawmill on his property at Oakview.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

One of these early mills was established at Black Snake by Rasmus and Coop. They sold the mill to T.H. Spencer who subsequently disposed of it to Hayden Shire and Co. Operators of the Black Snake mill cut a cross section of soft and hardwoods and a large number of teamsters supplied timber for its operations. The mill later changed hands several times, being sold respectively to Allen and Company, and then North Holdens, after which it closed down.¹¹⁴ One of the managers of the mill was Jack Allen who purchased the operation from Hayden Shire and Co.¹¹⁵

The Oakview mill was owned and operated by the Spencer family. William Spencer was one of Kilkivan's earliest residents, having come to the district during the gold-rush days. The mill was operated by Bill and George Spencer, having been acquired from C.E. Baldwin who had been contracted to teach the brothers how to operate it. The mill was moved to Oakview Siding in 1935. It was electrified in 1954 and in 1963 the Kilkivan sawmill was purchased and the thinnings quota was transferred to the Oakview mill. In 1969 the mills amalgamated and due to the ill health of George Spencer the business was merged with North Coast sawmills at Cooroy, S. and S. at Gympie and Wilson Hart at Maryborough. In December 1971 the Oakview mill was closed, its allocations transferred to Gympie.¹¹⁶



Kilkivan sawmill, near railway over head bridge.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society



Murgon sawmill, 1912. Owned by Bill Wright and Frank Caswell.

Source — Bill Roberts' collection.

The mill at Kilkivan was established during the 1920s by C.C. Jones for Hector Denyer. Like many other mills needing transport to larger centres and ports, the Kilkivan mill was situated close to the railway lines. It was later sold to Alfred Pearson, a Maryborough businessman.¹¹⁷

At Murgon the mill was constructed by the brothers Oliver Percival and F.W. Caswell and, according to a notice of sale published in the *South Burnett Times* in March 1933 it was evidently a business of some dimensions. In his advertisement, F.W. Caswell stated that the mill and grounds consisted of: 'Two acres, more or less (freehold) with bore and pump, Engine shed, 24 x 27, Millshed, 70 x 42, Office and Store room and Engine Driver's Hut. Machinery, Robey Engine, 18 h.p. with double cylinders, Colonial type boiler bricked in, carrying 120 lbs pressure, rack bench (heavy) with 40ft table and feet gear, Hand bench and Firewood bench. Over a dozen circular saws from 6ft to 24 inches in diameter. Robinson Planing machine on stand, Trollies (sic) etc.'¹¹⁸

Oliver Percival Caswell arrived in the Murgon district circa 1908 and began farming in the Redgate region until he assisted his brother to open the Murgon sawmill circa 1912. Until its closure during the Great Depression the mill played an important role in the early economy of the town, giving work to many men and a large number of Murgon's early buildings were constructed using timber sawn at the mill. This timber was logged firstly from the Boat Mountain region and later from the Proston district. O.P. Caswell later ran a garage in the region and is credited with having run Murgon's first taxi service. He left the Murgon area in 1919 and returned in 1939 to run various fruit shops in the town. O.P. Caswell died in Brisbane in April 1954, aged seventy years and eleven months.¹¹⁹

We have already examined the accident at Cobb's sawmill in the Murgon shire, this mill was evidently later sold to Hyne and Sons of Maryborough and was offered for auction in 1941. The mill must have been quite large, the listing for the auction included such equipment as a Waugh and Josephson horizontal underfired tubular boiler, a Lister diesel engine and a host of other engineering components. The sale included all buildings which the auctioneers, A.H. Bowd of Murgon, described as being: '... suitable for extensions and alterations to residences, barns, bails, haysheds, piggeries etc.'

A steam powered sawmill was established at Boondooma by the Kingaroy sawmilling firm of Hayden Shire and Company in 1949. The mill was constructed at the property of Ray Browne, on the banks of the Boyne River, water from the river was pumped up to supply the mill's boiler. The mill was completed by June 1950 and began operations with a staff of just four men, Arthur Lubke was its first manager.¹²⁰ Lubke was born at Tarampa, near Lowood and after completing his education worked at various positions, including the arrowroot factory of his father-in-law. He later travelled to the Boobie district where he became a farmer, went to North Queensland to work in the sugar industry, and following his return to the South Burnett worked at Hayden Shire's mill at Kingaroy. Lubke later recalled: 'In 1949 the forestry wanted the Boondooma sawmill on Mr Ray Browne's property to be operational. Jim Hayden asked me if I would just go out for the first few weeks to get the wheels rolling until they found a manager for the mill. I ended up being boss out there for seventeen years.'¹²¹

Hayden Shire and Co, in addition to the mill they owned at Kingaroy, also operated a mill at Ironpot. The mill was originally established on private property owned by Bill Northcott and was later moved to a dam on the same property where there was a better supply of water. In March 1944 this mill was the scene of what was almost certainly one of the most horrific sawmill accidents ever to occur on the South Burnett. On 10 March that year a mill hand named William Anderson Smith died after being dragged into the saw on the Canadian bench. The victim lost an arm and both his legs and died shortly afterwards. At a coroner's inquest, held at Kingaroy soon afterwards, one of the witnesses, Albert Robert Anderson, stated: '... he heard deceased call out, and it was a cry of distress. He saw deceased leaning towards the handle with his left hand and his right foot appeared to be caught in the wheel of the trolley. The trolley appeared to be pulling deceased towards the rear of the saw. He saw deceased fall alongside the saw. Witness said he was the first on the scene. He saw that the right arm was off at the elbow, the right leg was cut off at the hip, and the left leg below the knee. Deceased was removed to the living quarters where he was placed on a stretcher and later removed on Mrs Northcott's truck to Wylarah station.'¹²² Ironpot resident Bob Downes later recalled: 'I can remember being at school (that day) and suddenly we saw Mrs Northcott driving a utility at breakneck speed past the school towards Kingaroy with somebody in the back with blankets over him, we found out later that one of the men had actually fallen into the saw.'¹²³

Manager of the mill at the time of the accident was partner Julius William Shire, another man who worked at the mill and witnessed the accident was Claude Green. William Anderson Smith was a married man, he and his wife, Fanny, had lived at Duke Street, Red Hill, Kingaroy.¹²⁴

The claim, repeated many times over the years, that country mills in the South Burnett could not compete with the larger city mills at places such as Brisbane and Maryborough — especially in terms of quality — was clearly a falsehood. Many of the country mills had very experienced men working in them, men who had completed their apprenticeships at the large city mills and joinery works and who brought their talents to the country regions. An example of this may be seen in a 1930 account detailing the operations of the sawmill at Wondai. It is clear from this report that not only was the Wondai mill one of the most modern in the region, but the men working it were excellent craftsmen turning out a high quality product:

Jones' Sawmill represents the industrial section of the town of Wondai. The timber needs of a large community are met by this milling enterprise which commenced under different ownership well nigh 30 years ago.

Its present proprietor, Mr Francis Harry Jones, is one whom Wondai numbers among its best known citizens. Mr Jones brought the mill to its present size and efficiency in the face of big odds. Fire had practically ruined him and his partner in the early days of the century, but pluck and determination rebuilt the mill, and to-day it is a decided acquisition to the whole district ...

Twenty-three years ago Mr Jones paid his first visit to Wondai. Some thirty years' experience with Messrs Laheys Ltd., sawmillers, of Brisbane, had equipped him with a thorough knowledge of the industry. His outstanding ambition was to enter business for himself. On May 4, 1907, Mr Jones came to Wondai, having ascertained the possibilities of the district from a sawmilling viewpoint. Confident in the success of his venture, he entered into partnership with Mr Chas. Hess, who conducted a sawmill on the side of the railway line opposite to the present mill. Under the name of Hess, Jones and Richardson, the firm proceeded till the last mentioned partner dissociated himself from the business three months after its inception. For health reasons Mr Hess also abandoned his share, and Mr G.L. Thompson replaced him. Messrs Jones and Thompson continued operations for twelve months, and the mill carried on a busy trade during that period, at the close of which a heavy set-back was suffered. A disastrous fire demolished the mill, and the partners saw ruin facing them. The loss amounted to at least £1600 ...

The partners rebuilt the mill on the old site. Mr J.C. Thompson, brother of Mr Jones partner, entered the firm and at a later date Mr Jones disposed of his share in the assets to Mr J. Thompson. The mill thus was left in control of the Thompson Brothers.

Mr Jones, however, immediately opened a joinery business on his own behalf. That was about 18 years ago, the joinery shop standing on the site of the present mill buildings. His assistants included his own family and Mr J.C. Clark, who is still working for Mr Jones and who took a prominent part in the establishment of the undertaking. Modern machinery was installed but the scope of the joinery was limited. Timber supplies were abundantly available from district forests. The sawmill had derived large quantities of pine and hard woods from Kingaroy and from standing supplies nearer Wondai. Having opened his joinery, Mr Jones obtained his timber from a Nanango corporation known as Watt, Muller and Coy. The power plant driving the joinery machines was a town gas engine which Mr Jones converted into a petrol machine and which was utilised until 1912 when he installed the first unit of his suction gas outfit, a 23 h.p. engine.

Orders increased in volume. The small joinery works became busier as the months went by. The desire for expansion was fulfilled when Messrs. Thompson Bros. offered their sawmilling plant for sale. The business of the Thompsons was acquired and added to the joinery unit. By this process of development the present day large sawmilling and joinery works came about. Orders became more plentiful, and so constant was the demand made on the Jones organisation that at the close of 1929 the proprietor realised the urgent need for further space. Another progressive step was taken. Land in close proximity to the mill was leased, and an additional building erected to house some of the fine joinery machinery and to accommodate joinery stocks. This expansion allowed the installation of new, modern machinery, which is practically placed in position at the present time ...

Mr Jones also conducts the funeral arrangements for the district, and undertaking is carried out with a motor hearse.¹²⁵

The mill was again destroyed by fire in March 1987. Nearby residents were awakened by a loud explosion at 3.56 a.m. and found the mill ablaze. The alarm was raised and the Wondai Fire Brigade was soon on the scene. Mill owner, J. Hannay, drove up from Brisbane, and later told the press that the mill would be rebuilt. The fire damage was estimated to be in the vicinity of \$200,000.¹²⁶

Francis Harry Jones, the original proprietor of the sawmill at Wondai, was an ambitious and astute businessman. He was born at Ashton, Northamptonshire, England and arrived in Australia with his parents aboard the vessel *Darra* on 28 December, 1883. He spent several of his earlier years in the colonies in the south, working in the sawmilling industry, later coming to Queensland he was employed by Laheys Ltd. where he rose to the position of manager and after many years experience with this company he began to look for his own business opportunities, arriving in Wondai on 4 May, 1907.

F.H. Jones's wife, Wilhelmina (nee King), was born at Maryborough in 1870. She married Jones in Brisbane in 1887, the ceremony being performed by Reverend Thomas Leitch. On 27 December, 1938, the couple celebrated their golden wedding anniversary at their seaside residence, *Wondai* at Tewantin.¹²⁷



Mr & Mrs F.H. Jones, founders of Jones' Sawmill & Joinery Works at Wondai.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives



Jones Joinery Works and Sawmill at Wondai in 1936.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 2972/P4.

The company later passed into the hands of their son, Mr E.F. Jones. After a period of about six years the sawmill was sold to K.D. Morris Pty. Ltd. G. Jesberg later purchased the Joinery Works adjacent to the sawmill.

Mrs Wilhelmina Jones was a very public minded woman, she was the steward for the Wondai show for many years and was a member of the Wondai Choral Society. Mrs Jones died in March 1948 at the Wondai Hospital from injuries she received during a fall eight weeks earlier.¹²⁸ Her husband survived her by only a year, dying at a private hospital in Brisbane on 1 February, 1949, he was later interred at the Wondai cemetery.¹²⁹

Today the sawmill at Wondai is one of the ten largest in the state, it is approximately the sixth largest hardwood mill in volume in the state, is owned by a partnership of four business people and managed by Allan Giles. The mill has a pressure treatment facility and value adds with planed and seasoned hardwood products, it exports interstate and into Brisbane and North Queensland. At present mill management is developing overseas markets. The mill was purchased by its present owners from Jack Hannay in 1988 and since that time has undergone extensive modernisation and increased production, it is now, by far, the largest mill in the South Burnett.¹³⁰

Other mills on the South Burnett included Brims Mill at Gallangowan, which was operating as early as the 1920s, and where a small forestry settlement sprang up. Fred Hoskins, a well known timber man of the Kilkivan district, once managed this mill. The Gallangowan forestry reserve, once a part of the *Manumbar* run, was designated a reserve in 1933. Intensive silviculture techniques were carried out at the reserve and a fire tower, rising some 134 feet, was constructed there. The Oakview reserve, closer to Kilkivan, is a smaller reserve and has also been extensively used for silvicultural operations, the first planting of seedlings taking place in 1926.

There was another mill at Barker Creek, this was offered for auction on 4 October, 1958, the advertisement for the mill claimed that the mortgagee of the mill was Mr F.C. Obst, it was known as the Barker Creek sawmill and was situated seven miles from Nanango and fourteen miles from Kingaroy, it was licensed to cut two thousand super-feet per day.¹³¹

The small sleeper mill at Proston was opened in 1950 to supply sleepers to the Department of Railways. In July 1950 the press reported: 'The new railway sleeper mill at Proston commenced operations during the past week. This is a further advance of the progress of the town of Proston.'¹³²

From its very inception it was one of the largest employers in the Proston district and using timber from a variety of regions it cut hundreds of thousands of sleepers during the period of its operation. In 1964 there was a very great concern that the mill could be closed. It was then supplying sleepers for the Mount Isa railway scheme, as that scheme had almost been completed and as no other railway extensions of any magnitude were being planned by the state government, the closure of the mill appeared to be imminent. The government gave economics and the scarcity of timber as reasons for the closure of the mill and stated that the timber was being hauled to the mill from uneconomical distances. In March 1964 when news of the possible closure was received at Proston, there were forty mill hands, cutters, drivers and their families depending on the work at the mill, in all, some 115 people out of Proston's total population of five hundred would be affected should the mill close. Additionally, many Proston residents believed that with the closure of the mill the rail line would also be closed, as a large percentage of the rail traffic had operated for the sleepers. The news was received with considerable alarm and the Proston Chamber of Commerce called an immediate meeting to discuss the issue and to plan ways in which the mill might be kept in operation. A delegation led by Wondai Shire Council chairman, Councillor L.G. Smith, moved to arrange a meeting with the minister for housing and works, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen.¹³³

The mill was part of a railways network of such mills, others were operating at Barakula, Inglewood, Clermont, Canoona, Torrens Creek, Hughenden and Dingo. In June that year the minister for transport, Gordon Chalk, advised Johannes Bjelke-Petersen by letter that the mill at Proston would be retained, but at a reduced output, those mills at Torrens Creek, Hughenden and Dingo were to close.¹³⁴

In 1911 the Denning family established a mill at Tanduringie Creek at Peron, the mill exploiting the rich cedar growths of the Bunya Mountains. It remained in operation until 1934. In about 1912 or 1913 another mill was established close by, this was constructed by A. and D. Munro of Cooyar. Like most other rural mills, a small community soon sprang up at the site. The mill was forced to close in the early 1920s and a clearing sale was held on site. Charles Rose and his two sons, Edwin and Athol, operated a travelling mill during the 1930s, working initially at the Middle Creek region, the sawn timber being transported to Cooyar.

Charles Rose and his sons (trading under the name of C. Rose and Sons), also later opened a mill in Murgon. Writing to the Murgon Shire Council from Lockyer in June 1940, Charles Rose stated: 'Dear Sir, we are requesting your Shire to grant us permission to erect (sic) a Sawmill in Murgon on land described as follows: Allotments 3-4-5-6 and 7 of section 11, Town of Murgon, County of Fitzroy. Kindly give us an answer as soon as convenient as the Forestry cannot complete our transfer of our licence untill (sic) they have detail particulars of the sight (sic) our mill is to be transferred too' (sic).¹³⁵

At the time of this application there was no other sawmill operating in the town, almost a month before receiving this letter the shire clerk had written to the Forestry Department informing the department that the Murgon Sawmilling Company had closed down during the Great Depression and that the council would encourage any moves made to establish a new mill in the town. In fact the Murgon Sawmilling Company went into voluntary liquidation in 1933 and the company of Robinson and Jolly in Brisbane was appointed its liquidator.¹³⁶

The sawmill established in Murgon by Rose and Sons was not one of the old steam-driven mills but was a modern electric plant. During his various letters which comprised his submission to establish the sawmill at Murgon, Charles Rose gave details of the amounts of electricity his plant at Lockyer was then using and also estimates of how much power he would require for his new plant at Murgon. Permission to construct the sawmill at Murgon was given by the Murgon Shire Council on 21 June, 1940.¹³⁷

In the Bunya Mountains region there have been numerous mills, some of them moving location as the fortunes of business and the extent of logs varied. The first mill to substantially harvest the rich stands of bunyas was the Great Bunya Sawmill which commenced operating circa 1883 for the Darling Downs and Western Land Company. This large mill, capable of processing up to 40,000 superficial feet per week, did much to decimate the enormous stands of trees that had existed in the region for thousands of years.¹³⁸

Another mill in the Bunya Mountains was that owned by John Barron, who set up his operation at Cattle Creek in 1908. Barron suffered a tragic accident in 1910 when he was struck by a piece of timber, his arm was broken and he received major internal injuries. He made a will and was transported to the hospital at Dalby where he died the following day.¹³⁹

Thomas Clapperton of *Tarong* station was instrumental in establishing a mill in the Wengenville region circa 1922, he came to an agreement with Lars Andersen of Esk, Andersen was to build and operate the mill and Clapperton would provide the timber.

Andersen was a vastly interesting timber pioneer, a native of Denmark he had set himself up in business at Esk in 1895 or 1896 as a carpenter, builder, insurance agent and undertaker, and by 1899 had moved into the sawmill industry. He owned a number of mills, they were located at Toogoolawah, Redbank, Happy Valley, Blackbutt, Mount Esk, Cressbrook Creek, Mount Brisbane and Wengen Creek. His mills all took logs from difficult or almost inaccessible areas and he became adept in constructing tramways and even flying foxes in order to bring his logs to the mills.¹⁴⁰

Andersen's Wengenville mill was constructed at the junction of Wengen and Tureen Creeks, some of the machinery being dragged up the mountain range by steam traction engine. The establishment of the mill brought a small working population and Wengenville sprang up at the site. The village was a typical small rural community depending upon the sawmill for its prosperity and existence, there was a modest general store that also became the village post office and telephone exchange, a hall, school, butcher's shop, a barracks for single men, two tennis

courts and a cricket pitch. The village boasted about twenty-three houses, most of which were constructed by a highly respected builder named Charles Gutzke of Ipswich. The mill remained under the control of Lars Andersen for six years cutting somewhere in the region of thirteen million superficial feet of timber. The mill was sold to Hyne and Son at Maryborough in 1928 and following a general down-turn in trade during the Depression, in 1931 that company leased the operation to three men, James Hayden, Julius Shire and Peter Morris. In 1934 Hyne and Son again took control of the mill and it remained in operation until 1960.¹⁴¹

A fatality occurred in the region on 27 October, 1943, the victim of the accident was a timber worker named Vincent James Nolan who was killed two days before his eighteenth birthday. The accident occurred at Little Saddletree Creek while Nolan was snagging logs with a tractor, the tractor had been travelling down a slope when it overturned. Nolan had attempted to jump clear but failed to do so and was pinned beneath the tractor. Senior Bearer J.L. Noble of Nanango made a hurried trip to the scene of the accident and after walking one and a half miles through the thick scrub arrived shortly after a rescue party of men had succeeded in using jacks to raise the tractor from the young man's body. The ambulance bearer then pronounced that the timber worker was dead. Nolan, the son of J.P. Nolan, storekeeper at Wengenville, was later buried at the Nanango cemetery.¹⁴²

When the mill had been sold to Hyne and Son in 1928 Thomas Clapperton decided that in order to economically mill the timber that still remained on his land he would open his own mill. In association with the Denning family, four brothers who had worked in the timber industry for almost all their working lives, the mill at Tanduringie Creek was relocated to the head of Little Saddletree Creek, the road to the site being cut by horse-drawn grader. This mill was later leased to Newton and Gracie and was subsequently acquired by Hancock and Gore. The land was eventually sold to Allan Stirling, one of the region's earliest settlers, and used as a cattle property. The last sawmill on the Bunya Mountains was that owned by Reg Cullen and was situated at Dandabah. It closed down circa 1950.¹⁴³

The Demise of the Mills

By the 1960s there was evidence that the old days of the timber milling industry had long gone, and those involved in the industry were facing an uncertain future. By that time almost all of the rich forests of the South Burnett had been harvested, and despite conservation management and extensive silvicultural techniques that had been operating since the 1920s, it appeared the industry could be facing a starvation of logs. Figures released by the Bureau of Census and Statistics in 1964 showed that Queensland mills had processed more than ninety-five million superficial feet of logs during the March quarter of that year, thirteen per cent below the same March quarter averages for every year from 1951 to 1960. More than two thirds of the logs milled in the state during that quarter were processed by mills in southern Queensland.

In August 1964 one local saw-miller stated: 'The competition for logs was stiff, so much so that many areas had been cut out of hardwood logs. Toowoomba operators had almost denuded the Bunya Mountains area of hardwood logs and only a comparatively small stand remained.' The spokes-person went on to claim that his firm had stockpiled all the logs it could and that all supplies of pine for the South Burnett had to be imported from north Queensland and overseas, including South America. The press claimed: 'The government statistician, Mr S.E. Solomon, stated recently that 18 mills in southern Queensland, 17 of them small with a capacity of less than 5000 super feet, had closed in the last twelve months. A Forestry Department spokesman said that in south-east Queensland there was far more milling capacity than the forestry could support. At the end of March 1963 there were 572 licensed sawmills in Queensland, twenty-four less than in March the previous year.'¹⁴⁴

The mill at Manumbar, established circa 1922, finally closed in 1967, manager of the mill at that time was Mrs Maida O'Brien, who had taken over the management following her husband's death two years previously, Mr O'Brien had managed the mill for eighteen years. Mill owners, Brett and Co., had been forced to close the mill, '... because it was no longer an economic proposition.' Mrs O'Brien told the press that the quality of local timber had been deteriorating for several years and that the mill machinery was old and needed replacing, such expenditure, in light of the loss of timber quality, could not be warranted. At the time of the mill closure there

were seventeen people employed at the plant, mill owners Brett and Co. stated that the mill, its machinery and all the buildings at the site, including workers' houses, would be auctioned.¹⁴⁵

In May 1970 the manager of the Timber Corporation's mill at Nanango received notice from the mill owners, Hancock and Gore of Brisbane, that following the processing of all the existing logs then held at the mill, the mill was to be closed down. At that time there were sufficient logs at the mill to keep it in operation for two weeks.¹⁴⁶

The mill manager told the press that the mill had become a subsidiary of Hancock and Gore, '... somewhere around the late 1930s or early 1940s, but this date was vague as the Nanango records began from 1942.' At the time of its closure there were sixteen men working at the mill with a further six men in the Nanango region working as cutters and another six cutters in the Yarraman district.¹⁴⁷

Nothing could save the mill and there was to be no reprieve, the mill closed on schedule and the mill hands were forced to seek employment elsewhere. It was a bitter blow to the people of Nanango, the business had given employment to Nanango residents for many years and had reached its peak of production during the Second World War when 150 men had been employed there. However, in April the following year came the good news that the mill was being reopened. Hancock and Gore had sold the mill and its timber leases and contracts to a company called J. Wilkinson and Sons of Mount Gravatt. The mill was to be known as Wilkinson Timber Industries, the press reporting: 'When the mill's starting whistle blew again on Monday morning, eight men and three women commenced work in what could be an expanding industry for the town.'¹⁴⁸

However, the operations of the mill from that time were to be tenuous. Facing stiff competition from imported timbers the mill was closed again for most of 1976. In December 1977 it again closed, throwing fifteen people out of work, although there was strong speculation that the mill would once again re-open. Yet this was not to be. In October the following year the general manager of Wilkinson's Timber Industries, Ted Mason, stated that the mill would not re-open. Mason said that production at the company's Benarkin mill had been increased to absorb the log allocation at Nanango, the Nanango mill would be stripped, its equipment sold and the land placed on the market. During the previous two and a half years it had been in operation for only eleven months and its closure added to the town's economic problems. By this time the butter factory had closed, so too had the brick works, and the closure of the sawmill meant the loss of approximately \$3750 in weekly wages to the district.¹⁴⁹

Mill closures over the following years were becoming almost commonplace, and one of the mills affected by this down-turn in trade was at Benarkin. The Benarkin mill, owned by Wilkinson and Son, began operations in 1960 with a staff of seventeen men. One of the managers of the mill was Bill Wallader. Ten years later considerable additions were made at the mill and included the construction of drying sheds, extensions of the covered area and the arrival of a forklift from the company's Beerwah sawmill. That year Col. Hawkins was appointed mill manager. In June 1970 the mill introduced female workers into its labour force, the first women employed at the mill were Audrey Olzard of Blackbutt and Lorraine Smith of Benarkin, their duties being stripping timber off the green chain. The following year the company purchased a mill at Caboolture and closed its Beerwah mill, moving the Beerwah mill to the Caboolture site. In July 1986 eleven workers were retrenched from the Benarkin mill due to excessive stock holdings and in March 1987 both the Benarkin and Caboolture mills were acquired by Wilco Timber Production Pty. Ltd. as a part of the Eastcourt Ltd. takeover of Sunstate Resources. Softwood Holdings Ltd., from Mount Gambia, South Australia, later joined forces with Sunstate to acquire the assets of both the Benarkin and Caboolture mills from Wilco.

In July 1988, Softwood Holdings announced that the Benarkin mill would close, the mill had operated in the Benarkin region for more than twenty-eight years. The closure came as no surprise to mill manager Col. Hawkins and his staff of twenty-one who had known for the previous twelve months that the mill was in danger of closing. The mill's machinery and other equipment was long out of date and would have required extensive and expensive refitting to bring it up to modern standards.¹⁵⁰ The plant and buildings at the mill site were auctioned in 1991 and in compliance with the requirements of the special lease held by Softwood Holdings the land was returned to its natural state.¹⁵¹

Since the timber industry began on the South Burnett following the arrival of the rail line, that industry has brought enormous advantages to the region in terms of materials, wealth and employment. Today there is no wide-scale timber industry in the district, although some mills, such as those at Wondai and another near Blackbutt, continue to function — relics of a past period when the silence of the country was disturbed only by the scream of the saws and the strident whistle of the steam boilers. Those areas where the mills once functioned, places such as Elgin Vale, Manumbar and Boondooma, sites where villages once thrived, are now merely ghost towns, often with little or no evidence of the industries that once functioned there.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Ninety-five

Timber, Sawmills and the Timbermen

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144. SBT. 27 August, 1964, p 7.
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146. SBT. 20 May, 1970, p 1.
147. N/A. 21 May, 1970, p 1.
148. SBT. 7 April, 1971, p 1.
149. SBT. 4 October, 1978, p 1.
150. SBT. 20 July, 1988, p 3.
151. SBT. 13 August, 1991.

The Prickly Pear Menace

For those who did not live on the South Burnett and other Queensland regions infected by prickly pear during the state's formative years, it is difficult to imagine how the plant affected the lives of the people then struggling to make their small selections pay under trying circumstances. Yet the 'pear', as it was more commonly known, ravaged the land, it grew in such profusion and with such rapidity that selectors were often faced with only one solution — to abandon their holdings.

Prickly pear was reportedly introduced to Australia as a pot plant from Galveston Texas around 1839, and was grown at Scone, New South Wales, where its rapid spread became quite alarming. Despite this it seems that few people could conceive of the damage the plant would eventually cause and many people took cuttings for their gardens. Over the following years it travelled extensively, settling and prospering in Queensland where the sunshine gave it an added boost to life. There were, in fact, several types of prickly pear, including tiger pear, apparently a plant native to South America which was particularly prevalent in southern Queensland, drooping-tree pear, also from South America, velvety-tree pear, from Mexico, which grew up to forty feet tall, westwood pear, also from Mexico, which grew extensively in central Queensland, sword pear, which had snow-white flowers and bloomed at night and devil's rope pear, which was prevalent in New South Wales.

By the 1920s vast tracts of land were inundated with prickly pear of numerous varieties, as fast as selectors cleared their scrub the pear was growing back in another field.



Prickly pear, circa 1920s.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 152659

There were many methods used in an attempt to rid the plant from the land, poisons, burning, cutting and chipping. Some of the more drastic applications worked — to a certain extent — but the more manual exertions such as chopping up the pear by hand, or even mincing it in the infamous 'Pullen's Patent Pear Pulper', achieved only moderate and temporary relief.

Compared to regions such as Chinchilla, which was so heavily inundated with the pear that it was almost impossible for selectors to make any kind of living, the South Burnett did not suffer quite so seriously, although there were vast tracts of the countryside infested with the pest and it took many years for farmers to gain any kind of foothold, particularly in regions such as Durong.

To give some kind of indication of the difficulties experienced by the farmers the following letter, written by Alexander Cummings of *Mount Beagle*, in 1906, may be taken as an example of how the pest travelled and the difficulties experienced in its control:

The prickly pear was brought here about forty-five years ago. It was carefully cultivated for some time, and then planted out to form a hedge near *Mount Beagle* station homestead. From that hedge it has spread and established itself over a very large tract of the finest land in Western Queensland, *Mount Beagle* now forms the centre of this tract of infested country, and the pest is as complete as it can well be. A great deal of the land is rich sandy loam, with an open natural surface, in which the pest takes root readily from seed and cuttings and layers. We (two of us) commenced clearing some land for cultivation here in January, 1900. In order to get some of the land under cultivation as soon as possible we commenced work upon a piece of about 20 acres, comparatively free from timber. We cut down the pear with long-handled shovels, and grubbed out the stocks with mattocks. As we got along we grubbed any trees we came across, packed as much as possible of the pear into the holes, and covered it over with about 12 inches of soil. The timber was then gathered into heaps and burnt upon these heaps. There was still a large quantity of the pear left, which was carted away and made into heaps of 6ft to 8ft high. All the pear which could be picked up with forks was disposed of in this manner, and the land ploughed with a 12in. cut plough. All the small pieces of pear and seed were turned in, and a surface was got quite free from pear. In course of time wheat was sown, and it grew up well. When stripping the wheat small plants of the pear were making their appearance, and in a few weeks those plants grew to a height of about 12 inches and quite thick among the stubble. The stubble was then burned, and the young pear got scorched and killed down to the surface of the ground. There was, however, a small piece of the green plant left which contact with the earth protected from the fire. This again commenced to sprout, but before it got any height the land was again ploughed to a depth of about 6 inches and the little pear which grew after this was completely done away with by the third ploughing.

All this, however, entailed the handling of hundreds of tons of pear, and consequently we found ourselves greatly handicapped.¹

Over the following years the pear continued to fruit and multiply at an alarming rate and nothing the selectors could do would be in any way effective in its control. No sooner had the pear been cleared or ploughed in than it would return, often in greater numbers.

In September 1912 the state government announced the appointment of Professor Thomas Harvey Johnstone, M.A., a lecturer at the University of Queensland, as chairman of a commission formed to investigate ways in which the pear might be controlled or destroyed. Henry Tryon, the government entomologist, was appointed to the commission. Their initial task was to visit a number of countries that were also host to the pear, to investigate methods of destruction in those countries and to find if the pear had any commercial value, for example as fodder for farm animals.²

By 1913 there were approximately thirty million acres of Queensland land under pear and the plant was reportedly spreading by one million acres each year. In June 1913 a conference of approximately sixty selectors was held in Brisbane to discuss the pear menace, the conference was also attended by several members of parliament. At that conference resolutions were passed that the Land Act be amended to provide for terms of lease of pear lands for twenty-five years, rather than the fifteen years then in force, and that all lands under pear be subject to only 'pepper-corn' rentals for at least five years until the selectors had the opportunity of grubbing out the pear and planting a profitable crop. It was also claimed that state valuations on such land were excessive and that all pear selections should be considered, initially at least, as valueless.

Selectors moved that the government provide, at cost price, items such as arsenic and soda — then the only agents known to have any kind of chemical success with the eradication of the pear.³

The selectors presented the resolutions of the conference to the minister for lands, James Tolmie, the following day. Tolmie promised that he would introduce a Bill during that session of parliament which would extend the terms of pear leases from fifteen to twenty-five years. However, he refused to acknowledge that selectors needed five years' free rental, perhaps this was because Tolmie was a successful businessman, a newspaper proprietor (part owner of the *Darling Downs Gazette*) and company director and had no real understanding of the difficulties poor selectors were facing.⁴

The destruction of the pear was of such importance that many individuals and companies quickly realised that if a method of pear elimination could be discovered, then the person who made that discovery could become enormously wealthy by releasing those findings commercially. For example, one of the earliest of these entrepreneurs was a San Francisco chemist with the somewhat unusual name of Oliver Cromwell Roberts who, after being informed of the devastation the pear was creating in Queensland, travelled to those areas of the United States and South America where the pear had originally come from, including Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Mexico. After studying the plant and experimenting with methods of destroying it, he travelled to Queensland and from 1911 to 1913 carried out extensive tests. For a while he relied upon his own finances, but when these became exhausted he approached a Melbourne company which quickly realised the potential for making large sums of money should Roberts be successful. The press later reported: 'Having paid special attention to gases during his chemical studies, Mr Roberts, when it became evident that spraying with liquids would be too expensive a method of destruction by reason of the cost of labour, and moreover could be only partially effective on account of the difficulty in reaching all parts of the plant, decided to experiment with gasses. He tried several of these and at last fixed upon one which he now pins his faith to as being likely to yield satisfactory results.'⁵

Roberts' preliminary experiments had been made at Deagon, near Sandgate, and although his equipment was described as being crude, his results were so encouraging that he decided to continue the work on a larger scale by taking his equipment to a block of land, some two hundred acres in size, at Dulacca, where a government experimental station had been established in 1912. This block of land was particularly heavily covered with prickly pear. Here he discovered that his



Opuntia Vulgasis growing at Dulacca, circa 1911.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 45247.

earlier work in the United States had little value as the pear in America was not as thick as in Australia, and the Australian pear was therefore far more difficult to treat. However, Roberts overcame these difficulties, releasing his gas at times when the wind direction was most favourable, and soon the pear plants were withering and dying. The press was particularly impressed, claiming:

The effect was soon apparent in the withered appearance presented to the plants, and in a few weeks most of the leaves and a good proportion of the less bulky stocks became dead and dried up. It is not yet known whether the poisonous effects of the gas extends to the heavy bulbous stems and roots of the pear, but Mr Roberts hopes that time will prove that this is the case. Apart from this, however, it does good work in drying off the leaves so that they may be burnt. The burnt matter, it may be observed, is rich in potash. As to the cost of treatment the inventor cannot speak definitely, it has been stated that he claims that it is not more than 10/- per acre and may be reduced to 5/- ... Although the gas is fatal to the prickly pear within a considerable radius of the point of application, it does not appear to have any deleterious effect upon animal life, so there is no risk of injury to persons operating the apparatus.⁶

Soon afterwards Mr Temple Clarke, (also reported as Clark and Clerk) one of the most imaginative thinkers of the whole prickly pear era, released a publication entitled *The Prickly Pear Problem in Queensland*, having carried out a wide survey of the problem including the methods then being used by Roberts at the Dulacca experimental station. Interviewed by a journalist from the *Daily Mail* following the release of his publication, Clarke claimed that the only true method of pear destruction was through the use of Roberts' gas. He claimed: '... prickly pear is an air plant and one which is always drawing into its lungs moisture and air, hence the gas, which is heavier than air, so settles down all over the pear and in Nature's course is absorbed into its lungs. Once there the arsenic begins to do its work of circulating fatally through the whole of the plant.'⁷

Yet as we shall later see, Clarke himself, while acknowledging the important work being done by Roberts and others who were then investigating chemical methods of destruction, eventually came to the belief that the only true method of containing and eradicating the pest was through the use of biological control. In its home countries the pear was not nearly so destructive as in Australia, the reason for this, Clarke believed, was because the plant was subject to destructive invasion by insects indigenous to those countries. Therefore, it was Clarke's theory that the only sure control would be achieved by importing the insects from those countries and placing them on the plants. It was an innovative suggestion, open to many criticisms, not least of which was the concern over insect control and the impact such insects would have on the local fauna and flora. Yet Clarke persisted in his beliefs and moved to have the insects brought to Australia.



Prickly pear, Cooyar district, circa 1913.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 125549



Prickly pear cleaner's camp.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 726

Some of the proposed methods of destroying the pear bordered on the fantastic. For example, one farmer at Gayndah wrote to the state government claiming that his invention, which he called 'The Singeing Move', would be the most successful method of eradication. With his letter the farmer sent a scale model of his contraption, a reporter who examined this item described it as: 'A most weird looking model ... Imagine the exterior of a covered waggon and you have an idea of the general appearance of the model. It is mounted on four wheels made of tin and very wobbly. The covering of the main body of the waggon-like structure is composed of three separate layers of cloth which, in the actual apparatus, would be replaced with sheet iron.' The reporter went on to state that the centre of the apparatus was in fact a large oven. On one side was a firebox door. The concept of the invention was that the wagon, stoked with an enormous wood fire, would be dragged over the prickly pear thus burning and scorching it. However, as the report so succinctly pointed out, the inventor had: '... omitted to state several particulars which would be instructive. He does not mention, for instance, how he intends the heat of the furnace to descend instead of ascend as it has an habitual way of doing, nor how to prevent the horses having their tails singed. It would be interesting also to know on what part of the roasting vehicle the driver will sit.'⁸

Yet such light-hearted episodes in the quest to find a solution to the pear problem were rare indeed. In September 1913 the Prickly Pear Commission returned from its travels to the Canary Islands and South Africa to report on its findings. Members of the commission stated that in South Africa the most successful method of treating the pest was through the use of arsenite of soda. They also stated that chemicals used in pear eradication were supplied by the government to the farmers free of charge.⁹

Farmers on the South Burnett were warned by a fellow selector that the practice of treating the pear with arsenic and soda was a dangerous one. Writing under the pen-name of 'Pear Fiend', and disparaging the Prickly Pear Commission, calling them the 'Prickly Pear Picnic Commission', he claimed that when preparing the dosage care would have to be taken in not poisoning oneself, adding: 'The formula is 14 lbs white arsenic 21 lbs washing soda dissolved in a five gallon drum.

Take three gallons of water and while coming to boiling point add soda which quickly dissolves. Soon as this boils draw fire — all but a few coals. Then add arsenic in small quantities. When arsenic is added in lumps a boil over will waste the poison and cause fumes dangerous if inhaled.¹⁰

Many selectors were now in a desperate situation. As poor farmers attempting to scratch a small living from the land, the only land they could afford to rent from the government was country infested with pear. Believing that by considerable exertion and energy they would be able to clear the pear and finally plant a modest crop, they took over these small holdings in preference to having no work at all. Yet, as some selectors believed, in clearing the holdings they were doing the government a service — one the selectors should be paid for, or at least be awarded some form of concession. One selector claimed:

A man should be paid and in fact bribed to do the Government such a favour instead of being so penalized. If he does not do it, the land within five years reverts into a forbidding wilderness, useless alike to man and beast, and its clearing creates a valuable asset which in all fairness should be paid for by at least a concession on the part of the benefiting Government. The laws existing with regard to pear infested land, are of the most thick-headed and illogical nature throughout. It is in nearly all cases the very poor man who goes in for pear land, and with the perversity born of total ignorance he thinks it possible to engage, in small, money producing ventures, such as dairying on a small scale, fowl farming, etc., etc., and at the same time clear his land of pear. Almost invariably we see his feeble strivings, year after year confined strictly to the little pot boilers mentioned, while half a dozen half yellow clumps of pear close to the door attest the one and only valiant attempt in the early start to act in accordance with his original programme. The whole thing quickly degenerates into a system of 'drifts' and the not uncommon end of it all will be that the healthy ever-vigorous and damnable pear — the most uncompromising creditor man ever had — will tighten its cordon and close, or foreclose on its victim.¹¹

Meanwhile, at the experimental station at Dulacca, despite early and seemingly positive results, the work continued. Some of this work was highly dangerous, the people involved in the experiments exposing themselves to a host of chemical agents. For example, one of the leading researchers, Dr Jean White-Hainey (also reported as Haney), employed an assistant who inadvertently touched a spot of chemical with one of his fingers. The press later claimed: '... The burning pain was so intense that the finger had to be taken off at the first joint to save further consequences.'¹²

Even Oliver Cromwell Roberts' machinery appeared to be almost Gothic. Pear had to be chopped down to enable one of his machines to be dragged through the resulting corridor. It was later described as: '... a boiler on wheels. The chemicals are placed in the boiler with salt. The gas is thus manufactured and let out into the air.'¹³

Two years later, O.C. Roberts, assisted by Doctor Jean White-Hainey, was still attempting to perfect his invention. A visitor to the experimental station described the work being carried on there in 1915, writing:

At the hotel I met Dr Jean White and a weather-bound surveyor, Mr Steele, and, braving the showers and the sticky mud for which Dulacca is notorious, we set out for the Government experimental station just over a mile distant. We had not long left the hotel before we encountered any amount of pear; in fact, Dulacca is almost in the centre of a large area of country, comprising I suppose, a million acres in extent, all badly infested with this curse. We walked on for half-a-mile through this infested country until we saw before us a modern looking cottage perched high on blocks, in a small enclosure. This was the experimental station. Closer acquaintance revealed a small area of land reclaimed from the pear, while in front of the cottage was a pretty little garden plot in which quite a variety of flowers were in full bloom. It must be refreshing to the workers to be able to divert their gaze for a while from the eternal pear, pear, pear, to the pleasing plot of dear old garden favourites. Near the cottage are the sleeping rooms — half tent, half house — of the three work-men who work under the direction of Dr White in carrying out her experiments. The cottage is partitioned off into three rooms. The centre room is the general laboratory, that on the right the biological laboratory, and on the left is the study or office. All are well equipped with every requisite, and Dr White spoke in grateful terms of the readiness of the Lands Department to provide her with whatever she finds necessary for her work. The experimental plot lies to the left of the cottage, and here paths have been cut into the solidly

growing pear. These paths are about half-a-mile long, and on either side the plots of pear are about 8ft. wide. At intervals of about 8ft. stakes, numbered from 1 onwards, are driven in, marking off each plot. There are about 300 of these stakes already in use, and at each the pear is being experimented upon, each plot in a different manner from the others. Every known poison has been used, either alone or in combination with other ingredients, and their effects upon the pear noted, while the pear has been treated in different ways — by injection, by spraying and chopping, and by being subjected to the fumes of noxious gases. The first plots were treated with arsenic and arsenical compounds. After the arsenic-treated plots, came plots treated with barium, then calcium, and so on, the poisons being used in their alphabetical order. One of the most striking features in connection with the experiments is the way in which the pear protects itself from the attacks of the various poisons, by the thickening of the skin or bark of the leaves so as to render it impervious to the poison, and so protect the inner part of the leaf from injury; and in some instances by a chemical combination of the protoplasm of the pear with the poison, forming a compound which is innocuous to the plant. This combination is especially noticeable in the case of mercury, which travels through the plant in a marvellous manner, but whose effects are stultified by the combination above referred to. The experiments with certain gases seemed to be very promising, that with phenol gas having a very marked effect upon the pear. A walk through the plots reveals the fact that the work bristles with problems.¹⁴

Dr Jean White-Hainey's work on the extermination of the pear was certainly revolutionary, and, despite a host of critics, she was already on the way to discovering a solution to the problem. According to the *Northern Miner*, at Charter's Towers Dr White-Hainey had, approximately fifteen months previously, experimented with the introduction of cochineal insects, pioneering the belief that the solution would be found in the world of biology rather than chemistry. Dr White-Hainey had covered a mature clump of pear with hessian and released a number of insects on the plants, a later report claimed: 'The experiment looked so futile that it was really taken as a joke, but as time went by the small fluffy snow-white balls (insects) increased at a miraculous rate. Still the pear was so vast that even with the enormous multiplicity of the cochineal insects, the task set them was considered too Herculean.'¹⁵

Despite the cynicism, the insects succeeded in destroying the plant, they were transferred to another dense bunch of pear and set free. There they continued to multiply and devour the pear until it too was completely destroyed.

However, the scepticism remained. The plants upon which Dr White-Hainey had experimented were a strain of the pear found in the northern regions of the state and these differed considerably from the southern variety. The insects had certainly eaten the pear, but when placed on strains of the southern pear they had refused to eat the plant. In any case, few believed that a relatively small number of insects could ever solve the enormous prickly pear problem that was raging so widely throughout the state.

At this time too the Department of Agriculture was experimenting with ways in which the pear could be utilized as cattle fodder. Such initiatives had previously been made in Mexico where the pear was reportedly being commercially utilized in this way, and some government departments believed that investigations should be made to ascertain if pear could be commercially used as fodder.¹⁶

During the years of the First World War, many selectors left their farms, wives and families to go to fight at the Western Front and in the Middle East. At that time it was almost impossible for the women and children left behind to control the insidious spread of the pear on their properties, the press, reflecting the anti-Germanic attitude of the day, sometimes referred to the pest as: '... that vegetable Hun', or, '... the vegetable German'.¹⁷

Meanwhile, attempts to find a suitable eradication technique continued and, as the months and years progressed, many more experimenters became involved in the quest, including a Maryborough man named W.J. King who put a chemical concoction on the market under the name of 'King's Pearcide'.¹⁸

Another man who claimed to have discovered the solution to the problem was a Doctor Botteral who marketed Doctor Botteral's Prickly Pear Gas. In September 1915 this gas was demonstrated for a group of witnesses, one of whom later wrote:

The process was very simple. A fire was lit and an iron tray about two feet and a half square was placed on it and in a few minutes a sufficient heat was obtained, and a dark looking liquid, something like Phenyle or Brunswick Black was poured into the tray and a thick grey smoke was produced which, aided by a fairly strong northerly wind, spread for a distance of about 15 chains in front of the fire ... the killing fumes conveyed in the smoke are destructive for a distance of about 100 yards, of course losing both their density and power, as the distance increases. A windy day is absolutely necessary and the more choppy the better. The pear selected for destruction today was a very healthy variety about three years' old, and should give the process a good test. It requires about a fortnight to elapse, we are told, before discolouration takes place and after that the pear's days are numbered ... With the exception of careful handling and not allowing the liquid to touch the hands, there is no danger to the men employed using it. It was thought by the gentlemen present that a portable kind of furnace, which could be easily shifted, would be an advantage and we think so too. In very thick pear there would not be much need to remove the fire often and we are told that any old camp oven or non-leaky vessel would do for heating. We will have a look at the pear treated today in about three weeks.¹⁹

The work of Oliver Cromwell Roberts at this time was progressing to the stage where he could comfortably predict the complete eradication of the pear within a few years. Not only this, but Roberts promised that using his method of destruction and then utilizing the by-products, the selectors could obtain an income while the pest was being destroyed. In May 1916, Roberts walked into the offices of the *Daily Mail* in Brisbane to tell the world that he had found the solution. The paper later reported:

If Mr O.C. Roberts of prickly pear-killing fame, is right — and, as he says, he has had 'five solid years to get right in' — the Curse of Queensland is going to turn out a Blessing in Disguise! Mr Roberts called in at the Brisbane *Daily Mail* office on Monday night to give Queensland the best bit of news that it has heard for many a long day. The young inventor who has put up such a long persistent, and plucky fight against the prickly pear fiend has just come down from Dulacca, where he is conducting his great experiments. He expressed his appreciation of the special article on the arch-enemy of Queensland which appeared in this journal on April 15 and said it would be a good thing to keep public opinion focussed on the pest.

'I have been up at Dulacca for the last few weeks', said Mr Roberts, 'where we have been running the potash works during the past fortnight. We have been turning out half a ton a day. Next week we shall have the works up to a three-quarter ton capacity per day, and when their limit has been reached I am immediately starting to enlarge the works and produce a very much larger supply. The result of the work done to date is this. I know now for certain that the densest prickly pear land can be cleared up for nothing! This is an absolute fact. A man will be able to make good wages and also a profit above the clearing up cost. We have proved that the prickly pear is not going to be a curse, but a valuable commercial asset. Furthermore it is going to give Queensland a splendid opportunity to get into a trade that the Germans have enjoyed almost a monopoly of — and a highly profitable trade. The prickly pear will provide unlimited quantities of potash for all sorts of purposes. Furthermore it is going to help to solve the employment of returned soldiers question. They can be set to work clearing off their own land and meantime exist on wages, and good wages, too, while they are doing it. And they won't have to go outback either; the land is there waiting for them.'²⁰

The safe use of the gas designed to destroy the pear was also an interesting question at that time. Arsenic was in wide use in regional areas, it controlled animal pests and was sometimes used medicinally in minute quantities. Yet the dangers of using such a toxic poison were evident, especially when it was being discharged into the air in its gaseous form. One farmer complained that the gas had killed off grass and trees on his property and that it was: '... well known to kill fowls.' However, others claimed that the gas was perfectly safe and that men who were applying it to the pear could safely suck on their pipes while doing so. The state government could supply no information regarding the safe use of the gas, conveniently referring anyone who should express concern to the manufacturers.²¹

In June 1916 the news came that Dr Jean White-Hainey had resigned her position as director of the experimental station at Dulacca and that the station would close. Representations had been made to the federal government for it to take over responsibility for the station and to continue

with biological research, Dr White-Hainey having exhausted the possibilities for a chemical answer to the problem. It is curious that White-Hainey's previous modestly successful experiments with the cochineal insects, at least in relation to the northern strains of pear, seem to have been completely disregarded. A contemporary report claimed: '... at the present time, in consequence of the war, the price of the chemical was considerably inflated. The State having done its work it now remained for the Commonwealth to continue the investigations on biological lines, as the prickly pear question was a national problem.'²²

Over the following twelve months the problem continued. Many farmers on the South Burnett could hardly keep pace with the spread of the pear, and despite the poisoning, cutting and burning, it continued to spread at an alarming rate. Even the previously confident Oliver Cromwell Roberts had realised that his earlier hopes had been misguided. After seven years' work in the field he was no closer to finding an economical answer to the problem. In August 1917 he stated that he was moving his operations to Brisbane, that he had invented a new liquid poison which was more effective than any poison he had previously experimented with, and that it was less costly to purchase and apply. He stated that he was putting together a new laboratory and that all his time would be devoted to finding a solution to the pear problem. Roberts said that the spread of the pear was greater than had been previously estimated, those estimates had given a rough figure of one million acres each year but Roberts claimed that this was a very conservative figure. He also castigated the public, claiming that many people had an apathetic view of the problem and that if larger numbers of people became involved in attempting to find a solution then the problem would certainly be solved, and quickly. In contradiction to his earlier statements, Roberts now claimed that he did not pretend to know what the solution was, but that after seven years' work he had learned to 'respect' the pear and in his opinion nothing had been discovered that was capable of dealing with the pear at a price ordinary farmers could afford.²³

Roberts' new poison was certainly an interesting addition to the previous methods of destruction. It too has highly dangerous, experiments carried out in the field, especially at an experimental station at Wangan, New South Wales, revealed that while the men applying the poison remained: '... in excellent health, showing no ill effects,' the poison itself was extremely destructive to clothes and if droplets of the mixture fell on the skin of those applying it, the results were very severe. The poison was applied with an atomiser and therefore it was necessary to find an atomiser that created the desired spray without misting it too much. The poison certainly worked, however, a report of its application stated: 'One is at once struck with the apparent destruction wrought by this poison. Where the pear has been sprayed or infected for a month or more it is dead and rotting. After a sufficient time ... it should be burnt off. Within an hour of spraying dark spots appear on the plant where the drops have lodged. In a day the joints show black and the plant quickly falls. Action is accelerated or retarded by climatic conditions.'²⁴

However, while the new poison certainly destroyed the pear, there were drawbacks, not least of which was the cost of the chemical and its application. The primary equation in every endeavour to find a solution was always that of 'cost-to-effectiveness', as we have seen, most of the lands inundated with pear were leased or owned by poor settlers who certainly could not pay large amounts of money for pear poisons. The solution, when it eventually came, would have to be easy to apply and very cost effective. Realising that the atomisers he had designed released too much of the poison, thus making the poison less than cost effective, Roberts set about designing a new atomiser that would achieve both aims, that of killing the pear and also of releasing only sufficient of the chemical to do so cost effectively. Tests were carried out in New South Wales and, initially at least, these looked promising. Returned soldiers were used to apply the spray to experimental regions and officers of the Department of Lands claimed that at last a cost effective method had been found. A report of the experiments written in 1919 claimed:

It has been demonstrated that a light spraying of the leaves only is necessary to kill the circulation carrying the poison to the bulb. It is unnecessary to spray the stems owing to the efficiency of the atomisers. This is contrary to previous ideas and enables a considerable saving of poison. It has also been proven that in treating with this poison the pear should not be slashed or broken as this destroys the circulation. The fruit falls off sprayed pear, and shrivels, the seeds turning to dust. Cattle have been observed to eat the pear in a wilted state about three days after poisoning, and without ill effects. Soft grasses that grew up through the dead pear were also eaten by stock without detriment to their health.²⁵

In 1920 recommendations of the executive committee of the Bureau of Science and Industry were adopted to place into effect an organisation that would work towards the eradication of the pear. The committee had estimated that this organisation would cost approximately £8000 per year for five years, the Commonwealth bearing half the expense and the remaining costs borne by the New South Wales and Queensland governments. The advisory committee stated that experiments should be carried out with insects and fungi known to be inimical to the pear, that a central laboratory should be established in Brisbane under an expert in biology with a salary of £1000 per year, and that two subsidiary laboratories should be set up in pear infested country, each under the supervision of qualified entomologists at a salary of £650 per year. Dr T. Harvey Johnstone of Queensland University was appointed scientific controller.²⁶

During a lecture delivered under the auspices of the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce in the Albert Hall, Brisbane, in July 1920, Professor Johnstone stated that of all the eradication programmes he had so far been involved with he favoured the cochineal insect, as the chemical methods were all far too expensive for the average man on the land. However, he too had doubts concerning the effectiveness of any method then under consideration. Asked whether man or pear would ultimately control Queensland, Johnstone replied: 'You can put your money on the pear.'²⁷

In 1922, the local member of the Legislative Assembly, B.H. Corser, told the press that an answer was on its way and that at last the cochineal insect was proving effective. He said that the previous May, Mr Temple Clarke, '... a man who put much of his life and money into pear work and who lately has gone completely blind,' had entrusted to Corser's care a strain of cochineal insects known as *dactylopius tomen tesus*. Tests with these insects had proven that they were effective against two types of pear, including the one ravaging the regions of the Burnett. Corser said that the insects were almost certainly going to prove more effective than the previous strain of cochineal insects, (*Coccus Indicus*) that had been imported and proved temporarily effective against the north Queensland pear. He said that they had covered large areas, killed the plants and then died out themselves. Corser added: 'I saw their first nursery at Dulacca, but though at one stage some insects were starved, (they) would not touch the two great pear pests of Queensland which the new cochineal insect is doing and thriving on.'²⁸

Various other insects were also under consideration. In September 1922, Doctor Harvey Johnstone of the Commonwealth Experimental Station in Brisbane returned from Sydney where he had collected a consignment of insects including the Florida moth borer. Johnstone stated that the borer was the most effective insect in the destruction of prickly pear. However, this insect had been sent to Australia on three previous occasions but had failed to become established on pear plants. Further consignments of other insects, including a larger borer were also expected from the United States.²⁹

In January 1923, news was released that a new Royal Commission would be appointed to investigate the problem.³⁰ The commission would have a number of objectives, to investigate what steps should be taken to keep the pear in check and eventually secure its eradication and to report on the advisability of appointing a prickly pear board. The board would ensure that the land was cleared and maintained in a clear state and would work in cooperation with the Lands Department. A report of the inauguration of the commission pointed out: 'The Government recognised that the problem was assuming very great dimensions and should be thoroughly



Prickly Pear Royal Commission at Palardo, April 1923. Professor Steele, chairman.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 18373

investigated and a general survey of lands undertaken with a view to formulating a scheme for effectively coping with the evil. The Government had asked Professor Steele, of Queensland University, to accept the chairmanship of the commission.³¹

From its inauguration, the commission began to hear evidence concerning eradication work on the pear. Evidence and recommendations were mixed, some believing that the pear problem could never be completely solved and that it would be better to simply keep it in check, while others stated that the pear could be beneficial. Henry Quodling, for example, the director of agriculture, gave a résumé of operations and costs of experiments that had been carried out to determine the value of pear as fodder in times of drought. He said that these experiments had concluded that stock animals fed on pear could survive without water for 150 days, providing the pear was moist.³²

Following a tour of inspection through many of the areas affected by the pear, Professor Steele, chairman of the commission, stated that in addition to the ordinary type of pear then ravaging the land there was also an alarming spread of 'tiger pear' a huge variety much feared in South Africa, '... where it was one of the worst, if not *the* worst of its kind.'³³

Meanwhile, Oliver Cromwell Roberts was continuing with his work based upon an arsenic compound spray and, indeed, had set up a factory at Wallangarra where the chemical was to be manufactured. The factory was officially opened in February, 1923, the press reporting:

What should constitute an epoch-making event in the history of the fight against the national pest, prickly pear, took place at Wallangarra today, when the Queensland Governor performed the opening ceremony of the O.C. Roberts Limited new poison factory chemical works, and laboratory. Beside the Vice-Regal party, a large and representative gathering of public citizens from all parts of Southern Queensland attended the function. On the way to Wallangarra a stop was made at Mill Hill, and an inspection made of a plot of pear poisoned on January 20th, and the result seemed most satisfactory, as not only were the leaves dead, but the base of the plant. Mr J. Gregory, field manager of the company, who was present, said that last year they had cleared with the Roberts' pear poison no less than 234,000 acres, and there were 1350 users of the poison. Mr Gregory added that it was not gas, but merely a liquid, which is sprayed lightly by an atomiser where there were no fumes to contend with, and the whole operation was a simple one.

His Excellency ... said there was no way of effectually destroying the pear except by rooting it up and burning it or by poison. Speaking from information he had received he believed that the Roberts' poison would effect this object, but the question of cost seemed to him an all important one, and the problem before Mr Roberts is how to reduce the price so as to get a practically unlimited demand for the poison, which will make a profitable sale at a price that most graziers can afford.³⁴

The report of the Royal Commission was tabled in parliament in September 1923. The commission outlined some of the history of the battle to control and eradicate the pear and listed some of the actions taken. These included:

1. The offer of a reward of £5000 in 1901, and of £10,000 in 1907 for the discovery of an effective method of destroying prickly pear.
2. The appointment in 1911 of the Board of Advice on Prickly Pear.
3. The establishment of an experimental station at Dulacca in 1912.
4. The despatch in 1912 of a travelling commission to enquire into the possibility of introducing natural enemies of the pear.
5. The supply to settlers since 1919 of arsenic at £10 per ton, the balance of the cost of production being borne by the Crown.
6. The free carriage by rail of poison for use of settlers.
7. The co-operation since 1919 with the State of New South Wales and with the Commonwealth in the work of the Commonwealth experimental stations at Sherwood and elsewhere.
8. The granting of bonuses to selectors of the more heavily infested prickly pear selections.

9. The granting of concessions in rental to tenants in consideration of the work done by them in clearing the pear.
10. The granting of extensions of leases to tenants of grazing lands in deserving cases that come within the provisions of Section 137 of the Land Act of 1910.
11. The granting of subsidies to local authorities for the clearing of roads and reserves.
12. In accordance with the conditions under which holdings are held, a large amount of pear clearing has been carried out by Crown tenants ...³⁵

The Prickly Pear Land Commission, with three members, was brought into being in March 1924. It was vested with funds amounting to £100,000 per year, and was given extensive judicial and administrative powers to deal with the pear pest. The members approved by the governor-in-council were W. Payne, assistant under secretary for lands, as chairman, F. Power, officer in charge of the land settlement branch of the Lands Department, and William Purcell, a dairy farmer. The chairman was awarded a salary of £900 per annum, the other two members received £800 per year each with an appointment of ten years. These salaries were excellent when one considers that the ordinary working man was then earning approximately £4 per week, or slightly more than two hundred pounds per year. The commission started its work on 14 April, 1924.³⁶

With almost twenty-five million acres now under prickly pear and a further one million acres being affected each year, the task of the commission was indeed a considerable one. The commission's jurisdiction extended to all prickly pear regions and all lands situated in buffer zones. The commission held wide powers, including the fixing of rents, clearing conditions, rights of crown tenants and determining forfeitures.

Soon after his appointment the chairman of the commission, W. Payne, stated that while the Royal Commission that had appointed the Prickly Pear Land Commission had recommended arsenic pentoxide as the most effective method of eliminating the pear, and had recommended the purchase of two hundred tons of the poison as the first year's supply, there were, in fact, no funds with which to purchase that quantity of poison and that such funding would not become available until July that year. In effect, Payne was stating that nothing could be done until after that date.³⁷

Following the first meeting of the commission in April 1924, Payne stated that: '... To clear Queensland of the prickly pear was quite impossible. The first clearing, even if it were practical, would probably exceed 100 million sterling.' The chairman added that his commission was not going to attempt the impossible but would make an effort to stop the spread of pear, to encourage the tenants of pear holdings to clear the pear, to reward them for doing so and to make uniform rules concerning the management of pear lands.³⁸

In May the commission issued to the local authorities of sixty towns and shires in pear infested districts details of the assistance the commission would be in a position to give once funding was made available. These included the supply of poison at cost price, instructions on the best methods of using that poison, direction and supervision of pear clearing work and a subsidy of £2 for every £1 found by local authorities spent on pear clearing and management.³⁹

Meanwhile, on the Burnett, experiments with the new strain of cochineal insects, at the insistence of the local M.L.A. B.H. Corser were having some dramatic results. A press report of June 1924 claimed:

Just now, when the prickly pear question has assumed such a prominent position in current topics, in view of the endeavours being made at its extermination, it is pleasing to note that quite a few interesting experiments are being carried out locally with the Temple Clarke cochineal insect. Some of these experiments are today beginning to become convincing and converts to the system are being made among the local settlers. It is due to the persistency of Mr B.H. Corser, who introduced the insect into the local area, that various colonies of the insect have been propagated in several portions of the district, with the intention of giving the pear-destroying capabilities of the insect a thorough trial. Just two years ago Mr Corser was successful in placing a small box of the insects with Messrs Cribb Brothers ... who placed the few specimens in an area of dense pear on their property. In the time that has elapsed the few specimens contained in the box have multiplied enormously, and today ten acres of the pear have been covered, and are being operated on by the insect. In many places

throughout this area the pear has been destroyed entirely; while great numbers of giant plants give evidence of sure, if slow, decay. From present day indications it appears that it will be only a matter of time before the whole of the area infested will be more or less cleaned of what was formerly very dense pear. So convincing have the capabilities of the insect become that several local settlers are collecting heavily insect-infested pear leaves and transporting them to other pear covered areas with the view of establishing the insects in these.⁴⁰

By early July the commission had purchased one hundred tons of arsenic pentoxide from London, and had also purchased the entire output of O.C. Roberts' factory at Wallangarra. Roberts' mixture was a volatile composition of twenty per cent arsenic pentoxide and eighty per cent sulphuric acid. The London chemical was purchased to use on small areas of new pear, the poison being injected into the plant, while Roberts' compound was to be used as a spray on older plants more thickly concentrated on the ground and therefore less accessible. This state purchase of Roberts' chemical enabled landholders to obtain it for thirty-five per cent less than the retail price normally charged by Roberts.⁴¹

Other poisons then under consideration by the commission included Vallo poison, produced by Victor Leggo and Company of Melbourne, and arsenious chloride. During tests the Vallo poison had achieved a kill-rate of seventy-five per cent. The chloride achieved a kill-rate of just fifty per cent and was so dangerous to use that it was dismissed as an effective treatment.⁴²

Early in 1925 the commission instructed Land Ranger Dickson, based at Gympie, to place ten cases of cochineal on prickly pear at Windera. These insects did such effective work in combating the pear that Dickson later placed another ten cases of the insects onto the plants.⁴³

The Prickly Pear Commission tabled its first report in the Legislative Assembly in July 1925. It pointed out that using the poisons which had been distributed to the local authorities and farmers most affected by the pear, it was reasonable to assume that the pest could not only be controlled but eradicated. The commission also offered a number of travelling scholarships in order for university graduates to study the problem at first hand. Other items in the report included the fact that prickly pear as a substitute fodder was considered to have only limited value, the plant being mostly water. A subsequent press report claimed: 'Those whose belief in the value of prickly pear as a valuable stock fodder will receive a rude shock on reading what the Pear Commission has to say on the subject. In a report presented in the Legislative Assembly today, it says that old beliefs die hard, and it is not surprising that some people will claim that pear is good fodder for stock — that champion fat bullocks have been fattened on pear. The nourishing and fattening qualities of pear can easily be ascertained. Analyses show that pear contains 83 per cent to 87 per cent water, and that pear will hardly sustain life, but the reason fat cattle have come from pear country in dry seasons is that the beasts have had access to grass and edible shrubs, and have got the necessary water from the pear. Experiments ... in 1917 proved that pear is of little use as fodder.'⁴⁴

At this time the impact of Temple Clarke's cochineal insects was receiving some warm acclaim, even from the pear commission and the many sceptics who, years previously, had condemned any kind of biological control. Temple Clarke did not live to see his work come to any form of fruition, yet, as the following account demonstrates, his work, which was centred in the Burnett, was among the most important of the entire crusade against prickly pear:

Before the advent of the Commission a noted Queenslander in the person of the late Mr Temple Clarke, single handed, and without practical assistance from the Government of the day, worked silently in the direction of solving the problem of biological means. He imported cochineal insects from America in very small numbers. He allowed nature to take its course, with the result that before many months had passed Mr Clarke had established a fairly healthy insect nursery. Experiments were tried with the insects in many parts of the State, with every promise of success. But strange to relate, officialdom looked with a hostile eye on Mr Clarke's pioneering work. In fact the Commission of Enquiry into the best methods of destroying the pear strongly condemned Mr Clarke and his methods, and had it not been for certain politicians, among the number being Mr B.H. Corser, standing solidly behind Mr Clarke, the latter gentleman would have had even a worse spin. Gradually official prejudice was conquered, with the result that today the most effective and decidedly economic method known for the destruction of the pear are the very insects that Mr Clarke

liberated throughout portions of the State. It was at Mr Corser's farm at Wetheron, some three years ago, that Mr Clarke liberated six insects, known as the Chico. How those half-a-dozen little Americans multiplied into millions ... is well known history. Later came another variety, named the Texas, and supplied by the Prickly Pear Commission. It was claimed Texas was more efficacious than Chico. If that be so, Texas is a welcome addition to the ranks of pear fighters ... (On the Burnett) are to be seen splendid illustrations of what these tiny insects are doing, and the wonder is that the services of cochineal insects are not more largely availed of by the battlers against the pear ... When the late Temple Clarke was in the flesh, his pioneering work was recognised by a very few, but we feel the value of his single-handed fight, against heavy odds, will be made plain to Australia before many years have past. A public benefactor has evidently crossed to the Great Beyond unwept and unsung.⁴⁵

Another person who was to enjoy considerable public exposure during the prickly pear epidemic was a Maryborough man named J.W. Pohlmann, an inventor of some imagination who had already made a name for himself with appliances designed to spray insect pests in orchards and in applying 'emulsified cold tar' to roads.

Realising that the question of pear eradication was one which could utilize his fertile imagination, he set about discovering a poison and a method of application that would be both cheap and effective. The result of his labours was a potent mixture of arsenic and sugar. The use of sugar in his poison was also receiving considerable support from sugar-cane farmers who saw that if the poison worked, and hundreds of thousands of gallons of poison were produced, it would give a considerable boost to the sugar market which was then suffering from record over-production. The Prickly Pear Commission heard of Pohlmann's successes and decided to compare his poison with the poison being manufactured in ever increasing quantities by O.C. Roberts. The tests were positive and Pohlmann's poison achieved up to a ninety-eight per cent kill-rate.⁴⁶

So positive were these results that Pohlmann called a public meeting at Maryborough to form a company, the Pohlmann Pear Spray Company.⁴⁷

In August 1926 the Prickly Pear Land Commission released its second report to parliament. The commission revealed that approximately one million moderately sized plants were being poisoned in the state every day, which, at approximately sixty plants per acre, meant that some fourteen thousand acres were being cleared daily. Additionally, seventeen thousand cases of cochineal insects had been released in dense pear regions and that within twelve months, under favourable conditions, these insects were expected to have multiplied into the millions. Other insects and fungi diseases were also being investigated as a method of controlling the pear. The report pointed out that the cochineal insect alone was not the answer to the pear problem because colonies of insects frequently died out.⁴⁸

Another poison to come on the market was released under the trade name of S.O.S., Save Our Soil Prickly Pear Poison. It was a non-corrosive poison that could be delivered in petrol or kerosene tins to the farms and was, 'non-injurious to clothing or boots and can be sold very cheaply to the man on the land.' The mixture was marketed by Prickly Pear Poisons Ltd. with T.J. Ley, M.H.R. as chairman of directors. So promising was the product that a press report of 1927 claimed: '... Strangely enough the news of the tests seems to have travelled like wildfire throughout the pear areas ... and to such an extent that the company has been forced to double its output of its factory in order to cope with the demands.'⁴⁹

However, those businessmen, entrepreneurs, chemists and inventors who believed that they could make considerable amounts of money from pear eradication were in for a startling surprise. In July 1927 F.D. Power, then acting chairman of the commission, told the press that the commission was about to release a new kind of insect, an imported grub named *Cactoblastis* that had proved extremely destructive to pear during tests carried out on the plant. Power told a reporter: '(The *Cactoblastis* is) ... a caterpillar of great feeding capacity, and this, we believe, will blast any hopes the cactus may retain of surviving the other (controls) ... The moth of this caterpillar lays many thousands of eggs, and there is no doubt from the investigations that have been made that this insect will exercise wonderful control over the pear.'⁵⁰



Cages of hatched Cactoblastis, circa 1926.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 152662

Experiments on the *Cactoblastis* insect started in 1925 when the experimental station at Sherwood imported approximately three thousand eggs. By the following year almost four hundred million eggs had been bred ready for release. The 1928 annual report of the Prickly Pear Land Commission, tabled in parliament in October that year, was filled with confidence, claiming: 'Prickly pear will not be a serious problem in Queensland in ten years if the little caterpillar named *Cactoblastis Cactorum* continues to progress in the way it has done in the past.'⁵¹

By 1932, following widespread release of the *Cactoblastis* caterpillar, it was evident that at last a solution to the problem had been found. Vast tracts of land, previously useless for farming, were opening up to the selector as the pear gradually disappeared from the landscape. A press account following the final report of the commission, published in October, 1932 stated:

The final report of the Prickly Pear Land Commission tabled in the Legislative Assembly today stated that the closer settlement and the development of huge areas of land once densely infested with prickly pear and abandoned as beyond reclamation was proceeding apace. The report added that eight years ago when the commission started out, not even the most optimistic would have dared to hope that in so comparatively short a time and at a comparatively small expenditure such permanent results would be achieved. In 1923, the prickly pear position in Queensland was regarded as being almost hopeless. Prickly pear was spreading at the rate of 800,000 acres a year. Land was going out of commission and the plight of many settlers was desperate. Since April 1924, when the commission took up work not only had a large portion of the State been saved from pear infestation but even land which was formerly a wilderness of dense pear was now being occupied and developed for closer settlement. As much of this land was of good quality and handy to railways the advantages to the State would be enormous.⁵²

The fight had taken approximately three decades to win, during that time the costs in human labour, in financial ruin and family despair were incalculable, but at last the rich rolling landscapes of the South Burnett and all other parts of the state were free for the settlers to continue with their endeavours to win a decent living from the land.

Notes and Sources
Chapter Ninety-six
The Prickly Pear Menace

1. M/C. 22 December, 1906, p 6.
2. M/C. 6 September, 1912, p 5.
3. M/C. 26 June, 1913, p 5.
4. M/C. 27 June, 1913, p 5.
5. M/C. 10 January, 1913, p 2.
6. Ibid.
7. M/C. 1 August, 1913, p 3.
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9. M/C. 4 September, 1913, p 5.
10. M/C. 23 January, 1914, p 8.
11. M/C. 30 September, 1914, p 3.
12. M/C. 6 October, 1913, p 3.
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14. M/C. 20 January, 1915, p 8.
15. Reproduced in M/C. 6 November, 1915, p 6.
16. M/C. 14 June, 1915, p 5.
17. M/C. 18 April, 1916, p 2.
18. M/C. 31 March, 1915, p 5.
19. M/C. 23 September, 1915, p 8.
20. Reproduced in M/C. 12 May, 1916, p 2.
21. M/C. 19 May, 1916, p 5.
22. M/C. 17 June, 1916, p 8.
23. M/C. 8 August, 1917, p 6.
24. M/C. 20 December, 1918, p 3.
25. M/C. 23 May, 1919, p 3.
26. M/C. 19 April, 1920, p 2.
27. M/C. 27 July, 1920, p 3.
28. M/C. 28 February, 1922, pp 4–5.
29. M/C. 11 September, 1922, p 4.
30. M/C. 19 January, 1923, p 4.
31. M/C. 7 February, 1923, p 5.
32. M/C. 5 April, 1923, p 5.
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34. M/C. 8 February, 1923, p 4.
35. *1923 Queensland Royal Commission on Prickly Pear Report* JOL Papers OM64.018 pp 1–3. See also: M/C. 8 September, 1923, p 9.
36. M/C. 14 March, 1924, p 5.
37. M/C. 1 April, 1924, p 5.
38. M/C. 15 April, 1924, p 5.
39. M/C. 15 May, 1924, p 4.
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41. M/C. 3 July, 1924, p 5.
42. M/C. 14 February, 1925, p 4.
43. M/C. 14 April, 1925, p 5.
44. M/C. 30 July, 1925, p 5. See also: *First Annual Report of the Prickly Pear Land Commission*, being the report for the year ending 30 June, 1925. JOL OM64.018 pp 10–12.
45. M/C. 2 February, 1926, p 6.
46. M/C. 23 February, 1926, p 4.
47. M/C. 19 July, 1926, p 8.
48. M/C. 5 August, 1926, p 5.
49. M/C. 12 February, 1927, p 14.
50. M/C. 9 July, 1927, p 14.
51. M/C. 17 October, 1928, p 10.
52. M/C. 27 October, 1932, p 5.

The Dairy Industry, Establishing the First Factories

To the early selectors of the South Burnett there were many ways in which they could make money — and just as many ways to lose it again. The South Burnett during its formative years was a difficult region in which to survive financially; prior to the coming of the railways it was sufficiently isolated from the markets at Brisbane and Maryborough and many of the major trading ports were so far away that transporting goods to them was prohibitively expensive and time-consuming. Early selectors attempted a wide diversity of crops, maize, potatoes, pumpkins, cotton, arrowroot, and many others, some achieved modest successes while others failed — for a wide variety of reasons — including climate, the lack of transportation, insufficient work-force, extensive droughts and large numbers of insect and animal pests, but the one industry that was to be established on the South Burnett, the one industry that would bring the region's economy from the depressing stagnation of those formative years to a solid regional prosperity, was the dairy industry.

The following nine chapters will chronicle in detail the growth and decline of dairying in the South Burnett, and examine the personalities involved, the rise of the butter factories, the dairy politics necessary for their continued operation and the ultimate reasons why the industry finally declined to the level we see today.

The first dairy cows to be imported into what later became known as Queensland were brought to the Moreton Bay penal settlement in 1824 in order to provide milk for the patients at the settlement's hospital — and presumably also for the officers of the military corps. Commercial dairying began at the Nundah German settlement in 1844 when members of that settlement began selling their hand-churned butter to Brisbane residents. By the end of that year there were two small dairies producing milk and butter for Brisbane, one was situated in George Street, the other in Creek Street. The success of these enterprises soon saw other dairymen producing butter, milk and cheese, primarily for the Brisbane market.¹

Yet these were only small scale operations, the genesis of the dairy industry in Queensland really began following a government incentive in the 1880s. Up until that time there had been no real attempt to begin a large scale industry in the colony. In 1888 the secretary for public lands, Maurice Hume Black (who was also the inventor of the steam-driven sheep washer), instructed a man named Peter Mclean to investigate the operations of travelling dairies that were then operating in Victoria. The Victorian operations were so successful that a dairy plant was purchased and brought to Queensland by Mr Baron Jones who had previously been working as an assistant with the dairy exhibit at the International Exhibition. The equipment purchased by the Queensland government included various steam turbine cream separators, a cream tester, a pasteuriser, a cream cooler, a concussion churn, a butter worker, cheese vats, a salting and cooling sink and some cheese presses, all this equipment was crammed into a railway wagon. Local agricultural societies were prompted to nominate students for the programme and farmers were asked to supply milk for the travelling dairy.

The first travelling dairy (there were ultimately two of them) commenced operations at Tallebudgera on 15 April, 1889. It thereafter moved successively to a number of other Queensland centres demonstrating the feasibility of butter and cheese production and, in the process, carrying out a programme of training. The farmers who provided the milk and cream were allowed to retain the resulting butter and cheese products.

From its very inception it was clear that the dairy industry had a bright future, those who tested the butters and cheeses produced in the travelling dairy were both surprised and delighted

to find that the quality of the products was equal to the best of butters and cheeses then being imported from New Zealand. In September 1890 the travelling dairy came to the Wide Bay/Burnett region, visiting Gympie, Tiaro, Maryborough, Yengarie, Pialba, Miva, Alpha, Gunalda and Kilkivan where other highly successful tests were carried out. The travelling dairies were in operation throughout the state for varying periods, for three years two plants were in operation, and for seven years one plant was constantly in the field.

The project was extremely successful and throughout the colony there was added speculation concerning the potential of a large dairy industry becoming established. The first cheese factory was constructed at Yangan, near Warwick on the Darling Downs, in 1893, and the quality of its cheese was so good that it soon replaced the imported New Zealand cheese so popular in the colony at that time. Soon afterwards a number of proprietary cheese factories were constructed, and the first butter factory was built at Allora, also near Warwick, in 1895. The first foreign consignment of butter took place in 1895 when 195 boxes were sent to London. The progress of the dairy industry has relied largely on the availability of transport and only factories within easy reach of such transport could be economically viable. Early roads into the interior were usually of inferior quality, mere bush tracks, and the method of transport was by wagon or dray. Roads were frequently constructed or carved out of the bush to service mining communities, and when these mining ventures failed, as many did, the roads fell into disuse. Road transport and railways were vital to the growth of the dairy industry. Once these were in place and as closer settlement was under way, the industry could only grow rapidly.²

Thereafter the dairy industry suddenly grew as more proprietary factories were put into operation, the dairy farmers supplying first milk in bulk to the railways and later, after the introduction of hand separators, taking only the cream to the railway sheds and reserving the skim milk for the raising of pigs.³

Ever since closer settlement and, in fact, prior to closer settlement, there has been a dairying industry, of sorts, on the South Burnett. It existed under various guises, in some instances it was a small part of the operations of individual stations which supplied milk to various local farmers or villagers, and at others it existed on a somewhat larger scale and was responsible for the sale of milk in early townships such as Nanango and Kilkivan. However, by later standards these early attempts at dairying were particularly modest, and no real attempt to expand the industry on a large scale was made until the rail was established to connect producers with distant markets, and until the farmers themselves realised that the only economical way of creating such an industry was to form cooperatives in order to pay for the construction of butter factories.

One of the earliest known pioneers of the dairying industry on the South Burnett was Charles A. Hess. His experiences relative to the dairy industry were recorded in an account written in 1930 which claimed:

Fired with a wholesome ambition to wrestle with, and conquer the trials inseparable from pioneering life, Mr Hess, now one of the oldest and most esteemed residents of the town of Wondai, left his home on the Darling Downs and, with five others, took up land at Booie and Charlestown ...

Settlement had not reached Wondai at that time ... After following grazing for some time, Mr Hess occupied himself with dairying. His first herds sprang from stock he imported from the Downs, which he visited at various times ... Mr Hess was prominently associated with what may be claimed to have been the first factory venture in the South Burnett ... Mr W.T. Maddison was the owner of a small cheese factory at Kanuna. When approached by Mr Hess with a view to his transferring the factory to the South Burnett, the cheese-maker agreed to the proposal provided he was afforded the chance of erecting it on freehold land. A fellow settler, Mr W.T. Burton, and Mr Hess subscribed £5 each towards the cost of the land at Kunioon (Barker Creek). In due time the factory was removed to Kunioon, and Messrs Hess and Burton supplied milk for the manufacture.

Evidence of the more trials suffered in those days is furnished by what Mr Hess asserts was the death knell of the cheese manufacturing venture. Native animals inhabited the scrub in hordes and the opossums chewed their way through the 'rubberoid' roof of the factory and destroyed some of Mr Maddison's cheeses. It was that incident that resolved the end of the undertaking.

Having yielded to appeals for the extension of the line, the authorities had the ballast trains pushed further west to Wondai. While the line construction was in progress Mr Hess decided to consign cream to the Tiaro Butter Factory ... On arrival at the Wondai station with a can of cream, Mr Hess was plied by the station-master with the query, 'What have you got there?' His information of the can's contents prompted the assertion that that particular can of cream was the first to be consigned from Wondai or from any centre west of Kilkivan. Continuing his supply to Tiaro, Mr Hess sought and obtained the co-operation first, of Mr J.A. Lee, of *Ridgemere*, and later of that gentleman's brother, Mr Stanley Lee. Whereas in the first place Mr Hess had been obliged to make what he considered too frequent trips to the railway with cream and to obtain returned empties, the co-operation of the Messrs Lee allowed the operation of a system by which each supplier conveyed the cream to the railway in his turn, thus lessening the travelling time of each ... The opportunity of expediting the service and saving the time of each supplier was grasped at a later stage and Mr W. Selby, of Nanango began to ply his van down the line, taking the dairy supplies to the railhead three times per week ...

It was in 1907 that Mr Hess first took up his residence in the present Wondai district. Relinquishing dairying, he established a timber mill in Wondai. Fortunes in the timber hauling and milling fluctuated, and in later years a fire demolished the mill. Mr Hess acquired pasture land in Mondure and is conducting dairying there at the present time. Developing an illness while connected with sawmilling, Mr Hess has not actively engaged in farming for some years. For some time now he has conducted a commission agency and auctioneering business, though he now lives a semi-retired life.

For 14 years he has occupied a seat on the local authority. He was one of the moving spirits in the formation of the A.P. and I. Society and the Race Club. Mr Hess has for a number of years been one of the State School parents' committee, of which he now is chairman. The Wondai Town Band now claims him as president. He has also taken an active part in the discussions of the Chamber of Commerce, he was president of that body last year, (1929).⁴

As we have seen from this early report, one of the first attempts to provide the South Burnett with a considerable dairy industry was made in the Nanango region by a man named W.T. Maddison (also reported as Maddson). He opened a modest cheese factory in Nanango during the early part of the century but it was doomed to failure and had closed by March 1902, after which Mr Maddison attempted to open another factory at Booie. The press reported:

I am sorry to have to state that the cheese factories started at Nanango and Booie by Mr Maddson (sic) have had to shut down. This is a great loss to the district, as a good few farmers bought cows with the full intention of supplying a good quantity of milk to the factories when there was enough feed for them. The reason of the factory in Nanango stopping is well known, there having been some dispute and misunderstanding between the owner of it and the milk suppliers, which ended in a law suit, Mr Maddson suing for compensation for non-supply of milk, but losing the case. He then opened a factory at Booie with every prospect of success, and a fairly good supply of milk was forthcoming, with every probability of an increase in the quantity, but something went wrong very suddenly, and the factory discontinued operations, temporarily at all events, much to the surprise of the residents. Whether it was the insufficiency of the milk supply, or the condition of the cheese market, or some other cause, I am unable to say; but anyway the closing down was a blow to the Booie people, and it is a regrettable thing in many ways. There is some talk of an attempt being made by the farmers themselves to start a co-operative factory, and I am sure it would be the very thing if taken in hand properly; but I don't think there is much hope of their co-operating in a hearty manner and sticking together for long. As a farmer myself, I know that it is hard to get them to pull together. They will agree with one while he is talking to them, but when it comes to the pocket test and to fully trusting each other — which is necessary in any co-operative enterprise — they are generally very much off. In New South Wales, Victoria, and New Zealand, co-operative dairying and cheese and butter making has been a great success, all the profits — bar the cost of machinery and management going straight into the farmer's pocket, instead of the middleman's.⁵

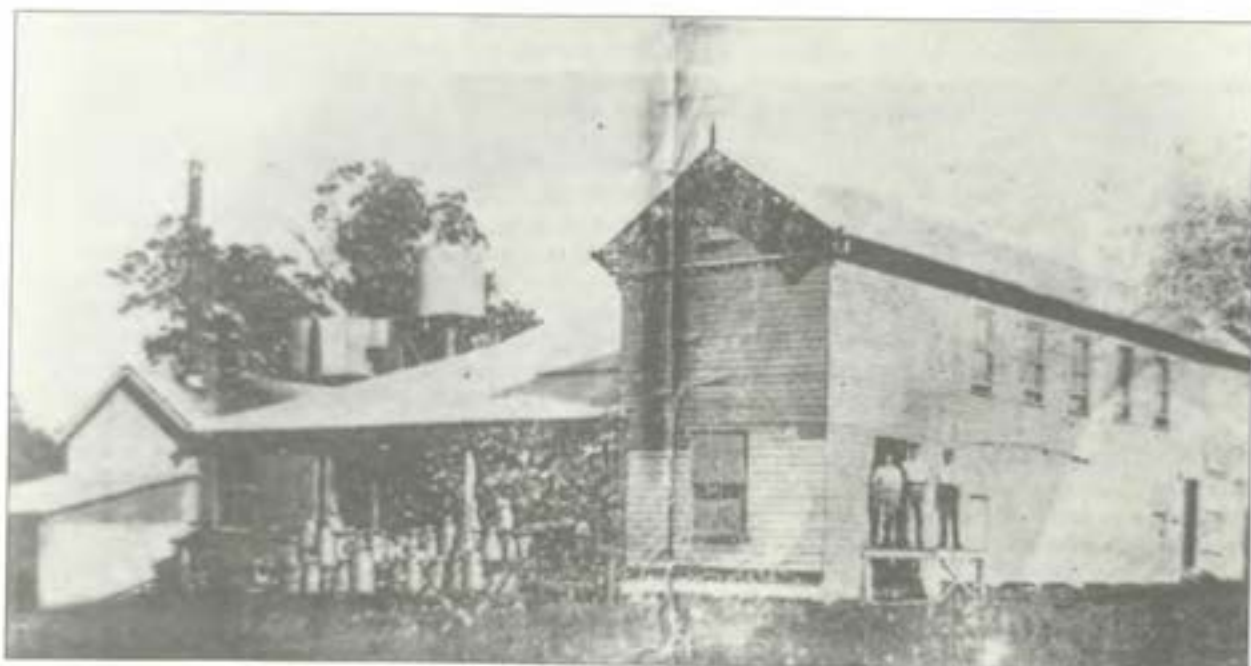
In March the following year a meeting was held at Taabinga Village during which the possibilities of forming a co-operative butter factory were discussed. It was pointed out during that meeting that the construction and operation of such a factory would be a difficult and financially perilous enterprise, especially as the drought had caused such hardship in the

community. Despite these warnings, members of the meeting formed a committee to investigate the possibilities — and particularly to establish the likely supply of cream to such a factory.⁶ Yet the subsequent press report of the meeting was disappointing: 'Though a large and representative meeting was held last Saturday at Taabinga Village to discuss the matter of a butter factory for the district, and it was carried at the meeting that a factory was desirable, the farmers and others throughout the district are very indifferent in the matter, and it will be some time, I think, before a factory will get started.'⁷

At another meeting held on 1 June, 1904, it was revealed that a large, unnamed Brisbane company had already given an indication that it was preparing to construct a butter and bacon factory at the 56 mile peg after the rail to that peg, the future site of Kingaroy, had been completed, completion was expected within a few months. Despite this, interested persons at the June meeting unanimously passed a resolution that a co-operative butter factory should be established at Nanango.⁸

Over the following eighteen months plans to establish the factory moved slowly ahead and the dairy industry grew ponderously. The rail by this time had been completed to Wondai and Kingaroy and vans were weekly running varying quantities of cream to both of those centres. In March 1906 the press claimed: '... everything points to the Nanango butter factory making a start just as the return of the good seasons are prophesied. I hear the factory will be in working order by the end of March, and judging from the quantity of cream leaving by Mr Selby's vans for Wondai and Mr C. Millis's for Kingaroy, it will have plenty of material to deal with.'⁹

The location of the Nanango Dairy Co-operative Association factory, on the Cressley side of the small township, also came in for some scathing criticism. Many of the cream producers claimed that the factory should have been built on the opposite side of town. A 1906 report claimed: 'These people contend that by the choice of the site on the Cressley side of the township that it not only places the factory in flat boggy ground, but that on that side it serves only about a dozen cream producers, whereas if it had been put on their side of town it would have occupied high and dry ground and served 300 or 400 people, all of whom will now be compelled to cart their cream across a boggy black soil flat in wet weather. This flat is certainly no joke at times, as the log traffic is heavy and continuous over it, and a considerable detour will be necessary in order to avoid bad bogging or total disappearance. In addition to the sounder site they contend that a good deal of expense could have been avoided as land of Mr Youngman's could have been bought at about £4 10 shillings per acre whereas £10 per acre was paid for that purchased at the other side.'¹⁰



The first Nanango butter factory established in 1905. Enlarged to a double storey in 1907. Destroyed by fire in October 1918. Rebuilt and re-opened 15 December, 1919.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives

In 1913 the manager and secretary of the factory was Walter Draney, however, Draney was later charged with having stolen several sums of money during his term as manager, and was brought before the magistrate, Mr P.M. Knyvett, at the Nanango Police Court in March, 1913. The crimes had been discovered following an audit of the company's finances and it was revealed that several cheques had been cashed by Draney but the money had not been deposited into the company's accounts. Draney, on being questioned by the auditor stated: 'There is no need to beat about the bush, I banked those cheques but took the money, I might as well make a clean breast of it.'¹¹ Several witnesses were called to his trial, including Francis Albert Loosemoore, a storekeeper of Blackbutt and Charles Skuse, a store manager of Yarraman, both testified that they had sent cheques to the factory in payment of butter but had received no receipts. Draney pleaded guilty to having stolen a total of £156/7/8d and was committed to the Brisbane District Court for sentencing.¹²

An overview of the history of the factory, published in 1934 stated:

Nanango Dairy Co-operative Association was awarded first prize for butter at the Maryborough show in June 1906 ... This marked the beginning of butter manufacture at this centre, for the local butter factory had commenced operations only a few weeks previously.

In September 1903 a movement was afoot at Nanango to establish a flour mill at this centre. Meetings were held, an organisation formed, shareholders registered with this end in view. But before the actual erection of this mill, it was realised that the butter industry — then in its infancy — was taking over a great part of the areas previously devoted to the beef, wool, and flour industries, and a more urgent need would be a butter factory, and the local farmers would shortly demand the erection of same. The question arose, could this district support both industries, or would the butter industry completely occupy the situation. The directors of the proposed flour mill decided to wind the company up, and join the association working for the erection of the butter factory. That this step was a wise one is evidenced today, when wheat is grown only for cow fodder and the local butter factory manufactures £517,166 worth of butter over a five years' period.

In 1903, four farmers of the Boovie district (Messrs J.A. Lee, Charles Hess, F. Birch, and James Birch), were carting their cream to Wondai for dispatch to the Silverwood Dairy company, Gympie. In December of the same year Mr W. Selby started a cream van running three trips a week to Wondai and had at the start six customers ...

In April, 1904, a public meeting was called to establish a butter factory in Nanango, as some farmers were supplying cream to the value of £10, £15, £20 a month to outside creameries. The meeting decided to proceed with arrangements for the erection of a factory at Nanango. A later meeting in June of the same year arranged matters for the formation of a co-operative company. Those present were Messrs J. Millis (Chair), M.J. Collins, J.J. Muller, J.H. Sigley, A. Becker, W.A. Lewis, J. Green, J. Stewart, C.G. Gordon, W. Selby, C. Grey, H. Langan, M. Muhling, T.G. McNamara, J.I. Markwell, A.H. Burgess, J. Darley, and others. Messrs Selby, Sigley, Burgess, Collins, McNamara were appointed a committee to make arrangements to form the company, the capital of which was fixed at £2500 in one pound shares. Mr Sigley was appointed secretary. In July the prospectus of the company was issued with the condition that all suppliers must become shareholders. In September of the same year it was decided to buy a piece of land (present site) and test for water. The first general meeting of shareholders of the Nanango Dairy Co-operative Company was held in April 1905.

The first directors were Messrs P.J. Macnamara (chair) W. Selby, J. Millis, J.E. Goodger, and T.G. McNamara ... tenders were called for the erection of a building for a factory ... The tender of Messrs Waugh and Josephson £920 was accepted ...

Mr K.H. Melver was appointed foreman of works ...

In February, 1906, the first annual meeting was held at the Palace Hotel when the Directors' report and balance sheet were presented. Mr W.D. Forbes was appointed manager his duties embracing the work of butter maker, tester, and secretary. It was stated that 1565 shares had been allotted to 152 shareholders, and that 115 shares were fully paid up. Messrs P.J. Macnamara, W. Selby, J. Millis and T.G. McNamara were re-elected and Mr C. Hess was elected to the vacant seat on the directorate without opposition.

In April 1906, operations started in the butter factory, and it was visited the day following the opening by Mr Thallon, Commissioner for Railways, and Mr (Henry Plantagenet) Somerset, M.L.A. The visitors were shown over the factory by the manager (W.D. Forbes).

On 9 April, 1906, the first consignment of Nanango butter was railed from Kingaroy and sent on to London, and it was in June of the same year that this factory was awarded its first prize for butter at the Maryborough show.

In July, 1907, the Directors decided to enlarge the factory and install extra machinery to cope with increasing supplies ...

In February, 1914, Mr M. Roach was elected a director. In September of the same year the company gave 52 boxes of butter valued at £120 to the Patriotic Fund.

Mr C. Scott was appointed manager and secretary ...

In October 1918, the Nanango butter factory was destroyed by fire, being struck by lightning. The new plant began operations on the 15th December, 1919. Mr C. Scott resigned from the managership to enter business and Mr F.W. Denny was appointed to the vacancy.

The factory was again destroyed by fire on October 13, 1926. While another factory was being built Nanango cream was treated at cost by the Murgon Company. The new factory was opened on 21st October the following year at a cost of about £15,800. Michael Joseph Kirwan, Minister for Works, performed the official opening. Mr J.T. Mulcahy was Chairman of Directors and Mr P.A. L'Estrange manager and secretary. The *News* of 1927 stated that the new factory is a handsome building situated adjacent to the post office, shire hall, Government offices, and the railway station. It was also mentioned that the building was practically fire-proof being made of ferro-concrete, and the plant being capable of manufacturing 50 tons of butter a week.¹³



The destruction of the Nanango butter factory, October, 1918.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society.

The factory received supplies from a wide variety of areas, including Yarraman and Upper Yarraman. One of the early selectors to supply cream to Nanango from the Upper Yarraman region was James Wyvill, his son, Charles Frederick Wyvill, was also one of the first settlers of that area.¹⁴

Over the following years the factory grew steadily — as did the dairy industry — the growth a direct reflection of the coming of the railways. By 1925 the factory had achieved a long list of successes, including the championship, for the third year in succession at the Maryborough show. Other wins were made at Toowoomba, Bundaberg, Rockhampton and Brisbane. The board of directors at that time included the chairman, M. Roach, J. Mulcahy, G. Chaseling, J. Kidd, F. Bowman, A.G. Hams, W. Carter and P. Caffery. Mr G. Newton was secretary and manager and the position of assistant clerk was held by Miss M. Muller.¹⁵

In 1925 a report of the operations of the factory claimed:

The Nanango Dairy Co-operative Association has a name for high grade, butter second to none in Queensland. Established in 1905, the company has made rapid strides during the last fifteen years. Quality has been the slogan of the company, and today, Nanango butter is a household word among the buyers and agents. Only two per cent of its output has been graded below choice of first, which is a record for the State, and needless to say the company is very proud of its achievements in this direction. Over 300 suppliers are sending cream to the factory at present, and for the four months ending April of this year 315 tons of butter were manufactured and £29,612 paid away to suppliers. When this total is compared with the output of 328 tons for the year 1923, and the output of 505 tons in 1924, the improvement in the seasons and the progress of the factory's operations can at once be gauged. The factory at present is capable of turning out 100 tons a week. At the beginning of the year this amount was nearly reached, and in order to cope with the expected increase this season the management has decided to install additional pasteurising appliances and cream vats for the summer months. Every effort is made to have the cream arrive at the factory in good condition, and to this end a fleet of motor lorries is busily engaged transporting the cream from farm to factory. This method of delivery eliminates delay, and ensures a quicker transportation, and, as some of the centres are 30 miles distant, the quick delivery contributes in no small measure to the success achieved.¹⁶



Nanango's second butter factory, opened 15 December, 1919, destroyed by fire 13 October, 1926, rebuilt and reopened 21 October, 1927.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

The destruction by fire of the factory in October 1926 was a particularly heavy blow to the producers and shareholders. The fire began in the building at around 3.30 a.m. on the morning of Wednesday 13 October, only the factory records, some office books and a few cream cans were saved. The damage bill was approximately £20,000, although the company was insured for around £15,000. With the loss of their factory many producers were forced to send their cream to the new factory at Kingaroy. Only a few weeks previously the Esk butter factory had also been destroyed by fire.¹⁷

In 1942 a new cheese factory came into existence at Nanango, a factory that was to supply cheese for the large British market, especially during that time of war. The factory was owned and operated by the Nanango Co-operative Dairy Association, its first manager was Mr C.H. Warnick. In January that year the *Nanango News* stated:

The advent of 1942 saw the establishment of a new industry in Nanango. On New Year's Day the first batch of cheese was made at the new factory which was built in order to assist the British Empire to feed the men who are fighting strenuous battles in the various theatres of the world war.

Although Britain asked the butter factories of Australia in general and Queensland in particular to turn their attention to the manufacture of good quality cheeses instead of second grade butter which was unsaleable in that country and could not be sent to the fighting men in the hotter climates, Nanango Dairy Co-operative Association Ltd. has the honour of being amongst the first to build a cheese factory. The cost of the building, cans and equipment will run into about £4000. On the first day the receipts of milk totalled 708 gallons and this was made into 700lbs of cheese.¹⁸



The second factory fire at Nanango, 13 October, 1926.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives, Neil Collins' collection.

Kingaroy

Like other regional centres on the South Burnett the dairy industry at Kingaroy was started in a small way. The first recognition that the dairy industry might have a future in the Kingaroy region came in 1903 when F.C. Petersen built a cart with which he offered to transport cream from Kingaroy to the rail head at Murgon, the price was 6d per can. James Harris drove the cart on that first historic occasion, however, there were only four cream cans and none of these was full. Upon his return to Kingaroy Harris resigned from the position and it was taken over by Harry Petersen. By the time the railways arrived at Kingaroy Petersen was running a four-horse double-decked wagon with an average of sixty cans per load. Harry Petersen was born in Germany, although his parents were from Sweden, his father worked at a German flour mill. Harry Petersen and his family travelled to Australia in 1881, landing at Brisbane. They spent three months at Marburg prior to moving to Laidley where they engaged in farming. After eleven years at Laidley they moved to the South Burnett selecting land at Coolabunia which they named *Hopevale*. After his marriage Petersen took up farming at Edenvale for several years and later worked as a carpenter. He died at his home in Kingaroy on Friday 24 July, 1936, and was interred at the Taabinga cemetery.¹⁹

With the clearing of the lands and the growth of imported grasses, the dairy industry on the South Burnett really began to burgeon. Within two years of the opening of the railway ten tons of cream were being sent to Maryborough every week and it soon became evident that a butter factory was needed for Kingaroy.

The Kingaroy butter factory was established in 1907, by the Maryborough parent company, the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Company, which had commenced operations at Maryborough in 1901 and was producing butter and ice by February that year. To have a full understanding of the operations of the subsequent factories constructed in the South Burnett by this parent company at Maryborough, it is necessary to give a brief outline of the history of the Maryborough Dairy Association. A report of 1930 provides this outline claiming:

The movement for the formation of the (Maryborough Dairy Association) company was initiated by the committee of the Wide Bay and Burnett Pastoral and Agricultural Society early in the year 1898, when a meeting was called and held at the Oddfellows Hall for the

purpose of considering the question of forming a co-operative dairy company and erecting a butter factory at Maryborough. At this meeting there was a good attendance of dairymen from the surrounding districts and of the business men of the town. The question was discussed in all the hearings, and a resolution was adopted that steps be taken to float a company. Arrangements were made for a canvass to be made for shares.

Formation of the company followed the issue of a prospectus which set out the purpose of the company as follows: 'To establish a butter, cheese, and bacon factory at Maryborough with subsidiary creameries in districts where sufficient milk or cream can be obtained to successfully work the same; and to carry on the business of general dealers in milk, cheese, bacon, ice and fresh food, or in any one or more of such products, as the directors may from time to time decide ...'

Capital was sought to the extent of £4000 in shares of £1 each, the first issue to comprise 2000 shares and the second issue of 200 additional shares to serve the purpose of 'erecting creameries, to be subscribed by suppliers of milk or by others ...'

When the company commenced operations the following board of directors functioned: Messrs James F. Wood (chairman), John Edward Dean, W. Mitchell, J. Mahoney and P. Biddles.

Historical information regarding the first butter production enterprise in the district was contained in the first half yearly report which, inter alia, contained the following paragraphs: '... we came to the conclusion that if a site could be obtained from the Government it would give the company more capital with which to carry on the business. After making inquiries, we have been successful in securing a most eligible position on the railway reserve with a frontage to Kent street ... The City Council intervened in the interests of the civic health, and the board eventually decided to purchase another site.'

During the latter part of 1900, however, the factory was erected at a cost of £839/13/6, which amount was paid to the contractor, and the plant was put into operation without unnecessary delay ... Mr G.P. Jenkins was appointed manager of the factory when it started manufacturing. Mr E.F. Youngman succeeded Mr Jenkins, and the former resigned his position in December 1902. During the latter part of 1903 Mr Nielsen became manager, George Willey had received appointment as secretary to the company. At the half-yearly meeting on August 14, 1902, Mr J.E. Noakes was appointed chairman of directors in succession to Mr Wood, who regained the position on August 27, 1903.²⁰



The first branch of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association was opened, at Kingaroy on 1 February, 1907, under the management of Mr T.H. Cornish. Prior to that, cream was railed from Kingaroy, to the company's butter factory, at Maryborough.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Meiers' collection

The establishment of the Kingaroy factory was recorded in the same report which claimed:

In 1905 the first step to establish a factory at Kingaroy was taken. The proposal emanated from Kingaroy dairymen, a deputation of whom waited on the directors and submitted proposals for the erection of a factory at that township. A resolution adopted at the board's half-yearly meeting on February 28, 1906, favoured the proposals, and the directors entered into an agreement with the residents of Kingaroy and surrounding districts for the building of the required factory. Applications were received from the dairymen and others in the Kingaroy district for 1525 shares which were allotted. Two of the directors and the secretary proceeded to Kingaroy in June and selected a suitable site, situated on the railway line a quarter of a mile from the township. The owner, Mr Tom Reen, generously donated one acre as a factory site and 19 acres more were purchased at a satisfactory price. The tender of Messrs Walkers Ltd. to supply the whole of the machinery and working plant (with a capacity of ten tons refrigeration) for the sum of £1674 was accepted, building tenders were called.²¹

A general meeting of intending shareholders was held in Carroll's Hall on 15 March, 1906. Those present included George Willey, the secretary of the Maryborough firm and F.C. Petersen. Willey explained that the cream accounts would be paid monthly to the suppliers and that shareholders who were not themselves cream suppliers would have to sell their shares to the company at some time in the future so that the dairying shareholders could be guaranteed to receive the maximum amount of profit. At that meeting a large number of shares were allotted.²²

Over the following months the construction of the factory went slowly ahead, some of the delays caused through poor weather. Shareholders planned to have the factory opened by November that year, but the problems continued and the delays lengthened. By October 1906 a 12,000 gallon well had been excavated and was ready for concreting, trenches had been dug and were ready for the concrete foundations to be poured. The framework for the building was ready to set in place and all the dressed timber had been completed and was stacked at the mill. The broken stone, gravel and sand was in place ready for the bricklayers, the charcoal for the cool room had been burnt and was ready for use, the railway siding to the factory was under construction, and the contractor, a carpenter with the somewhat symbolic name of George Wood, was reportedly: '... quite satisfied with the progress he has made.'²³

However, the shareholders were far from satisfied. In March 1907 the *Kingaroy Herald* published a scathing report severely criticising the company for a number of reasons, particularly over the delay in obtaining the necessary machinery. The report claimed:

The delay that has taken place in getting the Kingaroy Butter Factory to work is a matter of serious concern to suppliers in this district, and of more considerable importance to the shareholders ... Last year a promise was given that the factory would be in working order by November. It was reasonable to accept, without irritation, a delay until the end of December, but now it is March, and day after day goes by without the contractors being able to arrive at any decision as to when the machinery will be ready. The business has reached a stage when we think it is due to the shareholders that full and unequivocal explanations should be made, and they should be told whether or not the machinery contract was given without competition, without time limit or penalty ... Immediate results of the vexatious delay are that several intending suppliers who bid fair to furnish a very considerable amount of cream from Kunioon have been compelled to contract with the Crow's Nest Factory.²⁴

Despite these delays the factory was opened soon afterwards under the management of Mr T.H. Cornish.²⁵

From the very beginning of its operations the Kingaroy factory, owned by the Maryborough parent company, was a sound business proposition. By 1913 the twenty-seventh half-yearly report of the parent company in Maryborough revealed that 465,887 lbs of butter had been manufactured there during the preceding six months. This was almost twice the amount of butter produced at Maryborough and almost 100,000 lbs more than the factory at Biggenden, also owned by the Maryborough group. During that half year the company had produced a total of more than 417 tons of butter from its various factories and 5453 boxes of butter had been shipped to the London market.²⁶

Indeed, this shipping of butter to London became something of a contentious issue in 1913. During a meeting of shareholders of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Company late that year it was revealed that almost all the butter from the country factories, especially Kingaroy, was being sent to the London market while the butter from the Maryborough factory was being sold locally — at far better prices. This showed on the balance sheets that the country factories, Biggenden and Kingaroy, were not as profitable as its city counterpart. Company directors argued that the butter from Kingaroy was tainted with weed and from the animals drinking foul water, whereas the milk processed at the Maryborough factory came from country closer to the coast where the water was purer and where there was no weed to taint the milk. The news created something of a furore within the company and shareholders called for an independent evaluation of the problem. Asked why the producers should be shipping tainted butter to the overseas markets and why those markets had not complained, a Maryborough director stated: '... Ah that is just the explanation. The fact is that when the scrub (South Burnett) cream butter goes into cold storage for the time it does during the period of the voyage and before, the freezing eliminates all the undesirable flavours and it is much better butter in London than in Queensland.'²⁷

These criticisms were published in the *Kingaroy Herald* and the *Maryborough Chronicle* and company directors evidently paid attention to the complaint. By February the following year certain improvements had been made at the Kingaroy factory, a new bore had been sunk to supply the factory with fresher cleaner water and these improvements had resulted in: 'a marked improvement (of butter grading) since the commencement of the year.'²⁸

Murgon

Meanwhile, with an aggressive growth rate of the dairy industry following the arrival of the rail system on the South Burnett, the entire industry went into a state of flux. The management of the butter factory at Tiaro, an important factory that had long received supplies from places such as Kilkivan and Murgon, began to realise that if they were not prepared to move their operation from Tiaro to somewhere on the South Burnett — and preferably Murgon, then the business could wither and die.

The Tiaro Co-operative was formed in 1908 with Mr R. Lipsett as its chairman, Lipsett was replaced in 1911 by J.T. Lawrence who in turn was replaced in 1912 by F.S. Schollick. The factory was a relatively small one, it had initially only forty-one suppliers.

A meeting to discuss these problems of location and supply was held at the Protestant Hall, Tiaro on 1 August, 1912. The meeting was chaired by Mr F.S. Schollick, the chairman of directors. Also present were a number of directors and a considerable representation of shareholders. It was a somewhat bitter and acrimonious meeting, many of the shareholders and some of the directors forcefully stating that there was no need to move the factory. Yet it was pointed out that at that time eighty-four per cent of its supplies of cream were coming from the South Burnett, primarily the Kilkivan, Goomeri and Murgon districts, and that if something were not done quickly much of these badly needed supplies would be re-directed to other factories, especially the relatively new factory at Kingaroy. The people of the Murgon district were also heavy investors in the Tiaro factory, up until that meeting some 1700 shares had been purchased by Murgon people and it was expected that within a short space of time this share-holding would be increased to some 4000 shares. One of the proponents of the move to Murgon stated: 'The facts of the case are these. At present you are drawing the bulk of your supplies from down the line between Miva and Murgon. From observation I should say the main two sources of supply are the districts for which Goomeri and Murgon are the centres ... Murgon is a splendid site for a factory, it has permanent water admirably adapted for butter making as per particulars of analysis published in the *Agricultural Journal* in the year 1906.'²⁹

After several hours of debate it was moved that the factory be relocated to Murgon, voting then took place, 236 voted for the move and 53 against, with one informal. One shareholder, Mr J. Forbes, gave formal notice that he would seek an injunction to prevent the directors from moving the factory.³⁰ Despite this the directors moved quickly and by 21 August tenders had been invited for the removal of the factory to Murgon.³¹

A press report of the events, published in October 1912, claimed:

We have been informed, on the best of authority, that a crisis has been reached in the affairs of the Tiaro Co-operative Dairy Co. Ltd., when those shareholders who wish the factory to remain at Tiaro must act promptly 'or forever hold their peace.' It will be remembered that some time ago it was resolved, at an extraordinary general meeting of shareholders of the Company, that the factory should be shifted to Murgon. That resolution was carried by the recently added shareholders from the Murgon end, the Tiaro shareholders voting solidly against it. What was more, they questioned the legality of the motion, and spoke of securing an injunction to prevent its being given effect to; and after the annual general meeting, at which time no tender for removal had been accepted, Mr J. Forbes stated that an injunction would be applied for directly the first practical step towards the removal of the factory itself was taken. That time has apparently now come, for Mr George Wood, who built the Kingaroy factory, has had his tender accepted for the erection of a factory at Murgon and the removal of the Tiaro factory, and has actually commenced to lay the foundations of the Murgon structure, having about fifteen men employed on the job ...

It further appears that Mr E. Gilchrist has resigned from the directorate of the factory and that the vacancy will in all probability be filled by a gentleman of the Murgon district, which thus has a preponderating influence in the business and shares, and an entire control of the directorate of the company.³²

The injunction to have the factory move prevented was later heard in court and refused, although it was stipulated that the registered office of the company could not be moved without the approval of the majority of the shareholders. A special meeting of shareholders was called in January the following year (1913) with the object of obtaining this approval. Once again the meeting was characterized by acrimonious debate but the majority finally voted to have the office moved to Murgon.³³



South Burnett Co-op Dairy Association, 1913.

Source — Bill Roberts' collection.

The Murgon butter factory was opened by the minister for agriculture, John White, in September 1913. For the opening ceremony significant numbers of parliamentarians journeyed to Murgon and were welcomed at the factory by the company directors. It was something of a gala day for the still embryonic township of Murgon, the press reporting:

September 15. Today was a farmers' day outing. From early morning a continuous stream of vehicles, buggies and German wagons, with their living freight of happy and healthy humanity, passed through the town to the scene of the day's festivities, the Murgon butter factory. With a thin wreath of filmy mist ascending slowly up the pine clad slopes of Boat Mountain, with just a tang in the morning air as a pleasant reminder of departing winter

... By mid-day the largest crowd ever gathered together in Murgon's brief history had assembled. The festivities took the form of a huge basket picnic and the various amusements provided were heartily entered into in characteristic Australian fashion. The grounds adjacent to the factory — which is situated just on the outskirts of town — were effectively decorated with bunting.³⁴

After inspecting the factory and a long round of speeches John White officially declared the factory open. The first manager of the factory was a highly experienced man named P.E.H. Atkinson. The opening was followed by afternoon tea and that evening the parliamentary guests, company directors and other specially invited guests were entertained at a huge banquet at Reilly's Hall.³⁵ A press report giving us a description of the factory at that time claimed:

The factory is situated on the railway on the outskirts of the town adjoining Mr J. McLucas' farm and adjacent to the Recreation Reserve. The building is imposing and constructed on a model which will allow for duplication of the plant, without interfering with the working of the factory, Messrs Waugh and Josephson, of Brisbane and Sydney, are the contractors for the machinery, and Mr (George) Wood the builder. In the butter making room are installed two churns, butter worker, scales, and the usual equipment for treating butter after it leaves the churns. In the butter making department are also installed the temporary vats and cream cooling appliances. The cooling room and refrigerating machinery is up-to-date in every particular. Power is provided by a 16 h.p. compound tandem engine which drives a twin 14 ton compressor ... The factory is large and airy, the floors are of concrete, and the sanitary system perfect.³⁶

On 10 March, 1914, an extraordinary meeting of shareholders was held in Reilly's Hall, Murgon to consider the advisability of changing the name of the company. There were several names submitted, including the South Burnett Dairy Company Ltd., The Murgon Co-operative Dairy Company Ltd. and the Barambah Valley Co-operative Dairy Company Ltd., the shareholders chose the first of these titles.³⁷

Over the following years the factory grew dramatically. Between 1917 and 1920 there were three chairmen, G.W. Hampshire in 1917, M. Baker in 1918, Hampshire took over again in 1919 and was replaced the following year by E.W. Witton.³⁸

In 1921 two 1000 gallon batch pasteurisers were installed and the butter grades improved by an average of three points. In 1922 there were general improvements made to the factory and a new cream room was installed.³⁹



General meeting South Burnett butter factory, September, 1928.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.



A meeting at the Murgon butter factory 9 March, 1929.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

H. Shelton took over as chairman in 1930, he was replaced by J.A. Heading who remained in that position until 1957.⁴⁰

During the years from 1950 there were many progressive accomplishments at Murgon. In 1950 the new office building was constructed, in 1952 a dairy research laboratory was constructed by the association, this was staffed by personnel from the Department of Agriculture. In 1953 the old building at Murgon was remodelled and a modern pasteurisation and milk bottling plant was installed. That same year a showroom for the display of machinery was constructed at Proston. In 1954 a new building was established at Murgon to incorporate the trading section of the business and in 1955 the association was appointed an agent for Shell Petroleum.

In 1957 J.A. Heading was forced to resign as chairman, his retirement came about due to his appointment to state cabinet and his government's policy on ministers holding positions in outside organisations. Heading was replaced by P. Schwarz.⁴¹

In 1960 a new building was constructed at Murgon for the production of buttermilk powder, R.J. Bishop became chairman, two years later the Murgon cheese factory was completely remodelled and the Murgon retail store was converted to self service, the store then came under the Foodland banner. R.J. Bishop had been first elected to the board on 14 October, 1957, and was elected chairman on 14 October, 1960. He resigned in July 1966.⁴² In 1966 E.C. Braithwaite became chairman and bulk milk transportation commenced. In 1967 the association's first farm adviser was appointed and the butter factory at Proston was closed. In 1970 the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy and the Gympie based Wide Bay Co-operative Dairy formed a federation, this was known as the Co-operative Federation Ltd. It was established to form a pasteurised milk plant at Gympie in order to supply milk to the surrounding towns.⁴³

In 1975 W.G. Keys was appointed chairman and in 1977 the association became a member of the Murgon and District Development Board. In 1978 a new milk processing factory was opened by the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen and that same year Murgon cheese was named Australian Champion at the Australian Institute of Dairy Factory Managers and Secretaries annual conference in Sydney. In 1979 the factory commenced the manufacture of skim milk and in 1983 a new stock feed mill was commissioned.⁴⁴

Goomeri

The Goomeri Cheese Factory was constructed in 1911, shortly after the historic Boonara Land Sale. In August that year it was described as: '... situated on the western side of the line and a few chains there-from and looks cool and attractive in its restful coat of green. The engine and boiler have not (yet) been put in place but this stage of advancement has just been reached ... the water from the adjacent creek is to be utilized in the general manufacture and *sans* prejudice, we are of the opinion that it is a course which may be open to objection at certain times and seasons ... we note with hearty commendation that concrete plays its wholesome and sanitary role wherever waste matter is expected to flow.'⁴⁵

The Goomeri Co-operative Cheese Company commenced operations at Goomeri in 1 May, 1913, most of its investors being local settlers of the district. The deal was in association with the Goomeri Land Company which had originally acquired the building and then spent more than one hundred pounds on improving it. The building was leased free for one year and at one pound per week thereafter. The Goomeri Land Company had also fully equipped the factory and the Goomeri Co-operative Cheese Company was contracted to repay this debt over five years at five per cent interest. The manager was Mr James Wilson who had come from Melbourne to take up the position. The press described him as: 'Knowing his business from A to Z.'⁴⁶



Goomeri cheese factory, cheese maker Mr Battersby centre of photograph, 1918.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

Yet finding managers for the factory, at least during its first few years of production, appears to have been a difficult task, a report of August 1914, only fifteen months after the factory had started operations, stated that another manager, a Mr Grant had resigned and that, 'Mr M.L. McDonald, lately a student at Gatton Agricultural College, has been appointed manager of the Goomeri Cheese Company.'⁴⁷

At this time too another cheese factory was getting underway at One Mile Creek. A report of 1913 claimed: 'Mr R.H. Kenyon reports having secured the order (as agents for Messrs Waugh and Josephson) for the machinery and plant for the new cheese factory about to be erected at One Mile Creek, 8 miles north of Goomeri and called the Boonara Co-operative Cheese Co. Ltd.'⁴⁸



Boonara cheese factory during the First World War when Australian cheeses were in great demand, particularly as food to feed the troops.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

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Chapter Ninety-seven

The Dairy Industry, Establishing the First Factories

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6. M/C. 23 April, 1903, p 3.
7. M/C. 27 April, 1903, p 2.
8. M/C. 24 June, 1904, p 3.
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27. M/C. 6 November, 1913, p 8.
28. M/C. 11 February, 1914, p 5.

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31. M/C. 21 August, 1912, p 5.
32. M/C. 30 October, 1912, p 5.
33. M/C. 11 January, 1913, p 7.
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42. N/A. 21 July, 1966, p 1.
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The Butter Markets and the 'Margarine Menace'

Despite the opening of butter factories at Kingaroy, Nanango and Murgon, Australian butter had still to make a name for itself on the overseas market — especially in London. Most of the Australian butter exported to London was not sold as Australian butter but was distributed in a variety of ways. Thirty-five per cent of all imports went into blending with other butters, three per cent went into the manufacture of the, at the time, much maligned margarine, ten per cent was used in 'imitation butter', three per cent went on board ships for re-export and forty-nine per cent was sold to the domestic market under a variety of names.¹

Margarine was seen at this time as being a very real threat to the continued prosperity of the dairy industry, the 'margarine menace' as it was frequently termed in newspapers of the day. There were some grounds for this concern. The London butter market was the main outlet for butter from the South Burnett, it purchased far more butter than could ever be consumed domestically, yet the 'margarine menace' was having an increasingly detrimental impact on the butter market there, it was cheaper to produce — having a higher percentage of water content — it tasted similar to butter, some of it was coloured to look like butter, and because it sold for only slightly less than butter the profit margin for the retailers was greater, thus they tended to stock and promote margarine rather than butter. So serious was the problem that a conference was held at the School of Arts in Sydney in March 1913, the topic of which was to ask the federal government to approach the British government to request that: '... immediate action be taken for the suppression of the sale of coloured margarine as butter.'²

In some Australian states such as Victoria, the practice of adding colouring to margarine so that it looked like butter was prohibited. 'I will never be a party to any alteration to the law which will permit of margarine being coloured so that it may look like butter,' the Victorian minister for agriculture stated in August 1913. In London there were no such laws and margarine, sometimes blended with Australian butter, was being offered for sale, often under the guise of butter, and the selling of it was seriously undermining the quality of pure Australian butter. John Foot, chief inspector of the Health Department of the borough of Bethnal Green in London said in 1913: 'This unrestricted practice of blending and faking butters is highly injurious to the production and marketing of choice grades of butters and I deplore that no steps are being taken to give the genuine produce the protection it warrants as a valuable article of diet ... There should be a difference recognised by law between the colour of faked butter and the pure product, and until this grave error is corrected by the British Parliament the trade in imitation butters will continue to blossom.'³

At that time, under the British Butter and Margarine Act of 1907, there were 248 factories in the British Isles producing faked butter. Additionally, the British were annually importing 67,200 tons of margarine and over the previous twelve months this importation had increased by a further 20,000 tons. One margarine factory close to London employed 1000 people. Clearly there was some considerable concern for the butter producers of the South Burnett who, isolated from those distant markets, were trying to complete in an increasingly hostile business environment.⁴

Some of the butters being sent to London, especially those butters that were known to contain any kind of taint, as was the case with butter from the Kingaroy factory in 1913, were doing irreparable harm to the butter industry for it was these cheaper butters that were being purchased by the margarine manufacturers and blended into their margarines. The finer butters, those coming from places such as Ireland, Sweden and Denmark, were arriving at London under very stringent controls that prevented their use in margarines or their adulteration in any way. A report of this practice published in 1914 claimed:

Every pound of inferior butter, that is shipped from Australia to Britain is a gain for margarine, simply because this class of butter has been forced on the retail shops at prices out of all comparison to its quality. Margarine is being welcomed by the British public, and Australia need not look for British legislation that will interfere with its legitimate manufacture and sale. Scientific advances in the production of margarine and a perfect system of distribution are noteworthy features of the trade. The most critical and prejudiced minds will be forced to admit that in the largest margarine works in Britain and the continent a degree of efficiency has been reached that calls for admiration.

It is certainly clear that prompt measures should be taken by Australia to give the British consumer the choice produce which the States of Australia are capable of providing. In Denmark the factories have complete control of the raw produce, and in this way a uniform butter is put on the British market. But Danish butter is not superior to the choice product of Australia, the latter having a distinctly superior body; and, further, the Australian flavour cannot be excelled by any country in the world. Denmark exports to Britain nothing but high-class butter, known as the 'Lux' brand, which is under the control of the State, and any infringement of the Danish law governing this brand is met with severe punishment. Swedish butter appears under the 'Runa' brand, and this brand is also safeguarded by the Swedish authorities.⁵

For the producers on the South Burnett there was little they could do to help alleviate the problem of lower prices for their butter and its use in the manufacture of British margarine. In any case, the problem was largely overshadowed by the opening of hostilities on the Western Front in 1914, an event that created many other problems for the local butter producers.

Notes and Sources

Chapter Ninety-eight

The Butter Markets and the 'Margarine Menace'

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2. M/C. 26 March, 1913, p 3.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. M/C. 12 September, 1914, p 3.

Butter Markets and the Great War

By 1915, when the Great War was entering its second year, the butter market in Australia was in chaos. The problems were created through a variety of reasons, but were primarily linked to the lack of butter due to a continuing drought and a government policy to cap the price of butter on the local market. This price capping was placed into effect due to the shortage. As with any shortage, the price of butter began to rise in 1915. For example, in May that year the price of wholesale butter from factories such as Murgon, Nanango and Kingaroy rose from 182 shillings per hundredweight to 194 shillings per hundredweight. Farmers of dairy cattle maintained that the rises were normal and proper, with the continuing drought the cost of feeding cattle was high and the rise in cream prices simply reflected that situation. The drought at that time was largely centred in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia; New South Wales dairymen were not experiencing similar problems and so the price of cream had not been affected in that state. Yet the government had imposed a ban on the export of butter from NSW and this ban effectively aided the rise in price of Queensland butter.¹

By July that year the situation was so serious that a ban on the export of butter to the traditional overseas markets had been put into effect and some butter was being re-imported to Australia, the press claiming: 'A shipment of 10,000 boxes of butter has been returned to Fremantle, Melbourne and Sydney, but none of this, so far as can be ascertained, is likely to reach Queensland'.² By the end of that month, (July) the managers of the butter factories at Biggenden, Kingaroy and Maryborough were reporting that there had been a drastic falling off in cream supplies and the government had fixed the price of wholesale butter at 196 shillings per hundredweight. This was creating considerable concern to the butter producers throughout the South Burnett and elsewhere, as the cost of butter sent to Victoria, for example, should have been 234/3d per cwt.³

The situation was gloomy and dairymen were in an invidious situation. Facing rising costs of feeding their animals, and with no relief in the form of rain in sight, many of them were facing ruin, having to spend hundreds of pounds on feed with little to show as profit. The wife of one dairy farmer lamented: 'We have spent £340 in cattle and horse feed since our own supply ran out and I don't know whatever we are going to do. The outlook is heart-breaking.'⁴

On 14 February, 1916, a dairyman named W.D. Sanderson wrote to the editor of a local newspaper:

On account of the dry weather we have had very little to sell lately, but the few pounds we have had the Government says you shall only be allowed to get what the Government think fit to allow. Why have they not controlled the prices of other commodities, including fencing wire, roofing iron, arsenic, etc. The latter item we have to use largely to kill prickly pear, as you are aware, Mr Editor, we have to eradicate the pear or forfeit our selection, so no matter what price arsenic is we have got to buy it. The same thing, applies to fencing wire and roofing iron. They are items the selector is compelled to purchase, as he has to do the improvements on the selection or it will be forfeited. Now, Sir, the above items have been allowed to advance in some cases 100 per cent, since the war broke out and yet the Labour Government says: 'You dairymen shall not be allowed to get more than normal prices for your butter.' Where is the justice?⁵

By August 1916 the situation had eased considerably and the embargo on butter exports was about to be lifted.⁶ On 24 August the federal government decided to lift the ban, announcing that all third grade butters in store could be exported and fifty per cent of second grade butters were

also allowed to be sold overseas. The state government, having no second grade butter in storage, re-graded 3762 boxes of first grade butter to second grade and shipped half of this to London.⁷

The ban on exports had been particularly galling for the butter producers, it had tied up thousands of boxes of second and third grade butter that could have been sold in the Commonwealth, but due to the legislation the butter producers had been forced to find storage for it, at sometimes exorbitant rentals, and the quality of the butter, never good in the first place, had further deteriorated during this enforced cold-storage. The action of the state government in capping the price of butter had cost the dairymen tens of thousands of pounds. The half-yearly report from the directors of the Maryborough Dairy Company, the same company that owned the factory at Kingaroy, claimed: 'With these adverse Governmental meddlings, coupled with the continued dry season, your directors regret the results of the half-year's business are not so good as they might have been.'⁸

Yet by the following year the situation had improved somewhat, good rains had dramatically increased the supply of cream and the butter factories were again at capacity operation, the Kingaroy butter factory manufacturing almost twice as much as any other factory in the region.⁹

At this time too the Maryborough parent company decided to construct two cheese factories, one at Branch Creek near Gayndah and the other at Brooklands on the Tarong railway extension beyond Kingaroy.¹⁰ The construction of these factories was a sound financial move, cheese was certainly in demand, especially during the war years, the Australian government purchasing every pound of cheese above local requirements. Butter too was again coming in demand, and while there was a surplus of the product in Queensland during 1917, other states were experiencing shortages and vast quantities were required for the war effort. A government pool was formed, and this was administered by the Butter Pool Committee under the War Precautions Act regulations, which oversaw distribution and pricing.¹¹

But the war also created other problems for the dairy industry, not least of which was the availability of sufficient shipping to transport all the butter and cheese to London. Shipping was in short supply and ships capable of refrigerated transport were even more scarce. Chairman of the Maryborough Dairy Company's board, John Edward Dean, formed part of a delegation that waited upon the prime minister, Billy Hughes, at Melbourne in July 1917 to request that Hughes' government take steps to ameliorate the situation.¹²

By the middle of July 1917 it was becoming increasingly clear that cheese manufacture was going to be the most advantageous of wartime dairy industries, regulations being introduced that the shipping of perishable goods to Britain be in precise order of preference, firstly beef, then mutton, followed by cheese, rabbits and lamb, with butter coming last on the list of preferences. Newspapers were reporting that butter factories should gear up to begin producing cheese as quickly as possible.¹³

Yet while producers were being pressed to increase their production of cheeses the problem of the lack of refrigerated shipping was becoming more acute. A conference of all representatives of butter factories in Queensland met in Brisbane in July 1917 to discuss the pressing issue. Delegates to that conference were told that with the preference system in place, almost all the available refrigerated freight space was going to meat products and that the available refrigerated storage depots in Brisbane were quickly filling up. The numbers of refrigerator ships had decreased by about half from the previous year and the downwards trend was continuing.¹⁴

It was a very serious problem for the butter and cheese manufacturers on the South Burnett. Certainly there was strong local demand for their products, but the bulk was being sold into their traditional London market and without adequate shipping facilities the entire industry could well have dwindled to a trickle and died. Placing butter and cheese into cold storage was not selling it, and without a sale the factories and thus the many hundreds of farmers could not be paid. The cold storage accommodation in Queensland at that time amounted to some 50,000 boxes, but more than 30,000 boxes were already in storage and with thousands more arriving weekly the storage capacity would soon be exhausted.¹⁵ For a while the situation looked bleak until meat companies in Brisbane stepped into the breach and offered the use of their refrigerated stores. The offer was to save the dairy industry from particularly heavy losses.¹⁶

Despite these set-backs and the on-going restriction of government price capping, the Maryborough Dairy Company continued to move from strength to strength, revealing record profits in the first half of 1917. A report of the factory dated September that year claimed:

... From very humble beginnings this co-operative concern has become one of the most important wealth producing factors in our midst. Despite the stringency of the times due to the war, including arbitrary fixed prices, and the set back of an unfavourable season, the Company has succeeded in beating the record in the increase in the turn-over for the period. The success of the Company must be regarded as a triumph of the principles of co-operation. The output of the Company's factories (and there are others in our district), indicates in a striking manner the progress of dairying settlement since the industry really began about 16 or 17 years ago. The Maryborough Company alone paid away for cream in the six months under review just upon £100,000. As the industry is steadily expanding and has yet abundant room to expand, this means a distribution of cash throughout the district, of not less than £200,000 a year, or over a million in the next five years ... The foregoing splendid returns were the joint results of the operations of the Company's four butter factories, one each at Maryborough, Kingaroy, Biggenden, and Mundubbera ... Another butter factory to be established in the Woolooga district is practically assured, while two cheese factories, a new departure for the Company, are now in course of construction, one at Branch Creek, Gayndah district, and the other at Brooklands, on the Kingaroy line. These will come into operation during the current half year.¹⁷

By September that year (1917) considerable progress had been made with the construction of the new cheese factory at Branch Creek, however, there were some delays in the work of installing the cheese vats, which had been purchased from a manufacturing firm in England, and had been delayed because of the shortage of shipping. A manager had been appointed who had come, 'with first class references' as a cheese-maker. Another butter factory, also owned by the Maryborough Dairy Company, was being considered for Woolooga.¹⁸

By November that year the cheese vats had been installed at Branch Creek and without any pomp or ceremony the factory commenced its cheese-making operations. Its sister factory at Brooklands on the Tarong line commenced operations about a month later in December 1917. By April the following year the situation remained much the same, the war in Europe dragged on and the price of butter and cheese was still capped by a government price fixing committee. The proposed butter factory at Woolooga had stagnated somewhat due to the inability to find a suitable site, the concept was later abandoned.¹⁹

The locating of suitable refrigerated freight space was a perennial problem that was to affect the industry for the remainder of the war. By July 1918, for example, no butter had been exported to London for the previous four months.²⁰

Notes and Sources

Chapter Ninety-nine

Butter Markets and the Great War

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2. M/C. 1 July, 1915, p 5.
3. M/C. 31 July, 1915, p 9.
4. M/C. 9 November, 1915, p 6.
5. M/C. 18 February, 1916, p 8.
6. M/C. 31 August, 1916, p 3.
7. M/C. 15 September, 1916, p 5.
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10. *Ibid.*
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12. M/C. 26 June, 1917, p 5.

13. M/C. 3 July, 1917, p 4.
14. *Ibid*, p 2.
15. *Ibid*.
16. M/C. 10 August, 1917, p 3.
17. M/C. 20 September, 1917, p 4.
18. M/C. 29 September, 1917, p 8.
19. M/C. 25 April, 1918, p 6 and 22 September, 1919, p 4.
20. M/C. 6 July, 1918, p 7.

The Post War Dairy Industry

By the end of the Great War in November 1918, the butter industry was experiencing strong growth — perhaps too strong, there were large supplies of butter available for what was, in effect, a limited market, a market that was to grow smaller now that military spending would be cut back. The Danish butter industry had always manufactured a superior product and the Danes marketed their butter as one single brand whereas the Australian butter industry was marketing its butters under 435 different brands. The Danes sold their butter through one single agency in Britain while the Australians sold their product through a confusing admixture of agents, speculators and dealers, and, as a result, Australian butter lost much of its national identity.

By July 1919 there were calls to have some form of standardization enforced throughout the Australian butter industry, including a standardization based loosely upon the Danish system. These proposals included the introduction of an act of parliament compelling certain standards of manufacture to be complied with, especially compulsory pasteurisation and water purity. The act would legislate to set up a governing body that would oversee the quality of production and market Australian butter in either one or a small number of distinctive brands. This governing body would also have the power to inspect all the butter factories at frequent intervals and to ensure that all the regulations in respect to quality control were being complied with.¹

Meanwhile, the Maryborough Dairy Company had been approached by a group of dairy farmers in the Proston region. This delegation had made the proposal that the company construct a butter factory at Proston, and after due consideration the concept was accepted and the decision made. By September 1919 a site at Proston had been selected and a contract had been entered into for a test water bore. However, the factory was not constructed and it was to be another fifteen years before Proston dairy farmers would enjoy the convenience of having a local butter factory.²

In January 1920 a new butter factory was opened at Nanango, marking the beginning of another epoch in the dairying industry of that town. The opening of the factory also coincided with the unveiling of the soldiers' memorial and the opening of the new Nanango Hospital. The press reported:

Yesterday, 29th January, is a day which will be long remembered here as three important functions were performed. A very large number of people from all parts of the district had come in to witness the important events. As the train arrived, about 400 people were on the platform to welcome Major-General Sir T.W. Glasgow. A guard of over 50 returned soldiers, headed by the band, escorted him to the Commercial Hotel. At the conclusion of lunch, all proceeded to the butter factory, which was opened by Mr Robert Hodge M.L.A. Mr Huxham, Major-General Glasgow, and others spoke, complimenting the directors and shareholders on the very up-to-date factory, which has a capacity of 35 tons a week, and is fitted up with the latest machinery. The cost of the factory was in the vicinity of £8,000.

The building consists of concrete floors and foundations, with a concrete parapet of four feet. Above the parapet are wooden walls, and the roof of concrete tiles. The factory is equipped with all the latest machinery and plant, including four 600 gallon pasteurisers, combined Victory churn and worker. The factory is steam driven by a thirty-five h.p. boiler, 12 ton compressor, coupled to a 12 h.p. vertical engine ... the factory ... has been built and equipped by Messrs Waugh and Josephson.³

Despite the optimistic outlook that saw the construction of this new factory at Nanango, the reality was less reassuring. By 1920 the end of the war was affecting the price and stocks of butter and cheese, the half-yearly report of the Maryborough Dairy Company, for example, released in

April that year, showed that the government had cut back on its spending quite dramatically, indeed, at that time the government had not purchased any cheese for seven months and had no intention of purchasing more for quite some time.⁴

Notes and Sources
Chapter One Hundred
The Post War Dairy Industry

1. M/C. 25 July, 1919, p 4.
2. M/C. 22 September, 1919, p 4.
3. M/C. 3 February, 1920, p 4.
4. M/C. 22 April, 1920, p 4.

The Amalgamation of the Butter Factories

The amalgamation of the butter factories had been mooted at various occasions several years before the Great War. By 1912 it was becoming increasingly obvious that there were certain problems inherent within the dairy industry that would need to be solved in the not too distant future. Some of the suppliers were dissatisfied with the prices they were receiving from local factories and were calling for the construction of new factories, others were convinced that the practice of the factories competing with each other for sales, and for cream, was detrimental to the industry. In order to attempt to solve these problems the Queensland Farmers' Union suggested butter factories operating in the Wide Bay and Burnett, Murgon, Kingaroy, Nanango, Gympie, Biggenden, Gayndah, Bundaberg and Maryborough, be amalgamated into one huge company. Their selling power would be greater and there would be no competition for either sales or the purchase of cream.

Discussions took place on numerous occasions prior to the war, for example one was held at the offices of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Company in Kent Street Maryborough on the morning of 15 May, 1913. At that meeting it was suggested that the concept should be taken a step further and that all the butter factories along the eastern seaboard, from Brisbane to Rockhampton, should be invited to join the amalgamation. The issue was the subject of a lively discussion but no decisions were, of course, made at that meeting, the question having to be referred to the shareholders of each individual company.¹

If the amalgamation were to proceed, it was a bold business move that would see the establishment of the largest single business enterprise in the entire Burnett/Wide Bay region. Naturally the shareholders of each butter factory were concerned over the possible ramifications of the move, especially the impact such an amalgamation would have on any factory not a part of the conglomerate. For example a meeting of shareholders of the Gayndah factory was held in July 1913 and some of the shareholders voiced alarm that if the amalgamation went ahead, then the Gayndah factory would be compelled to either join the conglomerate or be forced out of business, as the conglomerate would certainly dominate the market.²

The Great War, with all its inherent problems for the dairy industry, effectively postponed any serious speculation on such an amalgamation, and the question of combining the companies did not receive any further formal consideration until 1921. On 30 September that year representatives of the South Burnett Dairy Company met at Murgon to investigate the possibility of such a merger. The move, again held at the behest of the Queensland Farmers' Union, was seen by many dairymen as the only way of obtaining any kind of parity in the dairy industry and to prevent overlapping areas of business interest. At that meeting it was proposed that a new company be formed to take over the business of all the companies agreeing to the amalgamation, that the company be formed with a new name and that shares be distributed on a pro rata basis according to current valuations of each individual company.³

Discussions again took place in December that year with representatives from Maryborough, Murgon, Nanango and Gayndah, but due to the size of the Maryborough company with its four factories, some of these representatives believed that the amalgamation was nothing more than a takeover bid that would swallow up the smaller factories such as Nanango and Gayndah.⁴

The scheme was 'adopted' at a special meeting of the representative companies in April 1922. The companies involved in the proposed amalgamation included the Maryborough Dairy Company (which included, of course, Kingaroy), the Gayndah Co-operative Dairy Company, the Nanango Co-operative Dairy Company and the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Company at Murgon.

The name of the new company was to be the Queensland North Coast Co-operative Dairy Company Ltd., with 350,000, £1 shares. The press claimed that the object of this new company was to ultimately embrace the whole of such small dairy companies from Caboolture to Rockhampton. The new company's head office would be based at Murgon.⁵

Yet still the concept remained somewhat in the wilderness. In 1923, with the amalgamation placed firmly off the agenda — at least for the immediate future — a press report gave the following version of its concept and history and quoted extensively from the remarks of Mr J.E. Dean, chairman of directors of the Maryborough Dairy Company:

Mr J.E. Dean, Chairman of Directors of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Company, a gentleman who has familiarised himself with every phase of the industry has been an ardent advocate of the amalgamating movement since its inception, and at the present time is waging a strenuous fight in its interests.

Mr Dean gave an interesting résumé of the series of events which led up to the initiation of the amalgamation movement. It began to be realised, he said, that competition was not co-operation. Accordingly fifteen years ago, Mr G. Chaseling, of Coolabunia, pioneered the way for such a scheme, by convening a meeting in Maryborough. The enthusiasm which had been evinced at that time soon became luke-warm, and it was not until Mr Dean, who realised the loss the dairymen were sustaining as a result of competition, inaugurated a scheme which was discussed five years ago, and referred to the Co-operative Dairy Companies' Association, that interest was revived. The proposition, after discussion, was rejected, one gentleman remarking that Mr Dean was '100 years ahead of the times.' As a result of a conversation with Mr J.S. Mikan, Q.F.U. organiser for the South Burnett, a conference was held at Murgon on December 15th, 1921, when representatives were present from Nanango, Murgon, Gayndah, and Maryborough. At that meeting it was decided to take a vote of shareholders, asking if they were in favour of amalgamation — yes, or no, the result being: Nanango, yes, 158; no, 108, Murgon, yes, 383; no 195, Maryborough, yes, 470, no, 83. For some reason Gayndah did not take a vote. As a result of this vote a conference was held at Murgon on March 28th, 1922. A motion was carried, on the casting vote of the chairman, that the head office be at Murgon. Another motion was that Murgon (one factory) would have three provisional directors, while Maryborough (with four butter and two cheese factories) have only three directors, thus leaving one of that company's factories without a director. Exception was taken to this by the Maryborough delegates, who claimed that Murgon was not the geographical centre, and each factory ought to have a director, and a controversy arose. The Nanango company later withdrew from the scheme, because of the Companies' Act providing that the company must go into liquidation and any shareholder may withdraw his shares. They were, said Mr Dean, afraid they could not meet the payment ... There the matter stands now.⁶

Yet despite the evident anticipation for a rosy dairying future, the industry was on the verge of some serious problems. Later that year the London butter market slumped and the prices of butter and cheese fell dramatically. Additionally, New Zealand butter producers moved quickly to off-load tons of their produce in Queensland and the Australian Butter Pool, the governing body that had done much to stabilise the industry and the prices attained, suddenly collapsed. For the shareholders of the Maryborough Dairy Company these losses were compounded by the illness of their highly capable chairman of directors, J.E. Dean, who, during the annual general meeting of 1923, was so ill that he was unable to attend and had been placed under care at St Mary's Private Hospital, Maryborough. In a letter he wrote for presentation to that meeting Dean claimed: '... The industry in Queensland has never been in a more precarious state than it is at the present time.' Dean pointed out that while the finances of his company were on a sound footing and there was no possibility of the company being in danger of collapse, there were other dairying enterprises that had lost considerable amounts of money, one losing as much as £20,000.⁷

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and One

The Amalgamation of the Butter Factories

1. M/C. 16 May, 1913, p 8.
2. M/C. 22 July, 1913, p 6.
3. M/C. 20 October, 1921, p 3.
4. M/C. 10 February, 1922, p 2.
5. M/C. 7 April, 1922, p 3.
6. M/C. 4 August, 1923, p 5.
7. M/C. 28 September, 1923, p 4.

The Growth of the Dairy Industry

Over the following twelve months the industry's growth was slow but steady, while still attempting to come to terms with the many external problems that affected important issues such as prices, costs of reproduction, markets and competition.

In April 1924 came the news that the chairman of directors for the Maryborough Dairy Company, Mr J.E. Dean had died. This was a particularly tragic blow to those associated with the company and the industry as Dean, a relentless worker, had done much to direct the company through the difficult times since the business had first been set up. A report following his death claimed:

It will be with sincere regret that many residents of the Wide Bay and Burnett districts — particularly in the rural areas — will learn of the death, at Maryborough, shortly after noon, yesterday, of John Edward Dean ... For some considerable time, the late Mr Dean had been in indifferent health — no doubt caused to a large degree by the strenuous nature of his work — and last year, at the time of the annual meeting of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Company Ltd., he suffered a collapse and was confined to his bed for many weeks. With a typical devotion to duty, Mr Dean, after experiencing a partial recovery, applied himself actively to work in the interests of the dairying industry, and it may be said he died in harness. In the interval between his illness of last year till the time of his death, he had not enjoyed robust health, but a stroke which struck him on Monday morning was quite unexpected. Throughout he fought a valiant fight, but yesterday morning he lapsed into unconsciousness and death supervened early in the afternoon.

The late Mr Dean, who was in his 64th year, was born at Preston, Lancashire, England, and as a young man came out to Australia in 1884, landing in Maryborough. In 1887 he was married in the Salvation Army Citadel ...

A successful producer himself, he was actuated by a desire to organise dairymen of the district and obtain the greatest efficiency. Thus his name figures in the earliest beginnings of the Maryborough Company when, in March 1898, the first steps were taken by the Wide Bay and Burnett Pastoral and Agricultural Society to establish a butter factory in this city. At first a provisional director, he was, upon the registration of the Company, on June 15th, 1899, created one of the foundation directors ...

In 1908 the deceased gentleman was re-elected as a director of the company, a confidence on the part of the producers, which had the confirmation of his fellow directors at the first meeting of the new Board, which returned him to the responsible office of chairman. Since that date the shareholders and directors of the Company renewed the confidence which they placed in Mr Dean, and almost up to the present, he continuously and capably filled the position of chairman, with the exception of the terms during which Messrs John Horne (Coalstoun Lakes), and G.R. Noakes (Maryborough), occupied the chair. In October of last year the late Mr Dean retired from the position of chief executive officer, but continued to take an active interest in the affairs of the Company as a director ...

The late Mr Dean was a prominent member of the Salvation Army in Maryborough, joining in 1885, and held the rank of Army Envoy. He was also a member of the Rechabite Lodge. Today he will be accorded a Salvation Army funeral.¹

Dean was replaced as chairman of the board of directors by James McRobert, who took over the position when the dairy industry was in something of a state of flux.² At the time of McRobert's appointment to the chairmanship of the board the various butter factories in the South Burnett were still operating independently and still attempting to maximize profits despite the

continued competition for cream and sales. The London butter market remained a problem, its prices regulated by a variety of external forces over which the producers had little or no influence, the wholesale prices being subject to the extremes of weather on the Continent, agency fees, public demand and various seasonal conditions. These issues created special problems in Australia, for example, when the butter market in London collapsed during February and March 1924, it caused shippers of butter to store huge quantities of butter in the hope that the coming winter prices in Australia would be better than the summer prices in England. But it was almost impossible to regulate, warmer winters in England and cooler summers in Australia meant that demands fluctuated and, in any case, storage capacity was always a problem and butter in cold stores was not money in the bank.³

The question of amalgamation was still very much on the agenda, but added problems to this schedule were beginning to creep in, not least of which was a movement from some shareholders of the Kingaroy butter factory to seek separation from the parent company in Maryborough — quite the reverse of amalgamation. Suppliers in the region were dissatisfied with the treatment they were receiving from Maryborough, they claimed that they were not getting a fair deal in the case of testing, weighing and grading of their cream and that minor problems always had to be referred to Maryborough and could never be solved on site. One of the reasons for this sudden flurry of separationist activity was the low returns the cream producers had received from the factory, these low returns had been a direct result in the slump in butter prices on the London market. Some suppliers had been so aggrieved over the issue that they had taken their business from the Kingaroy factory and were sending all their cream to Nanango. Opponents of separation argued that if such a break-away company was formed then the producers would have to suffer as the butter from the factory would have to be sold into London where prices were lower, there being little outlet for the already flooded local dairy market.⁴

Over the following months the dissatisfaction of the Kingaroy shareholders grew and it was evident that something would have to be done. In May 1925 directors of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Company arrived at Kingaroy with plans and specifications for the construction of a new building and details of new machinery they wished to install at the Kingaroy factory. They claimed that with these new alterations the factory would operate more efficiently and give added returns to the cream producers. If the Maryborough men had believed that such a move would solve the growing discontent in the Kingaroy region they were badly mistaken. At that meeting the Kingaroy producers were amazed that the plans for such expensive alterations and additions had been approved by the board without the consent of the Kingaroy producers — who, in effect, as the major shareholders, owned the factory — and those producers argued that they should have had some say in the decision-making process long before a builder was contracted and machinery ordered. It was a good point. The additions were to cost somewhere in the region of £18,500 to £20,000, a considerable figure, and that money had to come from butter profits, or, in other words, directly from the farmers' pockets, and yet they had been given no warning of the impending alterations nor had their permission been requested. The meeting degenerated into a series of heated arguments, one shareholder shouting to another: 'You're only a mongrel anyhow.' Kingaroy shareholders later held a separate meeting at which it was decided to hold a series of further meetings with their fellow shareholders, during which they would discuss the possibilities of complete separation or even the construction of another factory and a joint venture with Nanango and Murgon butter factories.⁵

J. McRobert, the chairman of the board at Maryborough, met with the Kingaroy shareholders at the Kingaroy School of Arts in August 1925 and told them that any break-away movement would be a retrogressive step. He explained that the Maryborough company had a strong selling system and that smaller factories operating independently would not be able to do so well. When questioned about the old proposals to amalgamate the various factories, McRobert explained that while he had not been on the board during the time of those particular discussions he understood that one of the main reasons why the proposal had stagnated was because of the insistence of the Murgon factory that the headquarters of the new company be at Murgon. This had proved to be a stumbling block for which no successful solution had been found.⁶

Despite these problems the Maryborough parent company pressed on with the construction of a new factory at Kingaroy. In October 1925 the annual report of the company was released which stated: '... Owing to the output at Kingaroy last season having reached more than the factory

could economically handle, your directors have decided on extensive alterations and re-modelling of the factory at an estimated cost of £18,500. This work is now well advanced and when finished will bring the Kingaroy factory up-to-date and capable of handling the output of this district for many years to come.⁷

Another advantage to the industry at that time was the establishment of the Queensland Butter Board, a body that immediately moved to improve conditions and returns for the cream producers. The annual report of the Maryborough company claimed: 'The creation of the Butter Board had been a benefit to the industry. It was created four or five months ago, and considerable advantages had been gained through the operations of the board. Some thought it had not justified its existence but he (the chairman of the Maryborough board) could assure them that it had done so to a great extent. It had not only raised the price of butter, but it had got a lot of little concessions which in the end would mean a larger return for the dairymen.'⁸

The Queensland Butter Board was constituted under the Primary Products Pools Act, 1922-1923 and came into being by the vote of the cream producers in the early part of 1925. The first act of the board was to raise the price of butter on 1 June, 1925, by 1½d per lb to 17/8d per hundredweight. Another immediate decision of the board was to promulgate different methods of appointing sales agents and agreements were drawn by the board's solicitors whereby the commission charged by agents could not exceed three per cent.⁹

The new and controversial factory at Kingaroy was opened by the minister for agriculture and stock, William Forgan Smith, on 7 October, 1926, by which time the costs had risen to a staggering £47,000, far in excess of the costs initially outlined to shareholders. The opening was preceded by an official banquet held at the Carrollee Hall, Kingaroy. Invited guests included, in addition to the minister, J. Purcell, chairman of the Queensland Butter Board, James McRobert, chairman of the Maryborough Dairy Company, T. Flood Plunkett, the chairman of the Export Control Board and J. Macfarlane, the manager of the Dairy Products Co-operative Company — the company that sold much of the butter produced on the South Burnett. During the day a large marquee was erected on the grounds of the butter factory and refreshments were served to the throngs of people who had come to witness the event. At the close of the ceremony James McRobert presented Forgan Smith with: '... a silver jardinière as a souvenir of the historic occasion.'¹⁰



A new butter factory was built at Kingaroy by the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association in 1926 and opened for production on 7 October, 1926.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Meiers' collection.



The churn room of the Kingaroy butter factory, 1938.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

The steam whistle of the butter factory was later used as a kind of time clock for the people of Kingaroy, it was blown at 8 a.m., noon, 1.p.m., and at 6 o'clock each evening.¹¹

Tragedy struck the Nanango factory just six days after the opening of the Kingaroy factory. On 13 October, 1926, the Nanango factory was totally destroyed by fire. Directors of the factory moved quickly and soon commissioned the construction of a new and more modern factory.¹²

The new butter factory was opened at Nanango almost exactly a year later in October 1927 by the minister for works, Michael Joseph Kirwan. The new factory was described as being built entirely of concrete and fibro-cement and included all the latest machinery capable of producing a high quality butter. The cost of the factory had been approximately £16,000.

To celebrate the opening the directors of the factory entertained a large number of guests to lunch including representatives from many other competitive factories on the South Burnett. The press reported: 'The chairman of directors, (Mr J. Mulcahy), who occupied the chair, extended a hearty welcome to the Minister for Works and to the visitors, and hoped their stay in Nanango would be enjoyable. He traced the history of the Nanango Dairy Co. from its inception in 1905 until the present day when they would open a factory complete in every detail and capable of catering for the requirements of the district for many years to come ... The first factory was erected some 22 years ago at a cost of £1800, and the credit of that building principally belonged to Mr P.J. Macnamara ... a good citizen, and in addition to his activities in connection with the factory, he had founded the first newspaper in the South Burnett.'¹³

This was a time of sustained economic growth for the dairy industry, indeed, despite the problems experienced over the years the balance sheets of the various companies were decidedly healthy. For example in 1901, when the Maryborough Dairy Company had first begun operations, the returns for that first financial year had been 33,309 lbs of butter produced for a gross turnover of £1,669/10/3d. Twenty six years later, over a period of strong growth, that figure had escalated dramatically. The 1927 results were 6,284,872 lbs of butter for a turnover of £579,383/3/2d. Over those twenty six years the total turnover of the company had been in excess of £5.3 million.¹⁴ Clearly, there was a considerable amount of money to be made in the dairying industry.

While the butter industry experienced sustained growth through the decade or so following the Great War, the markets for cheese were actually diminishing. Long gone were the days of the war years when the reverse was the case, when butter could not be sold due to transportation problems yet cheese was in very heavy demand by the military authorities. In light of diminishing demand the Maryborough directors of the cheese factories at Branch Creek and Brooklands decided to close them, a subsequent report dated 1930 claiming, '... Three years ago the directors decided, in view of the unfavourable markets and the paucity of the support by dairymen, to close the Branch Creek and Brooklands cheese factories on December 31, 1927. The whole of the buildings, plants and land was disposed of and the association terminated its connection with the manufacture of cheese. Those suppliers who supported the cheese factories are now supplying cream to the association's branch butter factories in their locality.'¹⁵

Yet the growth of the dairy industry on the South Burnett at that time was quite remarkable, despite the poor outlook for cheese. On 9 March, 1929, under the management of W.S. Hartley, a new butter factory was opened at Murgon, and this was seen as being a symbol of the enormous growth the industry was then experiencing. At the time of the opening the press reported the celebrations in full, remarking:

The official opening of the new factory was celebrated on Saturday in the presence of a very large gathering. Well over 1000 guests, including some from distant parts of the State, were entertained at a banquet, a large hall being erected and equipped with electric light for the occasion. The hall will be dismantled this week. The Hon. Minister for Agriculture and Stock, Mr Forgan Smith, performed the official opening ceremony, and among the interesting speeches was one by Professor J.K. Murray, of Gatton College. A bright note of optimism was sounded by all the speakers concerning the future of the dairying industry.

Murgon was en-fete for the occasion, flags being flown from the public buildings and from the new factory. All roads led to the township, and farmers travelled long distances to be present ...

Mr H. Taylor of Moorooka, Brisbane was the builder, and the work stands as a monument of modern scientific construction. It is solid, compact and shows quality of workmanship in every detail.

Mr G.C. Hutton, the well-known architect of Brisbane, supervised building plans and construction, the work reflecting great credit on him ...

Mr E.W. Witton is the chairman of directors, having occupied that position for almost 10 years. His co-directors are Messrs G.M. Pedersen, H. Shelton, J.A. Heading and A.W. Davies. The manager and secretary (Mr W.S. Hartley) has received unstinted commendation for his efficiency, enthusiasm and foresight in the matter of recent developments. A splendid staff also makes for efficiency. The cost of the present re-modelling exceeds £25,000 ...

The official opening of the factory was a brief ceremony performed by Mr Forgan Smith, who paid a tribute to the association's secretary, Mr (W.S.) Hartley, and amidst applause declared the factory open. Mr Witton presented the Minister with an engraved gold watch as a memento of the occasion. About 3000 persons were present, and the Murgon Town Band was in attendance.¹⁶

By 1959 more than 78,000 tons of butter and cheese, valued at approximately £17 million had been manufactured at the factory.¹⁷

In 1962 the factory was completely modernised, in 1966 E.C. Braithwaite became chairman.¹⁸

Notes and Sources

**Chapter One Hundred and Two
The Growth of the Dairy Industry**

1. M/C. 23 April, 1924, p 6.
2. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 15.
3. M/C. 22 September, 1924, p 6.
4. M/C. 26 September, 1924, p 6, and M/C. 3 October, 1924, p 6.
5. M/C. 19 May, 1925, p 6.
6. M/C. 6 August, 1925, p 2.
7. M/C. 10 October, 1925, p 10.
8. Ibid.
9. M/C. 24 July, 1926, p 10.
10. M/C. 8 October, 1926, p 4.
11. M/C. 5 September, 1928, p 6.
12. M/C. 7 February, 1928, p 2.
13. M/C. 26 October, 1927, p 12.
14. M/C. 7 February, 1928, p 2.
15. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 16.
16. M/C. 11 March, 1929, p 6.
17. QCL. 19 March, 1959, p 10.
18. SBT. 5 October, 1983.

Controversy and the Wondai Butter Factory

In August 1927 a local cream producer named A.C. Philips, who had twenty years' experience as the secretary to the butter factory at Eskdale Victoria, claimed in Wondai that the small township itself needed a butter factory. He said that despite the fact that there were factories at Murgon, Nanango and Kingaroy, there was enough cream available locally to provide a Wondai butter factory with sufficient quantities for such a factory to be economically viable and that a small factory would provide better returns for local producers. Philips' remarks were treated with some caution, but there was sufficient interest in his proposal for a committee to be formed to investigate the possibilities. In March the following year a large group of local dairy producers and townspeople met at the Wondai Memorial Hall to hear the recommendations of that committee. One of the leading proponents of the dairy industry in Wondai and a man who today is still highly respected for his unflagging efforts during the formative years of the town, was P.H. Outridge. It was Outridge who chaired that first vital meeting. Outridge outlined the advantages and difficulties in setting up a local factory and it was decided at that meeting to form a company for the purpose of constructing and operating a butter factory, that the company would be named the Wondai Co-operative Dairy Association Ltd. and that the plans for the factory be based upon a capacity of twenty tons per week. It was also decided to appoint provisional directors with the power to prepare articles of association, to secure plans for a factory and to organise the sale of shares. It was anticipated that the directors would raise £7000 by the sale of shares which would be sufficient for a loan of £14,000 to be made from the Agricultural Bank. This combined sum would be sufficient for the construction of a butter factory (approximately £18,500), and allow £2,500 for incidentals and the first cream cheques. The provisional directors appointed at that meeting were P.H. Outridge, Cowan Keys, one of the largest cream producers in the state, C.G. Argent, H.M. Slade, J.H.W. Williams, I. Macfarlane and A.C. Philips.¹

P.H. Outridge was certainly one of Wondai's more prominent early characters. A report of his activities, published in 1930, is illuminating. It claimed:

It was happy day for Wondai when Mr P.H. Outridge took up his residence in the town. It is not implied that Mr Outridge set Wondai's fortunes soaring, but in any town where old settlers remain in command of the reins of office the infusion of new blood and outside ideas must have a beneficial effect. Mr Outridge was quick to note the solidity of the town and district. He visualised even brighter days for the district settlement, and today the place is well on the road to greater prosperity. This condition is to an extent attributable to the large-minded efforts of Mr Outridge, who five and a half years ago commenced his business as a dispensing chemist in the town.

Mr Outridge's ability to see clearly and to express ideals which would advance the district's interests carried him to office in various public bodies. Last year he was elected president of the Wondai Chamber of Commerce ...

Having attended school and college in Victoria and Queensland (he is a native of Ipswich), Mr Outridge managed a pharmacy business in Gordonvale, North Queensland, for twelve months. When he came to Wondai his keen interest regarding all public affairs brought him into positions which included the presidency of the A.P. and I. Society, of which he is now a vice-president. In addition, he is the vice-president of the School of Arts Committee, treasurer of the Memorial Hall Committee, and president of the Hospital Committee. Recently he was a member of a deputation to the Home Secretary (at that time James Peterson) regarding the future administration of the Wondai Hospital.

When soon after his arrival in Wondai, agitation was keen for the erection of a butter factory at the centre, Mr Outridge, played an important part in the preliminary discussion

and investigation. His advocacy of the proposal eventually led to his election as chairman of the provisional directorate of the Wondai Co-operative Dairy Association Ltd ...

Nearly five and a half years ago, (circa 1924) after a period during which Wondai was without a chemist, Mr Outridge commenced business ... Mr Outridge showed considerable determination in opening a business where one had previously been closed ... Mr Outridge passed his Junior and Pharmacy Board Preliminary examinations ... then went to his people at Redland Bay where they are engaged in the fruit growing industry and was engaged in that industry for three years. He then became indentured to the old and well-established firm of Moses Ward and Sons and passed his finals at the College of Pharmacy, Brisbane. Prior to coming to Wondai Mr Outridge, held a position of Manager of the Gordonvale Pharmacy in North Queensland for a year.²

For the next two years plans to have a butter factory constructed at Wondai moved ponderously ahead, but these plans were to be seriously hampered by continued and persistent protest from other regions of the South Burnett. In December 1929, at a special meeting of the shareholders of the Wondai Dairy Association, it was decided to merge with the Maryborough Dairy Association after that company had promised to construct a factory at Wondai. The concept came about due to increasing business at the Kingaroy factory, the press reported that faced with either enlarging the Kingaroy plant which was seriously overtaxed, or constructing another expensive factory, the Maryborough company decided to offer the Wondai company the facilities of a new factory at Wondai. This proposal was put to the provisional directors of the Wondai Dairy Association in 1929 and carried by eighty votes to three. With the motion passed the Maryborough company promised to: '... proceed immediately with the erection of one of the most up-to-date factories in Queensland.'³

The issue quickly created a furor in various centres of the South Burnett, not least of which at Kingaroy. Once again the directorship of the Maryborough Dairy Company had moved without the express permission or approval of its majority shareholders, many of whom were cream producers in the Kingaroy district.

As a result of the decision made at Wondai, a special meeting was held in the Carrollee Hall at Kingaroy on Saturday 11 January, 1930, in order to discuss the issue with the chairman of the board, James McRobert, and the company's general manager, W.A. Schultz. Approximately three hundred shareholders packed into the hall, occupying every seat, with dozens more crammed around the aisles. It was a difficult meeting for both parties, the Maryborough men explained their reasons for making the decision, presented valid documents to demonstrate that the Kingaroy factory was working close to its capacity and stated that with the industry growing so rapidly the factory's capacity would soon be reached. The only answer, they contended, was to construct another factory at Wondai.

Others at the meeting believed that the factory should be at Proston, and some cream producers warned that if the factory was not built at Proston they would withdraw their cream supplies, sending them instead to another competitive factory. The meeting closed dramatically with various resolutions passed aimed at strongly opposing the construction of a factory at Wondai.⁴

Over the following weeks the issue was the subject of several large meetings in both the Kingaroy and Wondai districts, the lines of demarcation clearly drawn, those Wondai cream producers who were then supplying cream to either Kingaroy or Murgon clearly wanted a factory of their own, while the Kingaroy people wished to prevent a large expenditure of money earned from the cream cheques of all shareholders in the company, not just those shareholders in the Wondai region who would ultimately benefit from the construction of a local factory.⁵

On the night of 6 February, 1930, a large meeting was held in the boardroom of the Maryborough Dairy Association with a view to amending the by-laws of the company so as to provide for an enlargement of the board of directors and to increase the number of wards to encompass the needs for an added factory at Wondai. The meeting was a noisy one, James McRobert remarking that one of the Kingaroy directors, Mr J.H. Sigley had: '... apparently come down with as many points as a porcupine'. McRobert had great difficulty in maintaining order at the meeting, some of the protagonists shouting: 'Russia, Russia' at him. The following day the press claimed:

A large number of 'opportunists' (mainly from Kingaroy), attended last night's meeting and they were responsible for scenes such as never before have been witnessed at any meeting in the company's history. Hoots, catcalls and other interjections were the order of the meeting, and it was impossible to hear more than a portion of the remarks of the various speakers. From the commencement the recalcitrant members of the association heckled the speakers and during the proceedings two police officers made their appearance in the room. So persistent was one member of the 'break-away' section in interjecting that a police officer threatened to remove him from the building if he did not submit to the dictates of the chairman when he called for order. Eventually the motion for decision on which the meeting had been called was carried by a large majority, the total number of votes recorded being 1620, of which approximately 1300 were recorded by proxy. The result was a clear-cut endorsement of the action of the directorate, (to build the factory at Wondai).⁶

The shareholders of the Kingaroy factory met later that month and voted to pursue several actions, including the boycotting of the factory at Kingaroy and the formation of a new association, the Kingaroy District Primary Producers' Co-operative Dairy Association Limited. This association was to raise £25,000 from the issue of shares and then either purchase the existing factory or open another factory at Kingaroy.⁷

Mr D. Young and H.C. Muston, chairman and secretary respectively of the Kingaroy shareholders' organising committee issued a statement on 18 February in which they wrote:

There are three factories on the Kingaroy line — Murgon, Kingaroy, and Nanango — with a capacity output between them of 280 tons per week. The highest output of the three combined during the peak period of supplies has been between 170 and 180 tons, leaving a margin of 100 tons unused power and plant, and it is proposed in defiance of the wishes of a very large body of shareholders in the Kingaroy area, to add still another factory to the list, with its attendant cost of anything from £25,000 to £30,000, not to mention heavy working costs and depreciation. Why should Kingaroy district suppliers pay 60 per cent of this sum out of their cream cheques to gratify the ambition of directors, who frankly state they will build the factory in spite of us. More especially should we protest when it is remembered that the Chairman of Directors assured us when the Kingaroy Factory was being remodelled that the cost would not exceed £18,000 to £20,000, yet the cost when completed was £47,000. No tenders were called for the work nor opportunity given for competitive prices to be obtained. Approximately £130,000 has been spent by the directors of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Company in remodelling the four factories, and in one instance only has a tender been called so far as we know, and that tender was not accepted. There is one small crumb of satisfaction left to us. If the directors have power, which they have, and choose to use it tyrannically, they have no power to force dissatisfied suppliers to send their cream to the Kingaroy Factory, and the result to the present moment is that over 100 share-holders have withdrawn their supplies and sent them elsewhere; others are doing so daily.⁸

At another meeting held on the morning of Saturday 22 February, 1930, the newly formed Kingaroy association voted to appoint a special committee that would: '... approach and discuss with the directors of the South Burnett (Murgon factory) and Nanango Co-operative Dairy Associations the prospects of amalgamation of the South Burnett, Kingaroy and Nanango Associations.' Until such times as the newly formed association could either purchase the Kingaroy factory or construct one of its own, its members decided to send their cream to either Murgon or Nanango, whichever was geographically closer to individual farms or whichever offered a better deal for the cream.⁹

Over the following weeks the contentious issue prevailed throughout the region — the people of Kingaroy, and especially those who had shares in the Maryborough Dairy Company, being divided over the problem. Another meeting was held at Denning's sawmill, Tarong, on Thursday 27 February, 1930. James McRobert attended, as did W.A. Schultz, the general manager and secretary of the Maryborough company. They were confronted by those members of the association at Kingaroy who, by this time, were known as the 'break-away' group. Both sides of the question were examined but no resolution was found, the Kingaroy men and women determined to maintain their stance and to fight for autonomy.¹⁰

The issue completely polarised the community at Kingaroy and resulted in a flurry of letters to the press, some claiming that the factory at Wondai was the only sensible move to make as the

cream otherwise had to be carted for long distances in the heat of the day, while others maintained that the exhibition of disrespect the 'break-away' group had displayed at the meeting in Maryborough clearly showed that they were unfit to make sound business decisions. One observer writing:

That meeting was a most difficult one for any chairman to handle, irrespective of what experience he had had. Several Kingaroy men refused to allow the meeting to carry on peacefully. Now there are many good men I am sure, who, after the storm, and in calmer thought, will realise that they had adopted wrong tactics. They were apparently badly led, and the appointed leaders evidently had not the power to calm the unruly ones, or the latter had not the confidence in their leaders.

From the fuss that is now being made at Kingaroy and Kumbia, one wonders if the dairymen in the South Burnett actually realise what is likely to happen. As a result of the display at Maryborough, no dairyman could place confidence in the ability of the break-aways to manage an up-to-date factory. Seeing that they failed in a crisis as at Maryborough, what then would happen when they had to face the more serious questions of financial control?

Dairymen of the South Burnett should stand by their present factory management. Another factory at Kingaroy could only result in ruin, and who then would have to pay the losses? Only the dairymen! The Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association by its experience and efficiency could by better payments make it too difficult for any other factory. There is nothing like £.s.d. to make the dairy farmer transfer his cream from one factory to another. What then would be the result? Immediate discontent and the disgruntled Kingaroy men would find their factory with a rapidly diminishing list of suppliers.¹¹

In view of such sound reasoning the directors of the Maryborough factory made a strong argument in favour of the construction of a factory at Wondai, issuing the following statement:

For some time past the Board of Directors and Management had been seriously considering the advisability of doing something definite to relieve the pressure of cream supplies being received at the Kingaroy factory, either by enlarging the factory or seeking fresh fields wherein to establish a factory ... The growth of the dairying industry both in the North and South Burnett during the past five years had been phenomenal, and with a view to coping with the outputs of the shareholders and suppliers to this association, the directors decided that it would be more economical to build at Wondai than to enlarge the Kingaroy factory ...

(The) Kingaroy Factory was originally built as a 100 ton per week factory, and during February 1929, reached 98 tons of butter per week, or in round figures 100 tons per week. The average production during the year was not the matter that countered most, but the factor was the peak production, and, when cream is not promptly and properly handled, it would deteriorate very rapidly, and lose indirectly thousands of pounds sterling to suppliers. During the past three years Kingaroy output had increased from 50 tons per week during year ending June 30, 1927, to 70 tons per week during year ending June 30, 1928, and 98 tons per week during year ending June 30, 1929, and according to the same increase of approximately 25 tons per annum for the next three or four years, the proposed factory at Wondai would also be taxed to its full capacity.¹²

The 'break-away' group of Kingaroy dairy producers took their grievances to the minister for agriculture, Harry Frederick Walker in March 1930, but the minister, while stating that some poor decisions had been made in the past concerning the siting of butter factories, said that he could not help the Kingaroy men, adding: 'Although irregularities may have taken place at your meeting at Maryborough that does not exonerate you. As shareholders you should have put up a bigger fight and exposed it.'¹³

The situation was further confused by an announcement from the directors of the Murgon factory that it was their intention to construct a branch butter factory at Proston. The announcement was made by company chairman, E.W. Witton, at what was, up until that time, the largest meeting ever held in the history of the company, approximately five hundred people packing the Murgon School of Arts on Saturday 29 March, 1930. It was a decision that also received some criticism — especially so as the Murgon company had lost £2000 over the preceding six months.¹⁴

Within a month there were further complications, the Murgon directors met with directors of the Maryborough company with a view to merging their two companies. The issues were clouded over the Maryborough proposal to construct a factory at Wondai and the Murgon proposal to build a branch factory at Proston. At the end of the meeting it was decided: '... that representatives from each association draw up a constitution relative to amalgamation, that it be submitted to the full boards for approval and later for submission to the shareholders.'¹⁵

The dairy industry on the South Burnett was now one of the largest industries in the region, it was injecting hundreds of thousands of pounds into the local economy every year and providing employment for many hundreds of people. But it was an industry in a state of chaos. Direction had been lost, respect for management had disappeared, and there were constant proposals for fundamental change that usually came to nothing. In short, the dairymen were losing confidence in the people who were running the industry. Annual reports were questioned and scrutinized with particular severity and thoroughness by the shareholders, and when various factories did not win awards for their butter the shareholders demanded to know why.

In July 1930 the results of an investigation into the operations of the Murgon factory were handed down, this report was allegedly so damning of some of the directors and shareholders that the actual report was never released to the public — its findings being read only at a meeting held at the Murgon School of Arts on Saturday 28 June — with all the names of those mentioned in the report carefully edited out.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the plans for the Wondai factory moved slowly ahead, the factory being constructed by Brisbane contractors Waugh and Josephson Ltd., whose general manager was Ernest Alfred MacPherson. Total cost of building and equipping the factory was £36,000.

By March the following year, (1931) the directors were considering forty-three applications for the position of manager of the new factory, and Mr J.C. Dare was appointed. Staff for the new factory were to be drawn from existing employees at the various other factories.¹⁷



The opening of the new butter factory at Wondai, a branch of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association Ltd., which was officially opened on 16 July, 1931, by the minister for agriculture and stock (Mr H.F. Walker).

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives, Harold Mears' collection

The Wondai butter factory was opened by Harry Frederick Walker, the minister for agriculture, on Thursday 16 July, 1931. For the people of Wondai it was a moment for great celebration and large crowds gathered to witness the event. People were brought to the town by train from Maryborough and many eastern centres as well as Kingaroy and Nanango. The press enthusiastically reported:

Day of Days! That term unmistakably applied to today in-so-far as the Wondai district was concerned, in that the biggest undertaking in the district, the newly-erected butter factory, was officially opened. The function was performed with all the pomp and ceremony possible to be associated with the greatest step of progress in the history of this district ... The factory has been working since the beginning of the month. The potentialities of the district are such that the future of the new industry is already assured. Fully 3000 persons were assembled on the front side of the factory at the appointed time for the ceremony ... The utmost interest in the official ceremony was manifested not only in the immediate vicinity of the district, but in many outside centres, visitors being present from all parts of the State, some coming from as far north as Atherton, while many dairying districts of the State and some in New South Wales were also represented. Realising the immense value of the factory to the town, the business people made a day of it, and in order that they might be in attendance at the ceremony closed their premises between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. whilst the manufacturing establishments, such as the sawmills, closed for the day. From Wednesday morning visitors commenced to arrive, and residents of the district state that never before in its history has there been such a big influx from outside centres. The proceedings commenced with a procession headed by the Wondai Town Band, from the main street to the factory, where the band played 'For it's a Jolly Good Fellow' — the 'it' referred to the factory! The doors of the building then were closed and the ceremony took place.

The ministerial party stood on the landing of the building.

... Mr James McRobert, chairman of directors of the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association, said he was staggered to see such a large attendance. He did not know that the building of any factory in Australia could cause as much commotion as the building of this factory.¹⁸

Olive Wieland, who now lives at her property, *Wave Hill*, at Durong, the daughter of early settlers in the Home Creek region, was in hospital suffering from an attack of scarlet fever at the time of the opening of the butter factory at Wondai, she recalls that on the evening prior to the official opening the matron of the hospital brought a teaspoon of butter to each of the patients and told them that this was the first butter produced at the factory.¹⁹

The two men who were chosen as representative directors to serve on the Maryborough board, (there being directors from all the other dairy associations), were men with extensive experience in different aspects of the dairying industry. The first was Cowan Keys, long an advocate of a local butter factory who had worked his own dairy property at Mount McEuen, near Wondai for the previous twenty years, and Arthur C. Philps who, as we have seen, had long been associated with the manufacturing side of the business. P.H. Outridge, who had done much to promote the establishment of a butter factory at Wondai was honoured at the opening celebrations with a gold watch and chain, presented by the residents of the district in appreciation of his work in helping to further the dairy industry in the region.²⁰

The factory was certainly one of the most modern and well designed of the period and was capable of handling all the needs of the local dairy producers at that time. It was equipped to process increasingly larger volumes of cream as the dairy industry continued to expand.²¹

Wondai was later to win the prestigious Orient Jubilee Cup. This cup was a prize donated by the Orient Company to commemorate the competition initiated to celebrate the Jubilee year of 1928. Wondai was to win the cup in 1933, the first time the cup had been won by a Queensland butter factory. Conditions of the cup were that the competing butter producers had to send samples of salted butter to both Melbourne and London. These samples were judged at both places and the average of the two gradings was the basis for the award. Wondai received the highest marks from both the London and Melbourne judging, the factory also received, in addition, the champion prize for Australian export butter.²²

Notes and Sources

**Chapter One Hundred and Three
Controversy and the Wondai Butter Factory**

1. M/C. 28 March, 1928, p 6.
2. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 14.
3. M/C. 4 December, 1929, p 9.
4. M/C. 15 January, 1930, p 6.
5. M/C. 27 January, 1930, p 7.
6. M/C. 7 February, 1930, p 8.
7. M/C. 19 February, 1930, p 5.
8. M/C. 20 February, 1930, p 3.
9. M/C. 26 February, 1930, p 6.
10. M/C. 1 March, 1930, p 6.
11. M/C. 10 March, 1930, p 6.
12. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 17.
13. M/C. 13 March, 1930, p 7.
14. M/C. 31 March, 1930, p 6.
15. M/C. 25 April, 1930, p 10.
16. M/C 5 July, 1930, p 8.
17. M/C. 13 March, 1931, p 4.
18. M/C. 17 July, 1931, p 5.
19. Author interview with Olive Wieland, conducted 29 April, 1997.
20. M/C. 17 July, 1931, p 5.
21. *Ibid.*
22. M/C. 27 September, 1933, p 6.

The Secret Commissions

As we have seen in previous chapters, the dairy industry was growing rapidly through the 1930s, despite the Depression, and this growth brought with it a number of problems, yet few, if any, of these problems was to rock the industry more than the allegations of secret commissions which followed disclosure by the income tax commissioner during the early 1930s that certain dairy factory managers had not revealed such commissions on their income tax returns. The commissions had been paid to various managers and directors for the sale to factories of machinery and other goods and for the sale to wholesalers and agents of dairy products. Builders had paid commissions to receive contracts for the construction of factories, other commissions had been paid for the supply of butter boxes. The tax office released details which showed that there had been eighteen prosecutions against seventeen persons. These prosecutions had involved thirteen co-operative dairy associations, fourteen butter factories, fifteen factory managers, one managing director and one chairman of directors.¹

A hostile meeting took place in Kingaroy in October 1931, shareholders of the local butter factory demanding a Royal Commission into the matter.² That commission opened in Brisbane on Monday 1 August, 1932, it was headed by Mr C.J. Carroll, chief inspector of the Land and Income Tax Office in Brisbane. During the first day's hearings Waugh and Josephson, the Brisbane-based contractors, admitted that the best sales agents were the factory managers themselves.³

Over the following weeks the commission heard evidence at numerous centres, including Toowoomba, Warwick, Gympie and Maryborough, and this evidence was damning, the suppliers clearly demonstrating through their account books that in order to obtain favourable sales from butter factories they had been used to giving secret commissions to persons in positions of authority at many factories. Those prosecuted had included W.A. Schultz of the Maryborough Dairy Company and M. Egan, former manager of Gayndah butter factory. The press reported that both men had, '... left their positions following the disclosures made at the prosecutions by the Income Tax Department for the non-inclusion of amounts received by way of commission in their income tax returns.'⁴

One of the allegations was over the remodelling of the Kingaroy factory, owned, of course, by the Maryborough Dairy Association, the work having cost £47,000, far in excess of initial assessments. A witness to the enquiry, Soren Hansen, who was a former director of the company, claimed that secret commissions had certainly been paid to W.A. Schultz when the Kingaroy work was being carried out in 1926. The commission heard evidence that Hansen had first become suspicious of Schultz when the question of the remodelling of the Kingaroy factory had been under consideration by the board and the work was almost certainly going to be awarded to Brisbane contractor Waugh and Josephson without any tenders being called. At a board meeting he had asked: 'Is anybody getting anything out of this?' Schultz had warned him that he should: '... be careful what he was saying or he might have to prove his words,' (face defamation action).⁵

The commission heard allegations that the construction of the Wondai factory had been pressed ahead for personal gains rather than sound economic principles, the secret commissions involved in the work being quite significant. The press later claimed: '... Schultz was sacked by the board, being given payment in lieu of notice and a week's holiday pay. Schultz had provided the board with a list of the commissions received. The sales in one year amounted to £9341/2/- and the commission to £270, which was almost three per cent. Witnesses gave details of the other commissions received by Schultz, some of which worked out at as high as 17 per cent and as low as 1.3 per cent. As the cost of plant and machinery went up during the years the commission also advanced.'⁶

W.A. Schultz, the general manager of the Maryborough Dairy Association had previously been described as, 'a keen and able officer.'⁷ Schultz had commenced his career in the dairy industry with the Caboolture Co-operative Dairy Association on 1 February, 1909, as a junior clerk, subsequently working his way up to the position of accountant. He resigned from the Caboolture Dairy Association to take up his appointment as secretary to the Maryborough Dairy Association on 1 May, 1925. On 4 October, 1927, he was appointed general manager, the press reporting: 'The duties assigned to him have been discharged loyally and well. That at the age of 35 he should hold so high a position is a tribute to his talent. In his control of an organisation of considerable proportions Mr Schultz has necessarily made himself conversant with the various branches of the business transacted and he is appealed to for guidance and counsel. His services virtually have become indispensable.'⁸

This description of Schultz's capabilities was written, of course, almost two years before he was found to be accepting secret commissions and forced to resign from the company.

The findings of the commission were tabled in the Legislative Assembly in October 1932. While almost all of those persons involved in the management of butter factories were found guiltless by the commission, there had certainly been some secret commissions paid. The findings included:

1. That these factory officials who were alleged to be district agents of Waugh and Josephson Limited adopted most secretive methods for the purpose of concealing their transactions from the directors and shareholders.
2. That every possible subterfuge was adopted by Waugh and Josephson Limited to conceal the payments to these factory officials.
3. That the payments fluctuated and synchronised with contracts being carried out by Waugh and Josephson Limited for the associations with which the officials were actively associated.
4. That generally these factory officials were not duly appointed district agents of Waugh and Josephson Limited.
5. That the statement prepared by Waugh and Josephson Limited which purported to show the basis of commissions due and payable was false.
6. That such statement was prepared with the express intention of misleading the directors of associations and other persons who may have been interested in the payments.
7. That in presenting the false statement to your commissioner E.A. Macpherson and S.T. Crawford, the representatives of Waugh and Josephson Limited, deliberately intended to convey the impression that the moneys had been paid as commission on the sales of separators and machinery other than butter factory machinery, when in fact most of it had been paid on contracts carried out for co-operative dairy associations.⁹

The secret commissions did not severely affect the general operations or reputation of the dairy industry or its operators on the South Burnett but for many months, while the investigation continued and afterwards, there was considerable concern among dairy producers that their trust in the managers and directors of the various factories had been misplaced. The event brought under close scrutiny the operations of the factories and their profitability, and care was in future exercised to ensure that fair dealing was set in place when considering financial expenditures on items such as extra equipment or building constructions.

Notes and Sources
Chapter One Hundred and Four
The Secret Commissions

1. M/C. 2 August, 1932, p 6.
2. M/C. 26 October, 1931, p 2.
3. M/C. 2 August, 1932, p 6.
4. M/C. 7 September, 1932, p 5.
5. Ibid.
6. M/C. 7 September, 1932, p 5.
7. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 15.
8. Ibid.
9. M/C. 22 October, 1932, p 10.

The Decline of the Dairy Industry

During the early 1930s there was a steady and mounting belief that a new butter factory should be established at Goomeri, and the concept was not without merit. Many people in the region were supplying cream to the factories at Wondai and Nanango, and it was believed that there was sufficient quantity of cream being produced to warrant a local factory. A meeting was held in the Goomeri Memorial Hall in February 1933 following debate on the issue in the Goomeri Chamber of Commerce. Mr W. Bandit, president of the chamber of commerce was elected to the chair, and with more than 120 other people in attendance, he heard that during the month of December over eleven thousand pounds of cream had been sent by Goomeri district producers to the Wondai butter factory and an additional nine thousand pounds of cream had gone to be processed at Murgon. The amount of cream for the following month had increased dramatically to a total of more than thirty-six thousand pounds. Clearly there was sufficient local product to warrant the construction of a factory at Goomeri.

There were many voices raised against the proposal, some claiming that the cream supplies were not sufficient and that, as shareholders in the other factories, reducing the number of cream cans to those factories would cause them economic hardship. Yet many dairymen disagreed, including the well known Thomas Herbert Spencer, pioneer of the sawmill at Elgin Vale and himself a large dairy producer who claimed that he was: '... heartily in accord with the movement and could promise that every effort on his part would be expended in seeing a butter factory established at Goomeri.'¹

A Butter Factory Investigation Committee was formed to look into every aspect of the proposed project and over the following months this committee held meetings with various bodies to ascertain the costs involved and the impact on the local economy. A further meeting was held at the Memorial Hall in November that year, the report of the investigation committee being tabled. The committee recommended the construction of a factory for a number of reasons, not only for the basic principle of having local cream processed locally and thus saving the time and expense of rail freight, but also because the construction of such a factory would enhance the value of local land — especially in more sparsely populated regions such as Manumbar, Boobyjan and Cinnabar where there was ample room for closer settlement. The construction would give an impetus to population growth, increase shire revenue and thus provide for a better regional infrastructure — the construction of roads and other facilities etc.²

With the industry burgeoning in the district it was not long before added weight was placed behind a push to have another butter factory established at Proston. A meeting of dairymen and the Proston Progress Association took place at the Proston School of Arts in February 1933 and dairymen heard that a total of 33,212 gallons of cream had been sent from the Proston, Kinleymore and Hivesville regions during the previous December. This quantity of cream represented more than seventy-four tons of butter, and with increasing rail charges to the factories at Murgon and Wondai, there was certainly a case to have a small factory constructed at Proston.³

Over the following months the drive behind the concept grew in momentum and in March the following year (1934) during the fifty-second half-yearly meeting of the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association at Murgon, the chairman of directors of the Murgon factory, J.A. Heading, announced that his company would construct a branch factory at Proston. Heading stated that work on the factory would commence almost immediately as there was an evident need for such a facility at Proston. He told shareholders that with new roads being constructed in the region and with a new bridge going over the Boyne River, many regions would be opened up to dairy farming in the Durong and adjacent areas and large quantities of cream would then pour into Proston.⁴

The directors of the Murgon factory were true to their word and the construction of the factory at Proston moved quickly ahead. The factory was completed by December that year and on Thursday 20 December, before an audience of some 1500 people, J.B. Edwards, M.L.A. declared it officially open, although the factory had actually commenced operations on 19 December when it manufactured 6104 lbs of butter. The first manager of the factory was Jack Ferguson.⁵

This was the last of the butter factories to be established in the South Burnett and the people of Goomeri were never able to have such a factory built in that town. For the following thirty years the dairy industry was a relatively prosperous one, but ultimately it moved into decline.

A few minutes before 1 o'clock on the afternoon of Monday 23 May, 1938, an explosion in an oil trap seriously disabled the Kingaroy factory and suffocating ammonia fumes overcame some of the factory employees. The explosion was heard all over the town area and the concussion rattled the windows of houses within a radius of half a mile, the press subsequently claiming: '... there was no doubt as to the direction of the report, and cars and bicycles sped to the scene so that a crowd quickly gathered.'⁶

The factory manager, H.W. Cheers, told the press that the explosion had occurred in an oil trap situated immediately outside the engine room, the explosion had shattered a large portion of the adjoining engine room wall throwing fragments of wood and metal in all directions, the door was blown off its hinges and the ammonia compressor was damaged resulting in the release of its gas. Two men were badly gassed and both also suffered deep lacerations and burns to the face and eyes. The factory was so excessively damaged that until repairs could be effected cream supplies had to be temporarily diverted to the factory at Wondai.⁷

H.W. Cheers, the manager of the factory at the time of this incident, has become something of a legend in Kingaroy and his wife was also a much loved member of the community. Cheers took over the position of manager from Henry Morgensen in April 1926, Morgensen had superseded T.H. Cornish, the original manager of the factory. Following his resignation Cheers himself was replaced by Keith Kersnovske. At the time of his appointment the Kingaroy factory complex was undergoing its extensive (and expensive) rebuilding and modernization program. During his tenure as manager the factory achieved some of its most coveted awards. Cheers himself later told the press that the award which most pleased him was that won at Launceston in 1934, the prize was a magnificent grandfather clock standing seven feet high. In 1961 Cheers was awarded an M.B.E. for his services to the dairy industry. He announced his retirement in August 1965 and left Kingaroy to live at Southport.⁸

Cheers' wife, Florence Margaret Mary Cheers, was born in Adelaide circa 1884, the daughter of Mr and Mrs Michael Dempsey. On the death of her mother, when Florence was about ten years of age, the family moved to Brisbane and Florence later started training as a nurse at the Brisbane General Hospital. Upon completion of her training she worked at the Stanthorpe and Dalby Hospitals and later became matron of the Dalby Hospital, a position she held for three years prior to her marriage which took place in 1910. After their marriage the couple lived at Roma and Murwillumbah for several years until H.W. Cheers received his appointment as manager of the Kingaroy factory. Florence Cheers died at the Alexander Private Hospital in Brisbane on Wednesday 2 May, 1934, following unsuccessful surgery. She was buried at the Toowong cemetery. A park in Kingaroy was later named after H.W. Cheers.⁹

The reasons of the decline in the dairy industry in the South Burnett were replicated in many regional centres, stiffer government legislation regarding the running of dairies, low profits, heightened competition from foreign imports and centralization in urban regions, all played a part in the eventual decline of the industry and one by one the factories, those same businesses that had taken years to get into operation and had cost the farmers hundreds of thousands of pounds, closed their doors never to reopen.

On Tuesday 4 June, 1963, shareholders of the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association voted in favour of closing the manufacturing section of the Goomeri cheese factory. It was a decision bitterly opposed by the Goomeri suppliers who attended the meeting in force.¹⁰

Approximately four years later, in October 1967, the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association's manager, Mr T.W. Davis, announced that the Proston factory would cease production of butter and would concentrate instead on the production of stock-feeds. Proston cream producers were then forced to have their cream diverted to Murgon.¹¹

In January 1969 the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association announced that it would be closing both the Wondai and Biggenden butter factories the following month, company management cited an alarming drop in supplies as the reason for the closures. The manager of the Wondai factory, Ray Maguire, who had recently taken over the position as manager, told the press that during the previous six months only three hundred tons of butter had been produced at his factory. Production at the factory had decreased to 819 tons of butter the previous year. The largest output of the factory was in 1939–40 when 1900 tons of butter had been produced.¹²

Nanango's butter factory continued for many years after these other closures, carrying on a story of progress and success that had diversified into the retail industry. Apart from two severe drought periods, the factory had paid a dividend every year and there was certainly sufficient capital for retail diversification. The company purchased the grocery and hardware store that had previously been operated by Roy Walters, the shop under its new management opening on 2 January, 1969. The co-operative also later acquired the adjoining drapery business of W. Gillmeister and Son.¹³

With diminishing cream supplies, by the 1970s it was becoming increasingly obvious that some form of rationalisation would have to take place if all the cream suppliers were to survive. In 1974 the secretary of the South Burnett Dairymen's Organisation, Doug Findlay, of Kumbia, called for urgent changes to the processing of dairy products, claiming that butter should be produced at only one factory, Kingaroy, and the milk alone should be processed through the factory at Murgon.¹⁴ By June the following year the press was headlining: 'How Long Can Dairy Farmers Carry On?' The chairman of the Queensland Dairymen's Organisation, L.E. Hancock, claimed that the entire industry was then in grave jeopardy. He said that with a current inflation rate of twenty per cent, the dairy industry was moving into rapid decline and the expected boost to the industry that many thought would occur because of a slump in cattle prices had not eventuated.¹⁵

In October the following year Les Hancock, chairman of the Nanango Dairy Co-operative, stated that the industry was in such a poor state that the work and labour of the early pioneers of the dairy industry in the region was in real jeopardy. He stated: 'Unless something is done quickly, all those good men and women who laboured in this field for most of their lives will be ruined.'¹⁶

In May the following year the end of an era came when it was announced that both the Nanango and Kingaroy butter factories would close and that all cream supplies would be diverted to Murgon. The reasons for the closures were that a large number of suppliers were leaving the industry and that manufacturing and other costs had dramatically increased. With only small quantities of cream being supplied it was no longer economically viable to keep the factories open.

Since it had first begun operations in 1907 the Kingaroy factory had gone from strength to strength, reaching its peak of production, 99 tons and 12cwt a week during 1929–30. At that time the Kingaroy factory was reportedly the largest under one roof in Australia. There were then one thousand cream suppliers, at the time of its closure there were thirty-eight. The construction of the Wondai factory in 1931 saw a decline in Kingaroy's production and its suppliers dropped to around six hundred and seventy, but it still maintained around seventy-five tons of butter a week until the 1950s when it started to drop. This decline continued until the mid 1960s when there was a dramatic reduction of suppliers and butter output. The lack of cream suppliers forced the closure of Wondai and meant a temporary boost for Kingaroy, but it would not last and by 1977 only one and a half tonnes of butter were being produced each week. During its years of operation the factory won many awards including three gold medals, two silver medals and a bronze for competitions in Britain, it also won three Australian championships and many other top Australian prizes.

Since its establishment in 1905 the Nanango factory had also won many prizes. Its peak butter output of around 1700 tons came in 1938–39 and it maintained a steady average of 1400 tons until the dairy industry declined. During the 1950s milk drying machinery was installed resulting in the manufacture of a brand of milk powder known as Amity Roller Dried Butter Milk Powder. In 1972 the emphasis of the factory operations switched to bulk milk with most of the milk being sold to the Nestlé Company at Gympie. At the time of its closure it was producing only two hundred tonnes annually.¹⁷ After the closure of the factory its buildings were rented to other enterprises and the factory itself acted as a milk receiving depot for the Brisbane and Gympie markets.

In 1980 the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association announced that its Mundubbera factory would also close, due to economic reasons and the lack of cream supplies.¹⁸

The last cheese factory on the South Burnett, the Murgon factory, ceased production in 1995 and the factory was placed on the market the following year. Chief executive officer of Burnett Valley Ltd., (formerly the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association) Mr Brian Mobbs said that the decision to close the factory had been due to a decline in the demand for cheddar cheese. Production had been scaled back in 1989–90 after the market milk side of the operation had been sold to Q.U.F., following which approximately two hundred tonnes of cheese had been manufactured each year until the decision was made in 1995 to close the operation. The factory was then placed on the market.¹⁹

By now there was little left of the South Burnett dairy industry but reflection of those halcyon days when factories such as Kingaroy, Nanango, Wondai and Murgon were churning out thousands of tons of butter every year. In April 1988, dairy products promoter and television personality Peter Russell-Clarke and Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, opened the Queensland Dairy Museum at Murgon.²⁰

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Five The Decline of the Dairy Industry

1. M/C. 9 February, (marked January on this issue) 1933, p 3.
2. M/C. 25 November, 1933, p 6.
3. M/C. 27 February, 1933, p 6.
4. M/C. 19 March, 1934, p 7.
5. M/C. 21 December, 1934, p 8.
6. K/G. 27 May, 1938.
7. *Ibid.*
8. K/H. 12 August, 1965, p 2.
9. K/G. 11 May, 1934.
10. SBT. 6 June, 1963, p 1.
11. SBT. 1 November, 1967.
12. SBT. 15 January, 1969, p 3. For further details of the closure of this factory see:
K/H. 15 January, 1969, p 1.
13. SBT. 22 January, 1969, p 2.
14. SBT. 30 October, 1974, p 2.
15. SBT. 11 June, 1975, p 3.
16. SBT. 20 October, 1976, p 6.
17. SBT. 18 May, 1977, p 1.
18. SBT. 17 September, 1980, p 5.
19. SBT. 20 June, 1995, and 16 January, 1996, p 3.
20. SBT. 27 April, 1988, p 1.

The Queensland Country Women's Association, the Red Cross and Other Organisations

There is no doubt that the banner of feminine endeavour in rural Queensland was held, and is still held, by the Queensland Country Women's Association, an association that has bonded together a sisterhood which, over the years, has done invaluable work in many important fields. In the South Burnett the Queensland Country Women's Association was comprised of many branches and sub branches.

The Queensland Country Women's Association was launched in Australia in 1922 and in the Wide Bay and Burnett district, many Q.C.W.A. rest rooms have been established at various times, some as early as the 1920s. The women who pioneered these ventures and those who followed in later years have played an important role in the development of the area, providing funding, facilities and human resources that have encouraged development across a broad cross-section of areas, medical, welfare, conservation, social development, education and many others. Funding to provide these facilities has come primarily through the efforts of members of the Q.C.W.A. who have worked diligently to raise money to provide for projects that otherwise would have languished.

A report of the branches written in 1929 stated:

The C.W.A. was more than fortunate in the women among them (Mrs Kathleen Oakes, of Kingaroy), who were attracted to that first meeting in Brisbane in August, 1922, and who formulated the brief but beautiful constitution of the new association which required of its members simply the desire to serve the community in friendliness and with loyalty to the ideals which were laid down and have been lived by our beloved State president ... As the years go by the association continues to attract the very finest women into its fold, and almost anywhere that six women may be gathered together would seem an ideal place to form a new branch.

However, the Burnett district — number 5 in the Southern Division — is undoubtedly particularly blessed, being a rich agricultural area, containing many thriving towns, well developed, and provided with adequate facilities — rail, postal and educational, as well as hospitals and ambulances — for comfortably rearing a family in good conditions. Here the first objective of a branch of the Country Women's Association need not be to overcome some disability, as it is in so many parts of the state; but it can be, and very often is, to promote a feeling of friendliness, to draw together the women and children and to provide opportunities for recreation and enjoyment. The Burnett branches are all so enthusiastic, working so harmoniously and happily under their vice-president, Miss McConnel, and quietly accumulating notable assets.¹

Chronological Listing of South Burnett Branches and their Inaugural Dates, (where known)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Kingaroy | 22 August, 1922. |
| 2. Wondai | 14 September, 1923. |
| 3. Hivesville/Proston | 27 September, 1923. |
| 4. Blackbutt | November, 1923. |
| 5. Kumbia | 1924. |
| 6. Murgon | 12 March, 1924. |
| 7. Goomeri | 5 September, 1924. |

8. Woolooga	1 August, 1925.
9. Nanango	25 November, 1925.
10. Kilkivan	12 March, 1926.
11. Wooroolin	9 April, 1926.
12. Mondure	25 July, 1928 (reformed 21 October, 1954).
13. Maidenwell	28 August, 1928.
14. Tingoorra	2 April, 1930.
15. Durong	20 April, 1933.
16. Widgee	10 April, 1940.
17. Running Creek/Calgoa	2 August, 1946.
18. Cinnabar	7 October, 1948.
19. Cloyna	18 November, 1948.
20. Tansey	7 August, 1949.
21. Speedwell	18 September, 1957.
22. Elgin Vale	9 July, 1963.
23. Cherbourg	23 March, 1964.

The following is a synopsis of the early establishment of the various Q.C.W.A. branches in the South Burnett district.

Kingaroy

The first town to form a branch of the Q.C.W.A. after its foundation on 11 August, 1922, was Kingaroy. The Kingaroy branch was formed on 22 August, 1922, by Mrs Kathleen Oakes, vice-president of the southern division. The branch president at Kingaroy was Mrs D. Youngman, (of *Taabinga* station) with vice-presidents, Mesdames R. Tancred and S.J. Elliot. The honorary secretary was Kathleen Oakes; and the honorary treasurer Miss H. O'Neill.² The first objective of the branch was the opening of a suitable rest room, and in order to obtain funds a street stall was held on Christmas Eve 1922. Meanwhile, a temporary rest room, consisting of two rooms, was rented and opened in February 1923 by Mr T. O'Neill, then chairman of the Kingaroy Shire Council. The furnishings were mostly gifts from members.

Some of the initial work carried out by this new branch included assistance to place a bush nurse at the Burrandowan soldiers' settlement and also to provide assistance to the local ambulance and hospital. Free first aid classes were held by Dr Kent Hughes.

In 1925 the rest rooms then occupied by branch members were found to be inadequate and it was decided to construct new rooms on a block of land donated to the branch by Arthur Youngman of *Taabinga* station. Following considerable fund raising activities and after obtaining a suitable loan, new rest rooms were established, these consisted of a large meeting room, a bed-room and kitchenette, with front and back verandahs. The rooms were opened in 1926. In 1928 Mrs D. Youngman resigned and Mrs J. Meiers was appointed president, a position she held for only a year when, owing to ill-health, was unable to again take office. Mrs D. Youngman was then elected president for 1929.³

In 1929 Mr W.A. Russell donated land at the Bunya Mountains and a modest building that became known as 'The Shack' was constructed. This building was utilised by Q.C.W.A. members and their families who, for a small fee, could use it for brief holidays.

By 1934 the membership of the branch had risen to eighty-one with a Younger Set which contained eighteen members. Kathleen Oakes was one of the driving forces behind a project designed to raise funds for the construction of a holiday home at Hervey Bay, this building, named 'Oakholme', was later renamed 'The Kathleen Oakes Memorial Home' in honour of Mrs Oakes who had died in 1946.⁴

During the Second World War members of the branch, like members of all other branches throughout the state, were involved in the work of the Australian Comforts Fund, and the

Q.C.W.A. rooms resembled a small factory with members manufacturing items such as camouflage netting and winter clothing. The room at the rear of the building was used as a bedroom for female service personnel and the holiday home at Hervey Bay was commandeered by the military authorities, it reverted to a holiday home after the war.

The association later published:

The 1950s were busy years for the branch — the rest rooms were painted, paths laid, a servery added to the kitchen, a small storage room added and a brick frontage and concrete steps constructed at the entrance — cutlery, crockery and silverware (were) purchased (used when catering for weddings etc) — an official table to match a silky oak president's chair donated by Mrs J.A. Ott was also purchased. The women must have had big hearts as besides all these improvements they were moving to have a waiting mothers' hostel established in Kingaroy — this, as well as the great work done by the Emergency Housekeeper's Scheme, certainly kept the needs of women and children to the fore. It was on land bought from the Binzer estate for £820 that the hostel was to be built. A building on the land (was) sold for £100 and Mr C. Gill drew up the plans for the single storey brick building to accommodate 10 women.

The tenacity of the district women has to be admired because while funds were being raised for the hostel (Durong and Kumbia were also helping) it was decided in April 1955 that a hall and dining room be added to the rest rooms — once again Mr Gill drew up the plans and in August, the Brigden Bros. began construction of the hall at the rear of the rooms. Two projects — both successful, for on 10 March, 1956, State President Mrs A.M. Berry (later Dame Alice) was present to lay the foundation stone of the hostel which was completed at a cost of £5570. While on 24 November, 1956, Mrs Nell Amies, deputy state president (and a former vice president of the division) opened the new reception hall, completed at a cost of £2500. The hostel known as 'The House of Dreams' by Kumbia, Kingaroy and Durong, was opened in 1957.⁵

An indoor bowls association was formed in 1961 and in December 1990 a president's honour board was unveiled.⁶

Wondai

The Wondai branch was formed on 14 September, 1923, by Mrs Kathleen Oakes, Kingaroy (vice-president for the district), Mrs Gwendoline Hives of *Sunday Creek* station being the first president with Mrs Roseby of Mondure acting as secretary, a position she held until 1948. During the branch's formative years Mrs Roseby would travel to the meetings by horse and sulky. At first, rooms were rented and furnished as rest rooms. Mrs Hives was later replaced as president by Mrs M. McIlhatton. One of the first objectives of the branch was to provide a service as hospital visitors, bringing comfort to those in need of medical care. A rest tent was provided on show days and the branch participated in the provision of the holiday home at Hervey Bay.

A building that later became the first rest rooms was subsequently placed on the market and branch members decided to buy this building and remove it to two allotments that had been presented to the branch by Mrs C. Buss, of Bundaberg. The president, Mrs McIlhatton, lent the money to buy the building, free of interest, the loan being paid back weekly as rent. In July, 1927, Mrs Farmer officially opened the rebuilt rest room.⁷

The rooms were enlarged in 1950 by enclosing the side verandah, the back verandah received similar renovations in 1953. The Younger Set was formed in 1949 and was later combined with Wooroolin.

Music and drama have always played an important role in the activities of the association, a choir was formed in 1965 under the conductorship of Carol Francis.

On 21 June, 1977, it was again decided to enlarge the rest rooms and a committee was formed to bring about this objective. The enlarged rooms, costing \$7000 and constructed by Mr K. Anderson, were opened by the chairman of Wondai, Cr. L.G. Smith, on 15 July, 1978.⁸

Hivesville

During a meeting held at *Sunday Creek* homestead the Hivesville branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed as a sub-branch of Wondai on 27 September, 1923. The branch was created to embrace the regions of Proston, Stalworth, Abbeywood, Kinleymore, Speedwell, Mondure and Hivesville with alternative meetings being held at Proston. Meetings at Hivesville were held initially at Seymore's Refreshment Rooms and were later moved to the hall. At Proston early meetings were held at the hotel. The sub-branch of Wondai lasted for only six months when Hivesville became a separate branch in March 1924 under the presidency of Mrs Gwendoline Hives, with Miss McConnel as secretary-treasurer.⁹

According to subsequent reports, at Hivesville a disused butcher's shop was rented and converted into a rest room. It was furnished with box furniture and coloured curtains that were made by members during a working-bee. One of the primary objectives of the branch was to build a rest room at Proston. The timber for the room was donated and the room was constructed by 1926. Work then commenced to raise sufficient funding for a similar rest room at Hivesville and when this was done a tender was accepted for £263. It was completed in December, 1928, and opened by J.B. Edwards, M.L.A., with a debit of only £119.¹⁰

After five years membership of the branch reached 100, but in April 1928 Proston became a full branch. In July that year Mondure also formed a full branch, with Mrs Green as president. This reduced the membership at Hivesville to fifty.¹¹

Another early objective of the Hivesville branch was to secure a telephone service for the district. Mrs Hives remained president until 1947 when changes to the association's rules caused her resignation, however, she subsequently served a further three years' term.¹²

The rest rooms at Hivesville have been extensively used for meetings, church services, Sunday School, maternal and child welfare, dances and parties. Children in the district have been provided with Christmas trees and gifts, at a function held in 1927 four hundred children received gifts from the branch.¹³

Proston

As we have seen, the Proston branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed initially as a sub-branch of the Wondai branch in association with Hivesville. The first meeting at Proston was held on 30 October, 1923, at the hotel and Proston officially became a branch in its own right on 12 April, 1928.¹⁴

Among the early members of the Proston branch of the Q.C.W.A. were its president, Mrs Lindley, the secretary Mrs Greenway, the vice-president, Mrs Chesterton, Mrs Hodges and Miss Rice. The membership in 1929 stood at forty-nine women. They raised funding for a rest room and this was fully operational by that time.¹⁵

The association later recorded:

As early as 1924 moves were under way to establish a rest room in Proston for in November of that year Mrs Blanch was interviewed by a railway inspector re land — subsequently Allotment 7 of Portion 2 was set aside for the Q.C.W.A. Mr Wardill, Stalworth, donated timber and in October 1925 Messrs Stanfield & Chattaway cut and carted the logs to the sawmill — saving the ladies £25 — Messrs Hodge & Nowland carted the timber to the block and rental on the block commenced on 22 December, 1926, — rental £2/2/0 per annum ... a tender from Mr P. Kerr for £83 was accepted to build the rooms ...

Over the years the building has been upgraded, gardens added to the front — the rooms were once opened daily and a caretaker was engaged to keep them clean, now, however, the members perform this task — electricity was installed in 1944.¹⁶

Blackbutt

According to the state's annual first report, the Blackbutt branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed in November 1923. A preliminary meeting to form a branch was held that month, but due to the summer holidays there was not another meeting until 2 April, 1924.¹⁷

Twenty-seven ladies attended the meeting of 2 April, 1924, the founding officers were Mrs S. Collins, as president, Mrs J. Gibson, secretary, and Mrs E. Davies as treasurer. The first meetings of the branch were held in the coffee room of the Grand Hotel and Mrs Curry's home at Benarkin. The meetings subsequently moved to a cottage donated by Messrs Brett and Boldery in 1934, and to a room in the R.S.L. Hall in 1939. In 1962 the Bucklands State School was purchased and relocated to a piece of land granted by the Nanango Shire Council at the corner of Coulson and John Streets, Blackbutt, which is the present location of the branch.

The rest rooms were opened by the deputy president of the association, Mrs A.E. Atherton, O.B.E., on the afternoon of Saturday 25 August, 1962, when Mrs Clarris Buck was president of the branch. At that opening Mrs Buck told a large gathering of the history of the formation of the branch and its endeavours to have the rest rooms constructed. The press later reported:

Mrs Buck said some time ago they had approached the shire council about obtaining a piece of land on which they could build their rest rooms. Their application was successful and the land was made available to them free of charge.

Through the Q.C.W.A. head office they approached the Educational Department to see if they could purchase the Bucklands School. The department offered the building for the sum of £212.

From donations and functions, £112 was in hand, so a further £100 was sought. This was lent to them by the Ipswich branch of the Q.C.W.A., and the building was bought.

A donation of £87 approximately from the *Courier Mail* Pruzzles Competition was also received. The next step was to raise the finance of £200 to have the school placed on the allotment. With the approval of head office this was borrowed from the Commonwealth Bank ...

With the building established, money had to be raised for essential alterations, and through hard work and the generosity of the citizens of Blackbutt, approximately £150 was raised. This was put to good use, dividing one of the verandahs into a doctor's surgery and waiting room.¹⁸

Apparently the branch carried out much the same activities as other Q.C.W.A. branches, its members being involved in fund-raising for local community events and also, through the war years, providing comforts in the way of clothing, food and tobacco to members of the armed forces and to civilians in Britain.

Throughout the years a variety of fund-raising methods have been employed. These have included dance and card nights, balls, bazaars, street stalls, cent auctions, fashion parades, hoy and Melbourne Cup days, all carried out by the voluntary efforts of a small group of ladies.

In 1935, with Miss M. Grant as president, the first Younger Set was formed. 1960 saw another Younger Set formed with Miss F. Marrington as president.

The branch has operated a shire lending library since 1984. Inaugural convener was Bette Hawkins assisted by Vera Kreis. From September 1996 this facility was relocated to the new Archie Muir Centre and is now operated by the Nanango Shire Council.¹⁹

Since October 1992 a craft morning has been held every fourth Wednesday. Over the years, branch members have worked to provide aid to the community in many ways, the most recent has been assistance to drought victims. Other contributions have included the provision of a 'Silva' stretcher donated to the Yarraman District Queensland Ambulance Service, immediate need for local families in distress, supporting the purchase of a pedal wireless set for the outback, a defibrillator for the Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane, support of World War Two Australian Comforts Fund, assistance with the establishment of the Diggers' Memorial Hall at Blackbutt which was opened in 1939, the local swimming pool in 1987, and donations to the Cooyar flood disaster.²⁰

Kumbia

The Kumbia branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed in 1924 with Mrs T.W. Evans as its first president. Meetings were held at the local hall, in private homes and at the Mannuem School which was more convenient for members in that district. An ambitious project to have a local hospital constructed at Kumbia was later abandoned due to the lack of visiting doctors. Like most other branches, members of the Kumbia branch were closely involved in support work during the war years and have worked diligently towards raising funds for community events. Dances have been held in aid of the hospital at Kingaroy and during the Great Depression, upon the request of Matron Rixon of the Clydebank Hospital, Kumbia members collected clothing suitable for children and also forwarded items of food.

During the Second World War Q.C.W.A. members at Kumbia did as all other branch members were then doing and helped with the war effort through activities allied to the Comforts Fund and other committees. Food parcels were sent to enlisted personnel, camouflage nets were manufactured and medical supplies were kept in stock in case of air raid casualties. Members provided sandwiches and tea to soldiers of the Light Horse, paper, aluminium and other scrap materials were collected, many women handing in long-loved cooking utensils. Books and magazines were forwarded to the four Kingaroy hospitals. Additionally, several members provided accommodation in their homes for soldiers on leave. A maternal and child welfare clinic was also established.

In 1947 the branch arranged for a programme called *Help Your Neighbour* to be broadcast on the local radio station, this programme assisted in filling the need for items that were in short supply during the post war years.

A Younger Set branch was formed in 1949 with eight new members, Dell Slattery became its first president. Through the efforts of these members funds were raised that enabled a pianola to be purchased and to have the floors of the rooms covered with linoleum. Additionally the Younger Set raised funds for many local causes, however it was disbanded in 1958.

In November 1952 members of the branch received a letter from Cyril Hodge of the Kumbia Cafe offering a piece of land suitable for new rest rooms. The offer was accepted, the land cleared and the following year a loan of £400 was received from the state government in order to construct the new rooms. The rooms were built by Mr A. Collier, assisted by Mr A. Beil, and opened by Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, M.L.A. in August 1953.

In 1954 members sent food parcels to victims of the flooding at Lismore and also to the Brisbane City Mission.

The branch celebrated its golden jubilee in 1974 with a variety of programmes and since that date has continued to strongly aid in a variety of community events.²¹

Murgon

The Murgon branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed on 12 March, 1924, by Mrs Kathleen Oakes of Kingaroy. The initial membership was just thirty women. The first officers were Mrs B. Frederick, who was elected president, the secretary was Miss M. Nunn, the treasurer Mrs I. Cunningham and there was a committee of five women.

Like all other branches, the primary objective of the Murgon branch was to arrange for a rest room, an arrangement was made with a Mrs Dargen to temporarily use a room at the rear of her shop in Lamb Street and some furniture was installed, however, after six weeks members of the branch were informed that the room was no longer available as it was required for domestic purposes.

The next meeting of the branch was held at the Murgon School of Arts (which later became the Hanlon Hall) and arrangements were made to use a room in that building on a temporary basis, the furniture was then transferred there. A report of subsequent activities claimed: 'At the end of four months the idea of a temporary rest room was abandoned ... The following meeting was again

held at the School of Arts. Mrs Sweet offered her spacious verandah as a meeting place. This was availed of, and meetings were held there for almost twelve months.²²

Alma A. Tickle, then the secretary of the branch, wrote to the Murgon Shire Council on 4 July, 1925, requesting that the council provide a piece of land at a nominal price. Ms Tickle wrote: '... We understand that the piece of land we are asking for is to be auctioned at an early date. If this is so we would ask you to do all you can to aid us in getting it at a nominal price. We do not anticipate anyone bidding against such a worthy cause as the C.W.A. We have had a splendid offer from Messrs Cobb Bros. of Cloyna to lend us £100 free of interest for two years and we are anxious to secure the land to build our rest room.' However, the council replied that there were no such provisions under the Land Act and that the portion of land required by the branch, a site in Macalister Street adjoining the residence of the station master, was a valuable property and that when it went up for sale it would have to be auctioned and sold to the highest bidder.²³

Meanwhile letters were written to the postmaster-general, applying for land at the rear of the post office, and to the Lands Department, asking for ground in Lamb Street. The latter was granted.²⁴ The association later published: 'However, the site was later changed to the present position in the railway reserve and over the years additions have been made to the original building which was used as a spotting post by the R.A.A.F. during the war years. A Younger Set was formed in 1936 and in 1937 the branch formed a link with Long Bridy and Litton Cheney Women's Institute, England. During the war years food parcels were sent to the link.'²⁵

During the history of the Murgon branch three members have been honoured by the Queen, these are Mrs Katie O'Neill, who received an O.B.E. and Mrs Essie Goodchild and Mrs Doris Freeman who both received an M.B.E.²⁶ In the late 1980s the branch launched its cookery book with a foreword by Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen.²⁷

Goomeri

The Goomeri branch of the Q.C.W.A. was opened by the vice-president of the southern division, Mrs Kathleen Oakes, in the Boonara Hall, Goomeri, on 5 September, 1924. The first president was Mrs J.P. Lawless, vice-presidents were Mrs Killop, L. Hall, W.B. Lawless, the honorary treasurer was Mrs Bristow, the secretary, Mrs L. Skene and the committee was comprised of Mrs B. Micklethwait, (later treasurer) C. Eisentrager, L.M. Jones, A.E. Jones, H.F. Shadforth and Miss Downing.

Monthly meetings were held in the Boonara Hall until rest rooms could be constructed and this was one of the branch's first objectives, Mr W.B. Lawless of *Boobyjan* and his wife offered to lend £200 for two years or longer at 5 per cent interest and the state government allowed the branch to build on railway grounds at a rental of £5 per annum. This rate was subsequently reduced to £2/2/-. Tenders for the construction of the new rest rooms were called, builders Kopp and Toop won the contract with their quotation of £286/12/9d, Mr and Mrs W.B. Lawless donated the remaining amount of £86/12/9, and other fund-raising provided the capital to pay the total price, including painting and fencing, of £375/9/10. In March, 1925 the treasurer, Mrs Bristow, resigned as she was leaving the district, she was replaced by Mrs B. Micklethwait. In July that year the secretary Mrs L. Skene also resigned and Mrs Lecombe was elected in her place.²⁸

A press report of the branch, published in 1929 stated: 'It was felt that one of the most necessary things to benefit the women and children of the country would be the building of seaside homes where visitors might board at a nominal cost. The Q.C.W.A. appeal committee launched an appeal for a large sum and each branch was asked to give its quota. Mrs Oakes was asked to try and find a suitable place for the Wide Bay and Burnett districts, and finally chose an ideal home at Torquay, (Hervey Bay), at a cost of £900. Six branches agreed to share the cost of this, Kingaroy, Wondai, Hivesville, Murgon, Goomeri and Gayndah.'²⁹

One of the advantages of the position of the rest rooms near the railway station was that country women travellers could use the rooms while they waited for their trains, tea and coffee were served, and those women who had completed long train journeys could refresh themselves before carrying on their journey to their homes in the country.³⁰

A library was opened at the rooms in 1930 with books that were both purchased and donated. A Younger Set was formed at the branch in 1939. During the war years the rooms were used for the manufacture of camouflage netting and a branch of the Australian Comforts Fund was formed there. The rooms were also manned by members acting as aircraft spotters.³¹

In 1954 a block of land near the Hall of Memory became available and in March 1955, following an anonymous donation of £300 and with the aid of a bank loan, the rooms were moved from the railway yard to their present position. The association later published: 'The branch has, over the years, always helped where needed — providing a bursary for children from local schools, an emergency box of clothing was stocked and available to anyone in need through disaster, the rooms once provided accommodation for a woman whose home was destroyed by fire. The local hospital benefited, flood appeals supported, supplying materials for Malayan women, women of Mirpir (near Calcutta) receiving financial aid to help with reading and writing skills, Bush Children, Boy Scouts, crippled children, ambulance, providing layettes for babies etc.'³²

Woolooga

The Q.C.W.A. at Woolooga was first formed on 1 August, 1925, as a sub-branch of Gympie, there was an initial membership of eight women with a Mrs Kington as its first president. It was initially known as the Widgee-Woolooga sub-branch and remained as such until 5 August, 1926. During that year the branch assisted Goomeri and Gympie branches in the establishment of their rest rooms and also sent a donation to the *Dorrigo* Relief Fund. The *Dorrigo* was a steamer belonging to the John Bourke Line which plied a regular run between Brisbane and Thursday Island. The steamer was sunk in poor weather, primarily due to overloading, in April 1926, of her entire crew only her skipper, Captain Charles Albert Grey and his son, Alvan, a seaman working on the vessel, survived.³³

Early in 1926 the state president of the Q.C.W.A., Mrs Fairfax, accompanied by Mrs Kathleen Oakes, the president of the Kingaroy branch, and Miss J. White, the state secretary, visited Woolooga and urged members of the sub-branch to form a full branch at the village. This was done in August that year with twenty-eight members.

The first annual meeting of Woolooga branch was held on 3 March, 1927, by that time membership had increased to thirty-three women. Fund-raising was carried on in a variety of forms which provided donations to the Gympie ambulance, and to 'Lota' and 'Oakholme' homes. Members also sent parcels of linen and groceries to the homes and assisted financially with the construction of a tank and stand.³⁴

The association later published:

Meetings were held in various places: private homes; (the) verandah of (the) local store; the cafe; hotel lounge; the station house and hall. When a new hall was built the meetings were held there until their own rooms were built. Members travelled to meetings by horse and buggy; rode horses or walked; some came by train and later some came by cream lorry — today the motor car or even a motor bike is used.

A block of land in the township was donated to the branch to build a rest room in 1929 — it was well after the war that the rooms were built. A Comforts Fund was formed during the war years and with their available funds the branch bought War Bonds. It was 1953 before a start was made to build the rooms — the War Bonds were sold and with a loan of £470 from (the) state, donations and proceeds from dances, concerts, street stalls etc, eventually there were enough funds. The building was completed at a cost of £900. A local store donated three chairs and the Running Creek/Calgoa Branch having disbanded donated their furniture. The first meeting held in the new rooms on 12 February, 1957, with Mrs Roberts (state president) attending the official opening on 6 April, 1957.³⁵

Nanango

On Wednesday 25 November, 1925, a meeting was called at Nanango by Mrs Kathleen Oakes, secretary of the Kingaroy branch of the Q.C.W.A. and vice-president of the southern division. As a

result of that meeting, held in the shire hall, the Nanango branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed, its first president was Mrs F. Sullivan, vice presidents were Mrs J.J. Brazil, Mrs M.J. Roach and Miss M.N. Bussell, the secretary was Mrs G.S. Lee. Membership was open to any woman, the subscription being five shillings for the head of the family and one shilling for other members of the family. The branch started initially with sixty-five members. Temporary premises owned by Mrs F. Sullivan on the corner of Alfred and Henry Streets were used for approximately twelve months when it was decided to purchase a small building to be used as a rest room and this was obtained for £100. This room was later sold with sufficient profit to enable members to place a deposit on more substantial rooms in Henry Street that were opened in August 1935. During the war years the rest rooms were let at no charge for patriotic purposes. The branch celebrated its silver jubilee in November 1950 when members were addressed by one of the branch's original vice presidents, Mrs J.J. Brazil.³⁶

The rest rooms were moved to Fitzroy Street in 1972 and the 50th anniversary of the branch was celebrated in November 1975 when Mrs Beryl Rose was president.³⁷ When the branch celebrated its diamond jubilee in 1985 Mrs Patricia Brown was its president, special guests of the day included Senator Florence Bjelke-Petersen and Mrs Marie Elliot, state president of the Q.C.W.A.³⁸

Over the years many additions and renovations have been made to the rest rooms which have been used for meetings, entertainment and social gatherings. A Younger Set was later established at Nanango. Members have been involved in music and drama, a yearly cookery contest is held and handicrafts play a significant role in the branch. Each year members entertain ex servicemen and women with a luncheon on Anzac day, senior citizens are similarly entertained at the end of each year.³⁹

Kilkivan

On the afternoon of 12 March, 1926, Mrs Kathleen Oakes visited Kilkivan and addressed a meeting of women on the aims and objectives of the Q.C.W.A. It was decided at that meeting to form a local branch of the Q.C.W.A., Mrs R. Galloway was elected president, Miss Cogan as secretary, and there was an enrolment of twenty-three women, by the end of 1928 the branch had ninety-two financial members.

Meetings were held on the second Wednesday of each month at the local School of Arts. In 1929 the branch's officers included its president Mrs R. Galloway, the vice-presidents were E.P. Hammett, S.E. Batts, C.A. Moreland, and F.L.B. Mackrell, the secretary was Mrs A. White, the treasurer, Mrs A.F. Euler.

Among the first objectives of the branch was a plan to secure rural classes for Kilkivan and district, whereby children could obtain vocational training. A press report of the efforts made by those early members later claimed: 'To raise the necessary funds all members set to work for a fete, with a baby show and decorated motor car competition as added attractions. The season was very dry, but the efforts nevertheless were crowned with success ... The objective, after much delay, was attained in July 1927. The necessary alterations to the local school buildings were then made for the girls' work, and a new building erected in which to hold classes for boys. The total cost to the branch was £122. The government provided full equipment and the classes commenced in July. On July 7, 1928, the opening of these classrooms by Mr Riddle, inspector of technical colleges, took place in the presence of a large gathering. The event was of great importance to the branch, being the official recognition of the part taken in procuring the classes.'⁴⁰

A Younger Set was formed in 1937, its members entertained troops who were passing through the region. The association was later able to purchase the old council chambers, the building was moved to a miner's lease block of land which later became freehold. The new rest rooms were opened on 6 June, 1959.⁴¹

Other projects embraced by the association have included the establishment of the rural clinic, involvement with the centennial and bicentennial celebrations, purchasing playground equipment, beautifying the town, aiding flood victims and S.E.S. work.⁴²

The branch raised funds for a variety of other projects including the establishment of the home at Hervey Bay. Annual donations were also sent to the Gympie and Murgon ambulances and the branch also supported the T.B. Soldiers' Association.⁴³

Wooroolin

Among the older branches in the South Burnett, the Wooroolin branch was formed on 9 April, 1926, at the Wooroolin Memorial School of Arts. Twenty-two ladies attended that first meeting and a Mrs Kennedy was elected president. Among other fund raising activities branch members quickly embraced the concept of the construction of 'Oakholme' at Hervey Bay.

Members were responsible for the establishment of the laurel trees along the main street of Wooroolin and one of the early achievements was to provide funding for the divisional purchase of a two-way pedal radio set that was used to establish an aerial medical service to people in the country.

The Younger Set was formed in 1932 with fourteen members who ran dances and carried out other fund raising activities. The association later published: 'As a main objective they chose the building of a tennis court, the court, erected on railway property, became a reality in 1934 and two years later a club house, free of debt, was erected ... The activities over the next few years were many and varied, however, as the girls married and left the district the decision to disband was made in 1943. In 1990 girls joined with Wondai to form the Wondai/Wooroolin Younger Set.'

At a meeting held in December 1942 members of the Q.C.W.A. at Wooroolin voted to disband in order to join the Comforts Fund. Members then worked for the fund during the war years and at a meeting held at the hall on 19 June, 1947, the Q.C.W.A. branch was reformed with Mrs I. Buckley as its president. The branch took over the rooms previously occupied by the Younger Set which were then renovated and officially opened in 1955. In subsequent years additions and renovations have been made to these rooms.

In addition to their varied fund raising activities, a choir was formed at Wooroolin in 1974 and a piano was purchased at a later date. Since that time members have continued to be active in all fields of community endeavour raising money for a variety of worthy causes.⁴⁴

Mondure

The Mondure branch of the Q.C.W.A. was first formed on 25 July, 1928. Miss McConnel, the vice-president of the executive of the southern division, opened the branch with 18 members.

Those initially elected to office included the president, Mrs Green, vice-presidents, Mesdames Russell and Thorpe, the secretary, Mrs Ronald, and the treasurer, Miss Hullah. The first objective of the branch was to assist the local hall committee to reduce the debt on the hall that had recently been constructed at Mondure.⁴⁵

Little appears to be known of this first branch at Mondure and it evidently later became defunct, the history of the Q.C.W.A., *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division*, published in 1996, included nothing of this early branch, the publication records only the following information: 'Thirty-two ladies attended the inaugural meeting held on 21 October, 1954. The first president being Mrs L.E. Lovell. Some foundation members later transferred to Hivesville when the branch closed on 17 November, 1973.'⁴⁶

Maidenwell

The Maidenwell branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed on 28 August, 1928, the first branch president was Mrs Holden-Brown with Mrs Maher as treasurer. Meetings were held in Mrs Maher's home or at the hotel dining room and were later moved to the hall where meetings are still held today, the hall now being owned by the Nanango Shire Council. One of the branch's more prominent presidents was Mrs Mabel Mary Anderson, after whom the branch's M.M. Anderson Library was named. Mrs Anderson was born in Brisbane on 15 October, 1897 and

arrived at Maidenwell in 1922 where she taught at the Tanduringie School. She married Charles Anderson in 1928 at Brisbane and returned to Maidenwell where her husband had selected property in 1908. Mrs Anderson was a foundation member of the Maidenwell branch and during the war years served with the Comforts Fund. She died at St Aubyn's Hospital on 24 November, 1969.⁴⁷

Tingoora

First formed in 1930, meetings of the Tingoora branch were initially held at the Tingoora Hall, its first president was a Mrs Tannock.

In April 1932 members were discussing ways in which funds could be raised for the construction of rest rooms, however, as the branch's bank balance stood at only £5/19/4d, it was decided to shelve this idea for a while. Yet branch members must have been sufficiently determined for, as the association subsequently stated: 'Later a special account was opened for this purpose (the construction of rest rooms). Minutes show in 1933 the idea of building rest rooms was abandoned — although the minutes do not show how or when the rooms were built, £20 was passed for payment for furniture for the rest rooms and a special meeting was held at 2 p.m. in the rest rooms on 11 January, 1934, with the rooms being officially opened by Mrs Walker at 2 p.m. 8 February, 1934. A dance was held that night with the Younger Set (formed in 1932) helping with the catering. (The Younger Set was disbanded on 11 December, 1934).'⁴⁸

Like all other branches, the Tingoora branch was active in fund raising and community endeavours, making donations to the 'Lota' seaside cottage and sending gifts to 'Oakholme'. The branch went into recess at the annual meeting on 27 September, 1977, and never reformed, after which the rest rooms were purchased by the Nanango branch of the Q.C.W.A.⁴⁹

Durong

The Durong branch dates back to 20 April, 1933 when a meeting was held at the home of Mr and Mrs S.V. Reddan. Mrs Reddan was elected president with Mrs W. Reddan as secretary and a Mrs MacAllister as treasurer. Meetings were initially held in members' homes, later being transferred to the Durong Hall, and money was raised to purchase a piano for the hall in 1936.

Like almost all other branches, the members at Durong wished to construct their own rest rooms, land was donated by Mr H. Horne and fund raising got under way to provide the money necessary for the construction of the rooms. However, sixteen years passed before any firm decisions were made and in 1952 it was decided that rather than building new rooms it would be more advantageous to the district's young mothers if rest rooms were added to the hall. The block of land was sold and the existing supper room at the hall was purchased at a cost of £347. This building was lined, new windows were installed, the kitchen was refurbished and the building was repainted. This work was completed by 1953.⁵⁰

Widgee

This branch was formed on 10 April, 1940, under the presidency of Mrs Amelia McIntosh. Meetings were initially held in Mrs McIntosh's home until the local hall became available. The formation of this branch came at a time of great community need, stringent rationing was in force because of the war and members launched themselves into supporting the war effort. Dances and other fund raising activities were held providing money and clothing for both troops and civilians. Food parcels were sent to the troops along with winter clothing and other items such as cigarettes and tinned fruit. Orphans in England were sent clothing and branch members provided items for the Food for Britain Appeal.

On the local scene the branch members provided Christmas trees to country families and aided in the upgrading of the hall facilities. Donations have been made to flood and fire victims and to state hostels, local schools and other organisations.

The Younger Set was formed in March 1979 with Sue Heath as its president.⁵¹

Running Creek/Calgoa

This branch was formed at a meeting held on 2 August, 1946 when a Mrs Gould was elected its first president. Meetings were held in the local hall which was provided free of charge by the hall committee. Members of the branch supported the construction of 'Oakholme' at Hervey Bay, and provided support to the leper colony at Peel Island. Additionally, members provided food to Britain during the post war years of rationing. The branch was forced to close on 22 September, 1956, due to the lack of active members, at that time the branch's furniture and other items of equipment and fittings were donated to the Woolooga branch, the members of which had recently completed new rest rooms.⁵²

Cinnabar

The Cinnabar branch of the Q.C.W.A. was first formed on 7 October, 1948, and operated until 23 September, 1981, its meetings were held in the local hall where members: '... roasted at the summer meetings and froze at the July winter meetings.' Little is known of this now defunct branch but we may presume that it functioned like all other branches and concentrated its energies on raising funds and assisting with local community events.⁵³

Cloyna

The Cloyna branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed on 18 November, 1948, with Mrs G. Kerkow as its first president. Meetings were held in the local hall and five years later fund raising began in order to build rest rooms. These fund raising events were successful and Jack Krebs won the tender to build the rooms which were opened during the mid 1950s.⁵⁴

Tansey

This branch came into existence at a public meeting held in the Tansey Hall on 7 August, 1949. Thirty-five ladies joined the branch that day and by the end of the year membership had grown to forty-five. The first branch president was Mrs H.M. Graham. Members moved quickly into fund raising operations by providing luncheons at the Tansey campdraft. Soon afterwards it was decided to have rest rooms constructed. The association later published: 'They met with trustees and members of the hall committee and as a result plans were drawn up to build a room on the end of the hall. Stumps for the room were donated by Mr R.P. Stumm and by the end of 1950 the building was under way — officially opened by state president Mrs Roberts 31 May, 1951.' Furniture was provided for the new building as further funds became available.

Members of this branch were strong in supporting the establishment of a hospital at Goomeri, a room was subsequently furnished at the hospital and in 1960 a humidicrib was donated.

A library was created in 1951 with books being both donated and purchased. With the assistance of a government subsidy more books were added each year until the library contained over 750 books. Mrs N. Graham was appointed librarian in 1952 and held that position until 1962.

Other activities of the branch have included the formation of a choir and the creation of a drama group which has performed at the Warana Festival in Brisbane. Members have been active in donating prizes for schools and shows and assisting the Blue Nurses.⁵⁵

Speedwell

The first meeting of the Speedwell branch of the Q.C.W.A. was held on 18 September, 1957, at the home of Mrs S.A. Blair. Thereafter meetings were held in the homes of various members. This was only a small branch of the organisation with approximately sixteen members, but those members were active fund raisers and did much for the local community, they catered at weddings and at cattle sales and sent delegates to Q.C.W.A. conferences and executive meetings. Additionally they held concerts, fancy dress parties and Christmas parties for local children. The branch was closed in September 1964.⁵⁶

Elgin Vale

As we have seen elsewhere in this history, the site where the village of Elgin Vale was later established was originally a part of historic *Manumbar* station, settled by John Mortimer in 1848, however, apart from *Elgin Vale* station, a resumption from *Manumbar*, there was no settlement at Elgin Vale until the sawmills arrived there, firstly the mill founded by Ross and Co., and later the mill on the banks of Moonda Waamba Creek constructed by Thomas Herbert Spencer in 1926 and opened commercially in 1927. Around this mill the village of Elgin Vale sprang into existence, but it was not until 9 July, 1963, that a branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed at the settlement. On that day the divisional president, Mrs V. O'Farrell of Kandanga, chaired a meeting to form the Elgin Vale branch, its first president was Mrs B. Nielson who resigned seven weeks later as her family was due to leave the district. Upon the resignation of Mrs Nielson, Mrs R. Lane was elected to the position of president. Meetings were held at the Elgin Vale Hall, near the site of the sawmill, until 1983, when the branch purchased the, by then, closed school building at Elgin Vale for use as rest rooms.⁵⁷

Cherbourg

The Cherbourg branch of the Q.C.W.A. was formed on 23 March, 1964, the officers included Mrs Phillips as president, Mrs Demlin as treasurer, the secretary was Mrs O'Chin and vice presidents were Mrs Harrison, Mrs Collins, Mrs West and Mrs Moore.⁵⁸ A Younger Set was later formed at this centre. Members of this branch did much to raise funds for local community events and were instrumental in providing added facilities for the people of Cherbourg. The branch went into recess and was finally disbanded on 8 September, 1975.⁵⁹

Progress and Organisation Through the Years

By 1938 the membership of the entire southern division of the Q.C.W.A., which included, of course, those branches within the area of the South Burnett, had reached 7116, with assets of £35,521. Members of these branches attended a meeting at Charleville in November that year and passed a number of resolutions, they called for tax exemptions during times of drought, the development of a water conservation programme at federal level, the rehabilitation of the wool industry, the introduction of a system of cheap fresh fish supply into country areas, a restructuring of hospital taxes, the provision of incentives to young women to take up domestic work in country areas, a call for the introduction of maternity bonuses for each child, the declaration of whooping cough and chicken pox as notifiable diseases and the restructuring of social relief payments.⁶⁰

During the annual conference held at Roma in 1944 a decision was made to create smaller divisions, and following this initiative a meeting was held at Gympie on 1 December that year at which the Gympie and South Burnett division was formed. The first year of the division was taken up with war work, providing such materials as food, clothing and blankets. Parcels were also sent to the Wacol immigration centre and after the war a mothers' hostel was opened in Gympie, 319 women had used this hostel by August 1950, another similar hostel was later opened in Kingaroy.⁶¹

Presidents of the Gympie and South Burnett division since its inception in 1944 are as follows:

1944-46	N. Osborne.
1946-49	R.L. Podger.
1949-52	W. Osborne.
1952-55	C. Burton.
1955-58	W. Osborne.
1958-61	J.H. Rogash.
1961-64	E.J. O'Farrell.
1964-67	H.W. Davis, M.B.E.
1967-70	L.G. Freeman, M.B.E.

1970-73	R.H. Phillips.
1973-76	H.J. Armstrong.
1976-78	R. Lane.
1978-81	A.J. Bright.
1981-84	J. Evans.
1984-87	A. Wellington, O.A.M.
1987-90	J. Thompson.
1990-93	L. Donald.
1993-96	V. Hay.
1996-	M. Mudra.

The Red Cross and Other Organisations

The international Red Cross movement really had its genesis on a battlefield in northern Italy in 1859 when a man named Henri Dunant, a Swiss national, saw the devastation following the terrible battle of Solferino. Approximately forty thousand men lay dead or dying and nowhere was there any form of medical attention. Dunant hastily organised a corps of volunteers from the nearby town of Castiglione, housewives, priests, labourers, teachers, he commandeered private homes for temporary hospitals and the wounded were taken to them and cared for. Dunant later published his *Un Souvenir de Solferino*, and for four years he campaigned to have some form of society created whose members could take care of the sick and wounded during times of war. A committee was formed in 1863 which called for an international conference on the issue. That conference, with thirty-six delegates from sixteen countries, met at Geneva from the 26th to the 29th of October 1863 and the fundamental principles of the Red Cross were formed. A treaty was drawn up the following year by which governments agreed to care for the sick and wounded in times of war, whether those victims be friend or enemy. The red cross on a white background was adopted as the emblem of the society so that hospitals, ambulances and personnel could be recognised on the battlefield. The original convention was later revised to include protection for victims of war at sea, prisoners of war and civilians.

When war broke out in Europe in 1914 the Red Cross opened the International Prisoners of War agency in Geneva and Red Cross nurses worked extensively in the highly dangerous zones of the war front. Volunteers provided the staff for canteens and ambulances, they maintained rest and convalescent homes, and motor transports under the Red Cross banner provided for the evacuation of wounded.

In Australia there were many Red Cross societies formed, their members came from the ranks of ordinary people, generally women, who volunteered their services for a number of purposes, the provision of medical supplies, food and other comforts to the injured and needy soldiers who had gone to fight on foreign shores. Public demand also saw the Red Cross societies broaden their activities to meet other social needs.

A Red Cross Society was formed in Nanango in September 1939, only weeks after war had been declared with Germany. A public meeting was called by C.S. McClymont, the chairman of the Nanango Shire Council, who asked for volunteers for the society. After explaining the aims of the society a motion was passed to form the local Red Cross group. The first elected officers were Mrs C.S. McClymont, its president, J.P. Neil and L.H. Symes, vice-presidents, Miss Wilson and Miss Mulcahy joint honorary secretaries. The objectives of the society were to carry out the conventions of the International Red Cross, to establish branches throughout the state to further the work of the Red Cross in Queensland, to provide hospital materials and garments, extra medical comforts for men on active duty, to supplement the hospital medical stores and equipment of the armed services, to enrol women and men who, after gaining certificates in first aid, could be formed into voluntary aid detachments for home services, and to render assistance in the case of public calamity.⁶²

In addition to the Red Cross there were many other organisations which played a leading role in times of conflict. Organisations like the comforts fund and the patriotic fund provided resources such as gifts for those at the front, raised money to provide numerous items, including war-planes,

in order to continue the prosecution of the wars, although it should be pointed out that these funds were raised more for patriotic and humane reasons rather than aggressive ones. Women during times of war played leading roles in many other spheres, during the First World War they were placed at the leading edge of social reform when they took positions such as bus drivers or factory workers, some being employed in armaments factories. Women became air raid wardens, aircraft spotters, messengers, army nurses, post mistresses or any of a host of other occupations, many of which were traditionally male orientated.

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Six

The Queensland Country Women's Association, the Red Cross and Other Organisations

1. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 5.
2. K/H. 18 September, 1947, p 1.
3. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 4.
4. K/H. 18 September, 1947, p 1, and *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, pp 17-18.
5. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 18.
6. *Ibid*, p 19.
7. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 6.
8. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 30.
9. SBT. 23 October, 1968, p 12.
10. *Ibid*.
11. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 5.
12. SBT. 23 October, 1968, p 12.
13. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 15.
14. *Ibid*, p 24.
15. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 6.
16. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 24.
17. Letter from the Q.C.W.A. state archivist, dated 8 August, 1983, to Clarris Buck, Clarris Buck collection.
18. N/A. 30 August, 1962, p 1.
19. Letter to the author from Mrs Marian Mudra, dated 21 March, 1997.
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21. For a comprehensive history of this branch see: Carroll, Cecelia, *A History of the Kumbia Branch of the Q.C.W.A., Marking its Diamond Jubilee, 1924-1984*, a copy of which may be found at the Kumbia Historical Society.
22. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 5.
23. For copies of these letters see file: C.W.A., correspondence box 1924-25, Murgon Shire Council archives.
24. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 5.
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26. SBT. 31 May, 1994, p 21.
27. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 23.
28. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 4.
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30. B/C. 9 July, 1925.

31. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 13.
32. *Ibid*, p 12.
33. For details of this tragedy see: Matthews, Tony, *River of Dreams*, Vol 2, pp 453-456.
34. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 7.
35. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 30.
36. N/A. 30 November, 1950, pp 1 and 4.
37. SBT. 20 January, 1985, p 42.
38. SBT. 27 November, 1985, p 40.
39. For further details see: *Q.C.W.A. Nanango Branch 70th anniversary publication, 1995*.
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41. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 17.
42. *Ibid*, p 17.
43. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 6.
44. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 31-32.
45. M/C. 22 May, 1929, p 3.
46. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 22.
47. N/A. 11 December, 1969, p 6. For a more detailed history of this branch see: *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 21.
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49. *Ibid*.
50. *Ibid*, p 10.
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53. *Ibid*, p 9.
54. *Ibid*, p 9-10.
55. *Ibid*, p 26.
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57. For a comprehensive history of Elgin Vale and its mill, see: Matthews, Tony, *The Coffee-pot Mill*, Kilkivan Shire Council, 1997.
58. SBT. 2 April, 1964, p 2.
59. *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, p 9.
60. N/N. 17 November, 1938, p 1.
61. SBT. 2 August, 1994, p 2. For details on the history and present structure of the division see: *Queensland Country Women's Association, Gympie and South Burnett Division, 1944-1996*, pp 1-7.
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The First Two Decades of the New Century

The first decade of the new century was a remarkable one, not only for the people of the South Burnett but for all Australians. With the introduction of Federation the people of Australia gained a strong sense of independence and nationalism, but the ties to the mother country were nonetheless as powerful as ever. Evidence of this may be seen in the profound patriotism that accompanied the outbreak of the second Boer War in 1899. Almost immediately thousands of young Australian men trooped to the colours to join the early contingents then leaving for South Africa. All across the country in cities, towns and villages, recruiting stations were set up and long lines of men waited patiently to be allowed to join in the rush to battle. For many it was merely a calling of pride, of over-enthusiasm, of ignorance, few of those men knew the real reasons why they were joining a war on a distant shore, hardly any of them understood the politics involved, it was sufficient that the mother country was at war, and that she needed aid in crushing the rebellious Boer farmers.

The politicians, as in later wars, promised fast action and a rapid victory, yet as we now know, this was merely empty and misinformed rhetoric and the war in South Africa was to drag on for almost three bloody and interminable years.

The home front on the South Burnett during the Boer War was a patriotic one, women formed societies to provide the men at the front with comforts such as socks and other items of clothing, patriotic funds were inaugurated to help with the war effort and to provide monies for wounded soldiers or the dependents of soldiers killed during the campaigns.



Arthur Grevell in South Africa aged 21 years. Grevell was a popular farmer at Greenview a little west of Wondai and he served in both the Boer War and the 1914-18 War. Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 4885/P3(a)

Soldiers were sent off as heroes, they were feted and dined, dances were held in their honour, they were given gifts of rifles, ammunition, pistols, small bags of sovereigns, penknives, inscribed medallions, and the women waved them away little realising that some of those men would either never return, or would be terribly mutilated by the war.

Letters from the front were, at first, filled with enthusiasm, their authors eager to see some fighting and to vanquish the foe. Yet as the war dragged on the tone of those same letters changed dramatically. After a few months of living in difficult conditions, after the fatigue, the hunger, the incessant strain, the deaths, the disease, and especially after seeing the atrocious way the British waged war on not only the Boers, but also their women and children, rounding them up into concentration camps where they were to die in their thousands, the ordinary Australian trooper became dissatisfied with the way the war was being prosecuted, their letters turned bitter and they longed to return home.

Some came early, long before the peace was ratified in Pretoria in 1902. These men were welcomed as returning heroes, brass bands played, some women actually swooned at the sight of them. They were generally carried around the towns on the shoulders of other men and even church bells were rung in their honour. One of these was Trooper J.E.N. Bull from Kilkivan, who was invalided home in 1900 and was afforded a warm public welcome, the press reporting:

The welcome to our returned South African invalid Trooper Bull took the form of a social at the school house — and was perhaps the pleasantest evening ever spent here. The clerk of the weather not having been consulted, apparently took the huff and sent us a regular soaking night, but all who possibly could, of those invited, put in an appearance. The table was the whole length of the room and was most prettily decorated with flags, vases and hanging baskets, etc., filled with flowers and laden with all kinds of delicacies, while at one end of the room were displayed the words, 'Welcome Home.' Mr Dakin occupied the chair and when all were in readiness Mr Moore brought in the guest of the evening, who looked remarkably well and not in the least like an invalid. A round of cheers greeted his entry, and the chairman then tendered him a warm welcome in the name of his ... friends, to which Trooper Bull briefly responded, thanking them all for their kind and unexpected welcome, and sat down amid applause. The chairman called for a verse of 'God Save the Queen,' and then all fell to work at the cakes, tea, and coffee. After which the chairman called upon their guest to tell them something of what he had seen and done in South Africa ... The few relics of the war which had not been stolen while in the hospital were then handed round and discussed, after which parlour games were indulged in amid much laughter and pleasant fun.¹

One of the soldiers to fight in the Boer War was later a resident of the South Burnett, Joseph N. Alcock. Joseph Alcock was born in New South Wales on 20 August, 1872, and served with the New South Wales Lancers during the war in South Africa. Upon being repatriated in 1902 he married Florence Gertrude Ralph of Sydney and moved to Casino where he and his wife ran a dairy. There he took a keen interest in public affairs and was one of the provisional directors of the Casino Co-operative Dairy Company. He served as a director of that company for twelve years, three years as its chairman. In 1914 Joseph and his family arrived at Home Creek and later purchased a farm at Tingoora. He worked this farm until 1942 when he retired to Hervey Bay. While at Tingoora he was again active in public affairs, he became a member of the show society and served on the Wondai Shire Council for several years. Alcock died in Maryborough, aged seventy-six years, on 9 June, 1949.²

Another South Burnett resident who served in South Africa was Andrew Whiteside. He was born in Larkfield, Blantyre, Scotland in 1877 and as a young man travelled to Canada and America before returning to Scotland and finally emigrating to Queensland where he initially took up residence at Brisbane and married in 1901. He saw active service during the Boer War with the 5th Queensland Infantry Battalion. Upon his return from the South African campaigns he worked with Foy and Gibsons in Brisbane before moving to Tingoora. He selected land at Kinleymore around 1919 where he carried on general farming until he retired to Proston in 1945. In 1910 the first services of the Proston Methodist Church were held in the home of Mr and Mrs Whiteside by the Reverend E.J. Taylor, the services continued in the Whiteside home for approximately two years. Andrew Whiteside's wife predeceased him in 1961 and a son, Hector, also predeceased him. The Boer War veteran spent the last two years of his life at the Methodist Garden Settlement at Chermside. He died at Brisbane in January 1971 and was interred at the Proston cemetery.³

When the peace was ratified in Pretoria in June 1902 there was a profound sense of relief and joy in Australia. The peace was celebrated with peals of church bells, public holidays, the waving of flags and many street parades. As we have seen in previous chapters, this was a time of great change on the South Burnett, previously the people of the region had laboured under a long outdated colonial policy similar to that retained in England, rich landholders controlling almost all rural development while the ordinary working classes were virtually little more than serfs. Closer settlement ended that archaic policy forever, and the coming of the rail lines into the South Burnett heralded a new era of freedom and relative prosperity for the man on the land. Gone were the days of the imperious squirearchy, the time had come for average families to take control of their own destinies.

During the twelve years between the end of the Boer War and the beginning of the Great War, the entire landscape of the South Burnett changed dramatically. Towns like Wondai, Proston, Goomeri and Kingaroy came into existence, the dairy industry became one of the main stabilizing factors of the region's economy, the timber industry began employing thousands of workers and the wealth of the region grew dramatically.

During the first six months of 1914, few people in Australia would have believed that the world was on the brink of yet another war, the greatest war ever known to man, up until that time. On the South Burnett life during those halcyon days was proceeding much as normal, the men and women on the land and the workers and businessmen in the towns and villages enjoying the prosperity that closer settlement had brought. Yet those first six months of 1914 were the autumn of innocence. Soon the lives of those ordinary people were to change forever, and the cause was a single incident that was due to occur on the other side of the world.

At ten minutes to 11 a.m., on the morning of 28 June, 1914, the world was to be changed forever. At that moment a Serbian terrorist named Gavrilo Princip, a student, ran towards the car carrying Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie along Sarajevo's Appel Way and fired several shots in quick succession. The archduke was hit in the neck and his wife was also shot as she valiantly attempted to protect her husband from the bullets. Both soon afterwards died. This assassination was the fulcrum upon which World War One would turn. Within weeks, Britain, Russia and France were mobilizing their armies as the military might of Germany and Austria/Hungary threatened world peace. Day by day the armies of these mighty powers increased dramatically and by early August the world, for the first time in its history, was at war.

In far off Australia the build up of military strength in Europe had, at first, been a relatively insignificant occurrence. Few believed that Britain would become involved in a European war and if Britain was not to be involved then Australia too would certainly remain neutral. Yet as the weeks of tension progressed and it began to become obvious that Britain was to be involved, then it was evident that Australia, allied to the mother country in so many ways, could never abandon her at her time of need.

When this country entered the war the fervour of patriotism immediately ran high, and there was certainly no need, at least during those early months of the war, to resort to conscription to fill the ranks of the army. Across Australia, in small towns, villages and cities, the recruiting halls were filled to capacity, long lines of intending recruits waiting patiently to be examined by medical practitioners to ascertain their levels of fitness. Even in small townships such as Wondai, Murgon, Kilkivan and Goomeri there were recruiting stations, and amid the bluster of fervent patriotism, the bands playing, the flutter of flags and the clatter of militant drums, farmers, town workers, railway gangers, shearers, miners, all flocked to these recruiting stations to pledge their allegiance to the cause.

To many of these men, some 50,000 or so Australia wide, the cost of this very focussed sense of patriotism was to be their lives. During those early days of the conflict in Europe, before the campaigns in the Middle East and on the rugged shores of Gallipoli had been enacted, few of these soldiers could envisage the horror and the terror they were to ultimately face. How could they have understood that along a narrow stretch of Belgium and France, or on the rocky inhospitable shores of Gallipoli, or amid the hot desert sands of the Middle East, some thirteen million people were about to die? How could the innocent Australian soldiers realise the costs involved? They were given promises that the might of the British Empire was so great that nothing could prevent an early victory.

Recruits on the South Burnett were regarded as departing heroes, they were feted at special functions in community halls, dances and dinners were given in their honour and almost all of them received some kind of gift as a tribute to their patriotism. These gifts varied, some received pen-knives or safety razors, others watches or small purses of sovereigns. More wealthy centres gave their recruits weapons, silver matchbox holders, some officers received embossed swords in handsome presentation cases. Hundreds of people attended the railway stations as the recruits were sent off to Brisbane to commence their training.

On the South Burnett, in Kingaroy, Nanango, Murgon, Wondai, Proston, Goomeri, Kilkivan and at many other smaller centres there was an all pervading sense of total patriotism.

This patriotism went beyond the initial need for recruits and at all of those centres there were soon such organisations as the Red Cross Society, the Y.M.C.A., the Q.C.W.A., the members of which were organising themselves to provide comforts for the men who were leaving for the various fronts.

Unlike the Second World War, there were never any fears that the enemy would invade Australia's shores, and so the Australian continent remained free from such anxiety, but there were, nonetheless, many aspects of the war that reflected on Australian life, not least of which was the grief involved.

One of the men to fight during the conflict was Robert Ellwood of Memerambi, a soldier who fought at Gallipoli and the Western Front with the rank of lieutenant and later in his career attained the rank of lieutenant-colonel. In 1986 Colonel Ellwood recalled the moments before he went into action at Gallipoli, stating: 'It really was the most terrifying experience, we were all on deck, close together and crowded up, waiting to get into the boats, I suppose we were there for two or three hours, waiting for daylight. There was a terrific din, it gave me a feeling for what some of those fellows on death row feel like when they're waiting for the gaoler to come along and take them to the execution chamber. The sound of the explosions, the noise. It gave one the impression that it was the end of it all, nobody could live through that sort of business. Well, we landed, fortunately without getting into too much trouble, and from there on it is hard to describe. It was a very torrid experience.'⁴

Robert Ellwood witnessed the beginning of the battle between the Australian warship *H.M.A.S. Sydney* and the German raider *Emden*. He later served in the Second World War and remained involved with the R.S.L. for the rest of his life, never missing an Anzac Day service.

Following the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April, 1915, the people of Australia, for a few days at least, remained blissfully unaware of the horrendous casualties that were taking place, and it was not until those casualty lists started to appear in the pages of the local press that the public generally became aware that many thousands were being killed or wounded on this strange Turkish shore which few before had even heard of. And then, with the telegrams and the arrival of the local priests and other ministers of religion, came the grief that was to shock and stun the nation for evermore. Those men who had gone to war were the cream of Australia, the men and women who had volunteered to serve were among the fittest and healthiest people in the country, they had to be, the medical requirements alone were exacting. These men and women were mainly all young, some only seventeen years of age or less, gaining entry into the army by falsifying their ages. When news came to mothers and fathers of their deaths, such young sons, hardly into manhood, the grief and anxiety must have been heavy indeed.

Yet apart from this awesome grief, the war affected the people of the South Burnett in other ways. For example there was an almost immediate rise in the cost of many commodities. One press report claiming: 'Even in peaceful Kilkivan we feel the effect of the European war. Flour has gone up in price and the local butcher has closed his books, and informed his customers that beef has gone up in price and that cash must be paid before delivery.'⁵

Yet in many other ways life remained as it had prior to the outbreak of hostilities in Europe. The same 1914 report claimed: 'The euchre party and dance held in the Federal Hall last Friday evening was a success ... Ford's pictures were shown here on Monday night. Clifton Vane's company also played for two nights. The National Anthem is played and sung here before every entertainment.'⁶

Residents of the district could not understand why there was a sudden rise in the price of meat, after all, the war had only just started and it seemed evident from the many cattle in the paddocks that there was no shortage. Butchers received the brunt of complaints, but they replied by claiming that there were a number of reasons why the price of meat had risen. One butcher stated in October 1914 that the main causes of the rise were that producers had increased the live-weight price, that much of the rich beef-producing country had been opened up to closer settlement and these lands were now under grains and other crops rather than producing beef or lamb. He said that properties like *Boonara*, *Kilkivan*, *Barambah* and *Widgee* were no longer the massive cattle producers they had once been and with a slackening of production the prices had to rise. Additionally, the Australian government was then in the process of purchasing large quantities of beef for its military requirements, and these purchases further added to the shortage.⁷

Butter too had risen dramatically in price as had bread. For the rise in the price of bread there seemed every reason, flour had risen to £17 per ton, but for butter no one could fathom why they should be paying more — especially on the South Burnett, one of the major butter producing regions of the state. At that time, as has been seen in previous chapters, there was a shortage of shipping, especially shipping capable of carrying refrigerated cargoes, and throughout the war the Australian government was transporting large quantities of cheese to its troops in Europe. This left little room for butter intended for the London butter markets and so there was a large surplus of butter stored in Brisbane. This surplus was so extensive that some of it had to be kept in refrigerated storage usually reserved for meat. Therefore, the public correctly reasoned, there was no need to increase the price of this very basic commodity.⁸

Patriotic funds right across Australia quickly came into existence and the public was often particularly generous. For example, even as early as December 1914, the Nanango patriotic fund stood at £605/10/2d, a considerable effort for such a small town.⁹



Blackbutt soldiers, circa 1914.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 162774

Following the landings on Gallipoli and the release of the terrible casualty figures, the numbers of recruits dropped dramatically right across Australia. The time of early innocence had vanished, to be replaced with cautious confusion. The Australian government under Prime Minister Billy Hughes had promised a rapid and easy victory, they had promised a war of bright flags, colourful parades, heroes and noble deeds. Few politicians in those early days of the conflict had been speaking of excessive deaths, of tens of thousands being wounded or killed. Yet the casualty figures being released from Gallipoli were sure evidence that the optimism of the politicians had

been misplaced. The Australian people were at war with a determined enemy, one that would fight relentlessly and long for their own victory. As the casualty figures soared so recruitment dropped to almost alarming proportions. Men of serving age who had not joined the forces suddenly found they were being sent white feathers in the mail, the universal symbol of cowardice. Local politicians mounted platforms to harangue the public over its duty to 'God, King and Country.' In July 1915, approximately three months after the Gallipoli landings, the press was soberly claiming: 'The public of Kilkivan have lately been treated to sermons and speeches on the white feather question, ie shortage of volunteers for the front, but it is a very noticeable fact that the speakers are invariably persons who have no one belonging to them suitable for enlistment.'¹⁰



Patriotic occasion at Murgon.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 165053

In August 1915 all the regional centres in the South Burnett celebrated Patriotic Day. Towns and villages were decorated with bunting and flags and there were many emblems of the allied nations hanging from windows. Entertainments included processions, carnivals and sporting activities, and fund raising events were everywhere to be seen. Press reports continued to call the men to arms. Recruits could be between the ages of eighteen and forty-five providing they had a minimum chest measurement of thirty-three inches and a minimum height of five feet two inches. The pay was not attractive, often far less than railway gangers or labourers were then obtaining. Lieutenants received twenty-one shillings per day, sergeants ten shillings and sixpence, corporals ten shillings, and privates six shillings. There were also numerous separation allowances depending upon rank and family sizes.¹¹

Throughout the South Burnett there were several Red Cross Societies, these were comprised mainly of women who worked to alleviate the discomforts of the soldiers serving on the various fronts. Members of the societies collected donations and sent parcels to the troops. The parcels contained such diverse items as handkerchiefs, gloves, chocolates, soap, cigarettes, books, writing materials, ear muffs, towels, socks, and even pillows.

Residents of the various towns were encouraged to send Christmas gifts of billy cans to the front. These cans would be filled with numerous items, chocolates, sewing materials, tins of fruit, photographs of home or any other small presents. The cans were particularly popular with the troops serving overseas.

Meanwhile the fervour of patriotism continued. In November 1915 the press reported:

Everybody has caught the 'patriotic fever' here. Even the little children are attending a knitting class organised by Mrs R.A. Pearse, where they are making all kinds of knitted comforts for our brave boys at the front. The ladies of the Red Cross Society meet every Wednesday at Mrs Munro's residence and sew diligently. Already large parcels of pyjamas, flannel shirts, etc., have been sent away. As many as five machines are kept constantly going each afternoon, besides numerous hand-sewers. Altogether 212 billy-cans were forwarded from Kingaroy, including 60 from Memerambi, to the Queensland billy-can fund. The young men, not to be out-done by the ladies, held an entertainment to raise funds to provide comforts for the district men at the front. They are to be congratulated on the success of the evening, for the takings amounted to about £70. About 110 pipes were received, and also 200 packets of cigarettes, tins of tobacco, sox, mufflers, chocolates, etc ... Two young men named Simpson walked from Iron Pot Creek to Kingaroy (about 40 miles) in order to enlist. They left for Enoggera on Saturday night. The young Men's Patriotic League invited them to the School of Arts on Friday night, and presented each with a pipe, pouch and tobacco, and congratulated them on their fine patriotic spirit. No wonder the Australians have won fame, when samples of determination such as this are met with.¹²

At around the same time the Girls' Patriotic Club was formed in Nanango to: '... assist in obtaining comforts for the soldiers in the trenches.' Mrs F. Graham was elected president, Miss A. Clark treasurer and Miss Pearl Lee was its first secretary.¹³

By the end of 1915 it was evident that the war was having a serious impact locally. Prices had risen dramatically, and many rural industries were suffering. At that time the country was experiencing a severe drought and this, coupled with the lack of working men, was affecting crop quality and quantity. With so many men at the front land settlement was slow and due to the poor state of the Queensland economy rail construction had slowed, almost to a stop. Timber, mining, public construction and many other industries were all at a virtual standstill and many companies were struggling to survive.



Three Nanango corporals at Weens in Scotland. Ted Tancred, Jules Tardent and Dick Graham, 8 August, 1916.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society

By 1916 the public was becoming increasingly more aware of the horror of the war. When the anniversary of the landings at Gallipoli arrived it was a solemn day for all Australians. Those who had lost sons at Gallipoli were still stricken with grief, and as the war dragged on in Europe there seemed no relief in sight.¹⁴

This, the first Anzac Day, was a time of great mourning. In Kingaroy, as in all other centres on the South Burnett, businesses closed their doors at 11 a.m. for several hours while the appropriate services were held. That night a function took place at the Olympia Hall where a 'citizens' gathering' was held. The stage was draped with the national colours and for a while a band played outside the hall, later moving onto the stage where they played the *Dead March* and two buglers played the *Last Post*. Speeches were given by T.W. O'Neill, Reverend W. McLaren and Archibald Blue, the editor and owner of the *Kingaroy Herald* who was to be killed just a few months later. Miss E. Stebbens sang *Rule Britannia* and a Sergeant Nystrom, '... a hero of Gallipoli,' who had nine bullet wounds and a crippled arm, appeared on stage and was given 'three hearty cheers' in his honour.¹⁵

Six of the men who volunteered from the South Burnett were brothers, David, Harry, Charles and Fred Birch and their half brothers Allan and Harry Jenks. The first to enlist was Fred Birch in 1915, he later served in the Middle East. The other brothers enlisted in 1916. Harry Birch had been a farmer in the Goomeri district before he enlisted and was later promoted to corporal. Charles Birch was a farmer in the Wooroolin region prior to his enlistment. Alan Jenks was a farmer at Gordonbrook where he selected land after his discharge from the army. Harry Jenks was killed in action at Passchendaele in 1917. During an Australian advance on a German position at the village, Jenks was fatally wounded by an artillery shell. David Birch was wounded twice, both times by shrapnel. He saw action at most of the fighting zones including Pozières, the scene of some of the most terrible fighting involving Australian forces.¹⁶

Charles Birch enlisted at Nanango in 1916, he saw action at Bapaume, Passchendaele, Villers Bretonneux and several other sections of the Western Front.¹⁷

One of the more well known of the South Burnett's soldiers was Arthur Cripps who made a name for himself in the boxing ring and was an Australian middle-weight boxing champion. Cripps, who was later described as being genial, unassuming, gifted and with an attractive personality, was the son of a Sydney doctor and was born at Potts Point, Sydney, where he spent his childhood. He became interested in boxing at an early age and in 1901 he won the middle-weight championship of Australia from 'Soldier' Thompson. The fight took place at the National Sporting Club and Cripps held the title for sixteen years, retiring undefeated. He arrived on the South Burnett with his wife and child in 1907 and took up land at Broadwater where he conducted general farming and was a regular exhibitor at the district shows. He had intended to retire from boxing at that time, but upon the opening of the Sydney Stadium he was persuaded by friends to once more enter the ring. For the following years he toured all over Australia and included in 1910 a memorable fight with Cherbourg boxer Jerry Jerome. He toured many parts of the world, fighting at Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Paris, Abbeville (France), London, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, New York, Philadelphia, Kansas City and New Zealand. In 1916 he joined the A.I.F. and this marked the end of his professional boxing career. Upon his return to Australia Arthur Cripps became the proprietor of the Post Office Hotel at Nanango, later selling the hotel to move to Brisbane. Yet the country life still appealed to him and he returned to the South Burnett to carry on farming and dairying in the Kingaroy district. Cripps became ill in 1934 and spent some time at the Kingaroy Hospital, later being transferred to Brisbane for further treatment. He died at the Mater Hospital in Brisbane in September 1934.¹⁸

The first person from the Wondai region to have been killed during the war was Mr W. Grace, Violet Smith later wrote: 'He was a married man with a family. The people of Wondai formed a patriotic society and raised money and collected donations of building materials etc and then with the help of practically the whole town began building a house in Cadell Street facing the Baptist Church ... (The builders and painters) worked nights, mornings and weekends and built a home for the Grace family ... When complete the house was handed over to Mrs Grace free of debt.'¹⁹

Another of the region's Anzacs was Mr J. Rogash. Rogash was born at Benalla, Victoria, in 1893 of farming parents, he was the youngest child of the family and was educated at Benalla. He arrived in Queensland in 1910 and worked at various jobs until the outbreak of war in 1914. Like many of his contemporaries, J. Rogash had previously served for several years in a voluntary Light Horse militia and so had some military experience. He landed with the Light Horse at Gallipoli in 1915 and was wounded in the head and back while on the peninsular. He recovered, however, and later fought on the Western Front.

Following his discharge from the army after the war, Rogash returned to Plainby and later married Lillian Williams at Plainby. The couple worked a small farm at Crows Nest until 1930 when they moved to a larger property at Tansey, retiring to Goomeri in 1957.²⁰

One South Burnett man who spend most of the war in a prisoner of war camp was Frank Thomas Pearson. Pearson was born near Esk, and moved to Coolabunia with his parents when he was just five years of age. He was educated at the Coolabunia School and spent his youth on the farm. When war was declared in 1914 he volunteered and was sent to France. There he was wounded, captured and incarcerated for the remainder of the war. Following the armistice he returned to Coolabunia. He married Emma Augusta Herrlack on 20 June, 1920, and began farming at Malar. For the last five years of his life he suffered ill health and died at the Kingaroy Hospital, aged eighty years in November 1970.²¹

Another war veteran of Coolabunia was Harry Franklin. He was born at Coolabunia, the eldest son of Mr and Mrs Joseph Franklin, formerly of Maryborough. He enlisted during the war and served in France where he was wounded several times and also gassed. After the armistice he spent two years in England where he met and married Winifred Sykes. The couple travelled to Australia in 1920 aboard the ship *Horatio* and began farming at Coolabunia. In 1923 they moved to the Stuart River where they spent the remainder of their lives. Harry Franklin died at the Princess Alexander Hospital on 25 August, 1970, aged seventy-six years.²²

George Goodger was a highly respected member of the local community who lost a leg in action, Mainard Goodger was wounded several times and won the D.C.M. for bravery, Leslie Buttsworth was killed in action.²³

One of the more popular South Burnett men to serve in the war was Angie Livingstone, who was born at Bex Hill in 1891 and who came to the South Burnett with his parents from Mullumbimby, New South Wales. Livingstone joined the A.I.F. immediately upon the outbreak of war and served not only during that conflict but also during the Second World War. In 1921 he married Mabel Binnington of Kingaroy, the marriage taking place in Brisbane, and the couple lived on farms at Proston, Crawford and Booie prior to moving to Kingaroy. Angie Livingstone died in November 1954.²⁴

Another local veteran was Les Doyle of Goomeri. Les Doyle was born at Nowra, New South Wales, on 8 December, 1897. His family moved to Brisbane when Doyle was just eighteen months of age and he attended Gregory Terrace College. At the age of sixteen years he found employment with the *Courier Mail* as a process engraver. There he met his future wife, Kathleen McGickin. During the war he fought on the Western Front where he was wounded and gassed, the gassing badly affecting his lungs and causing fibrosis. After the war he was advised to live at Stanthorpe where the cold clear climate would be better for him. At Stanthorpe he worked as a sanatorium clerk. He married Kathleen at Stanthorpe and later returned to work at the *Courier Mail* in Brisbane. His son served in the air force during World War Two, and afterwards father and son farmed at Lowood. However, the gassing had created such damage to his lungs that he later suffered from tuberculosis and he was forced to give up his farming life, returning once again to the *Courier Mail*. His wife died in 1992, after a marriage lasting sixty-three years and Les Doyle died at St Aubyn's Hospital, Kingaroy, aged ninety-seven, in July 1994.²⁵

One of the more prominent personalities to serve in the war was private Percy Marmaduke Perrett who later became a well known Goomeri businessman and who served for many years on the Kilkivan Shire Council.

Percy Perrett volunteered for service at Goomeri immediately after the outbreak of war in 1914, however, as he was then under twenty-one years of age he needed his parents' consent and his mother refused to sign his papers. Disappointed, he then went to Coolabunia where he managed his mother's store while his mother went to Sydney for an operation. He volunteered again at Coolabunia and evidently lied about his age as he was accepted and was put into the camp at Vidgins Paddock for training. The date was September 1914. Several weeks later he was transferred to an N.C.O.s' class at Bell's Paddock, and when volunteers were called for service overseas he immediately responded. According to Percy Perrett's memoirs a condition of this service was that volunteers were required to have previous military experience. He told the military authorities that he qualified as he had spent two years in a brigade in England. The truth, in fact, was that he had spent five years with a church brigade.

While under training, Perrett had a dramatic experience in which he unwittingly found himself fighting a formidable opponent. Perrett himself later wrote:

While in Bell's Paddock, August to December 1915, a route march was made to Nudgee ... En-route we fell out to replenish our water bottles, from a tank on a wagon. I had my own and two bottles belonging to my mates to fill. Sitting on the side of the wagon I filled one bottle handing it down to my mates, and, taking a second, a 9th Battalion sergeant demanded the pannikin. I refused to hand it over till I had finished filling the other two. He hit me on the mouth. I ignored the blow till I finished filling our bottles. I then placed the pannikin where he had to reach across in front of me to pick it up. As he reached in front of me I hit him in the face knocking him off the back of the wagon. He raced to the side of the

wagon where we clashed. A few punches were exchanged when the fight was stopped. We met again on the beach at Nudgee. He asked if I felt as good as I was on the way down, in answering in the affirmative, he challenged to fight me. All in to the finish. He called for 'time' 3 times till the fight was stopped. I had certainly taken a hammering, with a black eye a swollen jaw and a split lip. Our Captain shook hands with me saying he wished he had a dozen men with my guts. He ordered an Ambulance wagon to take me back to camp where I had two stitches in my lip. I later learned that I had fought Jack Quinland, the amateur welter-weight boxer of Queensland.²⁵

Perrett also records that Sergeant Quinland had been a railway worker at Maryborough before the war, he later won the troopship boxing championship but lost an arm in 1916 and was invalided to Australia.²⁷

Being accepted for the overseas service, Percy Perrett was entrained at Enoggera for Pinkinbar wharf where he and his fellow soldiers boarded the troopship *Dorset*. Coincidentally, this was the same ship aboard which Perrett had returned to Australia from a trip to England in 1910. Perrett served on the Western Front, firstly at the quiet sector of Armentieres and then at Messines where the shelling was so heavy that Perrett developed 'the shakes'.

From Messines Perrett moved up to the Somme for the very intense action that was to follow the British offensive of July 1916.²⁸

Percy Perrett was later wounded in the arm by a bullet and given a 'Blighty' that is, returned to England for medical treatment. He managed to have himself sent to the military hospital at Halifax, where he and his family had originally come from. After convalescing, Perrett went A.W.O.L. for four days' unofficial leave in London but managed to get off without any punishment once he returned to his unit. After several more adventures in England and a few more spells of being absent without leave, all of which went unpunished, Perrett was returned to France where he underwent a period of intense training at the notorious Bullring at Etaples. Over the following years he experienced fighting in most sections of the front, finally returning to Goomeri after the war to begin his long career in business and public affairs. Initially he joined the Forest Service in the Gympie/Wide Bay district and remained with that service for five years. Later he moved into general carrying, mail contracts and store-keeping.²⁹

In subsequent years Percy Perrett wrote a summary of his life and service in the Goomeri district. He married Maud Evelyn Toop at Nanango in 1930. During the Second World War, while residing in Goomeri, he was second in command of the 29th Battalion Volunteer Defence Corps and served as the military intelligence officer of the Kilkivan district. He was a councillor of Number Three division for thirteen years and council representative on the Wienholt Hospital Board at Wondai for five years. He also served as secretary to the Goomeri District Hospital Friendly Society for five years and secretary to the Goomeri Show Society for thirteen years. He later moved to a house on the esplanade at Hervey Bay. A brief cryptic note appended to his memoirs indicates that while he served on the local council for thirteen years, his relationship with the council was not always harmonious. While working in the transport business he was fined £10 or fourteen days in gaol over a transgression of a local by-law. Perrett's footnote reads: 'Challenged the legality of a Local Authority by-law on heavy Vehicle Tax imposed by the Kilkivan Shire Council and found guilty. I took the case to the High Court. The charge was revoked. The Council then took the case to the Supreme Court who in turn gave authority to go to the Full Court. A verdict was given in my favour. Costing the Local Authority £6000.'³⁰

Wilfred Keith Welch was another soldier who volunteered from the South Burnett. Born in London on 1 November, 1887, Wilfred Welch came to Queensland with his parents at the age of four years, the family settling in the Laidley district. After farming in that region for ten years, the family returned to England to establish a produce business in Oxfordshire. Wilfred Welch managed this business for four years but he longed to return to Australia and in 1910 he emigrated, selecting land at Proston the following year. With the exception of the time he served in the Great War, he resided on his property for the remainder of his life.

Wilfred Welch served with the 5th Australian Light Horse in Egypt, Palestine and Gallipoli and was twice wounded, spending long periods in hospital. After the war he returned briefly to England and later married on the island of Jersey, subsequently returning to Proston with his

bride. He was described as a man who was well read and who took a keen interest in world affairs. Towards the end of his life Wilfred Welch experienced increasing medical problems as a result of injuries he had received during the war years. He died at the Wondai Hospital on the evening of Wednesday 20 September, 1961, his wife having predeceased him in 1936.³¹

Private John F. Downes, the father of Bob Downes, who later served as the mayor of Kingaroy, certainly had an interesting time during the war. At the age of thirty-two years he enlisted at Brisbane in the 31st Battalion, 8th Brigade, 5th Division A.I.F. on 15 July, 1915, and after initial training departed from Australia on 9 November, 1915. After being hospitalised on several occasions for minor illnesses in the Middle East, he was sent with his battalion to France and was placed into the line at Fleurbaix where the Australian troops were preparing for a diversionary attack. This diversion was intended to relieve the pressure on the major attack then taking place at the Somme. During the early evening of 19 July, 1916, the Fifth Division and a British division were sent to make a feint against the village of Fromelles. The attack was a disaster, the Germans, having seen the activity in the allied lines, were fully prepared and had been heavily shelling the Australian and British lines. 481 prisoners were taken during the attack, one of these was John Downes.³²



John F. Downes.

Courtesy of Bob Downes.

John Downes was taken to Sennelage, Westphalia where he was put to work on a number of tasks including cutting turf and working with scrap metal and timber. Conditions varied, the food was indifferent and sometimes scarce but the soldiers were occasionally able to receive Red Cross parcels containing food and tobacco and some private parcels were also received.

In July 1918 the Red Cross wrote to John Downes to advise him that his brother, Hugh, had also been captured and was a prisoner of war in Germany.³³ After the armistice in 1918 both John and Hugh Downes were repatriated to Australia, sailing together aboard the *Euripides*.³⁴

Robert Nigel Gray was a well known personality of the South Burnett, especially at Murgon, where his father, W.R. (Bob) Gray had constructed the first store, a rough tin shed. As we have seen, the business was later sold to Martha Angel. Robert Gray was a member of the first A.I.F. and was one of the first soldiers to land at Gallipoli. He was severely wounded and returned to Australia where he was discharged. However, he later re-enlisted and returned to the front fighting in the artillery. After the war he was a

foundation member of the R.S.L. and a member of the Services Memorial Club. He was an active member of the Murgon Show Society and the Masonic Lodge. He died in retirement at Caloundra in October 1966.³⁵

1916 brought an issue that was to divide the nation, that issue was conscription. By that time the volunteer recruitment numbers had fallen to dangerously low levels and many believed that if the number of recruits was not increased then the war in Europe and the Middle East would be lost. Britain, of course, had already embraced conscription, and millions of willing and unwilling men had been drafted to fight on the Western Front. The morality of such action has always been deeply questioned. Was it fair and just to take unwilling men from their families, their work, frequently their businesses, and place them in a position where they stood a very high chance of being killed or wounded? Many of these men had responsibilities, wives and children, businesses that could wither and die without their controlling influence. Some were holders of public office.

Was it right that these elected members of such office were to be taken from that office and sent to fight in France? Those who volunteered to fight had some idea of what they were doing and why they were doing it. Those who were conscripted were largely unwilling recruits with no moralistic concepts of patriotism, mostly they did not want to fight, they did not understand the war, all they wanted was the chance to continue with their lives. Prime Minister Billy Hughes certainly believed that all able bodied men should be at the front and in 1916 he called for a referendum to decide the issue. Should Australian troops be forced to serve their country or should the country continue with its policy of inducting only volunteers into the ranks of its armed forces?

The issue polarized the people of Australia. Some members of the press castigated those who would vote for a continuation of the system of voluntary recruitment while others strongly criticised those who would introduce an involuntary system.

In July 1916 the press claimed:

The voluntary system of obtaining men to fight the battles on the fields of Europe, judged by the slow manner in which the recruits are now coming forward to fill the ranks, has about exhausted itself. In spite of the quibbling resorted to by the opponents of a more vigorous and efficient system, our position is regarded by large numbers of our people as that of a defaulter, for it is now a certainty that we cannot supply the 300,000 men our leaders promised to have ready for the fronts by the month of July. Not only that, but it appears likely that we shall have the greatest difficulty in supplying the monthly reinforcements necessary to maintain the strength of those men in the field. This is a long way from what our leaders promised in the early stages of the war, when all was enthusiasm and excitement, loudly proclaiming that Australia would contribute 'to the last man and the last shilling.' We may reach the shilling stage, but it looks as if the last man is in no sort of hurry to sacrifice himself.³⁶

The prime minister was so certain that the country would vote 'Yes' to the conscription issue that he had already ordered the setting up of recruitment camps around Australia, and into these camps thousands of men had already been involuntarily drafted. However, the referendum delivered a sound 'No' vote and Hughes was forced to de-commission the camps and to return the men to their homes. The press later claiming: 'A vast sum of money, both in taking the referendum and conducting the camps throughout the Commonwealth thus has been practically wasted, and that at a time when waste can be ill afforded. The final result emphasises the unwisdom of calling out the men and establishing the camps before the referendum was taken.'³⁷

The results of the referendum certainly created a problem with filling the depleted ranks of Australian soldiers fighting at the front. The lack of soldiers was by now quite critical, especially after the terrible fighting at the Somme that had commenced on 1 July that year and in which the Australian divisions had become involved from the 20th of that month. The Allied troops, mainly British and French, were being killed in their tens of thousands and the French later mutinied in the trenches, but there was no respite from the bloodshed, day after day, week after week, the Allied troops threw themselves against the German trenches and there they died.

In order to help bolster recruitment figures, the State Recruitment Committee was formed, this committee was given the task of visiting various centres to encourage the men to take up the colours. Its results were only moderately successful, most of those who really wanted to go to the war had already gone.

Even in the smaller centres there was considerable excitement when local soldiers volunteered for the front, for example, a press report of 30 August, 1916, detailing the recruitment of Private G.H. Warren claimed: 'On Wednesday night 23rd inst. a large gathering assembled in Akesson's Hall to bid farewell to Private G.H. Warren who is leaving shortly for the front. The evening was spent in dancing and singing and after supper the young hero was presented with a handsome wristlet watch with radium dial. His mother fastened it to his wrist amid lusty cheers. A pleasant time was brought to a close by all present joining hands and singing *Old Lang Syne*.'³⁸

Patriotic Days were always celebrated with considerable zeal in all towns and villages. Some villages combining their efforts with the closest towns to make the celebration even larger. This generally occurred at Kingaroy where Memerambi and Taabinga Village aided in the Kingaroy

celebrations. Patriotic Day at Kingaroy in 1916 was a festive affair which raised approximately £800 to aid wounded soldiers. The shops remained open that day until 6 p.m. and, despite the rain, almost the entire town's population flocked to the streets to participate in the fete. In all there were seventeen stalls of varying designs and colours, some square, others circular, hexagonal or oblong, and all were decorated with flags and bunting. These were roofed with bushes and wattle blossoms and a committee of local carpenters had been formed, many of whom competed to produce the most attractive designs. Local saw-millers donated the timber, local carriers brought the materials to the site free of charge. That afternoon there were various speeches, including those of T.W. O'Neill, who mounted a lorry and, throwing aside a specially constructed veil, revealed: '... two large silky oak panels containing in letters of gold the names of 300 of our district boys who have gone to the front to do their duty.' Added attractions included a circus performance, afternoon tea, a concert and dance.³⁹ The Taabinga Village stall was in a rustic style thatched with dogwood boughs and decorated with grass trees, staghorns, crowsnest ferns and orchids. Volunteers at the stall raised £60 for the fund.⁴⁰

Among the volunteers to join the ranks of those who were going off to fight was South Burnett resident Charles Harper. Born in Coventry, England, on 22 February, 1890, Charles Harper came to Queensland in 1909 and it was during the voyage to Australia that he met his future wife, Ellenor McCleave. They were married in Brisbane on 29 March, 1910, and settled at Proston. Upon the outbreak of war, Charles joined up and served with the 42nd Battalion. He was badly wounded in his left arm and back in 1917. After the war he took up grazing at Windera and lived there for the remainder of his working life, finally retiring with his wife to Brisbane. In 1958 the couple returned to live in Murgon. Ellenor died in July 1968 and Charles died in October the following year.⁴¹

Bailey Douglass of Blackbutt was another World War One soldier. He was born at Blackstone, Ipswich, in 1890 and arrived at Blackbutt with his parents when he was just fifteen months' old. He was a keen cricketer and a member of the local government for approximately thirty years. During the war he fought as a machine gunner with the 9th Battalion in France. He was badly gassed and was sent to the Stanthorpe sanatorium where he eventually recovered. After the war he became a grazier and was an active member of the R.S.L. He died in May 1971.⁴²

One man who played a dual role in the war was S. Molen, who served in the A.I.F. but who also acted as the model for a series of recruiting posters. Molen was born in Holland and following his arrival in Australia he sponsored his sister and brother-in-law and their family as new immigrants to the country. The press later reported of him: 'Not generally known but recalled now by residents who knew of the incident of World War One days, was a photograph that, enlarged and taken to poster dimensions, which was used for recruiting campaigns. He had been photographed while in uniform leaning over a fire, the caption used was "Keep The Home Fires Burning".'

Molen later became an accountant in the Kingaroy district, subsequently carrying on his own grocery store. He was a life member of the R.S.L. He died at Gympie in March 1955 and was buried at the Taabinga cemetery.⁴³

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Seven

The First Two Decades of the New Century

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4. Author interview with Robert Ellwood, conducted at Memerambi, 1986, also reproduced in: *Crosses, Australian Soldiers in the Great War*, Matthews, Tony, Boolarong Publications, 1987, p 14.
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10. M/C. 2 July, 1915, p 8.
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12. M/C. 1 November, 1915, p 3.
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22. *Herald News*, 9 September, 1970, p 13.
23. *Back to Goodger, 1990, a Part History of the Goodger District*, p 61.
24. K/H. 25 November, 1954, p 2.
25. SBT. 5 July, 1994, p 8.
26. Unpublished memoir, *Notes on My Military Service*, Private P.M. Perrett, (summary), author's collection, reproduced with permission of Ailsa Stanton.
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31. SBT. 12 October, 1961, p 5.
32. A.I.F. service documents, Bob Downes collection.
33. Red Cross letter dated 12 July, 1918, Bob Downes collection.
34. For details of service life of these two men see: *A Time to Remember*, Bob Downes collection.
35. SBT. 19 October, 1966, p 2.
36. M/C. 1 July, 1916, p 5.
37. M/C. 10 November, 1916, p 2.
38. M/C. 30 August, 1916, p 8.
39. M/C. 31 August, 1916, p 6.
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41. SBT. 29 October, 1969, p 26.
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43. K/H. 17 March, 1955, p 2.

Aliens and the War

Upon the outbreak of war with Germany in 1914, there were many South Burnett residents of German descent. These people had flooded into the country during the previous five or six decades as farmers, shepherds or labourers for the sugar-cane fields. Initially at least, they had been regarded as second class citizens, yet over the years they had won a grudging respect from people of mainly British background. The Germans, such as those at Tansey, were hard workers who took up small blocks of land and grew their first crops under difficult economic circumstances. Yet the outbreak of war changed, for a while at least, the average Australian perspective of these early German settlers. Patriotism was running at particularly high levels and any Germans were seen as being enemies or, at least, potential enemies. The German people came under suspicion and were often regarded as spies and potential saboteurs, and following the outbreak of the war a mandate was issued by Commonwealth authority that all German residents would have to register their names, and swear not to undertake any acts that could harm the British and Australian war effort. Many people believed that a person of German birth could never relinquish his or her allegiance to the Kaiser, and as Germans could not take out Australian naturalization for two years after their arrival, then all those who had arrived between 1912 and 1914 technically owed their allegiance to the Kaiser.¹

Yet there were large numbers of people of German descent who had come to Australia during the 1860s, 70s and 80s and bore little, if any, allegiance to their mother country. Many of these people had sons who could hardly wait to get to the war. One of these, for example, was Carl Fleischfresser (junior) of the Taabinga region, the second eldest son of Mr and Mrs Carl Fleischfresser, people of German origin but who were, '... very old and respected residents of the place.' Upon reaching the required age, Carl Fleischfresser (junior) had gone immediately to the Toowoomba Exhibition where he had enlisted in the A.I.F. He did a month's training and was later given a send off and a gift of a wrist watch by the people of the region.² Carl Fleischfresser (junior) and his family were well known in the region, his wife, Gladys, operated the Wilga Private Hospital in Kingaroy. He was one of the fortunate few to survive the war and return to the South Burnett. When he died in March 1955 the press reported:

Carl Fleischfresser was born at Rosevale in 1895 and was the second son of the late Mr and Mrs Carl Fleischfresser then of Rosevale.

He came to this district when his father selected land on the *Taabinga* Resumption in 1908. He helped at home on the farm, and also gave his services as a hard-working man to many farmers in the district in assisting at scrub falling and blazing the way in preparation for greater opportunities in farming pursuits. When World War I broke out, he volunteered, and enlisted in the A.I.F. He saw service in the Middle East. In later years he was a grader operator for the Kingaroy Shire Council.

In 1925 he married Miss Gladys Noble. They had two children. One died soon after birth. The other, Lyle, was killed in an accident when he was 22 years of age.

To 'Matron Fresser' as she is fondly known to most Kingaroy people, more especially those of a few years ago when she conducted the Wilga Private Hospital ... very tender feelings of sympathy are felt ...

Mr Fleischfresser was a man of quite disposition, he loved peace and sought it. His own home and its fireside was where he liked most to be.³

The anti-German issue was a contentious one that created great animosity. Letters were written to the editors of newspapers and these letters only served to further inflame public

opinion. Anglophiles denounced Germans, stating that they were the enemy within, while the Germans could only complain of such vilification and claim that they were simply honest people attempting to make a modest living. One Australian commentator claimed:

Secret agents of Germany exist in every branch of our national life, from the circle of higher finance, down to those following such lowly callings as hairdressers and domestic servants. No detail of our weakness is too small to be overlooked by that system, which is, indeed, amazing ...

We have, in our midst, an enemy as unscrupulous and as dangerous as any in Flanders, and I here warn the authorities that the present high-inflamed state of public opinion is such that, if they falter further, and do not appoint a central board to deal with this ever-growing peril, the public will take the matter out of their hands.⁴

It is difficult now to visualize the depths of feeling this issue caused during the war, and there were certainly victims of it, one of whom was the editor and owner of the *Kingaroy Herald*, Archibald Blue. Blue was a journalist of considerable repute, he was also heavily involved in local issues. He was well respected on the South Burnett and had many friends. In 1916 Blue wrote a scathing article about a man named Adolf Hoffman whom, Blue claimed, had been distributing leaflets during the conscription referendum that had called for a 'No' vote. Blue believed that such an action was a treacherous one and one designed to help the Kaiser's armies. Hoffman confronted Blue and a bitter debate quickly followed, the debate turned ugly and soon turned to blows. Blue was badly injured during the fracas and, as there seems to have been no doctor close enough to attend the injured man, a message was sent to Maryborough calling for medical aid. Shortly afterwards Doctor Lee Garde of the Maryborough Hospital took a train for Kingaroy, however, by the time he arrived there Blue had died. A Maryborough police officer was also sent for and soon afterwards Inspector Toohey arrived by train. He held an investigation into the matter and subsequently charged Hoffman with Blue's death.⁵

The Maryborough press later reported: 'The tragic death of Mr A. Blue, proprietor of the *Kingaroy Herald* was received with expressions of deep regret by many townspeople of our city, the family to which deceased belonged being very widely known in Maryborough. Several of our citizens journeyed to Kingaroy on Monday to pay their last respects to the deceased ... the funeral was the largest seen in Kingaroy.'⁶

Hoffman was tried for murder in November 1916. However, the jury heard that he had not been distributing 'subversive' literature and that Blue's death had been an accident rather than a deliberate attempt on his life. He was found not guilty and discharged from custody.⁷

Incidences of discrimination and perceived discrimination were many. On 29 July, 1916, a correspondent at Kingaroy reported: 'A mild sensation was caused in the town during the week. The local bailiff served a writ on a small shop-keeper and proceeded to make an inventory. The shop-keeper, who is an alien, threw the bailiff out. The latter went away and returned with a constable. The shop-keeper, however, threw him out again.'⁸

The prevailing enmity towards residents of German origin at that time may have resulted in one man, James Hampson, receiving a lighter sentence than would normally have been awarded following the killing of a German national named Edward William Wenzel, (also reported as Wenzell) near Goomeri in 1917.

The case was a tragic one. James Hampson was a married man, but his wife had been closely involved with Wenzel for a number of years. Hampson had been suspicious that his wife had been having an affair with Wenzel but for some time he could not prove it. However, after the discovery of a series of letters between Wenzel and his wife, he no longer had any doubts. Travelling from Murgon to Goomeri, Hampson confronted Wenzel and shot him with a revolver he had previously ordered by mail from the firm of Hockleys in Maryborough. Having shot Wenzel, Hampson walked back to Murgon, and the following morning reported to John Davidson, acting sergeant of police in charge of the Murgon police station. Hampson said: 'I have an unpleasant statement to make. I left Murgon for Goomeri, arriving there about 9 o'clock where I saw Edward William Wenzel with a horse and cart. I went out with him to his place, on arrival there I had a conversation with Wenzel. I said to him, "You have seduced and violated my wife" ... I then fired three shots ...'⁹

Hampson was immediately arrested and brought before the police magistrate, Mr A.B. Gibson, on Monday 9 June, 1917. Various witnesses gave evidence, including Norman E. Osbourne, the brother-in-law of the accused, and Percy Deighton, a shop assistant with Hockleys who stated that he had received the order for the revolver and cartridges from Hampson.

Hampson made a statement to the police which was tendered in court. According to this statement, when the two men arrived at Wenzel's farm, Hampson had said:

Six years ago you laid yourself out to seduce my wife ... You have done an irreparable harm. As time wore on and you seemed to conduct yourself decently, and the wife found pleasure in your company as a friend when in my own home circle, I permitted you to frequent my home, remembering as a young man I took pleasure that afforded me at weekends to mingle in a good family circle. How did you repay it? When you put your foot on my threshold a gloom settled down upon me, because I mistrusted you, but I would not insult my wife by forbidding you the house when I had no positive proof; but proofs have come to my hand by eye-witnesses, by letters to you from her, and by letters from you to her. All the time I was building my house, though you yourself are a carpenter, you never set foot on the job or sought my company, but you sought hers spending hours together. When I was present you never made conversation to her but when I was in an adjoining room I would hear your eternal whispers and hers in reply by the hour. If I went to the School of Arts, or elsewhere, when you were in the house, the children were told they could go, but I could not stop to spy on you. But now I have the proofs, more than you have any idea of. You have seduced and violated my wife, and used the influence thus gained for your own vile purposes. You low German —, little wonder the small nations of Europe have been violated the way they have ...¹⁰

Hampson added that Wenzel had been standing at the back of the house near the tank and Hampson himself had stood about two yards away. He said: 'I then fired three successive shots at his breast. I then turned and left him as he staggered to walk inside. I did not know whether he was seriously injured or not, as he did not lose his balance. I was quite satisfied I hit him.'¹¹

Hampson was committed to stand trial at the Supreme Court in Brisbane in August that year. He was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to three years with hard labour. However, the judge, Mr Justice Real, added that if Hampson submitted a petition at the end of three months he would recommend his release under the First Offenders' Probation Act.¹²

The question of nationals of German descent was to remain a provocative one for the remainder of the war. People with German sounding names were often treated with suspicion and German migrants were the subject of official and unofficial investigations. The problem of such class malignancy was a perennial one that could find no easy solution in the patriotic fervour of Georgian Australia.

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Eight

Aliens and the War

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2. M/C. 5 July, 1917, p 8.
3. K/H. 10 March, 1955, p 4.
4. M/C. 18 June, 1915, p 8.
5. M/C. 9 October, 1916, p 3.
6. M/C. 11 October, 1916, p 6.
7. M/C. 4 November, 1916.
8. M/C. 1 August, 1916, p 8.
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10. *Ibid.*
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12. M/C. 14 August, 1917, p 4.

The War Drags On

By January 1917 it was evident that this was to be no brief war ending in heroic victory. Since the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 the world had changed, the sharp, almost exhilarating adventure of those early months had withered and died along with the many thousands of Australian men who had paid the ultimate sacrifice for what they termed, the 'great adventure'. Now, in 1917, with the nation suffering under a cloud of grief, with recruitment at particularly low levels, with everyday commodities steadily rising in price and with the wounded, the crippled, the insane, arriving back in Australia aboard the troopships, there was a time for reflection. How long could the war last, and was it time to send extra troops so that it could be finished quickly and decisively? Was it time, in fact, to finally introduce the controversial conscription method of recruitment in order to shorten the war and thus, in the long term, save many lives?

Casualty lists were continuing to appear with frightening regularity, the names of local soldiers being published in the press, ministers of religion appearing at the doors of the families of those men who had paid the ultimate price for their 'great adventure'. One by one the names gathered into a long list of those men. Private A. Freshwater, for example, who received a wound to his knee in France and subsequently died of blood poisoning. Prior to his enlistment Private Freshwater had been a blacksmith in Kingaroy, however, just before he joined the A.I.F. he had started farming a few miles from the town. He left a father, mother, wife and family to mourn his parting.¹

One of the men who paid the ultimate price during the war was Murgon photographer Alf Caswell, a man who left behind an invaluable legacy of early Murgon photographs which remained 'lost' for many years after the photographer's death.

Alf Caswell was born at Wallumbilla on 30 January, 1895, the son of William and Mary Ann Caswell. Arriving in Murgon with his family a few years after the establishment of the rail line, Alf Caswell soon became interested in photography and set up his own business, the Royal Studio at Murgon. He served in the Citizens' Militia and on 1 September, 1915, joined the A.I.F. He was posted to the 9th Battalion 13th Reinforcement and was sent to England, finally landing in France for active service. Alf Caswell kept a diary of his experiences on the Western Front, his last entry, dated 28 September, 1917, remarked: 'Back to the firing line.' Alf Caswell was killed nine days later on 7 October, 1917, he was then twenty-two years of age. The many photographs he had taken of the region, held on glass plate negatives, were stored beneath his parents' home at Murgon, lost and forgotten, until 1948 when they were discovered by his nephew, James Forsyth. A few of the negatives were then printed but the glass plates were stored and once again forgotten until the death of James Forsyth in 1974. The plates were then re-discovered and prints made of all the photographs.²

Among the recruits to voluntarily join the forces during those years was a group of men from Cherbourg, one of these was Archie Marshall who was killed during the war, a scroll and photograph of Marshall were later presented by the Murgon Shire Council to the Cherbourg settlement. Marshall had no family and was technically a ward of the chief protector.³

The lively gaiety that had accompanied the recruiting campaigns of the early years of the war had now disappeared. Long gone were the concerts, the pomp and ceremony that had accompanied the sending off of the troops as they had boarded the trains for the training camps. Day after day the dreaded telegrams and letters of condolences continued to arrive, week after week, month after month the toll of grief grew greater. As this national toll grew so too did the federal government's determination to place the conscription issue once again on the national agenda.



*McLucas family group, peace procession, 1918.
Australia — Beatrice McLucas, Serbia —
Ethel McLucas, Britannia — Matilda McLucas.*

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives. Ref. 2900 P3(b).

peace celebration performances. In Kingaroy, for example, the press was reporting: 'Kingaroy, like other centres lately, has been celebrating the armistice and also preparing for big efforts for the Peace Proclamation day or days. On Thursday last a meeting was held and it was decided to hold a great children's day in the school grounds on Friday 29th November, preceded by a monster procession. At night further activities are to be enacted towards the celebration when a torchlight procession will be held, also a patriotic concert.'⁴

That year, (1917) Billy Hughes again placed the issue before the people and called a referendum to decide the matter. Yet once more the people of Australia voted 'No', the majority realising that to send unwilling men to the front where they had a very real chance of being killed was both morally wrong and materially incompetent. Even the men at the front voted against sending conscripts, believing that to have unwilling soldiers fighting in the trenches would jeopardise the safety of the others.

In any case, by the end of that year the German forces were beginning to weaken and by the summer of 1918 the tide of war had turned firmly against the Germans. In November the armistice was signed and on the 11th of that month a sudden and unaccustomed silence fell over the fields of France and Belgium.

The war was over.

On the South Burnett and, indeed, all across Australia and the democratic Western world, the celebrations were instantaneous. In cities, towns and villages the people geared themselves up for days of celebrations, parades, concerts, speeches, dances and special



Rule Britannia, 1918. Float for peace parade at the end of World War One. Peter Conroy as John Bull, Mary Hurley as Britannia.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.



The armistice celebrations procession in Kingaroy Street, Kingaroy.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.



World War One victory celebrations, Murgon, November, 1918.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

It is difficult today to know what personal and private sacrifices were made by individuals during the war, but we do have some records left, one of which concerns the people of Goomeri. A history of war activity at Goomeri, written in 1930, records:

When recruits were called for, the first three men to enlist were Messrs W. Latham, O. Gurskie and H.A. Piper, Mr Latham attained the rank of First Lieutenant, and Mr Piper that of Warrant Officer, while two others gained commissioned rank. Of the remainder who enlisted, one gained the rank of sergeant major, four became sergeants, and three second corporals, while two were decorated with the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Eleven made the supreme sacrifice.⁵



Victory parade, at Nanango, end of World War One.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives

One of the strangest events to come out of the war was the case of Arthur Hughes, a soldier who was wounded at Mons at the beginning of the war, taken prisoner and held in a German prisoner-of-war camp until the Armistice in November 1918. While in the camp he was deprived of any form of reasonable medical care and Hughes himself, while of course acknowledging that he was wounded, did not know that a bullet was lodged close to his heart. Hughes, a resident of the Goomeri district, began suffering poor health during the 1930s and was taken to a private hospital in Brisbane for treatment. There his chest was X-rayed and the bullet was discovered resting on the heart valves and causing low pulse action. The projectile had rested on his heart for twenty-three years.⁶

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Nine The War Drags On

1. M/C. 13 September, 1917, p 6.
2. SBT. 31 January, 1995, p 2.
3. For details of this correspondence see: letters, 11 July, 1924, chief protector to T.W. Sanderson, shire clerk of Murgon Shire Council, letter dated 19 November, 1924, chief protector to Murgon Shire Council and letter dated 16 November, 1924, chief protector to Sanderson, correspondence box, Murgon Shire, Council archives.
4. M/C. 27 November, 1918, p 4.
5. M/C. 30 April, 1930, p 9.
6. SBT. 1 October, 1937, p 2.

The Soldier Settlements

When the Armistice was signed in Europe and peace descended over the tortured battlefields of France and Belgium in November 1918, the world remained in chaos. Millions of soldiers had to be repatriated, millions of bodies had to be retrieved from temporary graves and re-interred at war cemeteries. One by one the troopships brought the surviving Australian soldiers home from the Western Front and the Middle East. The men arrived in their hundreds of thousands on the wharves of Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Trains packed with troops brought the returning diggers into the country where they were welcomed at civic functions, flags flew, bands played, women cried. Australian soldiers who had fought in the war returned home to find the Australia they had left behind radically altered in many ways, but frequently the change was more of perception than of physical fact, for those soldiers had also changed, many of them casting off the mantle of parochialism. The war had matured the young men who had gone to fight, they returned more confident, more knowledgeable, more capable. One returned soldier claimed: 'There are dozens of men I have in my mind's eye at the present moment, men who have been brought out of the darkness of indecision, inaction and a general dependence upon others into the light of initiative, determination and self-assurance. This has been chiefly due to the fact that opportunities were made for them, opportunities that had to be utilised at all costs, and the soldier, being compelled to doing something, often found that what appeared to be an insurmountable barrier was but a stepping stone to greater achievements. And this sort of thing went on until the man, who, in the first place, was weak and apathetic, began to realise that he was capable of accomplishing comparatively big things.'¹

It was with this overwhelming confidence in the future and their own capabilities — perhaps an over-confidence — that the repatriated soldier once more returned home to the welcoming committees, the gala dinner celebrations, the small gifts of appreciation.

However, once the fervour of patriotism had died, the realities of life once more took prominence. During the war, conditions in Australia had changed dramatically. Women's suffrage had gained momentum, rail lines had opened more land to pastoral selection, communications had improved, but the curse of the prickly pear had continued to eat up the available land at approximately one million acres each year.

In the South Burnett there had been considerable growth during the war years. Some railway construction had been stalled for lack of funds, but the timber industry had continued to grow and consequently many of the small towns of the region were alive with prosperity.

Yet with the return of the soldiers there was a need to provide them with employment and housing, and this was largely catered for through the provision of land allocated by the government to soldier settlements.

Provision for these settlements came in 1917 with the introduction of the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act. This was the first of its kind in the Commonwealth and represented a broad liberal agrarian policy that would complement the already successful doctrine of closer settlement. The act empowered the government to lay aside money and land for the resettlement of soldiers onto small holdings. It was an ambitious project involving tens of thousands of farms and hundreds of thousands of acres of land.²

The project was to be a difficult and contentious one from its inception, and very few settlements were to become the meccas of returned soldiers. Initially, the government set a target of twenty thousand soldiers being settled on these lands, however, by early in 1919 this had been

revised to just 2800 and even this figure could not be reached. By the end of that year only approximately 950 soldiers had been settled and the figure reached just 2577 by 1921.

At first the soldier settlements were taken up with considerable zeal, the repatriated digger believing that the land would provide a rich new future. In 1920 the *Nanango News* published:

The Tarong Road Soldiers' Settlement is developing at a great pace, there being upwards of 30 selectors out there, and almost every selector is felling more scrub. Several returned men are paying great attention to vegetable growing. Several have expressed the opinion that before selecting there they visited a number of other localities in search of land, but at no place have they seen such good soil. The only thing lacking is a better water supply. With the return of normal seasons, this should be one of the most progressive new settlements on the tableland.

Another boon to the town is the surveying of another 2000 acres of scrub land for returned men at the Yarraman Soldiers' Settlement, about two miles out on the Yarraman-South Nanango road. This land is eagerly sought after, being right opposite the bore, where an endless supply of water was struck some time ago. Quite recently a strong oil engine, tank, and trough have been erected there ... The question of a butter factory is now beginning to engage the minds of many who pin their faith on the land.³

There were many factors involved in the rise and decline of the soldier settlements. The land that had been selected for this type of use was invariably of poor quality, soil samples were too hastily taken and the parcels of land were too small to provide a reasonable level of income. Land was provided on a leasehold basis, and this too came in for criticism, especially from B.H. Corser, M.L.A. for the Burnett in 1919, who raised many such criticisms in parliament. The premier at the time, newly elected Edward Granville Theodore, stated that the leasehold system had been adopted over a freehold system in order to prevent, '... a land boom and inflation of prices such as had taken place in New South Wales and Victoria, where the returned men were being saddled with a burden of capital costs that would condemn them to perpetual slavery.'⁴

The technical assistance provided by the government was of an inferior quality, the men themselves were frequently not suited to rural pursuits, many of them, prior to the war, had been city dwellers and knew nothing of agriculture. These problems were compounded by a number of other variables, the land was generally too far from modern methods of communication, roads and railways, markets were too distant, and those same markets, during the war years, had altered dramatically. Overseas competitors such as Denmark, New Zealand and the United States, particularly with dairy products, placed considerable pressure on the Australian producers. Additionally, the soldier settlers generally lacked financial resources, government loans of £625 were made available to the soldiers and a further £1250 could be borrowed providing the soldier could supply some form of security. The soldiers borrowed money to plant crops and to improve their holdings and when the crops failed due to poor agricultural practices or drought, many of them were forced to return to the cities.⁵

On the South Burnett there were several such soldier settlements at places such as Tarong, Booinbah, Burrandowan, Gordonbrook, Cinnabar, Boonaravale, Manumbar, Neumgna, and Taromeo, and these settlements too suffered no more or less than the settlements at such places as Stanthorpe and Beerburum. The government policy of providing the land on perpetual leasehold, rather than freehold, was a contentious issue. Also of considerable contention was the fact that some settlers were unable to obtain reasonable parcels of land when German immigrants who had not become naturalised Australian citizens, had obtained, in many cases, very fine selections. Returned diggers also urged the government to make available parcels of land that had been confiscated from German nationals who had been deported during the war years. In February 1920 a delegation of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League, representing returned soldiers, held a conference with the minister for lands, John Henry Coyne, who was also the chairman of the Soldiers' Land Settlement Committee. The representatives raised these issues with the minister, only to be told that Coyne would '... secure advice' on the points raised.⁶

By the following year (1921), it was already evident that the soldier settlements were failing at a rapid rate and many of the returned men were simply walking away from the land. One report of November 1921 claimed: 'On some forest lands in Queensland which, by no stretch of imagination could be termed agricultural, scores of fine men are wasting their lives, also the

money provided by the tax-payers of the Commonwealth. As conditions stand at present about 75 per cent of the men will not be able to make a living or pay off the advances and interest and compound interest thereon. The country stands to lose pretty well £200,000 on experiments undertaken on waste land.⁷

Yet not all of the soldier settlers were wasting their time and energy on a lost cause and there were certainly large numbers of men who had the necessary knowledge, the luck and the determination to keep going and to make a success from those very modest beginnings. One of these was Chris Dwyer who had leased a block of land at the Taromeo soldier settlement. Mr Dwyer was so successful in his endeavours that he drew the attention of the local press which reported:

Of his 100 acres subdivided into eight paddocks — all but 40 acres of scrub have been felled, and the cleared portions not under cultivation are carrying an abundance of Rhodes grass ... his February cream cheque came back to him marked £23/14s. He has a little over an acre of maize in heavy bearing, while two plots of potatoes give promise of a payable return for his labour. His little dairy, erected on approved lines with gauze ventilators, is scrupulously clean, while in one corner, set in the cool cement floor, he has provided a small well in which his cream can stand surrounded by water, which helps considerably to keep down the temperature of the cream while awaiting transit to the factory ... He is evidently on the spot to stay, fully determined to succeed if at all possible.⁸

In addition to the soldier settlements there was also a plan to construct war widows' cottages, what became known as Anzac cottages, small homes for the families of deceased soldiers. These cottages also had the advantage of providing extra work for local sawmills. The first Anzac cottage on the South Burnett, situated at Memerambi, was constructed through donations from the people of the region and was officially opened by Michael Joseph Kirwan M.L.A. on Thursday 2 October, 1919, before a large gathering of residents and visitors, the press reporting: '... the cottage is a substantially built five-roomed one, and was duly handed over to Mrs Keys of Memerambi.'⁹

The soldier settlement at Gordonbrook was evidently one of the more outstanding success South Burnett stories of the post war period. A description of the settlement, written in 1924, supplies us with the following information:

The Gordonbrook soldier settlement situated about 13 miles from Kingaroy, is one of the very few soldier settlements which have held their own. The settlement is portion of the Gordonbrook estate, which was a part of the original *Burrandowan* station, and is cut up into areas suitable for closer settlement. The country is mostly good open forest land, and nearly all the farms have blue gum flats, which are being used for cultivation purposes ...

A show, or 'harvest home,' is to be held at the settlement on the 5th May, when the district produce will be exhibited, and competition from outside settlements will be invited. This is the first soldier settlement in the Commonwealth to undertake the responsibilities of an agricultural show ...

A branch of the Local Producers' Association looks after the public needs of the district, and a public telephone connected with Kingaroy is one of the modern conveniences the settlement boasts of. The association is working hard to have a school erected, and the Education Department has promised to have the matter expedited ...

It is in the dairying industry that the settlement will make its name. The rich, black soil flats will grow an abundance of fodder for winter purposes, and the easy, sloping ridges are all covered with a profusion of good natural grasses ... Although the industry is only in its infancy, a motor lorry is already necessary to transport the cream from the settlement to the factory at Kingaroy, and twice a week the lorry is loaded to its utmost capacity.¹⁰

The first exhibition of produce from the Gordonbrook soldier settlement took place in May 1924, the press acknowledging that while the land on which the soldiers were farming was the 'worst in the district in many instances,' the former soldiers had managed to grow crops that would, '... do credit to shows of much greater dimensions as Brisbane and Maryborough.'¹¹

Yet despite these evident successes, the grievances of the soldier settlers continued. Soldier settlers took those complaints to a conference held in Brisbane in November 1926. They stated

that if the soldier settlements were to financially survive, then a number of changes had to be made to existing conditions and regulations. Among these were that all arrears owed to the government by soldier settlers should be wiped out, or at least that the settlers should have to pay no interest or redemption until the nett income from their farms approximated the basic wage. It was also resolved at that conference that the debts of settlers should be abolished after they left the settlements due to the land being unsuitable for agricultural purposes. In the event of the death of a soldier settler it was agreed that the land should be handed over to his dependents free from any financial encumbrances, and that where the land was too small to provide a living, extra land should be provided at no cost. Despite these resolutions, in reality they meant nothing without government approval and the minister for lands, Thomas Dunstan, refused to meet with the delegation that week as he was: '... busy with the estimates of his department.'¹²

One of the soldier settlers, J.T. McDermott, stated that such a response was, 'no good to them,' and said that as they were always being put off by such ministers it was time, '... that they took their coats off and hopped in.'¹³ McDermott stated that on a former Armistice Day he had walked down Queen Street, Brisbane, with a sandwich board on his back appealing for food for the starving wives and children of settlers, and despite various promises made by the government, nothing had been done to alleviate matters. Another settler said he had travelled one hundred and sixty miles to the conference and that livestock in his region was dying. It was, 'a blooming shame,' he said.¹⁴

Not content to be put off by the minister, the men decided to move to Parliament House where they quietly demonstrated. The minister finally agreed to see them the following morning.¹⁵

In the Legislative Assembly on 17 November, 1926, Dunstan moved for the introduction of a bill to afford relief to discharged soldier settlers who had been unable to meet their commitments. He also moved for amendments to the Discharged Soldier Settlers' Act. Dunstan said that the Bill was the result of special investigations that had been made by an officer of his department into conditions within the settlements and also through a conference with the Agricultural Bank and through deputations representing the various settlements. Dunstan said that relief should take the form of writing off of interest, and the provision of low interest loans over both short and long terms.¹⁶

Over the following years the problems continued, despite minor and cosmetic alterations to the various pieces of legislation governing such settlements. In 1929 another delegation took the grievances of the soldier settlers to the government, members of that delegation meeting with the then lands minister, William Arthur Deacon. They demanded action on six issues, including the transfer of holdings to freehold tenure and concessions on interest rates. One of the delegates quoted figures to demonstrate that due to the drought then being experienced in Queensland, some soldier settlers had earned only £20 for the year and others had earned nothing at all.¹⁷

Two of the soldier settlements in the South Burnett were established in the Goomeri district, one at Booinbah the other at Boonaravale. A description of Boonaravale was written in 1930. It claimed:

The Boonaravale soldier settlement was originally known as the Boonaravale paddock of *Kimbombi* station, and those at present owning the properties have every reason to be thankful to the late Mr and Mrs J.C. Mayne. It was really through their generosity that the men were able to settle there at all. The Mayne family always took a keen interest in the soldiers. One son, Mr W. Mayne, went right through the war only to be killed in a train smash in France, when the troops were demobilising, while another son, Mr Frank Mayne, who was very young at the time, also enlisted toward the close of those dark war years.

Ever ready to assist the returning men, Mr Mayne donated the whole of Boonaravale paddock of his holding consisting of approximately 640 acres and valued at £3000 to the soldiers.

The Boonaravale soldier settlement consists mostly of alluvial black soil lucerne flats. It was opened in April, 1919, and rapid advancement has been made, for the soldiers who started there practically penniless are now prosperous farmers. At first, much hard work was necessary clearing the land and getting rid of the larger gums and other trees, but the men persevered, and by dint of their hard labours have achieved success. Today

the countryside is one green mass of lucerne, permanent water being obtained from Chippendale Creek, which cuts through the holdings.

Many of the men have since increased their areas, and today there are five settlers there. Mr W. Heathwood now holds two blocks consisting of about 233 acres, while Messrs R. Badlor, R. McIntosh, E.H. Goodchild, and H. Hine are working on about 100 acres each. Mr Heathwood has taken a prominent part in public affairs since he has resided at Boonaravale ... The other returned men on the settlement have also made good, and today it is one of the most advanced and progressive in the State.¹⁸

There is no doubt that this very generous donation of land to form a soldier settlement was unprecedented in the shire and the Mayne family ensured a successful future for the settlers by donating rich and fertile land, in direct contrast to many of the settlements then being opened up by the government. The Boonaravale settlement had a number of other advantages, there were excellent areas of land available for immediate cultivation and the settlers were in close proximity to two railway stations, Goomeri and Kinbombi, which were only approximately three miles apart.

The second settlement in the region, being a government settlement, was not so fortunate. It was later described as: 'Booinbah is situated about twelve miles from Goomeri, and is well watered by Sandy Creek and various other streams. The land hereabouts, while not being quite so good in quality as Boonaravale, is nevertheless good country for mixed farming. The settlers were unfortunate enough to strike two periods of severe drought just after taking up their selections, but have stuck manfully to their task and today many fine farms are to be seen. Dairying is the principal industry but most of the settlers had a try at cotton growing. This crop had very trying conditions ...'¹⁹

In August 1927 the settlement was visited by Ernest Henry Collet Clayton, M.L.A. at the request of the Goomeri Q.C.W.A., the members of which were assisting with efforts to have a school established at Booinbah. Clayton addressed a meeting of residents and pointed out that a school was a necessity for the region. These remarks were backed by an address given by Cr. Stumm who stated that as closer settlement was then in its infancy in the region and as there were many rich blocks of land still to be taken up, there was every reason to believe that the area would soon be far more heavily populated and thus a district school was becoming an urgent necessity.²⁰

One of the soldier settlers of the Goomeri district was Mr A.B. Daniels who, with his wife Ethel, struggled to keep their soldier settlement farm clear of lantana and wattle. They purchased four draught horses, ploughs and a two horse scoop in an attempt to turn their selection into a successful dairy farm. Yet the land was covered with scrub that had to be cleared by hand using a brush-hook, axe and hayfork, Ethel working alongside her husband. It took months of clearing before they could see any positive results from their endeavours, the fresh Rhodes grass slowly breaking through. They then purchased what was to have been the nucleus of a dairy herd, spending what little money they had on the venture. However, luck was not with them, the stock suffered from cattle tick and died of red-water. Over the following years, like so many of their contemporaries, the couple struggled to make their farm into a successful venture, all the while fighting against the constant spread of weeds like lantana and wattle.²¹

If there was anything positive to come out of the war years it was the age of the soldier settlements, an era that brought many new selectors to the region, men and women and their children who did much to aid in the general growth and prosperity of the entire region.

Notes and Sources
Chapter One Hundred and Ten
The Soldier Settlements

1. M/C. 13 September, 1919, p 10.
2. Ibid, p 6.
3. N/N. 9 July, 1920.
4. M/C. 25 October, 1919, p 8.
5. Ibid.
6. M/C. 21 February, 1920, p 7.
7. M/C. 24 November, 1921, p 5.
8. N/N. 16 March, 1923.
9. M/C. 7 October, 1919, p 4.
10. M/C. 12 April, 1924, p 3.
11. M/C. 6 May, 1924, p 4.
12. M/C. 12 November, 1926, p 5.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. M/C. 18 November, 1926, p 5.
17. M/C. 1 August, 1929, p 7.
18. M/C. 30 April, 1930, p 9.
19. M/C. 18 September, 1924, p 2.
20. SBT. 19 August, 1927, p 2.
21. QCL. 6 August, 1959, p 14.

Medical Care at Nanango

The first hospital to be established in what was later to become Queensland was at the original penal settlement in Moreton Bay, a primitive institution used more for the treatment of whipping victims than the care of patients suffering from natural illnesses. This was later closed and used as an immigration barracks and was again opened as a hospital with a trustee board established in 1848. During this time there were several smaller hospitals in the colony, including a small clinic run by the legendary Doctor William Dorsey at Ipswich, but patients taken there could be treated for only relatively minor ailments and more serious cases had to be referred to Brisbane.

Other early hospitals included a small infirmary at Clifton and another at Gayndah, both very small and primitive affairs. The first public hospital established outside the Brisbane region was at Maryborough in 1859, but this too was merely a cottage hospital, its matron could neither read nor write and the hospital was capable of accommodating only a few patients at a time.¹

For many years residents of the South Burnett did not enjoy any kind of medical facilities. One of the region's earliest medical practitioners was 'Doctor' O'Connor who set up a sort of 'practice', operating from Goode's Inn at Nanango, but his qualifications seem to have been somewhat suspect and he would sometimes allow himself to be hired out to the various stations as a general labourer. He was also, reportedly, fond of alcohol and at times his operations, the setting of bones or the prescribing of various natural potions, had to be postponed due to an over consumption.

Unqualified practitioners were not uncommon in the colony at that time, there were many dozens of 'practitioners' in rural areas, but the *Queensland Government Gazette* of 4 January, 1862, recorded only twenty-three men who were qualified to practice in the colony. O'Connor was not one of them. Some of these practitioners were certainly charlatans, while others, like Doctor Gustavus Ernst, a practitioner at Maryborough and later at Gayndah, were fully qualified but in countries other than Britain. Ernst had qualified in Germany but his qualifications were not recognised in Australia. He was later found guilty of molesting one of his young female patients, a blind girl whom he promised to cure of her blindness in return for sexual favours, and served two years in prison. He was finally appointed medical officer at the Gayndah Hospital — at twice the salary he had been receiving at Maryborough.²

During the region's formative years the settlers of the South Burnett relied largely on 'doctors' such as O'Connor for their basic medical needs. Many of the settlers themselves and their wives had a practical understanding of basic medicine and patients were frequently treated at home using natural and herbal remedies or the small amounts of medicines kept for such contingencies at the stations themselves. Another person who 'practised' in the Nanango region was J.G. O'Sullivan, the manager of *Nanango* station, who was highly regarded for his medical knowledge and his ability to set bones.³

Another man named Doctor McMullen evidently practiced in the South Burnett during the 1860s and 1870s. It would appear from the records of *Tarong* station that the doctor was actually based at *Tarong*, the station diaries from 1869 to 1873 frequently refer to the movements of the doctor who rode all through the South Burnett, visiting various stations and even travelling to Maryborough to treat sick or injured patients. Evidence that *Tarong* was his base exists in the station diary entry for Sunday 12 May, 1872, which reads: 'Dr McMullen came home via *Taabinga*.' What became of this doctor is not known, one of the last entries in the station's diaries referring to him was written on 12 October, 1873, and reads: 'Dr McMullen returned to *Tarong* during our absence at *Baramba*. He is in too dreamy a state to do anything in the M.D. line. Kate

is unwell with sore throat. Doctor is "banging" (a handy word that) and cannot come to the rescue.' What was meant by 'banging' is not made clear in the diaries. The last entry in the diaries referring to the doctor appeared a few weeks later on 30 October, 1873, which reads, 'Dr McMullen left today with pack horse for Nanango.'⁴

The lack of medical facilities was a perennial problem. In 1877, the press published:

Robert Downing, engaged on *Barumba* (sic) Station, breaking in horses, received a kick from a horse on Thursday last, and had his kneecap broken.

Amongst the chief requirements of this district is a resident qualified medical practitioner. The accident above mentioned is but one of innumerable cases that are continuously occurring on surrounding stations, and to which horse-breakers, stock-riders, and wild horse-runners are liable, the unskillful setting of a broken limb rendering the patient a cripple for life. Setting aside accidents, the command of business by a medical resident must be extensive, as he would be the nearest practitioner to call upon in all cases of illness that require medical treatment with a circle of about 50 miles. Those stations would comprise *Tarong*, *Cooyar*, *Taabinga*, *Burrandowan*, *Mondure*, *Boonara*, *Barambah*, *Manumbar*, *Yabba*, *Mount Stanley*, *Colinton*, *Toromeo* (sic), *Nanango* station and township; and as the land resumptions on all the stations mentioned are now available, or shortly will be, the presumption is that the district will receive a large augmentation to its population.

As far back as 1865, the question of offering a certain amount to induce the residence of a medical man was adopted, and the sum of £200 per year guaranteed if the practice did not realise a certain amount. A Dr Walhardt accepted the appointment, and found the practice so remunerative that no necessity occurred to seek the assistance of the guarantee. Unfortunately, Dr Walhardt was himself suffering from consumption, and while in attendance at *Proston* station died, since which time two or three others have attempted practice. They might have had professional ability, but they did not inspire confidence. It is not necessary that our medico should be a Good Templar or Rechabite, but to be possessed of sufficient control to limit his imbibing capacity, so as not to interfere with the discharge of his professional duty. One great desideratum is, he should be a fair horseman. I am afraid, from the advertisements I occasionally see, that medical men ... have an antipathy to the bush; if, however, any should be induced to try this place as a residence, I would advise a visit to the stations I have mentioned. I am sure they would be welcomed, and it would tend to a much more satisfactory conclusion than arranging for a settlement by correspondence.

I may mention that the thanks of the district are due to our fellow (Nanango) townsman, Mr J.G. O'Sullivan, who, though not professing to be a qualified practitioner, has in numerous cases afforded medicines and such treatment as a considerable experience has enabled him to gather gratuitously. I am sure the advent of a settled doctor would afford him great satisfaction, and relief from anxious responsibilities, setting aside the pecuniary expenditure he must have incurred in the purchase of drugs which he has administered when asked so liberally and freely for several years past.⁵

Another of the early medical men was 'Dr' Von Stein, who became well known in the Nanango region — more for his seances and his participation in spiritualism than his medical abilities — although he is reputed to have carried out excellent medical work in the community. Von Stein's medical qualifications appear to have been somewhat obscure, J.E. Murphy records that he may have acquired his medical skills while serving as a medical orderly during the Franco-Prussian War.⁶ If this is the case, Von Stein must have come to Australia almost immediately after the war which ended in 1871, Murphy records that Von Stein arrived in Australia circa 1872.

Serious illnesses and accidents had to wait for a qualified medical practitioner to come up from Brisbane or the Darling Downs, but in most cases these patients had to undergo the tortuous journey by dray or wagon up the Brisbane Valley route to Ipswich where they would be treated by Dr William Dorsey or referred on to Brisbane itself. For people suffering serious illnesses or injury this delay could, and often did, mean a death sentence.

The first serious attempt to have a hospital established at Nanango was made during a meeting held at the offices of the divisional board on 25 February, 1897. The meeting was chaired by James Millis and a committee was formed to investigate the possibilities of raising the necessary funding and appointing a medical officer. Hector Munro moved a motion that: 'It is desirable

to erect a hospital in Nanango being the preliminary step to obtain the services of a medical man.' A ladies' committee was appointed to undertake fund-raising through subscription. The project was a successful one, two months later when another meeting took place, a total of £187/10s had been raised. Hector Munro, the surveyor, was subsequently appointed chairman of the hospital committee and it was agreed that a hospital should be constructed at a cost that was not to exceed £200. It was also agreed that a request be made to the government to supply land for the hospital. Tenders were called, the successful tenderer being John Heiner, proprietor of the local sawmill, the tender price was above the estimate, being £253/5/-. Heiner must have been a busy man, during 1897 extensions and renovations were carried on to the Nanango State School and Heiner was also the successful tenderer for that work.⁷

Construction of the hospital commenced in January 1898 and in March the following year the committee decided, after advertising the position in the *Brisbane Courier*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Argus* in Melbourne, to appoint a Dr Broom as resident medical officer. Broom was to be allowed a salary of £150 per year with the right to carry on a private practice in the region. The term of his employment was to be twelve months. However, Broom never took up the position and another Doctor Cory, who was offered the post, also declined to be appointed. Somewhat frustrated, the Nanango Hospital Committee requested the Eidsvold Hospital to provide a list of unsuccessful applicants for the position of medical officer at that hospital. A Doctor Morris (also reported as Mourice and Morice) from Tenterfield, was appointed the first medical officer of the Nanango Hospital. The minutes of the committee for 2 July, 1898, reveal that his offer to cater for patients at 2/6d per day, spirits not included, had been accepted.⁸

The first wardsman was James Cooley appointed in April 1898 at £40 per year, but he resigned in September 1898 after only six months in that position, and was replaced by two people, Mr A.H. Bartlett was wardsman with his wife being appointed matron, their combined salary was £100 per year. They were to be accommodated at the hospital but this meant moving the doctor out to other quarters. Catering was also one of the duties of the newly appointed wardsman.

At a meeting of the committee held on 23 June, 1898, J. Darley was appointed secretary with a modest salary of £25 per annum. The hospital committee was faced with significant problems, not least of which were those of a financial nature. In March 1901, when a Mr Thompson had been appointed wardsman with his wife as matron, the press reported:

A special effort is now being made to raise a supplementary fund for the Nanango Hospital, which has recently had so many calls upon it that the pecuniary strain has been somewhat beyond its resources. Although our district is deservedly noted for healthiness and beautiful climate, mankind ... is afflicted with a multiplicity of ailments of one kind or another, and a certain proportion of our population falls victims to accident or inherited disease, and those find their way to the hospital in due course for treatment, so that for a considerable time the various wards have been occupied. This means expense, for medicines and food have to be provided for the patients, besides medical comforts to build up their exhausted constitutions; and while some have been in a position to pay the fees charged, and have cheerfully done so, others have not had the requisite means. I may say in passing that the institution is conducted on extremely liberal lines, being almost free ... The wardsman, Mr Thompson, has been making a house-to-house canvas for subscriptions to augment the



'Dr' Von Stein, one of the region's first medical practitioners and a well known spiritualist.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

funds, and the residents have generally responded to the appeal ... When it is remembered that the great majority of people are struggling to get a start on the land themselves, and in the present (drought) season are hard pushed to keep the billy boiling, it is all the more to their credit that they are willing to do their best for the suffering and the unfortunate.⁹

The most direct route from Nanango to Blackbutt at that time was through some private property called *Bear*. The land was owned by a man named Gillespie. Gillespie was charging travellers a toll to pass through his property, and while this toll was used to augment the hospital funds, it sometimes raised the ire of travellers, as one press commentator named *Justitia* somewhat sarcastically wrote in May 1901: '... we found that here (at *Bear*) a stiffish toll of 1/6d for man and horse and 2/6d for pair, horse and buggy each way is cheerfully demanded and, of course, just as smilingly disgorged by all the millionaire settlers and ... travellers whose business or pleasure takes them upon this holy ground. One would naturally imagine that it should be the duty of the Divisional Board to either purchase this road or open one by some outside route with as little delay as possible, and so relieve the unfortunate selectors of Blackbutt from the burden of this irritability and of times inconvenient imposition. We use the word "imposition" in its least invidious sense, for it is certain that Mr Gillespie, in making this charge, is acting strictly within his rights, and we understand that the proceeds so acquired go to swell the funds of the Nanango Hospital.'¹⁰

In fact the lack of a proper road to the settlement at Blackbutt had been a perennial problem for several years. The residents of Blackbutt certainly did not part with their money 'smilingly' and the costs charged by Gillespie, even though the money was going to the hospital, were thought to be prohibitive. Petitions to the government produced little if any results, and settlers at Yarraman Creek were similarly affected.¹¹

Yet by 1902 the hospital remained on a tenuous financial footing, people of the district paying an annual subscription, much like modern medical insurance. That year the hospital committee was formulated into a board and Hector Munro, the committee's first chairman, was succeeded by James Millis (Senior).

This was a time of considerable agitation and discord within the hospital committee, discord that led to the dismissal of the resident medical officer, Doctor Morris (Morice). The press reporting the affair claimed:

Hospital matters have not been working too smoothly in this district of late, and for a couple of months past there has been more or less of a ferment going on. A short time since a new committee was elected for the hospital (the previous committee-men having lost their position through an oversight in regard to their nomination), and as new brooms proverbially sweep clean, the new committee decided to dispense with the service of Dr Morice, (sic) who for about four years had held the position of medical officer to the Hospital. The new committee did not give any public reasons for the step they took, but they broadly hinted that they could do so if required by a vote of a majority of the £1 a year subscribers. They gave Dr Morice a month's notice that he was to consider his job finished, but at the same time notified him that they were calling fresh tenders for the position, and he could put in an application if he desired. It was only a polite way of shunting the worthy doctor, who was personally remarkably well liked, and had a host of friends among the general public and the subscribers to the institution. He put in his application, but only to find that the committee had previously made up their minds to bestow the billet on another medico. Dr (E.R.) Row, who, I believe, hails from Bundaberg, was selected from among several applicants, and Dr Morice's friends felt pretty sore at what they considered was rather harsh treatment by the new committee. Anyway, they got up an influential meeting with the intention of calling the committee to account for shunting Dr Morice, and it is quite likely that there would have been a lot of trouble and bickering over the affair for some time to come only that at the meeting called to haul the committee over the coals it was announced that Dr Morice had received the appointment of medical officer to the hospital at Muttaborra, at a salary of £200 a year more than he was receiving at Nanango, with the right of private practice included. This unlooked-for ending of the trouble proved a most happy incident in its way, as it should tend to calm the wrath of Dr Morice's friends while avoiding unpleasant complications later on. The doctor has many warm friends in the district, who will greatly regret his departure personally, while rejoicing in his promotion to a more lucrative post. As a physician he ranks high, while in his private capacity he was geniality and kindness combined, and he takes with him to his new sphere the goodwill and regard of all who knew him during his residence in Nanango.¹²

Dr E.R. Row, because of the drought and the difficult finances of the region, was appointed at the reduced salary of just £130 per year. After the drought had broken his salary was substantially increased. In June 1903 W. Hamilton was elected chairman of the board, but the impact of drought must have been evident for the board was still undergoing some financial difficulty and soon afterwards both the doctor and the wardsman resigned.

Doctor John W. Tarleton was the next medical officer appointed to the hospital in 1904 with a salary of £100 per year. W.E. Adams was appointed wardsman, but as he was suffering ill health he resigned only a few months later and died soon afterwards. In the meantime a new wardsman was appointed, this appointment was confirmed in January 1906.

In July 1905 C.G. Gordon was elected chairman of the hospital board.



Original Nanango hospital, 1906.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

The matron of the hospital, a Miss Ella Bolin (also reported as Bohn, Bowling and Bolane), who had been appointed in 1905, resigned on 31 October, 1907, in order to marry James Stewart of Yarraman, she was replaced by Miss Irving. Thomas Crewed became wardsman on 30 July, 1908.

Miss Irving remained as matron of the hospital for only a short time, resigning on 28 February, 1909, she was replaced by Mrs R. Graham who was appointed as acting matron. Miss Cahill was later appointed matron but suffering ill health she too resigned and was replaced by Miss O'Leary.

By this time the hospital was suffering deep economic depression, this was not unusual for country hospitals, the populations of the various rural communities were small, and subscriptions to hospitals were difficult to raise. Most of the funds for the hospital were raised by race club meetings, churches and fetes and through the endeavours of the many women's associations in the region. Nanango residents were often deeply involved in raising funds for the hospital, for example in April 1912, Victor Stone, the proprietor of the Glydeaway Skating Rink, gave a benefit in aid of the hospital building fund. The performance, something of a novelty, was very well attended. Prizes were awarded for the best 'lady and gentleman' skaters, these were won by Miss Ida Sengstock and Mr O. Hamilton. Curiously, the prize for the best fancy dress skater was won by Mr J.R. Darley — his costume being that of a 'New Guinea girl'.¹³

The annual report of the hospital board ending June 1912 gives us some idea of the operations of the hospital at that time. The president of the board was then George Levinge, the medical



Dr John W. Tarleton (back).

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society

raised through benefits.¹⁵

By this time the old hospital had been condemned. Yet there was evidently some concern raised during the board meetings regarding the need for a new hospital. A report of the meeting held on Saturday 25 October, 1913, demonstrated the questions involved. The report claimed:

A meeting of contributors to the Nanango Hospital funds was held on Saturday 25th inst. The question was whether the new building should be gone on with or not? It was stated there was some £1700 in hand for the purpose. The President (George Levinge) thought they should go on with the building as the old building was unsuitable and had been condemned. Messrs Mulcahy, Cavaye, Moffat, Popple, and Rev. Father Bergin, were in favour of going on with it at once, whilst the P.M. (police magistrate, P.G. Knyvett) wanted to know where the patients were to come from. Well, I think the patients will come along all right if some alteration is made in carrying out the functions in connection with the institution. It is an open secret that our hospital is not looked upon as that haven of refuge and help it is expected to be. May its future be more prosperous.¹⁶

Yet skepticism remained. While the old hospital had been condemned and there were many faults with it, some people believed that to build a new hospital, with provision for a total of twenty-two beds, was far in excess of actual requirements for the town. At that time both Kingaroy and Wondai were in the process of raising funds and investigating the possibilities of establishing new hospitals and so Nanango could not expect to receive financial support or patients from those centres. A meeting of contributors to the hospital fund was held in the Nanango court-house on Saturday 25 October, 1913, to discuss the issue. Father Bergin, one of the contributors, stated that he had given money for the hospital in the belief that it would go immediately into construction and that it was wrong to collect money for a particular purpose and then not use the money for that purpose. Another contributor pointed out that in addition to the old building being condemned, there was no privacy at the hospital, the lavatories were in the wrong place and the kitchen was dangerously near the main building, a fire starting in the kitchen would quickly spread to the hospital. It was also pointed out that Nanango did not have the population growth to support a hospital of twenty-two beds.¹⁷

The debate continued for some time but with the outbreak of war in 1914 plans for this new building were postponed. In October 1914 Dr John Tarleton resigned his position as medical officer.

A severe epidemic of diphtheria broke out in Nanango in March 1915 which saw the limited medical facilities of the town placed under considerable pressure, the press reporting:

The epidemic of diphtheria which broke out in Nanango last week continues to spread, and at the time of writing there are no fewer than 41 patients in the two hospital buildings, which are taxed to the utmost capacity. The patients are all children, with the exception of a young man, 22 years of age, who was admitted this morning. The other patients range from 18 years of age to a baby of only a few months. Fortunately most of the cases were taken in good time, and with the exception of two of the younger ones, all are doing well. Three additional nurses have been secured from Brisbane, and these, with the matron and Dr Taylor, have been unremitting in their attentions upon the little ones. Dr Thompson, from the Health Department, arrived on Wednesday and is cooperating with the medical officer and the Shire Council in their endeavour to stamp out the disease. Fumigation and disinfection of most of the premises where the patients came from, have been carried out by the Council's sanitary inspector (Mr F.A. Hampson). At a special meeting of the Nanango Shire Council on Tuesday at noon it was resolved to make an advance of £260 to the Hospital to help them fight the disease.¹⁸

During the outbreak ninety-eight patients were admitted to the hospital and by 20 April only seventeen of these were still in care.¹⁹ These last patients were discharged from the hospital the following day and the press claimed that Nanango was: 'Free from Diphtheria.'²⁰

In 1919, after the cessation of hostilities in Europe, plans were made to carry out extensive renovations and additions to the hospital with the construction of extra wards and a new operating theatre. The cost of what amounted to a new hospital being approximately £2057, the new buildings were opened in 1920. New nurses' quarters were added in 1921 at a cost of £1078.



Nanango Hospital additions, opened 1920.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society

In 1920 the resident matron, Matron Cairncross, resigned her position and was replaced by the charge nurse, E.M. Butler.²¹

In 1925 the hospital was described as being one of the most advanced in the state. A report of August that year claimed:

The Nanango people are very proud of their hospital and it is one of the most up-to-date institutions in the State. Situated on the summit of a hill overlooking the town it is one of the first places shown to a visitor to Nanango. The view for miles around and the bracing air make it an ideal spot for the convalescence of patients. An energetic committee with Messrs T. Clapperton (patron), O.G. Oxley (president) and J. Hamilton (secretary) keeps in close touch with the institution and is well supported by the general public in the matter of contributions and subscriptions. In addition to Dr McReddie, the staff includes Matron F. Walpole, Sisters Walters, Clark and Blair, and Nurses Riedy and Walsh.²²



The second hospital at Nanango.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.



Dr P. McReddie and staff, Nanango.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

In 1933 Matron Amy M. Clarke informed the hospital board that a serious danger existed at the nurses' quarters. At that time the nurses were forced to use the same toilet facilities as the patients in the isolation ward, and as all these patients were suffering from highly contagious diseases, it was possible that some of the nurses would become ill. A new sanitary system had been ordered from overseas, but at that time it had not arrived at Nanango.²³

By May 1935 there were serious problems at the hospital which was then suffering from a dearth of patients. The doctor, matron and four nursing sisters had only two patients to look after and the medical officer, Doctor P.G. McReddie, wanted to appoint another doctor as his 'partner'. The board refused his request pointing out that due to the lack of patients at the institution some of the nursing staff would have to be dismissed.²⁴

Hospital admittance numbers remained low, Doctor P.G. McReddie's report of 30 June, 1937, pointed out that at that time there were just three males and two females in the hospital. Over the previous year the hospital had carried out 23 major operations and 138 minor operations.²⁵

A new medical officer, Doctor E. Lorimer Walker from Aramac, was appointed in July 1937, he replaced an acting medical officer, Doctor K. Coen.²⁶ The terms of his appointment stipulated that he would have to take up the position by 12 August, but due to personal difficulties the doctor did not start work at Nanango until late September.²⁷

Matron Amy M. Clarke was one of the longest serving matrons ever appointed to the post, serving from the 1920s until her retirement. She was trained at the Toowoomba Hospital and arrived at Nanango in 1928 to take up duties as a nursing sister, being promoted to matron the following year.²⁸ At a meeting of the hospital board held on 11 January, 1944, a letter of resignation from Matron Clarke, dated 28 December, 1943, was presented to the board. Matron Clarke advised that she was getting married but that she would be living in Nanango and would be available for duty should the hospital require her services.²⁹ The matron's services were evidently required for she did not actually retire from the hospital until 1948.³⁰ There is no doubt that the services of medical personnel such as Matron Clarke and Dr McReddie were vital to the growth of medical services at Nanango.³¹

Plans for a new private hospital in Nanango were approved by the Nanango Shire Council on 12 July, 1941. The hospital, run by Matron F. Rickertt, was to be built in Chester Street.³²

Over the following years there was mounting concern that Nanango required a new public hospital and several sites were suggested, yet the new hospital, with a proposed cost of some £17,000, was, '... placed on the deferred list' by the co-ordinator-general of public works in December 1947, one of the primary reasons for this deferment was the lack of funds.³³

In January 1953 a deputation representing the Nanango Shire Council and the Nanango Chamber of Commerce waited upon the South Burnett Hospitals Board with a request that steps be immediately taken to provide the town with a new general and maternity hospital. Delegates cited as their reasons the fact that the existing hospital was situated on a hill outside the town and was therefore almost inaccessible to people with no form of transport and that the government had allegedly decided to carry out no further public works on the building. A petition outlining a strong case for the construction of a new hospital had gone before the state health minister the previous June.³⁴

A new wing was brought into use at the hospital in November 1955, the new section of the building costing £4500.³⁵

Despite representations to the South Burnett Hospitals Board nothing further was achieved for several years. In 1958, five years after the January 1953 deputation, the Nanango member of the South Burnett Hospitals Board, Mr O.J. Praske, described the hospital as a 'bits and pieces' hospital, claiming that no amount of paint or public works would improve the situation. Praske stated: 'Accommodation at the Nanango Hospital does not match up to that provided at other South Burnett hospitals in any way, no matter what you do there now you can never change the outside appearance of the place. Adding bits and pieces here and there won't do at all. Lately you gave us a gunyah lean-to laundry which looks very bad.' Praske added that the heat in the private wards was

extreme and that all the patients were complaining about it. He said that the hospital had no fans and that the natural ventilation, '... would be a disgrace to any building, let alone a hospital.'³⁶

Finally, more than a decade later, it was decided to build a new maternity block and nurses' home at the hospital. The extensions to the hospital were opened on Saturday 24 October, 1970. These facilities were urgently needed as the hospital was serving the Yarraman, Blackbutt, Benarkin and Cooyar districts. The extensions included a new four-bed maternity wing complete with labour ward, nursery room and administration section, and a 'first class' fully air conditioned operating theatre. The recent history of the hospital, published at the time of the opening of the extensions claimed:

In 1948 the sum of £500 was provided to the Hospitals Board to plan a new hospital at Nanango, but when this was taken to the Department they were unable to proceed because of the financial position at the time.

Nanango residents were not happy with the position and the Board became aware of pressures from numerous groups in the district, the most prominent at the time being the Nanango Chamber of Commerce.

About 1962 final approval was given for remodelling of the hospital and plans were sketched for a scheme ... They were not considered satisfactory and the matter was taken up with the health minister unsuccessfully.

Tenders were called and one accepted, but the tenderer was unable to proceed and so the Board took this opportunity to again press for a new hospital for Nanango and a deputation went to the health minister.

By the end of 1968 final approval to working plans and specifications were given and tenders called. Construction started in April, 1969.³⁷

Other matrons to have served at the hospital include Matron M.C. Cossart, 1956 to 1964, Matron E.A. Unwin, 1964, Matron M.R. Foley, 1965 to 1971, Matron V. Doig, 1971 to 1972, Matron J. White, 1972 to 1977 and Matron L.M. Treeby.³⁸

The Ringsfield Maternity Hospital

Nanango's Ringsfield Maternity Hospital played an important role in early medical care in the town, operating in conjunction with the general hospital and providing a special service to the community.

The imposing building, situated on the corner of Alfred and Cairns Streets, was designed by well known Queensland architect Robin Dods and constructed in 1908. It was built for Mrs Florence Graham who was reputed to have received an inheritance of some £30,000. Her husband, James William Davies Graham, was a government officer based at Nanango. The couple married at Ipswich in 1886.³⁹

In typical Dodsean manner, the home was somewhat palatial with large rooms, inbuilt furniture and high ceilings, there were fireplaces in almost every room and the home even featured a secret passage between two bedrooms. The grounds were complete with a gazebo, tennis courts, stables and an impressive semi-circular driveway. Two other smaller homes, for the accommodation of servants, were also constructed on the grounds.

Mrs Graham's husband died at Ringsfield on 21 September, 1912, and, with her daughter she travelled to England in 1913, returning in 1915 after the outbreak of war. Mrs Graham married Frank Sullivan circa 1922, Mr Sullivan was a returned soldier who had been badly wounded during the war. During the 1930s the couple moved for a while to Brisbane, at that time the Cassidy family occupied Ringsfield and it appears to have been used as a hospital during that period. In her excellent book, *Ringsfield, If Only These Walls Could Talk*, author and historian Hilary Franklin writes: 'It is unclear exactly what happened to Ringsfield during these years but I have been told that the Cassidys, who ran the Commercial Hotel, lived here for some time. It was also used as a hospital as Reg McCallum (present mayor of Nanango shire) clearly remembers his father taking him 7 miles by sulky to Ringsfield to have Dr Skinner remove a large splinter from his toe.'⁴⁰



Ringsfield, 1996.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.

The Sullivans returned to Ringsfield in 1936 and the impressive building once again became an important social centre in the town. In 1942 the home was vacated and stood empty for a while and was damaged by vandals, that year Matron F. Rickertt, then matron of the Glenrowan Private Hospital in Nanango, made an offer to Mrs Sullivan to take over the building and to convert it into a maternity hospital. Florence Sullivan died at Brisbane in November 1949 and was interred at the Toowong cemetery.⁴¹

The building was opened as the Ringsfield Maternity Hospital in August 1942. The first baby born at the hospital was George Wolski, who was presented with a cup by Matron Rickertt.⁴² Matron Rickertt retired in 1946 and died at the Wesley Hospital in September 1977.

In 1946 the South Burnett Hospitals Board assumed the administration of the hospital, purchasing the building from the Sullivans and appointed Matron Emma Gilmore to take charge of the facility. Hilary Franklin writes: 'Records show the hospital closed its doors for the first time on 20th March, 1946, and reopened on 4th April with Dr N. Reid as the general medical officer, Dr R.V. Rickard as the medical superintendent and Matron Kelly.'⁴³

The Ringsfield Maternity Hospital closed its doors for the last time on Tuesday 31 March, 1970, making way for the new maternity service that had recently begun at the Nanango Hospital. At the time of its closing Sister Margaret Roberts was sister-in-charge. The last baby to be born at Ringsfield was Susan Marie Munro, the daughter of Mr and Mrs Duncan Munro. Patients at Ringsfield at the time of its closure were transferred to the new maternity wing at the general hospital. The closure of the hospital was followed by a special farewell party and buffet which was served: '... in one of the large gracious rooms which must have seen many such functions in the early days of Ringsfield.'⁴⁴

Following the closure of the hospital the building was purchased by the Nanango Shire Council and in 1973 was taken over by Lifeline to be converted to 'transitional units in the re-establishment of family life.' In 1993 the council advised Lifeline that it had decided to use the building to house the shire's museum and historical centre and the building is currently occupied by the Nanango Shire Historical Society.⁴⁵

Other private institutions in Nanango included the Kia-Ora Nursing Home in Alfred Street and the St Clare Nursing Home, opened by Matron Muriel McEvoy in Chester Street in 1923.

The building had originally been a residence constructed by Nanango solicitor, C.G. Gordon.⁴⁶ One of the owners of Kia-Ora was Sister Florence Thompson, who married John Downes of Ironpot and became the mother of Bob Downes, later chairman of the Kingaroy Shire Council.⁴⁷

Other medical facilities in the Nanango shire included, of course, those at Blackbutt. Blackbutt's first doctor was David Rosenberg who was assisted by Nurse Inez Morrison, a small cottage hospital was established on the corner of Margaret and John Streets and came under the administrative control of the Gayndah Hospital Board.⁴⁸ In 1912 the press reported: 'In Dr Rosenberg, the district boasts a gentleman who has proved himself possessed of very high qualifications. He is courteous, hardworking, clever, and painstaking to those who are placed under his care ... Associated with him professionally is Nurse Morrison who holds a certificate for midwifery from the Lady Bowen Hospital, Brisbane, and another for general competency from the Sydney Hospital, probably the largest institution of its kind in Australia. Nurse Morrison is the guardian angel of a private hospital, which can accommodate six patients, and as cases are received there from Linville, Mooretown and Yarraman, is sometimes taxed to its utmost capacity.'⁴⁹



Matron Muriel McEvoy's maternity hospital in Chester Street, Nanango, opened in 1923.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives, Neil Collins' collection.

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Eleven

Medical Care at Nanango

1. For further details on these hospitals see: Matthews, Tony, *River of Dreams*, Vol 2, pp 433–436.
2. For further details on Ernst's case see: Matthews, Tony, *River of Dreams*, Vol 2, p 435.
3. For a dated but unsourced copy of O'Sullivan's obituary see: Miscellaneous file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
4. 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.

5. B/C. 20 January, 1877, p 6.
6. WW. p 48.
7. M/C. 19 November, 1897, p 3.
8. For further details see: M/C. 4 July, 1898, p 2; N/N. 12 March, 1959, p 3; and K/H. 28 October, 1970, p 1.
9. M/C. 29 March, 1901, p 4.
10. M/C. 20 May, 1901, p 3.
11. M/C. 18 June, 1901, p 3.
12. M/C. 25 September, 1902, p 4.
13. M/C. 9 April, 1912, p 8.
14. N/N. 5 July, 1912.
15. N/N. 18 April, 1913, p 2.
16. M/C. 4 November, 1913, p 5.
17. N/N. 31 October, 1913.
18. M/C. 29 March, 1915, p 8.
19. M/C. 21 April, 1915, p 3.
20. M/C. 22 April, 1915, p 5.
21. M/C. 23 October, 1920, p 5.
22. M/C. 22 August, 1925, p 6.
23. N/N. 22 September, 1933, p 3.
24. N/N. 16 May, 1935, p 2.
25. N/N. 5 August, 1937, p 4.
26. N/N. 22 July 1937 p 1 and 23 September, 1937, p 1.
27. N/N. 23 September, 1937, p 1.
28. K/H. 11 November, 1948.
29. K/H. 20 January, 1944, p 1.
30. N/N. 18 November, 1948 and K/H. 11 November 1948. For details on Matron Clarke's career see: Hospitals file, Nanango Shire Council archives.
31. N/N. 30 May, 1935, p 2.
32. N/N. 24 July, 1941, p 2.
33. For details of this deferment see: K/H. 23 December, 1947, p 1.
34. SBT. 29 January, 1953, p 8.
35. K/H. 1 December, 1955, p 1.
36. SBT. 30 January, 1958, p 3.
37. K/H. 28 October, 1970, p 1.
38. South Burnett Hospitals Board letter, ASN:rjb, dated 21 January, 1980, Nanango Historical Society archives.
39. Franklin, Hilary, *Ringsfield, If Only These Walls Could Talk*, Nanango Shire Historical Society, p 5.
40. *Ibid*, p 11.
41. *Ibid*, p 14.
42. K/H. 8 April, 1970, p 10.
43. Franklin, p 18.
44. K/H. 8 April, 1970, p 10 and N/A. 2 April, 1970.
45. For a detailed history of Ringsfield, including registers of known matrons, nurses, domestic staff, births and doctors, see: *Ringsfield, If Only These Walls Could Talk*, by Franklin, Hilary, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
46. For further details of these nursing homes see: Hospitals file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
47. Author interview with Bob Downes, 5 September, 1996.
48. Stocks, p 11.
49. N/N. 6 September, 1912.

Medical Care at Kingaroy

Following the arrival of the railway line to the 56 mile peg and the subsequent sudden rise of the township of Kingaroy, it soon became quite obvious that the community was to become a major settlement on the South Burnett. The advent of closer settlement, the huge wealth generated by the harvesting of the forests and the ease in which that wealth could be brought to market once the railway system was in place, ensured a long period of sustained growth for the town. The incorporation of the necessary infrastructure came as it was required, local government being installed in 1912 which ensured the rapid construction of roads and other important facilities.

The first medical practitioner at Kingaroy is believed to have been a Doctor Rendle, who died soon after his arrival and was interred at the Taabinga cemetery. Adela Williams practiced briefly in the small township, arriving circa 1907, but soon relinquished her practice. Dr John Tarleton, from Nanango, was a regular visitor at Kingaroy although the first full time and permanent doctor was J.W. Heaslop.

One of the doctors to have practiced in Kingaroy appears to have been a woman named Doctor Harcourt. Little is known of this doctor other than a somewhat cryptic paragraph written by the Kingaroy correspondent of the *Maryborough Chronicle* in March 1908 which stated: 'Our lady medico, Doctor Harcourt, has left, not having come to terms with her predecessor. Doctor Morris is now in practice here and begins his work under difficulties regards road travelling.'¹

Prior to the shire achieving separation from the Nanango Shire Council in 1912, the local administrative needs of the district were largely catered for through the Kingaroy Progressive Society and the Chamber of Commerce, both organisations working to push the Nanango Shire Council for better local representation and for the introduction of modern facilities. Yet the battle to have these facilities set in place was a long one, and one subject to a host of variables such as the importance placed upon them by the progress association and the chamber of commerce. Hospitals were evidently not one of the priorities of the Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce in 1910, a local resident then lamenting: 'The newly formed chamber of commerce have got into harness and truly they have a full programme before them ... I should have thought another item on their programme would have been a general or cottage hospital, but it seems this is not so. Patients have now to go either to Maryborough or Gympie. Only the other day a patient was sent away in a serious condition, and died on the way.'²

Within twelve months, however, the situation had altered dramatically, plans were underway to have a general hospital constructed, at a cost of £1000, a site had been chosen and was to cost £200. A committee had been formed to canvass the town in order to raise subscriptions for the proposed hospital.³ A public meeting was called on 27 August, 1911, however, due to confusion over the venue only about six people were present at the School of Arts that day. People canvassing of the town had succeeded in raising only £325, which was somewhat disappointing and boded ill for the future of the hospital proposal.⁴

The committee of management made an application to the government for a subsidy to aid with the project, only to be informed that for such a subsidy to be granted a list of all subscribers, the amounts donated to the building fund and an estimate of the costs involved would have to be submitted for state governmental approval.⁵

Another meeting of the hospital committee was held at the Show Hall on Friday 4 July, 1913. The meeting was chaired by Reverend A.A. Mills. A rough sketch of the proposed hospital had

been forwarded to the Department of Public Works with the request that the department draw up detailed plans and specifications. It was also decided to make provision for an infectious diseases ward as a separate part of the hospital.⁶

The Works Department first proposed a building that would cost £1870, this was queried by the management committee but eventually the committee agreed that such a building, complete with an infectious diseases ward, be constructed. Yet there were further difficulties. In December 1913 the Works Department recommended that the tender of Jacob Bonding for £2310 be accepted, this cost included an infectious diseases ward, fencing and the preparation of the site. The committee of management considered the cost excessive and began investigating ways in which it might be reduced. Committee members finally recommended that the tender be accepted with the exception of the infectious diseases ward and fencing. This tender was accepted in February 1914 and the town was again canvassed for funding. Five acres of land in Fisher Street were purchased from Mrs Bridget Carroll and family who then donated the purchase price to the hospital management committee. In March 1914 subscribers to the hospital elected T.W. O'Neill, F.C. Petersen and D. Carroll as trustees.⁷

The stump capping ceremony was officially performed on 16 April, 1914, the occasion being declared a public holiday during which residents enjoyed a procession from the town and a sports carnival.

The hospital situated on what is still known as Hospital Hill in Kingaroy, was officially opened by M.J. Kirwan, the works minister, on 18 November, 1914. The site later became the Apex Park. After the opening, M.J. Kirwan, stated that the hospital was completely free of debt and had a credit balance of £700.



The Kingaroy Hospital which was opened in 1914. The first medical officer was Dr J.W. Heaslop and the matron was Miss M. Dowling. Miss Norma MacDiamid succeeded Miss Dowling as matron in 1915.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection

The first doctor, J.W. Heaslop, was appointed with a salary of £200 per year, this was later increased to £220. The first matron was Matron M. Dowling, she was appointed in October 1914 with a salary of £80.⁸

The first record of an annual general meeting was on 31 January, 1915, which was adjourned until 27 February that year, the committee at that time was comprised of F.C. Petersen, its president, A. Youngman and D. Carroll, vice-presidents, W.A. Hoffman, the treasurer, G.S. Venman, the secretary with other members being M. Baker, O.S. Bond, E.E. Dalton, J.B. Edwards, J. Ferguson, R.E. Horton, T.W. O'Neill, J.M. Pack, F.G. Palethorpe, B.S. Prothero, W.T. Smillie (also reported as Smilie) and J. Toomey.⁹

The hospital was only a relatively modest concern, although the building, for those times, was quite imposing. The doctor in charge, J.W. Heaslop, who also ran a private practice in the town, reported in May 1915 that during the preceding two weeks two patients had been discharged, two admitted and that only two patients were then in the hospital. The hospital was comprised of male and female wards, four small private wards, a detached operating room, a kitchen and mortuary. At a meeting of the hospital committee held on 11 May, 1915, it was decided to postpone the construction of nurses' quarters until the region experienced a more favourable season.¹⁰

Matron Dowling resigned her position in August 1915 and on 30 August applications were sought for the positions of matron and nurse for the Kingaroy Hospital, the salaries then being offered were £90 for the matron and £70 for the nurse, with an annual allowance of £6 for uniforms.¹¹ Matron Dowling was replaced by Matron Norma MacDiarmid who was appointed from 1 September, 1915.

Doctor Heaslop was not to remain medical officer of the hospital for long, he tendered his resignation in 1919 after being in the district for a total of nine years. Heaslop was given a public send off at the Olympia Theatre on the evening of Tuesday 28 January, 1919. He and his wife, who was heavily involved with Red Cross work during the Great War, were given '... a handsome cheque' in appreciation of their services to the community. Approximately one hundred and fifty people attending the farewell function. Heaslop's practice was taken over by Doctor F.G. Meade.¹² Heaslop's son, James Hardaker Heaslop, (affectionately known as Hardy) died suddenly, aged just seventeen years in 1932.¹³



Matron MacDiarmid, Dr F.G. Meade (medical superintendent), Sister Slater and Nursing staff of the first Kingaroy Hospital.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

By May 1919 the long awaited nurses' quarters and an infectious diseases ward were in the course of construction, the government contractor carrying out the work being Mr J. Hood and his staff. The work, after being in progress for approximately two months, was by that time nearing completion, although there was no funding available to provide hot water in the nurses' quarters and so a coin evening was organised in order to purchase a hot water fountain. The evening raised £8 towards the project.¹⁴

The nurses' quarters and isolation ward were officially opened by the governor of Queensland, Sir Hamilton John Goold-Adams, on 1 September, 1919, the combined cost of both projects being £2400.

Staff at the hospital at this time included Matron Norma MacDiarmid, Nurse Enid Morris, Dr F.G. Meade, Sister Slater and Sister J. Knipe, who later married Dr Meade.¹⁵

Like many other hospitals in rural Queensland, the Kingaroy Hospital laboured to survive financially and conditions there, due largely to the lack of funds, were far from ideal. In November 1925 the hospital committee met to discuss the serious financial position, Mr O.S. Bond stated that the situation was tenuous. He pointed out that by the end of December the hospital would have a credit of just £20 and that for the following three months, until the arrival of the next government subsidy of £509, the expenses of the hospital were expected to be approximately £900, leaving a considerable deficit. Bond claimed that during his visit to the hospital that day he had found: '... the institution lacking in many ways. The stretchers were a disgrace to the hospital, in fact the matter of putting patients in them in the men's ward was absolutely cruel and did not contribute to good treatment.'¹⁶

The matron of the hospital also pointed out to the committee that: '... in addition to renovations, new furniture was required, there was not enough seating accommodation for the patients who had to sit on their beds, or for visitors.' The matron said that such a situation was, 'cruel', adding that if the committee wanted the hospital to succeed then the necessary facilities would have to be provided. O.S. Bond stated: 'In conversation with several patients they expressed themselves highly satisfied with the staff who, they said, could not work harder. They complained there was no accommodation for patients or visitors ... On the verandah there were five or six men in bed, the heat would absolutely melt a wax candle. The stretchers were not fit for a blackfellows' camp and the lockers were absolutely devoid of white paint or enamel.'¹⁷

Numbers of patients in the hospital at that time fluctuated, for example during the month of December 1925 thirty-seven patients had been admitted, thirty-three discharged, one death had occurred and twenty-six patients remained at the institution. That same month the chairman of the committee, T.W. O'Neill, resigned due to ill health, he was replaced by Dan Carroll. Staff at the hospital at that time included the medical officer, Dr Davis, Matron Norma MacDiarmid, Sisters P. Tweed, E.A. Cornell, and G. McAuliffe. Miss V. Craig and Miss G.E. Swain were nurse probationers, other nurses included Nurse Cogzell, who had recently completed her fourth examination, and Nurses Power, Short, Craig and Swain who had passed their first examination.¹⁸

There have been a number of generous benefactors to the hospital, including Mr J. Svanson who donated £407 in 1926 and Mr T. Cleary who gave £100 in 1933.¹⁹

Conditions at the hospital were not always ideal and were the cause of some serious complaints from both the medical staff and the general public, especially during times when overcrowding occurred due to outbreaks of influenza or other contagious diseases. For example, on 17 August, 1933, the medical superintendent of the hospital, Dr Alex L. Caselberg, wrote to the president of the hospital board stating: 'I regret to again have to draw your attention to the disgraceful state of the isolation block at the hospital. During the recent epidemic we were unfortunate enough to have three very serious cases at once. These cases had to be kept under constant supervision, requiring two nurses to be permanently housed in the block. These unfortunate girls had to sleep in turn on the verandah and use the one and only (toilet) closet in the building, this being used by an adult male, an adult female, children and staff. The same remarks apply to washing facilities. The whole building must be enlarged, but first and foremost, quarters for the nursing staff are required ...'²⁰

In 1936 news was released that a new hospital, certainly the largest and most modern on the South Burnett at that time, was to be constructed at Kingaroy. The architect of the proposed building, J.P. Donoghue of Brisbane, had supplied plans that included the provision for several large wards which would emanate from a single central administrative centre on two levels. The hospital, in addition to containing male and female wards, would also include a complete obstetric service and a pre-natal clinic. However, there were many opponents to the plan and it was widely believed that such an institution could never hope to be economically viable. The Wondai Hospital

was then receiving an average of twenty-one patients per week and the existing Kingaroy Hospital received only a few more, thus the provision of almost one hundred beds and many other medical facilities was regarded by some residents as being quite unnecessary.²¹

The *South Burnett Times*, which found itself in a position to critically examine the proposal, castigated the *Kingaroy Herald* for its 'sycophantic attitude' towards the concept and advised the public that: '... the proposal to erect at Kingaroy a brick and 90 bed structure when the present average number of patients is about one fourth that number and all adjoining districts are well served by public hospitals certainly calls for explanation, more especially in view of the fact that there are excellent transport services by rail, road and air to the metropolis — the latter covering the distance in about three-quarters of an hour.'²²

In late June 1938 the tender of builders Blair and Cunningham of Brisbane was accepted for the construction of the hospital, the tender price being £38,308. The hospital would include a maternity wing which was being entirely funded by the state government.²³

The foundation stone for the new hospital, located on the corner of Youngman and Alford Streets, was laid by the minister for health and home affairs, E.M. Hanlon, on 22 October, 1938. It was completed in 1939 and was later to become the base hospital for the South Burnett. Some of the early doctors to have served at the hospital include Doctors Mackay, N.E. Davis, Alex L. Caselberg and R.V. Rickard.

The local ambulance service began operating following a public meeting held in April 1920.²⁴ Ambulance bearers have included a Mr Franks, his position being an honorary one, followed by F.G. Palethorpe, one of the first settlers in the Mannuem district.

A sale of the old hospital buildings in Fisher Street took place in March 1941, the sale was arranged through Mr L.N. Freeman and realised more than £641, although the main hospital building was not at that time sold, the board had received an offer of £99 for the main hospital building but, '... refused to treat the offer seriously.' A drinking fountain commemorating the work of Matron MacDiarmid was later constructed at the park.²⁵

During the Second World War there was a serious outbreak of polio in the region and the entire ground floor of the new hospital was converted to a polio ward. Eight nurses were allocated full time duty in this isolation ward and were forbidden to leave the hospital. One of the cases included a girl named Hilda Mills who was placed into an iron lung and sent to Brisbane in a furniture van, however she later died.²⁶

Over the years there have been only a few matrons at the two major Kingaroy General Hospitals. As we have seen, Matron Norma MacDiarmid was appointed to the position in September 1915, following the resignation of the hospital's first matron, Matron M. Dowling. Matron MacDiarmid remained in that position until she retired in 1944. Her letter of resignation, dated 18 January, 1944, stated in part: 'Realising that the years are catching me up and that I have not that same conscious resistance of younger years, I feel it is only fair to the hospital that I love, and right in every way, that I should turn my footsteps towards home.' The press soon afterwards claimed: 'We well remember a highly respected businessman of Kingaroy in his fatal illness during which he was an inmate of the Kingaroy District Hospital saying: "When Matron entered the room it was like an angel coming in".'²⁷ A ward was later named after Matron MacDiarmid and a Kingaroy street is also named after her. She was replaced by Matron Alma E. Farr, one of the longest serving matrons of the Kingaroy Hospital who was serving as a sister in 1938 at the old Kingaroy General Hospital and was appointed acting matron at a meeting of the hospital board held on 21 April, 1944.²⁸ Matron Farr commenced her nursing career at Cairns in 1928, she retired from the Kingaroy Hospital on 30 June, 1972.²⁹ In May 1972 the press reported: 'Matron Farr first came to this area some 34 years ago as a nursing sister. Except for a short period of further training in Toowoomba she has worked here continuously, becoming matron in January 1945. On her retirement she will have served in that capacity for twenty-seven and a half years. Probably the highlight of the matron's career came in June 1970 when she received the M.B.E. from Her Majesty the Queen. That her career has been a long and distinguished one is beyond doubt.'³⁰

In 1956 Matron Farr was responsible for introducing the first graduation ceremony at the hospital, a tradition which was maintained until the hospital ceased nurses' training in 1981.

In 1961 a new thirty bed female geriatric ward was opened at the hospital this was named Farrhome, in honour of Matron Farr. Farr Street was also named after her.

The matron was given a farewell at the Kingaroy Town Hall on the evening of 30 June, 1972, more than six hundred people attending the event. Matron Farr died at Maryborough in August 1981, a flower garden and fountain at the hospital were later dedicated in her honour, the plaque at the site being unveiled by Matron Farr's friend, Senator Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen.³¹

Matron Farr was replaced at the Kingaroy Hospital by Beverly Hay, a Kingaroy nurse who had herself trained under Matron Farr and who had undergone midwifery training at the Northshore Hospital, Sydney.³² Beverly Hay served as matron until 1975 when she took up a position with St Aubyn's Private Hospital in Kingaroy, she was replaced by Matron Hazel Knopke who was appointed nursing superintendent.

Matron Knopke had completed her general training at the hospital from 1955 to 1959 — also under Matron Farr — later moving to complete other aspects of her professional training including a period of nine years in New Guinea where she worked at a Lutheran mission hospital at Finschhafen. Matron Knopke had completed a diploma in nursing administration and is a Fellow of the College of Nursing, Australia.³³ Matron Knopke resigned from Kingaroy Hospital in 1982 to take up the position of director of nursing at Gracehaven, a Lutheran nursing home at Bundaberg.³⁴

Over the years there have been many extensions and renovations made at the hospital, today, as the base hospital for the South Burnett, there are more than forty beds and the institution provides general and specialised services to the entire region.³⁵

Private Hospitals in the Kingaroy District

In February 1926 the Kingaroy Shire Council received a letter from a resident named R.W. Whitehead which claimed that the health inspectors were not doing their jobs properly and that the three private and maternity hospitals then operating in Kingaroy were a disgrace, adding that the conditions at childbirth were anything but clean. He wrote that shortly after one of these hospitals had been inspected a death had occurred, from 'septic', and that the death could have been avoided, Whitehead claimed, '... the infant torture chambers required immediate attention ... Was Kingaroy to be looked upon as the chief stink-pot of the South Burnett?' The council regarded Whitehead's letter with some contempt, one councillor claiming that it should be consigned to the waste paper basket. In fact there had been only twelve deaths in Kingaroy private hospitals during the previous three years, which was something of an enviable record.³⁶

There have been several private hospitals at Kingaroy, including the Ailsa Private Hospital in Alfred Street which, in 1912, was under the control of a Mrs McDonald. In June that year Mrs McDonald advertised: 'Mrs McDonald (certified nurse) desires to announce that the Ailsa Private Hospital is at all times ready for maternity cases. Ample accommodation and all modern facilities. Terms moderate.'³⁷ Another private hospital at Kingaroy, the Wilga, was conducted by Matron G. Fleischfresser (or Matron Fresser as she was more popularly known). In either September or October 1931 (the letter is undated) Matron Fresser wrote to the Kingaroy Shire Council stating: 'I beg to make application to have the premises in Bell (sic) Street occupied by me registered as a maternity and medical and surgical hospital. I am a certified obstetric nurse ... It is my intention to employ (a) certified medical and surgical nurse who will reside on the premises ...'³⁸

In February 1935 Matron Fresser was advertising in the local press that she had: '... removed to the new Wilga Hospital in Haly Street.' and that: '... patients may be treated by their own doctors.'³⁹

In 1937 the Wilga Hospital was involved in a well publicised court case concerning the death of a Wooroolin farmer named Victor William Hope who had died under anaesthetic at the hospital on 3 October that year while undergoing an operation for acute haemorrhagic pancreatitis. At a subsequent inquest before the coroner, F.G. Illidge, Dr R.V. Richard testified that he had met the patient on the Wooroolin road on 30 September and after being transferred from a car to an

ambulance he had injected Hope with heroin in an effort to relieve the man's pain. A subsequent operation had not gone well and a second operation was needed in a desperate attempt to save the patient's life, however, Hope never survived that operation. While there were questions raised that the second operation had not been strictly necessary, both the surgeon, Dr R.V. Richard and his anaesthetist, Dr W.J. Saxton, were cleared of all blame.⁴⁰

Another private hospital was the Clydebank Hospital in Haly Street with Matron C.A. Rixon as both proprietor and matron, Rixon having taken over the hospital from Nurse Somerset in 1916. It was advertised in April 1923 that there were two nurses at the hospital, C. Rixon and Nurse Hansen.⁴¹ The hospital had achieved a good reputation for medical care marred only by the sudden death of a patient named John Livingstone in April 1931. Livingstone had been undergoing a standard procedure for the removal of a gall bladder on the 27th of that month when his heart suddenly stopped. A later enquiry revealed that the anaesthetic used during the operation had contained a toxic product that had caused a fatal heart attack.⁴² Another fatality occurred on 4 July, 1932, when Thomas Cleary, who was undergoing an operation for cancer of the rectum, died when his heart stopped, although the district coroner found that there were no suspicious circumstances involved. The anaesthetist was Dr Alex L. Caselberg, Matron Rixon was assisting with the surgery.⁴³ Matron Rixon died suddenly in June 1950, aged sixty-three years.

Another such institution was the Ontario Private Hospital, this was situated in Queen Street Kingaroy and in June 1923 it was advertising that it was run by I. Alcorn and A.C. Alcorn as its matron.⁴⁴

In the country there was a Bush Nursing Association cottage at Burrandowan that catered for the sick in that region. The cottage was constructed in 1923, its first president was R.F. Tancred.⁴⁵ One of its principal supporters and a foundation member was John M. McLaughlin, who did much for the sick and injured in country regions and was president of the Bush Nursing Association for fourteen years. McLaughlin was, in fact, something of a legend on the South Burnett. He was born at Ipswich to farming parents and in 1896, at the age of twenty-seven years, he arrived on the South Burnett seeking land. At first he inspected property at Deep Creek and finally selected his homestead block at Burrandowan which he named *Mounefontein* (Many Springs). The following year he married Jane Brown, the daughter of Mr and Mrs John Brown of Lanton Park, near Ipswich. For many years prior to the establishment of the regional ambulance John McLaughlin transported sick and injured residents from the country to Kingaroy in his horse and buggy. Later, when he acquired a car, McLaughlin continued with his community service. He served eighteen years on the Kingaroy Shire Council as a representative of Division Three, and died at his home on 1 September, 1942.⁴⁶

The nursing home at Burrandowan was moved to Durong circa 1935 and due to the increased accessibility of medical care at places such as Wondai and Kingaroy, it was closed during the 1950s.⁴⁷

The most important private institution and certainly the most enduring in the Kingaroy district is the St Aubyn's Private Hospital.⁴⁸

The St Aubyn's Hospital at Kingaroy was first opened at the turn of the century in an old gaol that had been moved to Kingaroy from Gympie, and in 1909 it was purchased by its long serving matron, L.K. Whitehead. Matron Whitehead remained in charge of the hospital for many years finally handing over control to Gertrude Goessling. In February 1950 the hospital was taken over by the Methodist Church and from that date it entered a programme of expansion that has continued until recent times.⁴⁹

In February 1970 the hospital board, which also controlled the St Helen's Hospital in Brisbane, stated that tenders would soon be called for the construction of a new brick hospital to replace the timber buildings which then served as the hospital.⁵⁰ An appeal was launched to obtain funding for the new hospital, the hospital committee stating that due to a three hundred per cent rise in the cost of equipment an extra \$10,000 would be needed to satisfactorily complete the work. In November 1970 the committee accepted the tender of \$91,900 from Tom Tuite, a Kingaroy builder, for the construction of the new hospital, the architects were E.P. and A.I. Trewern of Brisbane.⁵¹

The new St Aubyn's Hospital was officially opened in November 1971, the first baby to be born there was Teena Maree Kucks, the daughter of Mr and Mrs L. Kucks of Kingaroy. In charge of

the hospital at that time was Matron J. Kennaugh, the administrator was Mr Ray Cox.⁵² One section of the old hospital had been moved from the Markwell Street site to the Kingaroy football ground where it was used as a clubhouse. Originally the building had been sited in King Street, above the railway line where it was once used by a Miss Doessel who ran a dress-making business from the premises. Later it had been removed to St Aubyn's and converted into nurses' quarters.⁵³

The hospital continued to maintain its place in the forefront of medical technology, purchasing new equipment when it became available. In May 1972 the hospital added a cardiac monitor and defibrillator to its equipment.⁵⁴ A new air-conditioned operating theatre was added in 1976, by which time the hospital's assets totalled more than half a million dollars.⁵⁵ It was, by this time, the only surviving private hospital in the South Burnett.

One of the more vital functionaries of the hospital was Gertrude Anna Goessling. Gertrude Goessling began her career at St Aubyn's in 1913 and spent forty-five years in the nursing profession at Kingaroy, retiring as matron of the hospital in 1957. Gertrude Goessling was born at Plainlands in 1892, the seventeenth child in her family. She arrived at Kingaroy in 1904 when her family moved to the Edenvale district, she was educated at the Taabinga Village School. She completed her nurse's training at the Lady Bowen Hospital in Brisbane and worked at St Mary's Hospital in Wynnum subsequently returning to Kingaroy. Prior to taking up an appointment with St Aubyn's she worked at various homes. She continued to do relief work at St Aubyn's, even after her retirement, until a car accident in 1961 prevented her continuing with these duties. In 1979 she was awarded an M.B.E. for her services to nursing. Gertrude Goessling died, aged ninety years, on Thursday 31 March, 1983.⁵⁶

Two of the most highly respected doctors associated with the hospital's history were Jean Stobo and Keith Shaw who purchased Dr Stobo's practice.

Keith Shaw is the son of one of Wondai's pioneering doctor's, Hugh Kirkland Shaw. Keith Shaw completed first year medicine in 1940 but his studies were interrupted by the war and in 1941 he joined the R.A.A.F. serving for four years as a pilot and instructor. He was demobbed in 1945 and subsequently returned to his medical studies. He married in 1950 and he and his wife, Anne, moved to Kingaroy to take over Dr Stobo's practice in April 1953.⁵⁷

There have been many changes to the organisation and administration of the hospital in recent years including the formation of a partnership with St Stephen's Private Hospital at Maryborough. On 8 January, 1997, Jean Burey was appointed director of nursing in place of Matron Helen Banff. Jean Burey had worked at the hospital for more than eleven years, most of this period as deputy director of nursing.⁵⁸

Over the years there have been, of course, many private practitioners in Kingaroy who have been closely associated with the various private hospitals. Some practitioners have remained for only a few years while others have practiced all their working lives in the region and came to be highly respected, even loved, by members of the community. One such doctor was John (Jack) Cyril Thompson. J.C. Thompson was born in Sydney and as a young man joined the A.M.F., serving in the 42nd Infantry while undertaking a bachelor of arts course at the University of Sydney. Following the outbreak of war in 1914 he volunteered for active service, joining the A.I.F. in 1915 as a private. He embarked on board the *Berrima* in Sydney in June 1915 as a lance corporal and was sent to Gallipoli where he spent his nineteenth birthday. The war years made an indelible impression upon him and was undoubtedly responsible for him later changing his course from arts to medicine at the University of Sydney. Upon graduation his first practice was at Sarina, followed by Gatton, Ipswich and finally Kingaroy where he remained for twenty-five years until his retirement to Urangan, Hervey Bay, in 1957. In the mid 1930s Dr Thompson and his wife, Heather, constructed a new home and surgery on the corner of Haly and Youngman Streets and also a new building next to the Wilga Private Hospital. Dr Thompson died at Urangan in 1968.⁵⁹

Another doctor who served the community and who also served in the trenches of the Great War was William John Saxton. Dr. Saxton was born at Melbourne in 1895, he enlisted in the A.I.F. in 1914 and was sent to the Middle East for training. On 25 April, 1915, he was among the first waves of troops to land at Gallipoli. After the evacuation of the peninsular at the end of that year, he was sent to France where he served in the trenches. He was returned to Australia aboard the

S.S. Port Hacking at the end of the war. Dr Saxton then enrolled at Melbourne University's Faculty of Medicine, graduating with first class honours and the university medal in 1924. He completed his internship at Prince Alfred Hospital.

Following his marriage, Dr Saxton moved to Hamilton, Victoria, and went into partnership, later moving to Brisbane. In 1933 he moved to Kingaroy and worked in private general practice. When war broke out in 1939 he became a medical officer for the R.A.A.F. stationed at Kingaroy and was, in addition, a captain in the Australian Army Medical Corps Reserve. Leaving Kingaroy for Brisbane in 1947, an exhausted and sick man, he was later made a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. In Brisbane he went into partnership as a consultant and diagnostic radiologist, having been awarded a further degree in that field of medicine. He was secretary and then president of the Queensland branch of the A.M.A. during the 1950s. Dr Saxton died, still working, in 1970.⁶⁰

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Twelve Medical Care at Kingaroy

1. M/C. 20 March, 1908, p 4.
2. M/C. 29 July, 1910, p 6.
3. M/C. 28 July, 1911, p 6.
4. M/C. 7 September, 1911, p 6.
5. M/C. 13 October, 1911.
6. M/C. 11 July, 1913, p 8.
7. K/G. supplement, 5 April, 1935.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. M/C. 13 May, 1915, p 3.
11. M/C. 18 August, 1915, p 5.
12. M/C. 1 February, 1919, p 3.
13. K/G. 5 February, 1932.
14. M/C. 8 May, 1919, p 6.
15. SBT. 14 January, 1994, p 2.
16. M/C. 7 November, 1925, p 8.
17. *Ibid.*
18. M/C. 4 December, 1925, p 8.
19. K/G. supplement, 5 April, 1935.
20. Correspondence dated 17 August, 1933, file: General Correspondence, 1933–1934, Kingaroy Shire Council archives.
21. SBT. 10 April, 1936, p 6.
22. SBT. 9 October, 1936, p 5.
23. SBT. 1 July, 1938, p 3.
24. For further details on the formation of this service see: WW, p 176–78.
25. K/H. 13 March, 1941, p 6.
26. SBT. 2 December, 1994, p 25.
27. K/H. 27 January, 1944, p 2.
28. K/H. 4 May, 1944, p 1.
29. SBT. 26 April, 1972, p 1.
30. SBT. 31 May, 1972, p 2.
31. SBT. 26 August, 1981, p 3 and 27 March, 1985, p 1.
32. SBT. 5 July, 1972, p 1.
33. SBT. 4 February, 1981, p 14 and author interview with Hazel Knopke, September, 1996.
34. SBT. 13 March, 1985, p 33 and author interview with Hazel Knopke, September, 1996.
35. For additional details on the Kingaroy hospitals see: *Kingaroy General Hospital, 1914–1981*, by Doreen Smallbone.

36. M/C. 16 February, 1926, p 2.
37. N/N. 1 June, 1912.
38. File: General Correspondence, 1931–1932, Kingaroy Shire Council archives.
39. K/G. 1 February, 1935.
40. For details on this case see: K/H. 3 December, 1937, p 2.
41. K/H. 9 April, 1923, p 2.
42. For details of this case see: K/G. 29 May, 1931.
43. For details of this case see: K/G. 12 August, 1932.
44. K/H. 25 June, 1923, p 2.
45. B/C. 3 April, 1926.
46. K/H. 10 September, 1942, p 2.
47. Further details on this small hospital may be found in Coe, pp 58–59.
48. For some details on this hospital see: K/H. 3 December, 1937, p 2 and 10 March, 1955.
49. SBT. 10 November, 1971, p 30.
50. SBT. 18 February, 1970, p 1.
51. SBT. 16 June, 1971, p 2 and SBT. 11 November, 1970, p 2.
52. SBT. 10 November, 1971, p 29.
53. *Ibid*, p 28.
54. SBT. 17 May, 1972, p 2.
55. SBT. 8 December, 1976, p 3.
56. SBT. 6 April, 1983, p 4.
57. Author interview with Dr Keith Shaw, recorded 7 September, 1996.
58. SBT 14 February, 1997, p 2.
59. Correspondence, Dr Keith Shaw to author, 30 April, 1997.
60. Family notes to Keith Shaw, dated 14 April, 1997.

Private Hospitals in the Kilkivan Shire

As with most other centres in the South Burnett, medical facilities in Kilkivan during the very early years of settlement were provided by a few travelling doctors, midwives and visiting medical practitioners from places such as Maryborough or Gympie.

There have been several small private hospitals in the Kilkivan shire, including the Hillcrest Private Hospital, which, in 1921, was advertising that it specialised in 'medical, surgical and maternity.' Its matron was L. Alton.¹ Yet most of the private hospitals were hardly worthy of the name. For over twenty years Matron Edith Ann Mackay conducted hospitals in Moore and Hodge Streets, and later another cottage hospital was opened by Matron Hendersen in Tansey Street, this was opened in 1947 but closed two years later.

The Sterling Private Hospital was operated by Matron Edith Mackay, a nurse who, during her life, was awarded numerous medals for her dedication to nursing. During her career she travelled extensively and was reportedly able to speak nine languages. She was born at Ulladulla on the south coast of New South Wales and in 1900, as a young woman, travelled to New Zealand where she worked as a nurse. After returning to Australia she moved to Brisbane and served with the Methodist Mission as a nurse until the outbreak of war in 1914. Nurse Mackay immediately volunteered for service and was sent with the Imperial Forces to Turkey, France, Belgium and Siberia. For a while she was matron of a military hospital at Corsica.

Following the armistice in November 1918, Nurse Mackay travelled to Russia where she was employed by the British government doing relief work during the great Russian famine. She returned to Australia in 1923 and worked as assistant matron to Thornborough College at Charters Towers, later moving to Goomeri to run the Sterling Private Hospital.

In her later years she suffered a fall from which she never recovered, finally contracting pneumonia, she died, aged eighty-six years, and was buried at the Methodist cemetery, Byron Bay. She left her entire estate to a home for orphaned and underprivileged boys.²

In November 1922 a public meeting was held at the Kilkivan Hall to discuss ways of obtaining a medical officer for the town. It seems that a Dr Sharp, who formerly had operated a practice in London, was then interested in opening a practice and a chemist's shop in Kilkivan.³

Kilkivan shire came under the official boundary of the Gympie Hospital region and patients from within the shire were generally treated at Gympie. However, this was not always practicable as the shire is so large and many residents, especially those living from the Kimbombi Range to the Murgon boundary, including Goomeri, found that they could receive faster treatment by travelling to either Nanango or Wondai.⁴

There has never been a hospital of any significant size in Goomeri, the size of the township had precluded such an institution being run there, however, there were some medical facilities operating during the town's formative years, as the following report, dated 1930, clearly demonstrates:

The hospital needs of the Goomeri district are in a small way being catered for, but a movement has been set in motion for the erection of a cottage hospital, which should supply a long felt want. In the early days Murgon formed a branch of the Maryborough Ambulance Association with a sub-branch at Goomeri, but it was short lived. Experience proved that it was too expensive a scheme for a small district to support, and often, when the ambulance

car was required, it was out of order and unable to attend cases. The ambulance bearer was sent back to Murgon and the car went with him.

Medical attention was often required by residents in the district, and an effort was then made to induce a doctor to take up permanent residence in the town. A fund was started to secure a subsidy to enable a doctor to start, and the first medical practitioner was Mrs Ellen (also reported as Helen) Woods. She secured a house and commenced to build up a large practice. The next step was that a Murgon lady opened a maternity hospital Dr Woods then sold out to Dr Graham, who, however, did not remain long, but before Dr Graham's departure, the private hospital had also been closed.

A period of time elapsed, and again a public meeting was called to deal with the situation. Dr R.J. (Reginald James) Nash, a graduate of Sydney, attended that meeting, and he undertook to commence practice, if a hospital building were provided. Due consideration was given to the question, and eventually a ... representative committee was formed to deal with the matter. It was decided that a building should be rented as a hospital and that it be furnished. A fund for this purpose was started by ten well-known residents who each donated £5, and the committee was fortunate in securing a house in a very suitable position. It was comfortably furnished, and ... (a nurse) who served as a war nurse in Serbia and in other parts, was appointed in charge. The hospital is still being carried on, (1930) and Dr. Underwood is now practising in the district, so that to a large extent the medical needs of the district have been provided for.

Recently a committee was formed for the purpose of erecting a new cottage hospital on two allotments of land donated by the late Mr Murphy, and it is anticipated that in a short time a building will be provided to serve the needs of the district for some considerable time to come.⁵

The Doctor Underwood mentioned in the above report was one of Goomeri's most respected medical practitioners. Cecil Thomas Underwood was born on his grandfather's cattle property outside Mudgee, New South Wales, on 22 July, 1900. A few days prior to his birth the Jimmy Governor gang had killed a family on the next property and, as Cecil Thomas's son later wrote: 'Dad was born with a midwife and a cordon of mounted troopers around the homestead because it was thought that the bushrangers may come to Underwood's to get more supplies.'⁶

Cecil Underwood's father later became a stock and station agent in Mudgee and after several years built the Woolpack Hotel. Cecil Underwood was brought up at the hotel and attended schools at Mudgee. John Underwood later wrote: 'Apparently he was very bright at school and did the qualifying certificate aged 10 years. He had to repeat it twice at 11 & 12 before he was allowed in high school. Then he had to do the Leaving Certificate 3 times as you had to be 18 to go to Sydney University. He qualified in 1924 but ... he couldn't get in to a hospital to do his residency. He travelled round for a couple of months with an itinerant insurance representative sleeping in the car and doing on the spot medicals for 10/6d. Then he was ship's surgeon ... before he got into Prince Alfred Hospital ... After some more months in late 1926, Dad saw the Goomeri practice advertised in the British Medical Association Journal and wrote over about it. Dr Lahz wanted to move on and a local businessman, Terry Wise, was prepared to go guarantor at the bank for an over-draft. Dad and Mum arrived in November 1926 with about 2/6d in their pocket.'⁷

During the Second World War Underwood looked after two practices and also the Cherbourg community until the war ended. He then bought a practice at Sherwood in Brisbane and retired in 1967. He collapsed and died after playing bowls at Graceville on Sunday morning 3 July, 1977.⁸

A meeting to discuss the possibility of establishing a new cottage hospital at Goomeri was held in the Hall of Memory on Saturday 1 March, 1930. It was explained to a large gathering of people that approximately £300 had been collected and spent on furniture and fittings for the hospital and it only remained for a suitable new building to be found. A guaranteed rental period of twelve months was promised to any prospective landlord. At this time James Graham had recently resigned as secretary to the hospital board and had been replaced by J. Mander Jones. A finance committee of nine people was appointed and with the help of the Q.C.W.A. it was envisaged that further funding could easily be obtained in order to procure a suitable building to serve as the new hospital.⁹

In August 1938 Councillor Thomas Herbert Spencer, chairman of the Kilkivan Shire Council, addressed the Wienholt Hospital Board with the request that the board consider the construction

of a small cottage hospital at Goomeri, the hospital to be a subsidiary of the main hospital at Wondai. Spencer stated that several years previously there had been a strong movement to have such a hospital established at Goomeri and some £650 had been raised, however, due to amendments made to the Hospital Act the matter had been deferred. Spencer continued: '... There also is half an acre of land in suitable location — in the Murphy estate ... Goomeri is upwards of 20 miles from Wondai, and Divisions 2 and 3 of Kilkivan Shire which are included in this Board's area extend about 30 miles each side of Goomeri — to about 50 miles from Wondai and the present hospital — and at the extremities on either side are the Manumbar and Dadamarine timber areas where there are many accidents entailing long transport to Wondai. We are not asking for a big hospital, but for one as small as possible, to be subsidiary to the Wondai Hospital. The question of distance, I think you will agree, is in our favour. We also have the sum of money mentioned and the land, which should be some inducement to the Board to agree to the request. I move that this Board agree to the request of the trustees of the Goomeri Hospital Fund for erection of a small hospital at Goomeri to be subsidiary to the district hospital at Wondai.'¹⁰

In November that year, following new government regulations which saw the closure of the small cottage hospitals at both Wondai and Murgon, the Wienholt Hospital Board agreed, in principle, to the creation of new maternity hospitals at both Goomeri and Murgon, and arranged for a deputation from the two shires to wait upon the minister for health and home affairs at Brisbane with a request to be allowed to borrow sufficient funds for the new hospitals.¹¹

For the following seven years little, if anything was achieved, however, in May 1945, at the monthly meeting of the Wienholt Hospital Board, board members announced that the state government had approved a plan to construct a maternity hospital for Murgon with an estimated cost of £21,500. In April 1946 the chairman of the Wienholt Hospital Board advised the Murgon Shire Council that the maternity hospital construction would soon commence and requested that a bitumen road be laid to the main access in Dutton Street and that the necessary street lighting be provided.¹² At the same time it was announced that no plans were being made for hospitals at either Goomeri or Proston, although an outpatients department of the Wondai Hospital had been functioning at Proston for several years.¹³

While the maternity hospital at Murgon was completed, no further success was achieved in the construction of a general hospital for Goomeri until the early 1950s, and then the project only came to fruition due to the continued efforts of the Goomeri sub-branch of the R.S.L., the members of which raised sufficient funding to provide a building for the hospital. At a meeting of the South Burnett Hospitals Board held in June 1950 the board considered a letter from the sub-branch which advised that the sum of approximately £700 was available from the funds that had been raised many years previously. Finally the board recommended a proposal to establish a cottage hospital at Goomeri. The recommendation to the Department of Health and Home Affairs was successful and the hospital was officially opened by the state president of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. on Saturday 22 September, 1951, twenty-five years after the concept had first been mooted. During the opening ceremony Mrs L. Barsby of Cinnabar was presented with a cup to commemorate the birth of the first baby at the new hospital and, during afternoon tea provided by the 'energetic ladies committee,' music was provided by the Salvation Army Band. The press reported:

... The hospital is situated in a commanding position overlooking the town and is exceptionally well equipped to deal with any emergency. It has accommodation for ten patients with staff quarters, labour ward, operating theatre and all modern conveniences. Water is obtained from a nearby well and is ample for all purposes. A septic system is provided. The X-ray plant is something of which Goomeri may be proud, and it is claimed that it is superior to any other operating in the South Burnett. The building is nicely painted both inside and out, and the accommodation for both staff and patients is very comfortable. Maternity and general ward patients are catered for. The Hospital has a full staff consisting of matron, sister and three nurses and domestic staff.

The building has been provided by the Goomeri Sub-branch of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. who raised £3000 for the purpose. Another £4200 has been spent on the equipment and furnishing. Local graziers and other primary producers gave livestock to help equip the hospital and this was sold free of commission charges by the local auctioneers. Other funds were raised by donations and by the sale of debentures.

The building has a floor space of 2800 square feet.¹⁴



Goomeri Hospital, owned by the R.S.L. It was opened on 22 September, 1951 and closed, for the last time, in 1968.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society.

The hospital, for a while at least, was an immediate success and was well patronised by the local community. In April 1958 the matron reported a record number of admittances. 10.2 patients per day for the month of March that year. The local community was active in providing for the hospital, the matron receiving many donations of such items as milk, vegetables, flowers, eggs and meat.¹⁵

In July 1958 it was announced that extensions to the hospital were to be carried out, the extensions being drawn up by architects Trude and Webster. The plans included the provision of a new wing, kitchen and laundry block and the complete remodelling of the interior.¹⁶

By 1960, however, the hospital was beginning to face grim economic times and the treasurer's report for the year ending 29 February, 1960, showed that the institution had lost £1353 that year. The treasurer, Mr C.V. Lord, stated that the primary reason for this loss was the necessity to keep on staff while patient numbers were down, this conundrum had been brought about because the hospital had been without a doctor for several weeks and patients requiring treatment had gone elsewhere.¹⁷

In 1961 the governing body of the hospital, the Goomeri and District Hospital Friendly Society, decided to offer the hospital for lease on a private basis, the decision was made following continuing problems of finance, the press reporting: 'The decision to lease the hospital, which has been in operation for over eight years, follows another decision made at a special meeting last Monday night to temporarily close the hospital due to a combination of staff problems, insufficient patients and financial difficulties ... in an attempt to cut costs the committee has tried to battle along with a skeleton staff with the result that it has been involved in stiff overtime payments while income has steadily dwindled.' During the previous four months the hospital had shown a loss of £1550. The committee believed that the closure of the hospital would be only temporary, until a suitable matron could be found to take over the institution and to run it on a private basis. Remaining staff were given two weeks' notice and no more patients were accepted to the hospital.¹⁸

In March that year Matron Behrend took up the option of a lease over the hospital and opened the institution as a private facility, she was backed by the Friendly Society and received a government allowance of £125 per month to aid in the cost of running the hospital. However, the situation continued to deteriorate and patient numbers remained low. In April the matron advised

that due to the lack of patients she would have to relinquish her lease. At a meeting of the Friendly Society held the following month the acting president of the society, Mr A.E. Wright, said that it was the blackest moment in the history of the hospital.¹⁹

Following the resignation of Matron Behrend the ten bed hospital once again closed its doors until 21 September that year. One of the reasons for the continued closure, according to the Friendly Society, was the fact that the resident medical practitioner, Doctor Barclay, did not provide a 'full range of surgery.' However, when Barclay sold his practice to Doctor Pike, the society believed that Pike would increase medical services in the region and committee members voted to re-open the hospital. Staff were employed and Matron Grimshaw, described as a 'tireless worker and a power of strength,' took charge of the institution. Patient numbers built up to a weekly average of three, but this was still not sufficient to economically maintain the institution and by May 1962 the society was again warning of imminent closure.²⁰

For the following three years the hospital struggled along with its limited resources. Dr A. Wall took over much of its functions as well as running his private practice but when Wall announced that he would be retiring, the town was filled with rumours that the hospital would again close.²¹ Additionally, the hospital was now urgently in need of refurbishing, medical practices and technology had advanced dramatically since the hospital had first opened and because it was a hospital run with very limited private funding, rather than sufficient funding from the public purse, it had fallen far behind modern technological advances.²²

Dr Wall's resignation as medical officer and his subsequent move to Brisbane had once again left the hospital in difficult circumstances. Wall's practice was soon afterwards taken over by Doctor Nunan, who severely criticised the Kilkivan Shire Council for not financially supporting the local hospital.²³ However, upon Nunan taking up his duties, the bed average at the hospital increased dramatically. Further difficulties were experienced in attracting qualified nurses to Goomeri, the nurses' quarters were somewhat primitive and an application to the state government for funding to improve these quarters was refused. There were also problems of lack of equipment, up until 1965 there was no anaesthetic machine and the autoclave, a vital piece of equipment designed to sterilize instruments, was no longer working.²⁴

In April 1968 the Goomeri Hospital Committee announced that the hospital would remain open even though no doctor was then practicing in the town and that the hospital was virtually functioning only as an outpatients' centre. Funding still depended upon the government subsidy and the old nurses' quarters had been put up for sale.²⁵

In November 1968 the Friendly Society Hospital Committee called a public meeting to discuss the problem, the president of the committee, Trevor Cichero, announced that as the daily bed average was only 2.9, and despite a government subsidy, it seemed likely that the institution would be incapable of functioning beyond the end of that month.²⁶

On 27 November, 1968, following a meeting of the Friendly Society Hospital Committee, the *South Burnett Times* headlined: 'Goomeri Hospital Has Definitely Closed. The Goomeri and District Hospital has been closed, with no possibility of it ever reopening. A public meeting in Goomeri last Thursday night decided the hospital's fate, 26 people voting for the hospital's permanent closure and five against the motion.'²⁷

Committee president, Trevor Cichero, stated that the hospital had closed for a number of reasons, adding: 'The doctor (Doctor Rowsell) does not wish to have maternity cases at the hospital as he does not believe in having maternity cases treated by staff who might be attending cases of infection. He considers the theatre too small and won't operate here unless the theatre is extended. Goomeri people who attend surgery in Murgon and require hospital treatment are admitted to Murgon Hospital as it is more convenient for the doctor to keep an eye on them. When the hospital was first established there were more people admitted to hospitals than today. With drugs more readily available people are able to be treated at home instead of going to hospital.'²⁸

There were suggestions that the building, which was still owned by the R.S.L. could be used as a spastic children's centre, a private nursing home, or even a repatriation hospital, but none of these was ever a serious consideration and the hospital was never again to open its doors to the public.²⁹

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Thirteen

Private Hospitals in the Kilkivan Shire

1. SBT. 29 July, 1921.
2. SBT. 23 July, 1959, p 12.
3. M/C. 30 November, 1922, p 4.
4. M/C. 24 May, 1930, p 6.
5. M/C. 30 April, 1930, p 13.
6. Letter to the author from John Underwood.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. SBT. 7 March, 1930, p 2.
10. SBT. 5 August, 1938, p 6.
11. SBT. 25 November, 1938, p 8.
12. Letter from the Wienholt Hospital Board to the Murgon Shire Council, 5 April, 1946, correspondence box 1946, Murgon Shire Council archives.
13. SBT. 3 May, 1945, p 3.
14. SBT. 4 October, 1951, p 5.
15. SBT. 24 April, 1958, p 2.
16. SBT. 24 July, 1958, p 1.
17. SBT. 21 April, 1960, p 8.
18. SBT. 2 February, 1961, p 1.
19. SBT. 11 May, 1961, p 6.
20. SBT. 17 May, 1962, p 15.
21. SBT. 8 September, 1965, p 4.
22. SBT. 2 March, 1966, p 27.
23. *Ibid.*
24. SBT. 25 May, 1966, p 5.
25. SBT. 3 April, 1968, p 3.
26. SBT. 6 November, 1968, p 1.
27. SBT. 27 November, 1968, p 30.
28. *Ibid.*
29. SBT. 27 November, 1968, p 30. For further details on the history of the hospital and its closure see: K/H. 15 January, 1969, p 1.

Medical Care at Murgon

The first medical practitioner in Murgon appears to have been a lady named Ellen Woods, who, apparently, had previously practiced in Goomeri. At first this doctor was treated with some scepticism, female doctors were not a popular sight during the turn of the century and one in the Australian 'outback' was an even rarer occurrence. However, Ellen Woods soon established herself as a competent and reliable doctor who, travelling throughout the region on a large black horse, catered to the community's many medical needs. There were several other early resident doctors including Doctor Lavery, C.D. Greenwood and W.H.N. Randall. Prior to these doctors taking over the medical responsibilities of the region, sick and injured patients were frequently treated at home. The first midwife in the Murgon area was Mrs Fick, after whom Fick's Crossing is named, she evidently ran a small maternity hospital in the embryonic township.

The first hospital at Murgon appears to have been the small cottage hospital named the Dudley Private Hospital. Little is known of this hospital, although a report written by a visitor to the hospital in May 1915, described it as:

... a fine healthy site and fine commodious building standing thereon and which is now open to sufferers under the name of the Dudley Private Hospital. This beautiful little institution at last supplies a long felt want to the surrounding community, and the completeness of its various appointments furnish ample proof, both within and without, that it was a person of much experience in health matters who conceived the plan. The hospital is situated on a commanding elevation about a quarter of a mile from the business centre, alike convenient to town and country folk, and no pains nor expense have been spared to make it attractive both inwardly and without. Its very appearance as one approaches is both soothing and reviving ... Matron Davies, late of Toowoomba, is the lady in charge of this very attractive hospital ... A unique feature about this hospital will be found in the beautifully constructed tents which adjoin the main building in the grounds, for the "open air" treatment of such cases as this particular course will benefit ...¹

Another private hospital was operated by Nurse Annie Meddleton, this was the Graham Private Hospital in Taylor Street. Nurse Meddleton was also a generous benefactor to the Murgon district. She was born at the Lady Bowen Hospital in Brisbane where, years later, she was to complete her own nursing training. As a child she travelled to Gympie with her mother in order to join her father who was working there during the Gympie gold rush. These were the years prior to the establishment of the rail system, and mother and daughter went by sea to Tewantin, camping that night on the wharf at Tewantin and continuing their journey the following morning along the rough dirt track that then led from the Noosa region to the diggings at Nashville — later known as Gympie.

During her nursing career Nurse Meddleton worked for a while in a South Sea Islander mission and at the Lady Chelmsford Maternity Hospital in Bundaberg. She was a nursing sister at the Brisbane Central Methodist Mission during the First World War. In 1922 she purchased a house in Taylor Street Murgon and after renovating and extending the building opened it as the Graham Private Hospital, caring for both general and maternity patients. The hospital operated until 1938 when, due to increased government regulations, it was forced to close. After its closure the building was used for several years as a boarding house. Nurse Meddleton lived next door in her own home and during the years of the Second World War she allowed the Methodist Church to use the building to accommodate children evacuated to the country from Brisbane. On 27 March, 1947, the building was opened as a hostel and became known as the Graham Hostel. In 1976 the building was sold to the company Hu-Metals and converted into flats. It was sold again in 1985 to

Errol Cherry and again used as flats. Later it was purchased by the Department of Administrative Services and used by community groups for meetings and lectures.²

There were many private hospitals operating in the South Burnett region, the numbers of the hospitals fluctuated according to the region's demands, its population and the style and quality of care being provided by the public institutions. Some of these hospitals certainly had excellent reputations and, for a price, they provided good medical care. One of these was St Ronan's General Private Hospital, situated in Murgon next to the residence of Mr McSweeney, the solicitor, which, in 1919, was advertising that it could provide care for: 'Surgical, medical and maternity cases'.³ The date of the opening of the hospital is not known but minutes of the Murgon Shire Council for 12 July, 1919, reveal that a letter had been received by the council from: 'Nurse (Elizabeth) Davies, Murgon, applying for registration of her hospital. Moved by Cr. Caswell, seconded by Cr. Shelton, that (the) matter of arranging for inspection of premises be left in the chairman's hands.⁴ Nurses were provided from the hospital to care for people in their own homes, the sister in charge at that time was M. Douglas, the matron was Elizabeth Davies.⁵ What became of that application is not clear for on 27 September, 1920, Matron Davies again applied for the registration of her hospital. The certificate of registration was issued on 11 November, 1920, and stated: 'This is to certify that the residence known as "Lone Pine" situated in Lamb Street in the town of Murgon has been registered as a "private general hospital" for the accommodation of three patients.'⁶



Graham House, Murgon.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 56645.

The Jenner Private Hospital, also in Murgon, was operated in rented premises by Matron Kathleen Miller. Matron Miller was qualified in medical surgical procedures, fever, special nursing, obstetrics and child welfare. The hospital was situated in Taylor Street on a one acre block. Nurses' accommodation was located on one of the verandahs and came complete with a dressing room. Other rooms in the hospital included a small theatre, one large ward and three smaller private rooms, a bathroom, kitchen and breakfast room. The number of patients appears to have been just six. Kathleen Miller made an application to the Murgon Shire Council to open the hospital in 1932, the hospital was inspected by both the council's health inspector and the council's medical officer, Dr P.M. Davidson, and approval was given to open the hospital on 1 March, 1932.⁷

The Murgon maternity hospital came about following a series of public meetings in 1936. Representations were made to the home secretary through the Wienholt Hospitals Board and, after some controversy, these representations resulted in the approval for the construction of such a hospital.

In 1937, with the introduction of new and more stringent regulations governing the operations of private hospitals, many of the smaller private hospitals in the South Burnett faced an uncertain future. The *South Burnett Times* lamented:

The enforced closure of private hospitals by the promulgation of a series of regulations and awards which make it practically impossible for the proprietors of such to carry on is the latest instance of bureaucratic control to be foisted on country people of Queensland.

Murgon has had available the services of a private hospital ever since the commencement of the township, and it is over twenty-five years since the first hospital was built by Mrs Fick. Since that far-off period there has always been one or two such institutions available in the town. The Graham Hospital has been carried on in an efficient manner for the past fifteen years and has been made constant use of by a large clientele, especially by the women of the town and district, and its prospective closure has created widespread dismay and indignation at the callous disregard of the circumstances and conditions which make it of such vital importance to the community.

The large and representative deputation which waited on the Shire Council at last meeting voiced the unanimous opinion of organisations representing over two-hundred members. Also representative of country L.P.A.s and Friendly Societies is convincing evidence of the manner in which this latest ukase of bureaucracy is regarded by residents of the districts concerned ...

Perhaps many of these (private hospitals) may not be of such dimensions as to comply with the latest departmental regulations, or be in a position to provide a full staff of trained nurses as demanded by the award (one trained nurse to three occupied beds) but under a voluntary system of 'give and take' the matron and nurses have been able to provide a service which, under efficient medical supervision, has been quite satisfactory in its results to country clients.

It would be no exaggeration to say that children brought into the world through the ministrations of these matrons and nurses are quite as healthy, and the mothers as well cared for, as those in many of the huge piles of bricks and mortar built in the cities out of Golden Casket funds and maintained at such huge expense by the iniquitous and inequitable system of hospital taxation in the State. Certainly the enforced closure of these private hospitals, with consequent travelling over long distances for suitable accommodation and attention, will not tend to improve matters.

The fact of having a hospital (although same may not be of large dimensions) and capable doctor close at hand is much more reassuring than the knowledge that there is a large and expensively equipped hospital many miles away. However, this is not only a matter of local interest but concerns practically every small town in the State, and the effect will be far reaching and (as one speaker at the deputation referred to remarked) 'tragical' if this latest instance of departmental control by regulation is allowed to go unchallenged.⁹

Following a deputation which waited upon the Murgon Shire Council soon afterwards, a delegation went to Brisbane to present a case to the minister for health and home affairs, protesting against the closure of the Graham Hospital. Meanwhile, Matron Meddleton announced that in conjunction with Sister Booth and a new nurse, Nurse Mills who was about to join the staff at the small hospital, they intended to keep the hospital functioning.⁹ However, according to later reports the cottage hospitals at both Murgon and Wondai were soon afterwards forced to close.¹⁰

For more than two decades the question of establishing a public hospital at Murgon became a political football.

Finally, the foundation stone for a maternity hospital at Murgon was laid by the minister for health and home affairs, Arthur Jones, on Saturday 22 January, 1949, and construction was rapidly completed. This was a ten-bed hospital which cost approximately £46,427.¹¹

However, there appeared to be no concrete evidence that a general public hospital would ever be built at Murgon and most Murgon residents who required hospitalisation continued to use either Kingaroy or Wondai Hospitals. The problem was a powerful local political issue, and, as the press reported in 1954: 'Something of a show-down was forced at the South Burnett (Hospital) Board on Friday evening on the question of the establishment of a general hospital at Murgon. The committee's resolution on the matter read: "It was resolved ... that the board has no policy with

regard to the erection of a general hospital at Murgon". The statement created something of a storm, but despite protests nothing further was done to establish such an institution at Murgon.¹²

A letter from the hospital board to the shire council, written that year, stated: 'No facilities are or could be made available for the treatment of cases other than maternity cases at the Murgon Hospital. In other words it would not be possible to set aside part of the Murgon Maternity Hospital for the treatment of general patients as the council requests.' Following receipt of this letter the council decided to send a deputation to Brisbane to discuss the issue with the minister for health and home affairs.¹³

In 1960 the *South Burnett Times* reported: 'New Move For Murgon Hospital'. The story went on to claim that the local member for Barambah, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, was supporting a move to have a cottage hospital subsidiary to the Wondai Hospital established at Murgon. Also backing the project was the Murgon Shire Council which had agreed to obtain the services of an architect so that a plan could be designed to back the drive for a hospital. The plan was to have another building constructed near to the existing maternity hospital and using much of the maternity hospital's facilities.¹⁴

Yet the modest hospital completed in 1969 at Murgon was never really adequate for the size of the town and in January 1970 the Murgon Shire Council decided to tender for the purchase of the old Murgon court-house so that the building could be removed to the hospital and used to house hospital facilities. At that time the hospital had twenty-one beds in its general section and eight beds in maternity.¹⁵ The hospital was sadly lacking in facilities. During the early 1970s there was no outpatients department, no casualty room and no X-ray equipment. The lack of these facilities created a sub committee of the Murgon branch of the Australian Country Party to investigate ways of improving hospital facilities. Branch chairman of the Country Party at Murgon, G.W. Roberts, stated at the time that Murgon was one of only a very few towns in Queensland with a population of three thousand people that was not served by such hospital facilities.¹⁶ These investigations and representations were evidently successful for in September 1971 the South Burnett Hospitals Board recommended to the Health Department that the hospital be given outpatients, casualty and X-ray services costing an estimated \$37,275. The board recommended that a new brick building on the eastern side of the existing hospital be constructed to house these new facilities.¹⁷

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Fourteen Medical Care at Murgon

1. M/C. 21 May, 1915, p 3.
2. SBT. 12 June, 1991, p 6.
3. M/C. 12 July, 1919, p 8.
4. Murgon Shire Council minutes, 12 July, 1919.
5. M/C. 12 July, 1919, p 8.
6. Certificate of registration, correspondence box 1920, file 'Registration of Private Hospitals', Murgon Shire Council archives.
7. For copies of this application and other relevant correspondence see: correspondence box 1932, 'Registration of Private Hospitals', Murgon Shire Council archives.
8. SBT. 25 June, 1937, p 5.
9. SBT. 9 July, 1937, p 3.
10. SBT. 25 November, 1938, p 8.
11. SBT. 27 January, 1949, p 5.
12. K/H. 2 December, 1954, p 1.
13. K/H. 30 December, 1954, p 8.
14. SBT. 23 June, 1960, p 1.
15. SBT. 27 January, 1971, p 1.
16. SBT. 8 September, 1971, p 3.
17. SBT. 29 September, 1971, p 1.

Medical Care at Wondai

The Wondai Hospital did not come into being until 1915, and then only after considerable fund-raising activities had been carried out. When the hospital was opened in March 1915 by the Governor of Queensland, Sir Hamilton John Gould-Adams, it was a modest building with fourteen beds. Its first medical officer was Dr McQueen, Matron Atherton was its first matron and the committee of management included J.A. Slater, P.J. Burns and Andrew McLucas. Much of the fund-raising of this and other hospitals in the South Burnett was arranged through the Weavers' Group, the forerunners of the Ladies Auxiliary. These ladies worked diligently to raise monies and also provided the hospital with linen and other badly needed necessities.

The Wondai Hospital appears to have had less problems, especially financial problems, than the other hospitals in the region. In February 1926 the hospital committee moved to have a new ward constructed. The hospital received many donations, not only monetary donations but also of produce. For example the monthly report of the committee meeting for January 1926 reveals that the matron had received, from various Wondai and district residents: '... onions and tomatoes, beans, vegetables, fowls, cream, parsley, jam, and eggs.'¹

An account of the hospital written in 1930 gives us some interesting insights into the organisation and operations of the hospital:

Deriving its revenue by voluntary subscription in addition to patient fees, the Wondai District Hospital has grown to a remarkable extent since its inception 15 years ago ... The foundations of the present organisation were laid in 1915. Moving spirits in the establishment of the hospital were Messrs J.A. Slater, P.J. Burns, and A. McLucas ... The hospital was built to accommodate 14 patients. Mr Slater was the chairman of the first hospital committee and his fellow workers, Messrs Burns and McLucas, also rendered invaluable assistance.

Dr McQueen was the first medical officer, and he commenced with a staff comprising Matron Atherton, a nurse, and a probationer. That small staff has been increased as the hospital was enlarged and the equipment improved. The present staff (1930) is under the control of the medical officer, (Dr. H.A. Sundstrup) and Matron M. Drinkwater and comprises Sisters S. Smith and E. Harper, Nurses E. Dakin, A. Groth, B. Groth and K. Hector and a domestic staff of five.

The present daily average number of patients treated is 22, though 28 beds are available for use and as many as 40 patients could be accommodated if the emergency arose. Situated on the highest part of the town of Wondai, the hospital consists of two men's wards, a general and a women's ward and eight private wards. Separate nurses' quarters stand in the spacious grounds which occupy about six acres. One of the men's wards was added during the last few years at a cost of £800. About ten years ago (circa 1920) an infectious diseases ward was erected. The present staff quarters were formerly a private hospital in the town; the building was removed to the present site and converted to serve its purpose. The original nurses' accommodation consequently became private and children's wards. Wise precautions were taken to prevent a water shortage; 40,000 gallons tankage was provided. Heavy expenditure has been involved in the equipment of the institution with the requisite facilities and appliances to ensure its conduct on modern lines. A new operating theatre ... is nearing completion, and an X-ray plant forms an important unit of the present equipment. The institution possesses its own electric lighting plant which has been in operation for the past five years. Portion of the large grounds has been devoted to a tennis court ... The territory which the Wondai Hospital serves extends far beyond the recognised confines of the Wondai district. It includes Murgon and that part of the Goomeri area which does not

come within the jurisdiction of the Kilkivan Shire, while patients are admitted from farther west than what is otherwise regarded as Wondai territory.²

As with many other hospitals in the region Wondai experienced its quota of tragedy. For example in March 1923 a man named William Grey Bell was rushed to the hospital following an accident with his horse. It appears that Bell, a dairy farmer residing at Cushnie Creek, about twelve miles from Wondai, was in the process of riding his horse home when a car driven by Otto Weicke, the licensee of the Wooroolin Hotel, suddenly appeared. Bell's horse took fright, threw its rider to the ground and trampled on him. Bell was hurried to the hospital but died at 8 o'clock that night, his death being attributed to a rupture of a kidney and internal hemorrhage. He had lived at Cushnie Creek with his brother and sister, his mother lived at Caboolture.³



Wondai Hospital in the 1940s.

Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives Ref. 2891

Living in the bush, often far from medical aid, was occasionally something of a life-threatening inconvenience. For example in March 1934 a young boy of eight years died of food poisoning at Boondooma. The tragedy occurred at the home of Mrs R.G. Dale whose five children, including a baby of eighteen months, became ill one evening after eating dinner. Mrs Dale, whose husband was working some fifteen miles away at the time of the incident, took her youngest child in her arms and walked two miles to the nearest neighbour, Mr G. Heath. Heath owned a car and with Mrs Dale and the child he drove to the Dale family home. Unfortunately the eldest child, Richard, died before a start could be made for Wondai. Mrs Dale then collected the other sick children and Heath drove them to the hospital at Wondai — collecting the husband on the way. However, they experienced mechanical trouble with the car which delayed them for many hours, and it was almost daylight before they reached the Wondai Hospital. By that time all the children were extremely ill. A post mortem carried out on Richard revealed the cause of his death as being food poisoning, he was buried at the Wondai cemetery.⁴

During the Second World War when the First Australian Armoured Division was stationed in the region, the Wondai Hospital functioned in cooperation with army field hospitals and army nursing staff. Italian prisoners-of-war were also used as staff at the hospital. The hospital was used as a training school for nurses under the guidance of Matron Mary Frances Drinkwater.⁵ Matron Drinkwater was reputed to have been an extremely efficient nurse, teacher and administrator, and was described by Lorna Rickards, one of her protégés, as being: '... a wonderful nurse and a very strict matron. She was good to the nurses and she turned out good nurses.'⁶ Matron Drinkwater left the hospital in February 1944 to take up a position with the larger hospital at Dalby.⁷

Life at the hospital was sometimes difficult for the nurses, Lorna Rickards later recalled: 'There was no running water, the only way to get hot water to sponge the patients was from the kitchen. It was controlled by a lass called Myrtle Schultz, and if you dared spill a little drop of water, you had to answer to Myrtle, and we were frightened of her, it was her kitchen.'⁸

Among Wondai's early medical practitioners, and a man who won the lasting respect of the community, was Doctor David Junk.

David Junk was born at Six Mile Cross, County Tyrone, Ireland. He married Katie Brundret in 1900 and nine years later the couple decided to move to Australia. They arrived in December 1909. For two years after their arrival Doctor Junk worked in various regions as a locum until moving to Wondai in 1911 to begin his own practice. For many years he was the only medical practitioner resident in a large area around Wondai and he was exceedingly busy. He retired circa 1928 and he and his wife moved to a small cottage near Noosa, the cottage fronting the Noosa River at Tewantin, however, they missed Wondai and frequently returned to their creeper-clad home in the town and could be seen almost every day walking together through the streets. Early in January 1938 both the doctor and his wife unexpectedly ended their daily walks and it was soon discovered that the doctor was ill. He was seen for the last time in public when he attended a lecture given by Dr Goodard on the night of 23 January, 1938, but he was soon afterwards admitted to the Wondai Hospital where he died on Monday 7 February, 1938.⁹

One of the earliest doctors in the Wondai region was Hugh Kirkland Shaw who had studied medicine at Edinburgh, graduating in July 1914 after which he joined the Royal Navy as a surgeon. Dr Shaw served at Gallipoli from the fourth day of the invasion until the evacuation in December 1915. He later served at a hospital for limbless soldiers in England prior to being transferred to *H.M.S. Royal Oak* at Scapa Flow in Scotland in time for the Battle of Jutland in 1916. He emigrated to Australia in 1919. In 1921 Dr Shaw married Helen C. Rhodes, whom he met at a Sydney hospital, and the couple moved to Murwillumbah where Shaw practiced as a G.P. They were flooded out of their home and decided to move to Wondai where Dr Shaw served the community from 1922 to 1926. In 1926 he, his wife and son, Keith (later a highly regarded doctor at Kingaroy) returned to England to complete his F.R.C.S. While in England Dr Shaw bled extensively from a duodenal ulcer, he subsequently returned to Australia in 1927 and settled initially at Beaudesert. He later moved to Buderim where he practiced from his home — even to the extent of setting up his own dispensary as there was no chemist in Buderim at that time. He died in Brisbane, aged seventy-two years, in 1963.¹⁰

Another of the well known and respected medical practitioners in the Wondai district was Doctor Reginald James Nash, who worked as the part-time medical officer to the Wondai Hospital and who also ran a modest private practice in both Wondai and Proston.

After seventeen years' service to the Wondai district Nash resigned his position, due to ill health, and disposed of his practice in June 1949, leaving the district to move to Brisbane. His position was filled by Dr F.H. Cowlshaw, formerly the medical superintendent at the Kingaroy Hospital. Cowlshaw had also purchased Nash's practice at Wondai.¹¹

Nash lived for only another three years, in June 1952 the *South Burnett Times* published his obituary which stated:

Residents of Wondai and surrounding districts learned with deep regret the passing of Dr Reginald James Nash in Brisbane on Monday, June 23rd. The late Dr Nash practised his profession in Wondai for many years until forced, owing to ill-health, to dispose of his practice. During the war years and the years immediately following the war Dr Nash overworked himself attending to the medical requirements of a very large district, and the sphere of his activities was greatly enlarged owing to the absence on military service of the doctor who usually practised in Murgon. He visited Proston regularly once each week and dealt with a large number of patients at that centre on each visit. The Doctor was also superintendent of the Wondai District Hospital. The strain of these heavy years took a toll on the doctor's health and during the last year or so of his stay in Wondai he was a very sick man, and he eventually was forced to dispose of his practice and seek easier employment in Brisbane, accepting the position as medical officer on the staff of the State Government Insurance Office. His ill-health continued, however, and for some time prior to his death he was unable to work ...

The cremation service was held at the Mount Thompson Crematorium on Wednesday, 25th June.¹²

Nash's replacement, Dr Cowlshaw, remained in the position for less than four years, resigning in March 1953 to move to Hervey Bay. He was succeeded by Dr Nimmo.¹³

The Wondai Hospital celebrated its jubilee on 2 April, 1966, (a year late) and past patients and staff recalled its early years as a fourteen bed institution which, more than fifty years later, had grown to one hundred and ten beds. Among the guests of honour were Mr and Mrs P. Phillips of Maryborough. Mr Phillips was the first patient of the Wondai Hospital, as a small child he had been kicked by a horse and subsequently admitted to the new institution.¹⁴

In July 1980 the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, announced that approval had been given in principle for the construction of a new general hospital for Wondai, although it was pointed out that it would be some considerable time before the actual construction work could begin. Wondai shire chairman, Councillor Les Smith, stated that it was wonderful news for the people of Wondai and district, adding that the first Wondai Hospital was then being used as the hospital administration centre and that the hospital itself was badly in need of maintenance and improvements.¹⁵

The project took a further four years to get underway but in June 1984, Queensland building manager for Citra Constructions, David Robertson, who had been contracted to build the new \$3.92 million hospital complex, stated that work would begin within a week. He said that the hospital, which was to be constructed on the same site as the old hospital, would be completed by October the following year and the development of the complex would take three stages, including the demolition in two stages of the old hospital, although there was speculation that some parts of this building might be preserved for posterity.¹⁶

Yet the decision to construct a new hospital in the area was not universally accepted by the general public, many of whom believed that the old hospital was sufficient for the region's needs. Cr. Percy Iszlaub, the driving force behind the move to have a new hospital constructed, later gave the reasons for his actions, writing:

After a short time on the South Burnett Hospitals Board I reached a conclusion that the large, rambling and ageing building was in danger of being regarded some time in the future as becoming obsolete. The upgradings being effected and being projected were of a patchwork nature. These were in the operating theatre, casualty and outpatients areas. There was evident deterioration in ablution, laundry and many other areas whilst there was a persistent problem with termite control in the vast number of stumps. I concluded that if replacement with a new building was not effected at an early stage whilst patient numbers were at a higher level, eventual and inevitable replacement could be of the nature of a small cottage type facility. The old building with its spacious floor areas was developed during an era when birthing and most operative confinements were generally of two weeks' durations, however, these were now reduced to several days. Many minor procedures were now being effected in doctors' surgeries and did not reach hospitals. In earlier days there were substantial admittances for infectious diseases now almost eliminated by immunization programmes ...

Following discussions and deliberations over a period of board meetings in the late 1970s, in June 1980 the board had received an approval in principle to construct a replacement hospital in Wondai.

A project planning team was appointed in the second half of 1980 comprised of J. Quatermass, deputy chairman, P.H. Iszlaub and R.N. Burrows, board members, L. Stevenson manager, Mrs M. Compagnoni nursing superintendent, Dr. P. Lip medical superintendent, John Swindall architect, Edwards, Bisset and Partners, with departmental representatives: Tom McCarthy director hospital administration, Dr W. Smith senior medical officer, Mr K. Endress architect Works Department ...

The old hospital had a bed capacity of 80. However, for instance the maternity section had some dozen excess beds always made up and never used for decades. Based on my report submitted with the support of council I put a case for 47 beds. Board supported a figure of 45. Department of Health submitted a case for 33 beds based on a daily average of six years to 1979-80 of 20.5 and in 1979-80 25.2 with a maximum of 37.

A decision was made to include a new 32 bed nursing care unit in the project replacing the old aged care all male unit which had been sited in the old infectious diseases annexe — a very old and unsuitable building. This required a compromise to reduce the size of the main hospital plan to accommodate the new Wienholt Nursing Care Unit in budget provisions. A small sector from the main building and a reduction of verandah width was deleted from the original draft plan.

The planning team then settled for a 33 bed acute care area.

The fact that present medical superintendent Dr Lip had continued the practice of early doctors such as Drs Shaw and Sundstrup later followed by Drs Nash, Cowlshaw, Nimmo and others in providing a tradition of surgical procedures at Wondai supported our argument for an excellently equipped main operating theatre and a minor procedures theatre.

The path in progress is seldom without some obstacle. A departmental decision was made to substantially reduce the size and capacity of the X-ray facility. We quickly arranged fund-raising functions and gratefully accepted a large donation from the hospital auxiliary, a very active supporting organisation and thus preserved the excellent facility.

A European based company, Citra Constructions, won the contract for construction from 17 tenders received on the 28th March, 1984.

Renal Burrows and myself paid tribute to the great contribution of the then new manager Mr Les Stevenson and the support of the Board.

An interesting aftermath of the project was the disposal of the buildings from the old complex. It provided some 17 or 18 homes and some house-yard sheds throughout the shire and some adjoining districts. One of the largest being the old maternity hospital wing of some 52 squares relocated across the street by the manager Les Stevenson. The main central portion was moved to the heights at Kingaroy. Many others became homes of 15-20 and up to 40 squares.¹⁷

The hospital was officially opened by the premier, Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, on Saturday 22 March, 1986. By then the project included a thirty-three bed hospital and the Wienholt Nursing Unit with a total cost of approximately \$4.2 million.¹⁸

In addition to the general hospital there have been several private hospitals operating in Wondai and its surrounding regions. One of these was run by Matron Higman (also reported as Highman) in South Street Wondai who trained two of her daughters, Naomi and Bessie at the hospital facility, the two young women completed their training at Sydney and Lismore Hospitals. The nursing family later moved to Southport where they opened a general and midwifery hospital in a large colonial building on Marine Parade. This was the first hospital on the Gold Coast and the only hospital between Tweed Heads and Brisbane until the opening of the Southport Maternity Hospital in the 1950s. One of the daughters, Naomi, served on hospital ships during the Great War, she died in August 1976.¹⁹

One private hospital at Wondai was operated by Sister Kidd, the date of the opening of this hospital is not known but it was certainly in operation by 1913. Sister Kidd accepted both maternity and general patients. The hospital was later cut into two sections and served as private residences. Nurse Boisen was also another well known local medical personality who operated a private hospital and nursing home in Wondai.²⁰

Apart from these hospitals there was another small cottage hospital in the region, the Boondooma Private Hospital at Proston. In 1934 the press reported: 'Work has now commenced on the erection of the new private hospital at Proston. The hospital is situated on the property recently purchased by Dr Rundle from Mr C. Hansen and is on the main road to Hivesville just about two hundred yards outside of Proston.'²¹ The hospital was run by Matron Gladys Annie Gersekowski, a nurse who held four nursing certificates, general, midwifery, child welfare and mental. The matron operated the hospital in partnership with Celia Iris Hafner, the holder of three nursing certificates. This hospital, like almost all the other small private hospitals that functioned in towns such as Murgon and Goomeri, was poorly equipped by modern standards and run by only a small number of staff. One of the more notable moments in this hospital's history occurred in 1939 when a considerable controversy erupted over the treatment one of the hospital's patients had received while being treated there.

The affair followed statements made by a hospital patient, Mrs Bertha Christina Rossow, who had been admitted to the hospital for an operation in July 1939. On 1 July Mrs Rossow had consulted the region's medical practitioner, Dr R.L.G. Elcoate, who, following an examination, had diagnosed that Mrs Rossow was suffering from acute inflammation of the kidneys and advised her to have her husband arrange for admission into the Proston Hospital. However, Mrs Rossow

evidently did not strictly follow that advice and soon afterwards the doctor received a message that Mrs Rossow was suffering from fits at her home. The doctor was himself suffering from influenza at the time, and as it was raining that night he thought it circumspect not to see her in her home. He sent a message to the hospital asking the matron to arrange for Mrs Rossow's admission.

Doctor Elcoate was at the hospital when Mrs Rossow subsequently arrived there, he again examined her and discovered that she was suffering from severe fits. He ordered her confinement, believing that if she did not receive hospital treatment she would die. After Mrs Rossow had been admitted and placed on a bed the doctor remained with her for about one and a half hours. During the following day he visited Mrs Rossow on two occasions and over the next few days saw her at least once each day. Apparently Mrs Rossow underwent some form of operation while at the hospital. The patient made a remarkable recovery and after twelve days she was able to leave the hospital.

At seven o'clock on 24 July Doctor Elcoate was informed by the matron of the hospital that Mrs Rossow had again been admitted. The doctor was unable to attend to her that day as he was engaged in other work, but soon afterwards he visited the cottage hospital and examined his patient. He then diagnosed that she was suffering from gastric influenza. The following day Mrs Rossow complained of pains on both sides of her abdomen, and the doctor, suspecting peritonitis, instructed the matron to arrange for his patient to be transferred to the larger public hospital at Kingaroy. This transfer was quickly carried out but soon afterwards Mrs Rossow died.

The controversy surrounding her treatment erupted when Leonard William Rossow, soon after the death of Mrs Rossow, stated that after Mrs Rossow had been released from the hospital following her first confinement there, she had told him that while in hospital she had been very poorly treated, she claimed that a week after she had undergone an operation at the hospital she had been made to get out of bed and walk about. Mrs Rossow had also claimed that during the nights when she was in pain and screaming, the nurse or matron would put a hand over her mouth and hit her, telling her to be quiet so that the other patients could sleep.

During the subsequent enquiry, held before the district coroner, C.W. Knowles, Matron Gerskewski denied the allegations and claimed that the patient had been having fits and hallucinating.²²

Doctor Elcoate, the medical practitioner mentioned in this case, lost his son, Flying Officer Terry Elcoate, two years later when he was killed in an aircraft crash in Victoria.²³

The hospital closed in 1940, having been in operation for only six years, it became a home for boys during the Second World War and was later transformed into a guest house. The Wienholt Hospital Board later began a nursing service at Proston, in 1941 the press claimed that the first nurse under this scheme was Sister Patterson who had arrived on 26 April that year.²⁴

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Fifteen Medical Care at Wondai

1. M/C. 9 February, 1926, p 2.
2. M/C. 5 April, 1930, p 10.
3. M/C. 10 March, 1923, p 10.
4. M/C. 3 March, 1934, p 8.
5. SBT. 8 August, 1984, p 36.
6. Author interview with Lorna Rickards, conducted at Wondai, 12 November, 1996.
7. SBT. 24 February, 1944, p 1.
8. Author interview with Lorna Rickards, conducted at Wondai, 12 November, 1996.
9. SBT. 11 February, 1938, p 5.
10. Author interview with Dr Keith Shaw, recorded 7 September, 1996.

11. SBT. 30 June, 1949, p 1 and K/H. 30 June, 1949 p 7.
12. SBT. 26 June, 1952, p 3.
13. SBT. 2 April, 1953, p 8.
14. SBT. 6 April, 1966.
15. SBT. 30 July, 1980, p 1.
16. SBT. 13 June, 1984, p 1.
17. *Memoirs, Redevelopment — Replacement Wondai Hospital*, by Percy Iszlaub, 1996, Wondai Shire Council archives.
18. SBT. 26 March, 1986, p 1.
19. SBT. 11 August, 1976, p 19.
20. Author interview with Violet Smith, conducted at Wondai, 11 November, 1996.
21. SBT. 21 September, 1934.
22. SBT. 17 November, 1939, p 2.
23. SBT. 16 July, 1942, p 5.
24. SBT. 3 October, 1940, 1 May, 1941 and letter to the author from Joyce Penman, dated 28 September, 1996.

Aviation and the South Burnett

During the latter part of the nineteenth century it was not generally considered that aviation would play any kind of significant role in the development of the colony. Dr William Bland had made a name for himself as early as the 1850s when he was conducting experiments in balloon flights, but by the turn of the century the only type of aviation the public would infrequently see were the balloon displays of people such as the Viola sisters who, with their manager, Frank Ward, travelled to country towns giving amazing aerial displays. The young women could be seen ascending in their primitive hot air balloon, 'prettily attired,' seated on a trapeze, from which they would ultimately launch themselves into space, a parachute — equally as primitive — hopefully bringing them safely to the ground.¹ It was a dangerous undertaking, the balloons were inflated using a wood fired apparatus which more often than not set the balloons alight.²

In those days aviation was the romantic dream of a few, the new science had no serious role to play in the lives of most people. Even when the Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville, first succeeded in lifting their frail aircraft from the ground in December 1903, no one really believed that the events would change the future of the world.

From 1903 until the First World War, as aviation grew dramatically throughout the world, it touched the lives of the people of the South Burnett only infrequently — if ever. No aircraft had then visited the region, there were no aviators struggling to find success, and no landing fields had even been contemplated, let alone constructed.

Yet the war was the catalyst that brought aviation closer to the hearts of all Australians. Servicemen returning home after the war sometimes brought their frail wood and canvas machines with them, dismantled in the holds of cargo ships.

One by one the barnstormers appeared at country centres, these were largely men who had served in fighters and other types of aircraft during the war and now believed they could make a reasonable living by carrying out flying demonstrations and by taking people for joy rides.

However, these were the halcyon days of Queensland aviation, little serious consideration had then been given to putting the industry onto any kind of solid commercial footing.

Yet by that time the aviation industry was beginning to slowly grow, businessmen were realising that there may have been some kind of future in the industry, there was potential for fare paying passengers, the delivery of mails, faster communications (although not necessarily safe) to distant and often inaccessible centres.

In order to achieve the desired level of safety and to provide services for the travelling public, it was necessary to provide a comprehensive network of airfields and other supportive services across the regions that would become the air routes of the future.

As the aviation industry began to ponderously grow, the various local authorities throughout the South Burnett slowly realised the potential for future development of their respective regions. Air routes to and from those centres would bring added revenue, more people, fast mails, and open up the rural centres to added business speculation. Therefore it was important, they reasoned, for sites to be selected that could be used for landing strips.

Yet the selection of such sites was a difficult task and the controller of civil aviation, based in Melbourne, had issued a memorandum to state authorities which in turn was handed to local

authorities. This memorandum stated the precise conditions under which an airstrip could be constructed and included regulations regarding areas and conditions. Local authorities found that these provisions were stringent and they quickly looked for sites within their boundaries that could be transformed into landing strips.³

By mid 1928 an aerial service from Brisbane to Toowoomba had been started by Qantas, bringing a regular air service closer to the South Burnett. The service was extended in November that year to Charleville, the company using D.H. 61 type aircraft with Bristol-Jupiter engines, and while the service did not stop at any of the townships in the South Burnett, primarily because there were few, if any, facilities for landing, this new service was seen as a definite advantage for travellers. People living on the South Burnett now had to travel only as far as Toowoomba by road, where they could be connected by air to Charleville or Brisbane, or even as far as Normanton in the Gulf of Carpentaria, also served at that time by Qantas. The press somewhat excitedly reported:

For the Brisbane-Charleville service two machines of the D.H. 61 type, which are seven-passenger machines, will be utilised. Each machine will be fitted with Bristol-Jupiter 475 h.p. engines, and will carry in addition to seven passengers, 1340 lbs of freight. The highest speed will be 135 miles an hour, and the cruising speed will be 100 miles an hour. The cabin will be most comfortable, and will be fitted with luxuriously appointed chairs and other conveniences, including an air speed indicator, an altimeter, and a map of the route. The maximum safety has been provided for by the provision of the Hanley-Page automatic safety slots. Regular stopping places will be Toowoomba and Roma, and it is expected that Dalby and Mitchell will be stopping places as occasion demands to let down or take up passengers ... It is a little over five months since the Brisbane-Toowoomba aerial service of Qantas has been in operation, and during that period 400 passengers have been carried on this one section alone.⁴

Wondai, (First Two Airstrips) and Proston

There have been three landing strips in the Wondai region, the first was at Slater's Paddock, the second at the site where the industrial estate is now situated and the third at the present site.

In embryonic Wondai the first most accessible strip of land available for aircraft was known as Slater's Paddock at Greenview, on a farm owned by James Slater which received numerous visits from pilots during the late 1920s. Slater was also well known in the region as the builder of the Hotel Cecil. The site was a popular landing area for those early pilots, for example, in July 1928 the press reported: 'Shortly before mid-day Mr L.J. Brain in the Qantas Moth 'plane, *Lark* arrived from Brisbane in accordance with arrangements previously made. The Moth circled the town and made a graceful landing on the landing (strip) which is ... situated in Slater's Paddock. After a careful survey of the 'plane the pilot started taking passengers up for joy flights. These continued throughout the afternoon and altogether over twenty joy flights were made before the 'plane left for Brisbane shortly after 3.30 p.m.'⁵

Those willing to undertake such joy flights were certainly placing their lives at risk, the science of aviation was in its embryonic state and there were many technical problems to be overcome. For example, also in July that year the *South Burnett Times* reported: 'When approaching Nanango while winging Brisbane-wards after leaving the Wondai aerodrome on Saturday afternoon, Captain Brain and his assistant noted that their 'plane was developing engine trouble and they decided to land at that township. Examination proved that new valves were required and a message to Brisbane secured their delivery by 'plane on Sunday, and after they were fitted the *Lark* accomplished the remainder of its journey without further incident.'⁶

However, this landing ground was regarded as being suitable only for emergency purposes and it had not received a licence from the Department of Civil Aviation. One of Wondai's leading public figures, P.H. Outridge, was determined to have a licensed landing site near the township and he lobbied the department to inspect the site where the industrial estate was later established and to make recommendations in order that the necessary work could be carried out to bring the strip up to the required standard. According to Percy Iszlaub, current shire mayor, the land was originally heavily covered in scrub and this was cleared by contract workers who were allowed to plant a crop of cotton as payment. When the crop was harvested, the land was then levelled.⁷

In February 1930 Mr V.H. Augenson, of the Civil Aviation Branch, visited Wondai at the invitation of Outridge and stated that the landing strip at Wondai was 'practically ready for licensing for the smaller types of planes.'⁸ This was good news indeed, with the aviation industry growing dramatically, and with the introduction of an air service by the Queensland Air Navigation Company to the north of the state, there was a growing demand for similar services in rural regions.

Further improvements were made to the runway over the following years. In 1936 the strip had been improved to such an extent that large aircraft such as the famous Avro-Avian were capable of landing there.⁹ By November that year the airstrip at Wondai had been granted a provisional licence, the press reporting: 'This 'drome is situated only half a mile from the town. In shape it is a parallelogram, measuring 600 yards on its longest side, 600 yards deep with 85 acres perfectly level and prepared land. Approaches 800 yards in length have been cleared to allow of safe approach and take-off from all directions. The name of the town has been painted on the roof of the Memorial Hall in 6ft letters and is visible from a considerable height. Over £800 in relief grants and loan subsidy has been expended in preparing the 'drome ...'¹⁰

By now all the necessary work of bringing the airport up to standard had been finished — as had similar work at Murgon — and the company, Aircrafts Pty. Ltd., commenced operating a regular air service flying twin engined, eight-passenger planes from Brisbane to both Wondai and Murgon, the press claiming: 'The company anticipates by the time that the aerodromes at Nanango and Kingaroy are all available the passenger demand from Murgon, Wondai, Kingaroy and Nanango will warrant a regular daily service.'¹¹

The airstrip was an immediate success, by January 1937, approximately two months after the air service first started, many passengers had used the facility, some forty-seven at Murgon alone, although during wet weather there was some difficulty in landing and taking off on the dirt strips and at times passengers had to be transported by car to another dryer airfield. Yet despite these minor problems the numbers of passengers was steadily increasing.¹² The aviation company, headed by its general manager, Mr Wyndham Pike, and its chief instructor, Cyril Broome, also offered pilot training to students, the company utilized new *Taylor Cub* aircraft purchased from America. Both men were highly experienced aviators, Pike had flown with the Royal Flying Corps and later with the Royal Air Force during the Great War and had been involved in pilot training for many years.¹³

Another landing site was at Proston. Following an inspection of the region by a Department of Defence inspector in 1935, the controller of civil aviation reported to the Wondai Shire Council that the site selected would be suitable with only a small amount of work, including the removal of trees, the planting of couch grass, the laying down of markings and the erection of a wind sock.¹⁴

The site, close to the Stuart River, was situated on Portion 46, Grazing Homestead lease 7501 and was leased by Ivan B. Lindley and Amy Grace Lindley as tenants in common. The land was gazetted as a landing ground under the control of the council on 9 December, 1939.¹⁵

Murgon

Among the first pilots to use the small airfield at Murgon was Lieutenant Ronald Adair. Adair was one of Queensland's leading pilots at that time and a veteran of the First World War. In 1920, he and another pilot named W. Tagg had purchased an Avro aircraft for £1450 in Sydney and were using the Avro to put on flying displays and for general barnstorming, taking passengers on joy flights and generally attempting to get some form of aviation industry started in the state. They had established a record for a Sydney to Brisbane flight, the time being five and a half hours. Minutes of the Murgon Shire Council for 9 March, 1921, reveal that Adair was due to land at Murgon, the council minutes entry reads: '... that the Chairman and as many councillors as can be present officially welcome Lt. Adair when he arrives in his aeroplane.'¹⁶

Adair and Tagg later crashed their Avro at Maryborough, the crash was apparently due to water in the fuel, and the aircraft was very badly damaged, although both pilots received only minor injuries.¹⁷

The Murgon Shire Council received a letter from the controller of civil aviation in June 1929 which stated that an official from the Department of Aviation would visit the Murgon region in order to inspect various sites that had been proposed for a licensed aerodrome, the press claiming: '... Councillors generally agreed that the future means of travel would be by air, and before many years had elapsed either.'¹⁸

The three sites under consideration by the council at that time were owned respectively by a Mr Harm, Mr Redmond and a Mrs Martha Angel. Harm who did not wish to lease his property, had, by August 1929, offered it for sale, Redmond had offered a lease of ten years with an option for the council to purchase the land after the expiry of the lease, and Mrs Angel's position regarding her land had not been made clear to the council at that time.¹⁹

Some of the landing strips in the South Burnett were decidedly dangerous, yet even so the young pilots continued to use them, risking their lives in order to promote aviation and to make a few pounds by providing reckless flying displays and taking fare paying passengers on joy rides. Wondai, Goomeri, Kingaroy and Nanango all had makeshift strips and none of them was particularly safe. For example, in May 1929 the press claimed:

Visit of Aeroplane — Pilot T. Young flew over the township early yesterday morning en-route for Kilkivan where he had a narrow escape when landing. Pilot Young stated that the ground where he landed had been an old cultivation patch and was not recommended, it was not fit for a car to travel on, let alone an aeroplane. The ground was very rough with sharp furrows. Mr Young said that every time he hit a bump he expected something to break but 'the old bus' stood up to it. He found great difficulty in taking off again, but eventually succeeded. In coming in to Goomeri Pilot Young circled round the town a couple of times to let the people know he was back again and then made for Mr Bandit's cultivation, where he landed at about half past twelve. An inspection was made of Mr Klumpp's paddock which adjoins Mr Bandit's cultivation. When the paddock was measured it was found that it was very suitable for both taking off and landing, so it was made use of with Mr Klumpp's permission. Flights were made yesterday afternoon and Pilot Young left again this morning for Wondai.²⁰

Another company flying in the state was Queensland Air Navigation Ltd. Its technical adviser and chief pilot was Captain J. Treacy. In June 1928 the company was formed with one hundred thousand shares of £1 each. Company directors claimed that they would be flying routes from Brisbane to Rockhampton and there was evidence to suggest that they also intended to fly into smaller rural centres. In April 1928 the press claimed: 'On Monday Captain Treacy of the Queensland Air Navigation Ltd. paid a flying visit to Kingaroy in the new *Gypsy Moth* aeroplane from Nanango, and when his wife motored over to Kingaroy in the afternoon they flew home, completing the journey in 57 minutes, the distance as the crow flies being 90 miles.'²¹

By 1930 aviation was growing dramatically right throughout Australia and the world. For example, at Mascot airport in Sydney more than 130 aircraft were arriving and departing daily, and up to fifty aircraft were using the Brisbane airport every day.²²

Even so, there was still a prevailing belief that rudimentary landing grounds would suffice for the present and local authorities were reluctant to provide adequate resources until the aviation industry was a proven fact — that air travel would grow steadily bringing a certain degree of prosperity with it. In May 1930 a press report castigated the apathy that was then surrounding the industry, particularly the reluctance of local authorities, claiming:

A chain of airports throughout Australia is essential if any long distance flying is to operate with success. Today, if a pilot is chartered to fly to another State — and the passenger can halve his travelling time by using air transport — he has practically to rely on himself and a few service aerodromes in a flight of 400 miles. He will have very little information about the weather over those 400 miles, and in effect he will be engaged in an arduous cross-country flight rather than a steady progression along a commercial air route.

The position can only be altered by municipal authorities, who must have sufficient faith and initiative to put down the initial equipment enabling airports to be within reasonable distance of the pilot throughout the 400 miles. Fortunately, the initial outlay is not great; it concerns mainly the purchase of suitable land, for, once that is secured, the airport can be allowed to start in a small way and grow as the traffic requires. As the land will be an asset

of growing rather than diminishing value, there is no risk of capital loss; the cost of its acquisition can never be cheaper than at the present time, and if a suitable site is once lost it may be impossible to find another suitably serviceable.

With commercial aviation in its present stage only light or medium powered aircraft will be used in taxi services, and, though a wise municipality will take the long view and provide an area which allows a run of about 1000 yards in all directions, not more than half of this area need be prepared for use at present. The minimum equipment is not costly and comprises only a wind indicator, supplies of petrol and oil, and a telephone with some sort of shelter or hut. A hangar is very desirable, but not essential ...

An active campaign by the Civil Aviation Branch of the Defence Department in leading a movement for 'more and better aerodromes' is many years overdue.²³

In August 1930 the Murgon Shire Council received notice from the Aviation Department stating that if Mrs Martha Angel's property were acquired as an aerodrome then the site would be licensed once the necessary work of tree clearing had been carried out. A sub-committee was formed by the council to investigate the proposal, to interview Mrs Angel and to discuss terms with her.²⁴

By September 1930, fifteen months after receiving instructions from the Controller of Aviation concerning the requirements of local airfields, the Murgon Shire Council eventually decided to acquire land owned by Mrs Angel. However, the council meeting that month was a tense one, some councillors claiming that not enough work had been put into roads and that road transport was far more important than aviation. Yet these comments were disregarded by the other members of the council who passed a resolution to accept Mrs Angel's offer of a five year lease at £20 per year. The land on which the airstrip was to be laid out was, at that time, covered with timber and this had to be cleared by a gang of unemployed men working under a relief scheme. A total of 136 acres had to be cleared at a cost of £432.²⁵

On 12 January, 1931, the technical adviser to the Burnett Air Navigation Company, Mr John Donovan, wrote to the Murgon Shire Council requesting permission for his company to obtain a lease over the Murgon airstrip in order to use the airstrip as the centre of a new service flying a regular route from the South Burnett to Brisbane. The company had recently been formed, largely with the money of local shareholders. The secretary of the company was Charles G. Gehrmen, (also reported as Gehrman) their registered office was at the Hibernian Building in Adelaide Street Brisbane. According to an illustration on their letterhead they were flying *Tiger Moths*. After six months of negotiations the lease was signed allowing the company to construct hangers and workshops on the site.²⁶

Over the following years the aviation industry in the region expanded dramatically. The first air pageant to be held at Murgon took place in 1932 and the following year another pageant resulted in some dramatic events. The second annual air pageant at Murgon was held in June 1933 and included nine aircraft, five of which belonged to the Queensland Aero Club. The feature of the event was the arrival of a new machine, the *Wapiti*, belonging to the Australian Air Force, which carried out an aerial bombing display. One pilot, Mr C.S. Rolfe, who was practicing forced landings in a *Gypsy Moth*, bogged his aircraft in a soft patch of the landing strip and stalled the engine. Climbing down to the ground he spun the propeller, however, he had inadvertently left the throttle wide open and the *Moth* roared down the runway with no one at its controls. Rolfe raced after it but the machine turned a complete somersault, after travelling about fifty yards, and was considerably damaged, the propeller was broken, the wings fractured and the struts and rudder damaged. The machine was inspected by Mr J. Brunckhurst, the ground engineer, and later railed to Brisbane for repairs.

After the pageant there were three separate accidents involving aircraft that had taken part in the event. The first occurred the following Tuesday morning when a *Cirrus Moth* dived into the ground near Nanango and was completely wrecked, however, the pilot escaped uninjured. Another machine returning to the Archerfield aerodrome from Murgon was caught in the branches of a tree while preparing to land, and a third aircraft, also on Tuesday morning, while attempting to make an emergency landing in a paddock near Nanango, crashed and was completely wrecked. The pilot escaped with only a few bruises but his passenger, Norman Lambert of Toowoomba, was injured and was taken to the Nanango Hospital. Another pilot, R.C. Brett, who was flying to

Brisbane from Murgon in a *Gypsy Moth*, saw the wrecked aircraft from the air and landed nearby in order to render assistance, the press later claiming: '... Both the pilot and passenger had remarkable escapes from death, as the machine spun almost vertically into the ground. The aeroplane was completely wrecked and the fuselage shattered right back to the pilot's seat.'²⁷



Southern Cross at Murgon 29 July, 1932.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.



Joyflights at Murgon, date unknown.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection.

In July 1934 the company, Aircrafts Pty. Ltd., whose manager was pioneer aviator Ronald Adair, wrote to the Murgon Shire Council to inform the council that it intended to offer an air service flying out of Murgon on their regular Cracow route.²⁸

Over the following years the demand for an air service and the airstrip at Murgon gradually deteriorated to such a degree that by 1946 one Murgon town councillor was moved to argue that the old airstrip was, 'absolutely useless' and that it was time for serious consideration to be given to building a new aerodrome. A public meeting to discuss the issue was held at the Murgon Town Hall on Tuesday 29 October, 1946, and the general opinion expressed at that meeting was that a new aerodrome was an urgent necessity. Council delegates were cautious, however, stating that such a facility would cost an enormous amount of money and that in times of post war economic stringency care would have to be taken to ensure the airport was needed by the majority of the public. One participant in the debate, Mr E.C. Roberts, stated, however, that if the public could raise millions of pounds during the war in order to kill people, it was an easy choice to raise a few thousand pounds to provide an air service.²⁹

Nanango

The first aircraft to arrive at Nanango landed on the race-track in February 1929. However, apart from its very basic race-course airstrip, infrequently used and certainly not on the route of regular air services, Nanango remained without any kind of formalised airport during the early days of pioneer aviation in the state, despite public agitation, especially from one resident, a man named Cyril Broome, who held a pilot's licence. On 1 February, 1929, the *Nanango News* published a report of a meeting of the Nanango Chamber of Commerce held on 28 January that year:

It was decided to arrange for a visit of an officer from a commercial concern, on the eve of establishing an air service from Brisbane to Townsville, to inspect sites in and around the town for a landing ground. It is hoped to be able to get the officer here by next Sunday, he's coming by aeroplane and being met by members of the Chamber of Commerce, Shire Council, Trustees of the Race-course, and Show Society's Grounds, when the matter will be gone thoroughly into, it being the intention, we understand, of the Company to make Nanango a stopping place, going to and fro, if a suitable ground can be located ... It is very necessary to strike whilst the iron is hot ...³⁰



Crowd at Nanango aerodrome watching the arrival of the first plane.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

Captain Tracey (also reported as Treacy), one of the state's more well known early aviators, arrived at the Nanango strip in February, 1929 and gave his impression of the possibilities of establishing an aerodrome in the district, the press later described subsequent events, claiming:

After a short pow-wow, Capt. Tracey was shown around the race-course and the pros and cons of it discussed, when a move was made to the site at the Chinaman's Water-hole, and to the Show Grounds — each site being carefully gone over and weighed, the final decision, by the captain, being for the race-course as a landing-ground, it only requiring a few pounds to do it up, whilst the other sites would mean a large expenditure of money to make them suitable. His company expects to start an air-service about April from Brisbane to Gympie, via the Brisbane Valley, and this line to that town, thence back to the city. A service to Townsville is also contemplated from Brisbane. Owing to the rain on Sunday afternoon last, no flying was done, the crowd being somewhat disappointed, but Capt. Tracey hopes to visit us again, on Saturday and will take up passengers for a fly around on Sunday. To ensure safer landing a lane will be cut through the saplings ... Later on three more lanes will be

cut, at various points, when airmen will be able to alight from the 4 cardinal points of the compass. With the removal of a few trees and other minor improvements, the race-course will be one of the best landing grounds in this State. The official opening will be a red-letter day for Nanango as a fleet of planes will arrive from the city to take part in the aerial races and other exciting events. Capt. Tracey circled the town on Tuesday before he made a bee-line for Mr T.A. Clapperton's station, *Tarong*, where he gave 25 residents an opportunity of having a trip to the clouds, returning to Nanango about 6 o'clock to do some stunting, including looping-the-loop, before landing at the race-course ... He congratulated Nanango on the quick way it got to work re a landing-ground, being quite a contrast to some other places he visited for the same purpose.³¹



The first plane to land at Nanango.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

Yet the rough bush airstrip that was sometimes used at the race-course was not large enough to facilitate the more modern and faster aircraft, it was also dotted with trees and tree stumps.³² The Nanango Shire Council was divided on the matter, and at a meeting held by the council in October 1936, the shire engineer, G.W. Barlow, reported that the cost of establishing an airstrip at the existing race-course, an airstrip that would include all the requirements of the Civil Aviation Department, would be £440. In view of various uncertainties, including the question of control over such an airstrip, nothing was decided at that meeting.³³

In November 1937 Mr H.G. Hill spoke at a meeting of the Younger Citizens League in Nanango and impressed upon his audience the need to have such a facility constructed. He said that it was a pity to have a daily air service passing the town without residents being able to take advantage of it unless they first travelled to Kingaroy by car. There were several suggestions that the race-course, or the show ground could be made available, with certain modifications, and used as a proper airport. However, there were problems, not least of which was the presence of obstacles such as fencing, trees, stumps and posts that would have to be moved, at considerable expense, and the race-course trustees were reluctant to give permission for such usage.³⁴



Nanango aerodrome circa 1920s. Iris Broome (left) Ron Adair (right).

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives.

The aviation authorities had inspected the site and approved it in principle, providing that the necessary improvements were made, members of the Nanango Shire Council had also inspected the site and had made representations to the race-course trustees. With Hitler's rise to power through the 1930s and with evident alliances in Asia, especially with Japan, following the signing of the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact on 25 November, 1936, there were concerns in Australia that in the case of armed aggression, the Australian government would need a network of small airports such as those provided at Kingaroy and Wondai. 'The site unquestionably seems to provide the most suitable place for such a public purpose as a landing ground for aeroplanes,' the *Nanango News* pointed out in 1937, 'and when the importance of aviation is taken into consideration, whether from a defence or civil or commercial point of view, there can be no doubt that its claim for the provision of an aerodrome worthy of the town and district, far outweigh any other consideration that may be urged in favour of some other use to which the land can be put, for instance the holding of an occasional race meeting each year. What would be the use of the site as a race-course in the event of Australia being attacked by a foreign power and aerodromes being required for military and aviation purposes?'³⁵

Many contended that the provision of a modern aerodrome would do far more for the district than the occasional race meeting, an aerodrome would assist in promoting the progress and development of the town whereas the race-course only provided amusement for a limited number of racing *aficionados*. The race-course was a government piece of land held by the trustees under licence, and that land could be resumed at any time if the need arose. The local press was incensed at the impasse between the shire council and the race-course trustees, the editor of the *Nanango News* thundered:

Even if another site could not be procured for a race-course, surely the need for the land as an aerodrome should take precedence over the wish to retain it for racing purposes, and it would only be an act of grace on the part of the trustees to recommend to the government that it be resumed for aviation purposes without making any reservations such as the provision of another piece of land complete as a race-course, in view of the dangers that would be attendant upon the idea of making the present race-course an aerodrome and race-course combined. There is nothing wowsery about such a suggestion, which is nothing more nor less than a plain, practical proposal for bringing the town and district into line with the more progressive centres in the South Burnett in the matter of developing the method of travel and transport of goods by air. The provision of a licensed aerodrome in Nanango would also provide a speedy facility for the transport of urgent medical cases needing the services of a specialist, to the metropolis where such services are available. For that reason alone, if for no other, every obstacle to the accomplishment of such a scheme should be removed, and the town and district placed on an equal footing with other centres where the services of specialist medical men are available by means of the air liners.³⁶

By April the following year no solution to the problem had been found, although an estimate had been made of the costings to convert the race-course into an aerodrome, this totalled approximately £800. In order to obtain this money an application for a Commonwealth government grant had been made, but there were still reservations in council.³⁷

Meanwhile the race-course was, in fact, still being used for smaller aircraft. In June, Lieutenant J. Reece, one of the breed of barnstormers then making the rounds of the state in order to offer aerial displays and to take up fare paying passengers, arrived in Nanango. He was interviewed by the local press and stated that the race-course strip was a perfect landing site, the only improvements necessary would be the cutting down of the surrounding trees. He said that the strip was an all weather facility. 'It is only a matter of time', he said, 'when the aerodrome will be as essential as the railway station.'³⁸

In October that year, the council was advised that the Treasury had approved a loan for the construction of an aerodrome at Nanango. At the same time the council also received a letter from Aircrafts Proprietary Ltd. advising that as an aerodrome was to be constructed at Nanango then the company was willing to offer the services of their captains to provide assistance and advice.³⁹

Further problems were looming, however, in November the council was advised by the Land Administration Board that approval could not be given for the spending of the money until control of the race-course was vested in the council.⁴⁰

The problem grew in proportion until the race-course trustees were forced to call a public meeting to determine whether or not the people of Nanango wished the race-course to be converted for general aviation. The meeting was held at Tara's Hall on Saturday 3 December, 1938, and it was unanimously decided to have the area converted to an aerodrome. This necessitated the race-course trustees resigning as a body and officially handing over the race-course to the council, on the understanding that the facilities there would be maintained for horse racing and that all the monies then held by the trustees be handed over to the Department of Public Lands for eventual use in improving the race-course on the reserve.⁴¹ The decision regarding the money was later revised, and the race-course funds were given to various charitable institutions including the Yarraman and Kingaroy ambulance brigades and the Nanango Hospital.⁴²

With these problems finally overcome, the construction of the aerodrome moved slowly ahead. Proof that the facility was badly needed came on Monday 20 February, 1939, when a commercial flight carrying passengers from Brisbane to Kingaroy ran into trouble. The aircraft was over the Blackbutt range that morning when one of its engines suddenly cut out, the pilot, however, was able to make an emergency landing at the newly formed Nanango aerodrome, even though the facility had not then been officially opened. The plane and passengers arrived safely, another aircraft was sent from Brisbane to take the passengers on to their destinations and a mechanic, also arriving on the same plane from Brisbane, effected repairs to the downed plane.⁴³

As work progressed on the facility plans were made to hold an official opening in conjunction with an aerial pageant. A meeting of the combined committees of the Nanango District Hospital Board and the Nanango Town and District Band, both of which would financially benefit from such a function, was held at the Diggers' Room in Nanango on Tuesday 29 August, 1939. At that meeting a letter from the Nanango shire clerk was read advising that the council had approached the Royal Aero Club in Brisbane with a request that they put on an aerial display at Nanango to mark the opening of the aerodrome.⁴⁴

Yet in February 1947, after the war scare was long over, Mr G.N. Smythe an airport inspector with the Department of Civil Aviation visited the airstrip and announced that it was not suitable as an international landing site. Presenting a detailed report to council the following month, Smythe informed the council that there were several major problems, these included the length of the runways which were too short, the overall longitudinal grades which were excessive, and the disturbing fact that there was no end to end visibility on the runways. Smythe's report concluded: 'If your council is desirous of providing aerodrome facilities for Nanango it should therefore be in the selection of a new site.'⁴⁵

Over the following years, the facilities throughout the South Burnett steadily increased and pilots using the airstrip frequently praised its layout and design. In 1947 a new air service was

introduced to Kingaroy with a free air transfer system operating from Nanango, the service from Kingaroy was provided by new Douglas air-liners.⁴⁶

Kingaroy

An aviator known as Captain Frank Roberts is believed to have been the first flyer to land an aircraft in the Kingaroy district, the event was reported to have taken place on 7 May, 1921. This was an Avro trainer which he landed in a paddock near the site where the Seventh Day Adventist Church was later constructed in Avoca Street. The landing of this aircraft created considerable excitement in the town and Roberts, in addition to carrying out some barnstorming feats, took passengers for their first flights. The first passenger is claimed to have been a Mr Leatherbarrow, manager of the Co-op store at Kingaroy, J.B. Edwards, then M.L.A. for the district, was among Roberts' first passengers, he is said to have tied some pebbles in his handkerchief and to have attempted to 'bomb' his home with them but he missed by half a mile. The press later reported:

Kingaroy was (also) visited by a Captain Randall who gave a lecture on planes and flying. Captain Randall was trying to raise money to complete his flight from England to Australia. At the time his aircraft was grounded in Greece due to lack of funds to complete the journey.

It was only in 1930 that people in the South Burnett really became involved in aviation. Until then the only flying in the district was by barnstorming pilots and flying circuses. But about 1930 Mr Cyril Broome of Barker Creek near Nanango obtained his pilot's licence. Mr Broome continued flying for many years both privately and as a commercial pilot.

Mr Jim Chaseling of Coolabunia was the second local person to obtain a pilot's licence. Mr Chaseling learnt to fly with the Royal Queensland Aero Club then based at Eagle Farm. This was only a few months before Mr Percy Olsson of Wooden Hut near Kingaroy became the third local man to obtain a pilot's licence. A fellow student of Mr Jim Chaseling at Maryborough Grammar School was Mr W. Compagnoni of Wondai. Together they both decided to learn to fly, and in 1930 when Mr Chaseling obtained his licence from the R.Q.A.C., Mr Compagnoni graduated from the R.A.A.F. Flying School at Point Cook. Mr Compagnoni remained with the R.A.A.F. until his discharge in 1946 with the rank of group captain.⁴⁷



The Avro aeroplane, piloted by Captain Roberts — the first aircraft to arrive at Kingaroy, 7 May, 1921.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection

Like other regions in the South Burnett, Kingaroy's early airport facilities were extremely basic, and those aircraft that wanted to land in the district generally used Akesson's paddock at Taabinga, a relatively level piece of ground which pilots used at their own risk, there was certainly no formalisation of the area as a legitimate aircraft landing site until 1931.

The Kingaroy aerodrome, opposite the Broadway Hotel, was an initiative of private business and was constructed by the Burnett Air Navigation Company with the intention of flying a route daily from Murgon to Kingaroy, Nanango and Brisbane, the concept had first crystallised in October 1930. The airstrip was officially opened by J.B. Edwards, M.L.A. on the afternoon of Saturday 6 June, 1931, the press reporting that the airstrip was: '... the property of and ... constructed by the Burnett Air Navigation Company, the opening of the field and the aerial pageant making the inauguration of the company's service between Murgon, Kingaroy, Nanango and Brisbane.'⁴⁸

The day of the opening was dull and heavy with the promise of rain, the poor conditions prevented a large gathering of aircraft for the auspicious event and only five aircraft participated in the opening, these included the Burnett Air Navigation Company's *De Havilland 50*, a cabin biplane which was powered with a 240 h.p. Siddeley Puma engine. This was one of the prestige passenger aircraft of the day, it could maintain a cruising speed of ninety miles per hour carrying four passengers with their luggage and some freight, the seating accommodation was described as being 'very comfortable.' The pilot for this aircraft was W.H. Crowther. The other aircraft participating in the opening were C.R. Broome's *Gypsy Moth*, A. and D. Cameron's *Gypsy Moth*, W. Shaw's *Hawk Moth* and L.J. Brain's *Puss Moth*, an aircraft which was owned by Qantas.⁴⁹

The day's events included two handicap air races, a display of aerobatics and a parachute descent by Mr J.W. Milne, a pilot of the New South Wales Aero Club who, during his jump from a *Gypsy Moth*, experienced strong cross winds and landed outside the airfield, narrowly missing the fence.⁵⁰

Yet even at this time, with a new air service operating, the airfield was described as being far from perfect, L.J. Brain, the Qantas pilot, stated that: '... the ground needed to be cleared of all loose sticks which had a tendency to rise when struck and tear the fabric, especially on the rear of the machine and tail parts. Also the surface needed a little attention and the depressions filled in. Secondly the four main approaches to the 'drome needed clearing and all useless dead timber for a hundred yards or so back in the adjoining paddocks felled.'⁵¹

Secretary to the Burnett Air Navigation Company was a well known Kingaroy man named Francis Cedric Bacon who, in association with a partner named W.D. Brown, also ran a stock and station agency in the town.⁵²

By the early 1930s there appear to have been few facilities at Kingaroy, the Department of Defence wrote an undated letter to the Kingaroy Shire Council, probably in 1932, stating that while the site used as an aerodrome was still in a reasonable condition, the department had received no response to correspondence to Burnett Air Navigations, and requested that the council consider taking over the site as a municipal landing area.⁵³

The lack of proper aviation facilities at Kingaroy was of considerable concern, not only to the people of Kingaroy but also to aero clubs and the operators of aviation companies such as Qantas and Aircrafts Pty. Ltd. In October 1932 Ronald Adair, the manager of Aircrafts Pty. Ltd., wrote to the council pointing out that the owner of the land where the airstrip was sited was thinking of closing it to aircraft. Adair suggested that the council purchase or lease the land and stated that a small charge could be levied against those aircraft operators using the field.⁵⁴ In November 1932 the Queensland Aero Club wrote to the council also suggesting that the council should take over the landing ground at Kingaroy, pointing out that such a site would be a distinct advantage to the region.⁵⁵ Qantas wrote to the council on 4 November to point out the difficulties they were experiencing, the managing director wrote:

We believe that there is some danger of Kingaroy shortly being without the services of a landing ground for aircraft, as the ground which is being used at present is private property and the owner being desirous of selling or possibly of placing the area under cultivation. Kingaroy is used by us extensively as a refuelling place between Brisbane and Cracow. It is handier than Nanango and the ground is better, but should no ground be available at your

town we would be forced to land at Nanango or go right through to Cracow obtaining petrol there at a much higher cost. Apart from these conditions, however, we would urge you to secure a permanent ground at Kingaroy as practically every town nowadays has its aerodrome, and recognises same to be essential ...⁵⁶

The following years remained difficult for the aviation industry in the Kingaroy region. The site opposite the Broadway Hotel was abandoned and another site near the golf course was adopted but this too was only a temporary measure. In January 1937 Brisbane airwoman Mrs H.B. (Lores) Bonney landed at the Kingaroy airstrip. Lores Bonney was one of the state's leading flyers of that time, she had achieved fame through her many courageous feats. Between 1931 and 1938 she was the first woman to circumnavigate Australia by air, the first woman to fly from Australia to England and the first person to fly from Australia to South Africa where she had been born. Mrs Bonney landed at Kingaroy in 1937, the press were both excited by her arrival and despairing at the state of landing facilities at Kingaroy, one reporter claimed:

Yesterday, Mrs H.B. Bonney, aviatrix, a competitor in the recent South Australian Centenary air race, flew over to Kingaroy in her *Klemm Eagle* low-wing monoplane. Owing to the high landing speed of her plane, Mrs Bonney found Akesson's Paddock a little difficult. Quite a number of local townspeople went out and inspected the visiting machine. Mrs Bonney left for Brisbane again during the afternoon.

The question is again raised, when is Kingaroy to have a proper aerodrome? Some time ago the company operating the Cracow service intimated that it was intended to include Kingaroy in its service, when a suitable aerodrome was available. The Council received correspondence from the Civil Aviation Department on this matter. The service takes in Murgon, and Kingaroy is passed over. An aerodrome is an absolute necessity, and haste should be made in providing the facility at Kingaroy, particularly as Kingaroy is the centre for a big district.⁵⁷

Lores Bonney's feats finally faded into history and she was largely forgotten until author Terry Gwynn-Jones published a biography on her exploits in 1979. Lores Bonney died in 1994, a fly past of Cessnas and a *Tiger Moth* taking place at the time of her funeral at the Allambe Gardens Crematorium, Nerang.⁵⁸

In 1937 when Aircrafts Pty. Ltd. was flying a route from the South Burnett to Brisbane, Kingaroy was the only major town on the South Burnett that did not have a landing site suitable to accept the aircraft then in use on the route. In July that year the council moved that in order to be included on the route a sum of £60 would be spent on upgrading the recently acquired town common.⁵⁹

In conjunction with pilots of Aircrafts Pty. Ltd., officers of the shire council inspected the site opposite the show-grounds in 1937 and made a recommendation that with a small expenditure this site would be suitable as an airfield. On 13 July, 1937, Aircrafts Pty. Ltd. sent a telegram to the council stating: 'If your council would agree (to) sanction immediately (a) very small expenditure necessary for landing ground on (the) site adjacent (to the) showground, (in) accordance our pilot's recommendations during recent inspection with your engineer, we will include Kingaroy as (a) regular stopping place in new schedule timetable to operate from 2nd August.'⁶⁰

By August the situation had evidently improved somewhat as the management of Aircrafts Pty. Ltd., through their booking agent, Waldock and Zerner at Kingaroy, in appreciation of the improved facilities, invited members of the shire council on a scenic flight, the invitation stating: 'The directors of Aircrafts Pty. Ltd. extend an invitation to the Chairman and members of the Kingaroy Shire Council to take a flight on Sunday 15th inst. in the Twin Engine Cabin Plane which will be used on the service lately inaugurated ... At the same time they wish to express their thanks for the good work done on the landing ground which they consider, with very little extra work, could be easily classed as the best on the run.'⁶¹

Yet confidence in this landing ground did not last and the planned scenic flight did not go ahead. On 13 September, Waldock and Zerner again wrote to the council advising that the weather had been unsuitable on the day planned for the flight and that the landing site was not,

after all, suitable. The letter in part claimed: 'At the present everything hinges on the completion of the other runway as both pilots are fully convinced that until this is graded and completed, too great a strain is imposed on the machines in landing in a cross wind and even with only a partially loaded plane they are not too keen about coming down here.'⁶²

A report from the Civil Aviation Board's inspector of aerodromes recommended that land at Taabinga be adopted as the site for the Kingaroy aerodrome, this land was held by the estate of early Taabinga resident, Ola Akesson. On 16 November, 1937, the council wrote to Mr H. Olsson regarding the land at Taabinga then in the council's books under the estate of Ola Akesson. The council wished to know if the land was for sale and if so how much it would cost.⁶³ By now the situation was becoming critical, passengers booking flights with Aircrafts Pty. Ltd. sometimes could not be picked up or landed at Kingaroy due to unfavourable conditions which existed at the temporary airfield.⁶⁴

Olsson, acting in conjunction with a Mrs H. Robinson in Sydney, offered the land to the council at a cost of £2500, however, the council thought this price excessive and in September the following year advised Olsson that he and Mrs Robinson should reconsider a 'bedrock price'.⁶⁵

There were some difficulties, including the fact that Mrs H. Robinson's mother, Mrs Akesson, was living in a house on the property and that as a stipulation of Ola Akesson's will she was to be allowed to remain at the house for the rest of her life. Mrs Robinson wrote to the council from Sydney in March 1939 advising the council that a price of £2000 would be acceptable providing that Mrs Akesson was allowed to remain at her Taabinga home.⁶⁶ The council advised Mrs Robinson on 20 March, 1939, that her offer had been accepted and that Mrs Akesson would be allowed to remain on the property.⁶⁷

Over the following eighteen months the acquisition of the grounds and the construction of the facilities went ahead, and in October 1940 the Department of Civil Aviation advised the council that the grounds were ready for licensing. At the same time the department advised that the licence for the temporary landing ground, half a mile south of Kingaroy, had been revoked.⁶⁸

During the Second World War there was an increasing need to provide facilities for training, both for air crews and ground personnel, and many new airfields came into existence around the country — other airfields were upgraded to provide landing and training facilities under the Empire Air Scheme. Two of the leading air training schools were at Amberley and Tamworth. In June 1941 came the news that a new air training school, which would largely replace the activities at Amberley, would be established at Taabinga, the minister for air, John McEwen, (later prime minister) announced from Canberra that Kingaroy had been chosen as the site, technical R.A.A.F. and Civil Aviation Department personnel had inspected the proposed site early in 1941 and approved of it, although details, for security reasons, were kept secret. The *South Burnett Times* later reported:

The council originally decided to lay down the new airport for civil purposes — a use to which it is now being put — and loan money was made available for this purpose. When the air experts saw the field they decided that it was too valuable a place for civil use only in war time.

The present area of the flying field is 320 acres, but there is ample room for expansion. The natural grassy runways range from 900 to 1250 yards, but with grading and clearing their length could be extended to a mile or more in any direction.

Aviators agree that Kingaroy is an ideal place for training pilots. Apart from the safety of the airfield and the surrounding territory, visibility is good, and there is little fog and mist. Air Force officers who have been in the district in recent weeks are preparing for surveys and the layout of the new station, the construction of which it is expected will be expedited.

Amberley, which cost more than £500,000, is now to be put to other Air Force uses. The Kingaroy station probably will not be as elaborate, but construction of the buildings and other necessities at Kingaroy will run into a large figure.

The purpose of a service flying training school is to take air crews who have completed their elementary training at Archerfield and Tamworth schools, and to instruct them in larger machines in tactical manoeuvres, fighting, ground attack, bombing, reconnaissance work, and night flying. Having put *Tiger Moth* trainer planes behind them, they will step

into Australian-made *Wirraways* and the British twin-motored *Avro-Ansons* for a course that will occupy some months. A considerable portion of the training will be done on the ground in class-rooms.

To ensure that trainees will maintain the highest degree of fitness, they are housed in modern buildings, fed liberally in accordance with dietitians' charts, and provided with plenty of recreation.⁶⁹

Shortly afterwards the minister for air, John McEwen, stated that the new training school would be opened by the end of that year, however, there were problems to be overcome, not least of which was the lack of water in the vicinity, and an extensive boring operation was put immediately into effect. Many local people, including the press, stated that the construction of a new site at Taabinga was a waste of tax-payers' money, especially so when there already existed several airstrips that could have been easily converted for the purpose, including the strips at Nanango, Murgon and Wondai, the press lamenting that: '... a veil of official secrecy hangs around the whole business ... the authorities may have sound reasons for flirting with peanut and maize farms in preference to these 'dromes, but the man in the street is entitled to some more obvious explanation.'⁷⁰

Despite these problems, plans for the establishment of the training school moved rapidly ahead, one of the advantages to the strip being the existence of good relief landing grounds at Home Creek and Mannuam. In August 1941 news was released that the 'elementary training school' would be opened in October that year, the work of establishing the airstrip costing approximately £130,000. The plans for the school included modern barracks accommodation, recreational facilities and a number of administrative buildings. Apart from serving as a training school, it was envisaged that the site could also be used as an operational base for war-planes.⁷¹

By July 1942 ninety-six buildings had been constructed at the site and in September that year a concrete machine-gun nest was installed.⁷²

The Kingaroy airport was substantially upgraded during Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen's tenure as state premier, an upgrading that created considerable controversy, particularly as it was the premier's home landing field, however, the site is now one of the more important landing fields in the region.

Confusion and Dissent Concerning Airports at Wondai and Murgon

By 1947 and 1948 some of the airfields in the South Burnett, those that had been hastily prepared during the 1930s for what was perceived to be a booming aviation industry, had lapsed into disrepair and disuse. Licensing for the Nanango airstrip had been allowed to lapse and the old Murgon airstrip at Angelfield was no longer in use, although at one time it was the hub of the South Burnett aviation industry and Sir Charles Kingsford Smith landed there in July 1932. Kingaroy maintained its airstrip which was classified and licensed as a D Class aerodrome suitable for most aircraft with the exception of *Constellations*.⁷³ Yet there were signs that the industry could face a reasonably secure future. In January 1947 executive officers of Aircrafts Pty. Ltd. visited Wondai and stated that there was every possibility of a thrice weekly air service being started, especially so if certain measures were taken to upgrade the airstrip at Wondai, although, as with any business, the operation would depend upon patronage.⁷⁴ By the end of that year the first concrete proposals were made to have a new airport constructed between Wondai and Murgon, an airport that could conveniently service both towns. These views were expressed during a council meeting held at the council chambers that month.⁷⁵

The concept received something of a boost when, the following month, the Civil Aviation Department announced that the Wondai airstrip could not be extended to accommodate the newer types of aircraft and that a new airstrip to service the town would have to be constructed.⁷⁶ The press later reported: 'Outstanding features are that Wondai is recognised by the aviation authorities as a stopping place for 'plane services, that the existing 'drome is being taken over and maintained by the Civil Aviation Department, and, if proved by survey to be unsuitable to comply with the Department's standard laid down by large 'planes, a new 'drome will be constructed near Wondai.' Tentative sites for the new runway included a location near Barambah Creek and a

paddock owned by the butchers, Ryan Brothers, between Wondai and Murgon. This land was situated approximately three miles from Wondai and seven miles from Murgon, it fronted the main road to Proston. It was then heavily timbered but could be cleared with bulldozers at a reasonable cost. The Ryan Brothers stated that: '... in the interests of progress' they would have no objection to their land being resumed provided they received a fair price.⁷⁷

The two proposed airfields were inspected by officials of the Department of Civil Aviation and while the first site was considered quite suitable, it was discovered that the soil was not as dry as that of the paddock fronting the Proston Road.⁷⁸

Despite these promising signs of progress the project stagnated for the next three years, primarily due to the fact that the Murgon Shire Council refused to co-operate with the Wondai Shire Council in the formation of a joint authority to construct and maintain such an airstrip. On 19 April, 1951, G.C. Morris, the shire clerk at Wondai, wrote to the Murgon Shire Council inviting representatives of that council to attend a meeting to discuss the possibility of arranging joint ownership of the proposed airstrip.⁷⁹ The Murgon Shire Council formed a committee comprised of the shire chairman, W.D. Davidson, and two other councillors, to attend the proposed meeting.⁸⁰

By September 1951 plans to establish the airstrip were proceeding, contour plans and other survey information had been sent to the Civil Aviation Department and the Wondai Shire Council was expecting an airport plan from that department that would allow the planning of the runway improvements, the buildings and other alterations to the site.⁸¹

However, on 28 November, 1951, the Murgon Shire Council informed the Wondai Shire Council that it would take no part in the construction of the new airstrip.⁸²

In the face of rising demand, the Wondai Shire Council, in December 1951, announced that it was prepared to fund the airport alone. Tenders were called for the clearing of the site, funding for this clearing coming not only from council revenue but also from a government subsidy of £3500. Three tenders were initially received for this clearing work, the lowest being more than £8643. The engineer's estimate of the actual cost was approximately half that amount and as the councillors believed the tendered prices were: '... extortionate and ridiculous', no tenders were accepted for the work.⁸³

Yet the decision to press on with the construction of the airport created considerable controversy in the town, so much so that the chairman of the Wondai Shire Council, L.G. Smith, was moved to write an explanation for the decision of his council. In April 1952 he claimed:

The Council believes that if not now, then, in the near future, airport facilities will be as essential as roads and railways for the development of any community. One only has to see a map of any country to observe community interest and production in close proximity to these facilities. Many minor events have occurred in the South Burnett area during the last 50 years, which at the time were strongly opposed, but have proved to be, in later years, of untold advantage. The Council has not just decided that provision should be made for a carry-all aerodrome. Consideration, investigation, and reports from all Federal, State and Local Governments, date back to 1946. Every aspect has been considered and reconsidered, including the possibility of improving (the) present ground, from a local and national view point. Recent months have only produced the culmination of these efforts.

... The Council has been supplied ... with an estimate, which includes the acquisition of land, clearing and preparation of strips 2000 feet in excess of current requirements for a fully loaded Douglas aircraft, terminal buildings with all facilities, road deviation construction, and every other requirement of the Department of Civil Aviation, which by regulation would make this aerodrome equal or better than any outside the major cities, and that estimate is £30,000.⁸⁴

Over the following three years plans for the construction of the aerodrome moved slowly ahead. By September 1955 the work had progressed to such a stage that the Wondai Shire Council was beginning to plan an opening ceremony, but no date could be decided upon.⁸⁵ In March the following year the shire clerk, G.C. Morris, announced that the official opening of the new aerodrome would take place on Sunday 14 April, 1956, the ceremony being performed by the minister for air, A.G. Towney. By that time a total of £34,000 had been spent on its construction

with an additional £14000 being expended on a special road deviation at the site. However, these major expenses were largely offset by an agreement of the state government to provide half the funding for the aerodrome construction with a major part of the road deviation bill being provided by the Main Roads Department. At the same time the Wondai Shire Council agreed to the disposal of approximately ten acres of the old Wondai airstrip, the site being taken over by the sports group, Wondai Recreations Limited.⁸⁶

Yet there were further problems and delays. At the end of March 1956 it was revealed that federal parliament would be sitting on 14 April and therefore the minister for air would be unavailable. The date also clashed with the annual Goomeri show.⁸⁷

The new aerodrome was finally opened on Saturday 19 May, 1956. For the people of the region it was indeed a gala occasion. A crowd of eight thousand spectators thronged to the site, reportedly the largest gathering of people ever seen at one location in the South Burnett. The press claimed:

From early in the morning streams of cars began to choke the roads leading to the 'drome and at mid-day police estimated that there were two thousand cars parked in the space cleared by the committee for this purpose. Later in the day the number of vehicles present was estimated at three thousand. Gate takings at three shillings for adults amounted to nearly £500, but hundreds gained admittance to the grounds without paying.

At eleven o'clock streams of cars extended for miles both ways along the Wondai-Proston road as harassed gate keepers, parking attendants and police strove to admit them to the grounds as quickly as possible. Despite their efforts at this peak period, it took cars about 15 minutes to move from the Murgon-Wondai road junction to the aerodrome gates. Inside the parking areas, car attendants disposed of the vehicles quickly and without fuss, although at one stage several cars became bogged in the rain affected area.

Four police on duty, under Sergeant R.T.J. Gall, carried out a good job controlling traffic and the milling crowds inside the 'drome and despite the congestion no traffic incidents were reported. Cruising in a loud-speaker equipped utility, the police maintained order inside the drome and confined the people to areas set aside for them as much as possible. However, hundreds infringed on to the tarmac area throughout the day, but no accidents, although at one stage vandals interfered with a light plane, removing plug wires and jamming the rudder controls. Fortunately the damage was noticed by pilots.⁸⁸

The spectators were rewarded for their persistence with a spectacular air pageant featuring *Vampire* jets and a display of stunt flying performed by Ken Barker who piloted a *Tiger Moth* owned by Johannes Bjelke-Petersen. 'Barker amazed the crowd lined along the 7000 feet strip by flying at top speed some 9 to 12 inches from the ground,' the press later reported.⁸⁹

With the opening of this aerodrome the aviation industry in the South Burnett began a new era. It was still difficult to attract air services, and indeed, one such service, Queensland Airlines Ltd., stated just before the opening of the Wondai aerodrome that it was losing £5000 a year with its twice weekly service to Brisbane which ran each Saturday and Monday.⁹⁰

At a meeting of the Wondai Shire Council held in November 1979 a submission for the formation of a joint local authority to upgrade and manage the airport by the Murgon Shire Council and Wondai Shire Council was outlined by Wondai council's shire clerk, Alan Keates. It was proposed to construct a bitumen landing strip, 5000 feet by 60 feet and install landing lights, the total cost of the programme would be \$260,000.⁹¹

Epic Flights, Air Services and Tragedies of the Air

The Flight of Alan Bandidt

One of the most remarkable flights associated with the South Burnett region was that of Group Captain Alan Bandidt, a well known resident of the South Burnett who, in 1947, flew solo aboard a tiny twin-engined *Miles Gemini* aircraft from England to Australia, landing finally at Wondai, the first such post-war flight and certainly the first (and only) direct flight from England to Wondai.

Bandidt was a permanent R.A.F. officer who had left Australia fifteen years previously. In 1947 he was due to go on leave and had decided to combine business with pleasure by delivering a *Miles Gemini* aircraft to a Brisbane agency and at the same time visiting his family at Goomeri. He left Lympne aerodrome in Kent on 1 December, 1946. His aircraft was well stocked with provisions and survival equipment, including all the maps he would require for his lone journey, and even a small water condenser in case he was forced to come down in an area where only sea water was available. The aircraft was fitted with a new kind of experimental propellers and these immediately began to give the airman trouble. At Bahrain Bandidt had been forced to wait for five days while replacement propellers were flown in from England.

Because he had been forbidden to land in Indonesian territory he then had to fly on the long leg of 650 miles from Singapore to Batavia. During a tropical thunderstorm which struck while crossing from Koepang, the heavy rain almost forced the aviator and his aircraft into the sea. Bandidt later stated: 'I had to go under the storm as the top of the cloud was at 30,000 feet. In twenty minutes' flying through the heaviest rain I have ever seen I was forced from 2000 feet to 200 feet above the water. The 'plane just wouldn't stay in the air. Another five minutes would have finished me but fortunately I broke through. My worst enemies on the trip were the Persians (Iranians), Saudi Arabians, Indonesians and the weather.'⁹²

The press later published an account of Bandidt's exploits claiming:

Group-Capt. Bandidt left England from Lympne (clearance) aerodrome, where all continental air traffic starts from, and his first hop was to a town in the Rhone Valley, where he encountered bad weather which caused delay. His second hop was to Marseilles, then to Cagliari to the North Coast of Africa. On this part of his journey he stated that he flew over Benghazi, Tobruk, and many other towns where the Australians fought so bravely and made a name for themselves. He then proceeded on to Cairo and across Palestine, to Irak, (sic) and down the Persian Gulf to Bahrain. During this part of his journey he was fired on by the native tribesmen ... He proceeded to Karachi and thence across India to Calcutta.

... He then continued his flight down the Burma coast to Rangoon; then on to Penang, where he was forced down on to a little island by bad weather. His next stop was Singapore, where there was a further delay of seven days owing to weather conditions. During his stay in Singapore Capt. Bandidt was able to render assistance to a fellow airman who was flying a Proctor 'plane from India to Australia, and they left for Australia together but parted off the Dutch East Indies Coast, Group-Capt. Bandidt flying direct to Batavia and thence to Sourabaya (Surabaja). Between these two points all airmen are warned not to fly at a height less than 8000 feet, as along this route the Indonesians have 3.7 Bofor guns and are not particular when they use them. As a matter of fact they were used while Capt. Bandidt was passing over this territory. His next landing place was Koepang; thence across the Timor Seas to Truscott (Aust.).

At last he was back in his native land. During his journey across Australia he landed at Wyndham, Daly Waters ... Camooweal, Cloncurry, Charleville, and then to Wondai. At each of these towns he received ovations. On arrival at Wondai he was met by his relatives and was tendered a welcome by Wondai Shire Council.⁹³

Upon his arrival at Wondai, Bandidt was taken by members of the Wondai Shire Council to Cairns' Cafe for afternoon tea. He later travelled to Goomeri to see his mother and brother and was given a formal reception by the Kilkivan Shire Council. After delivering the aircraft to the purchasing agents in Sydney the aviator returned to Goomeri and later by passenger flight to England to continue his duties with the Royal Air Force.⁹⁴

What was possibly the last of the great pioneering flights in the South Burnett region was undertaken by two local men in 1954, they were Kingaroy music shop proprietor Tom Nicholson and his friend Ronald Coleman, who flew from England to Australia in a tiny, single engined *Proctor* aircraft. The two men left Australia by sea in August 1954. They then purchased a second hand *Proctor* that had been completely overhauled and on 7 October, 1954, set off from England on their 12,500 mile journey flying across France, Greece, Arabia, through Karachi to Singapore and down via Sumatra, Java, Timor to Wyndham in Western Australia, arriving there three and a half weeks later on Sunday 30 October. Ron Coleman was not a licensed pilot, although he held a student pilot's licence and during the long haul from England he too took turns at the aircraft's controls, he also kept a diary of the journey.⁹⁵ The men later gave details of their journey to the press which published:

Unable to find Baghdad through a limpid sand pall, the aftermath of sand storms, they circled for a few minutes, then headed fifty miles to a R.A.A.F. desert outpost. The *Proctor* came in almost 'flying blind', with a thick veil of oil and sand obscuring the windscreen. They had forgotten to clean an oil attachment near the air screw. They first flew into the 10,000 feet ceiling sand pall after taking off from Basra and chewed, breathed and even talked sand until after seeing the last of Baghdad. A turbulent tropical front hit their tenacious craft at Penang, and next day they failed in an attempt to reach Palembang from Singapore. It was on the airstrip on the romantic isle of Bali, flooded with American tourists, that the *Proctor* slid into a hole and smashed a wheel cover which had to be repaired. But there was nothing romantic about Soembaw Baser, sixty-five miles away, where mischievous Indonesian children stuffed paper in the airspeed tube. Ahead was the long sea hop to Koepang, and, as Mr Nicholson put it, they may have had a 'little trouble' had the children's trick not been detected. They couldn't find the culprits, who, probably, were among the gaping group of two hundred which clustered, naked and yabbering about the shiny sky visitor.

Although not the longest hop, the flight between Megui and Penang took up the single greatest period of flying — four and a half hours. At Megui, the flyers stayed overnight with an Australian mining engineer married to a Burmese girl, who billeted famous Australian pilot Titus Oates when he crashed nearby during the last England/Australia air race.⁹⁶

Air services to the South Burnett district continued and were upgraded in 1964 when the Queensland Airlines agent at Wondai, Allan Huston, announced that his airline would introduce a new schedule to both Wondai and Kingaroy airports, flying *Portafino* aircraft into those centres four times a week.⁹⁷

In July the following year the region experienced a fatal aircraft crash when a *Tiger Moth*, flown by local grazier Harold Eustace Fraser, forty-two years of age, crashed at Kingaroy airport. Fraser's passenger, a South African student named Eden King, aged approximately twenty years, was seriously injured and later died.⁹⁸

Another crash occurred just over a year later, in September 1966 when a *Victa Airtourer* flying from Rockhampton to Kingaroy suddenly developed engine trouble and its pilot, Mrs Mary Rideout of Thangool, made a forced landing at Angel's Paddock near Murgon. During the landing the front wheel of the aircraft broke loose and the aircraft spun and skidded to a stop. Mrs Rideout was not injured during the event. Coincidentally, the paddock where Mrs Rideout had crash landed was the same paddock that had once served the Murgon region as an airstrip.⁹⁹

In October that year, as speculation regarding a new proposed airport for the Murgon district increased, the Civil Aviation Department made a recommendation that the same paddock was the best site for an aerodrome at Murgon. The inspection of the site was made at the request of the Murgon Apex Club which had adopted the establishment of such an airstrip as its community project. The press subsequently reported: 'Angel's Paddock (it has been suggested that the new name will be Angelfield) has a long history of aircraft landings. One of the first aircraft to land there was Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's Southern Cross, (1932) and for quite some time prior to World War Two a regular air service with Brisbane was conducted from the field. Many Murgon people will remember the entertaining air pageants that were held at the field before the war. The aerobatics, the flour bombing and the R.A.A.F. *Wapitis*. Angel's Paddock has been many things in the past fifty years, a race-course, a golf-course, an aerodrome and now an authorised landing area.'¹⁰⁰

In August 1967 it was announced that the air service provided by Ansett, an air service that had been introduced into the region thirty-four years previously, would finally cease. Spokespersons for the company, Queensland manager Vern Adams and his sales manager Mal Anderson, stated that the service was ending because of the lack of local public support. They said that only approximately five passengers per flight were using the thrice weekly service and with little freight the company was losing money. The announcement came at a time when the Kingaroy Shire Council had recently approved an extensive works programme for the Kingaroy aerodrome, including the bituminizing of the runway surface, a project that would cost approximately \$32,000.¹⁰¹ Work on the new sealed runway proceeded over the following eighteen months, the runway, which by then had cost approximately \$48,000, was opened by the member for Fisher, Charles Adermann, on Saturday 15 February, 1969, it was, as the local press claimed, a far cry from that of 1932 when Aircrafts Pty. Ltd. had flown *Dragons* into a small grass landing ground at Kingaroy.¹⁰²

Another air service provider to the South Burnett was Jetair, although this service was only in effect for a few months when it was cancelled in December 1970, the company suspending its services Australia wide.¹⁰³ The company had used a DC3 aircraft flying from Brisbane to Kingaroy and then on to Gayndah, Theodore, Rolleston, Springsure and Rockhampton.¹⁰⁴ However, this service was quickly replaced by another company, Stradbroke Gardens Air Charter, which began a regular service to Kingaroy and Wondai in July the following year. The company, flying seven-seater *Piper Cherokee 6* aircraft, was providing a service to Brisbane and Stradbroke Island.¹⁰⁵ Yet this air service too was doomed due to lack of public support, and in December that year the company announced that it was suspending its operations, having lost heavily during the five months it had provided the service.¹⁰⁶

In July the following year the company directors announced that they would be continuing the service, moving the terminal from Kingaroy and Wondai to Angelfield at Murgon, the manager of the company, Brian Hooper, stating that his company was prepared to take a risk with the new service because the South Burnett was one of only a very few areas in south-east Queensland that was not being serviced by an airline.¹⁰⁷

In November 1972 the region experienced another air tragedy when a glider crashed two miles west of the Kingaroy aerodrome, killing its pilot, fifty-nine years' old William Maurice (Bill) Gerrard. The glider tow pilot, Jim Moore, had only just released the glider when spectators noticed that parts of 'debris' were falling to earth. Moore flew past the doomed glider, saw nothing unusual, but soon afterwards the glider crashed to earth. This was the first fatal crash in the history of the Kingaroy Aero Club, of which the victim was a member. The club had commenced operations in 1959 and since that time club members had flown in excess of 10,700 hours and conducted approximately 32,000 glider launches. What exactly happened to the doomed glider is not clear, although it is presumed that the airframe began to collapse in the air as the wings of the *Libelle* glider were found about half a mile from the wreckage of the fuselage. Jim Moore, the tow pilot, who had himself flown the glider for approximately two and a half hours before the fatal flight, later stated that he had found nothing unusual in the glider's performance or behaviour. The *Libelle* was considered to be a very safe glider, used extensively for cross country work, its frame as strong, if not stronger than a powered aircraft.¹⁰⁸

The 1970s was, in fact, the season for air crashes. Another crash occurred in December 1975 when a single engined *Piper Cherokee* crashed at the Nanango airstrip after running into a log. The pilot of the aircraft, Bob Grey of Nanango, was in the process of aborting a landing, and while trying to gain height, the aircraft had narrowly missed one of the ring-barked trees at the end of the strip. However, one of the wings clipped another tree, the *Piper* pancaked to the ground and slithered into the log. The pilot was admitted to Nanango Hospital for observation and his passengers escaped with only minor injuries.¹⁰⁹

Within less than two months another crash occurred, this time at Booie, when the pilot of a crop-duster, Michael Anthony Keeley, forty-one years of age, hit a contour bank during a crop-dusting run. The aircraft hit the bank and lost one of its wheels but the pilot managed to jettison his chemical load and was attempting to climb after flying below the power lines, however, the damage to the aircraft was too severe and it plunged to the ground soon afterwards, flipping over onto its back. The pilot was uninjured apart from a small scratch on his nose caused by his sunglasses.¹¹⁰

Another crop-duster crashed, also at Booie, in August 1978, the *Cessna Agtruk* piloted by Bruce Lear striking power lines during an approach run. Both of the aircraft's wheels and the spraying equipment were torn away by the power lines and extensive damage was caused to the nose of the machine, yet the pilot escaped with only minor injuries.¹¹¹

Another crop-duster, piloted by Tony Pratt, crashed in March 1983 after hitting power lines at Tansey while spraying lucerne on the property of G. Maudsley and Sons.¹¹²

A second fatal glider crash occurred in March 1984 when a glider piloted by John Henry Canard, a highly experienced glider test pilot, cart-wheeled into the ground at Taabinga, narrowly missing several houses. The pilot, who owned a glider maintenance and repair business, held a licence to test gliders and issue certificates of air-worthiness.¹¹³

Another crop-duster crashed in December 1984 when Michael Brown, who was being tested for his crop-duster's licence, experienced a loss of height during a turn and struck the ground. The pilot was uninjured.¹¹⁴

Over the years the various attempts to have a regular air service to the South Burnett have, as we have already seen, met with little success, many of the service providers such as Air Queensland being granted a licence to fly the route but subsequently suspending operations due to the lack of patronage. In 1982 a Gayndah company, Aussie Air, was awarded the licence to provide such a service, but as the company soon afterwards went into liquidation, the operation was taken over by another company, South Burnett Aviation. This was a small company with a full time staff of five and flying just four aircraft. It began its service from Brisbane to Kingaroy and on to Gayndah and Monto three times each week. The manager of the company was David Smart.¹¹⁵

Plans to upgrade the airport at Kingaroy were announced in February 1987, these included replacing the existing runway with a strengthened runway, the addition of a navigation beacon, a new taxi-way and aerodrome access road.¹¹⁶ In September the following year the state transport minister announced that he had approved a new regular air service between Coolangatta, Brisbane, Kingaroy and Gayndah, the service providers being Challenge Air Services Pty. Ltd. who were flying *Beechcraft Barons* and *Piper Navajos*. The Challenge Air Services director stated that he believed the South Burnett region had been neglected as no air service had been operating since June 1986 when the last operator had ceased to service the route.¹¹⁷

In October 1988 a *Beechcraft Baron*, carrying the minister for administrative services, Russell Cooper (later state premier), crashed at the Kumbia airstrip as the pilot attempted to avoid hitting power lines at one end of the strip, all the passengers and crew were uninjured during the crash.¹¹⁸

The new upgraded Kingaroy airport, named the 'Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen Airport', was officially opened by the state minister for transport, Ivan Gibbs, on Saturday 26 November, 1988. Ignoring criticisms of cronyism, Sir Johannes stated that the airport was a valuable asset to the Kingaroy district and he called upon the public to support the new service suppliers, Challenge Aviation. The opening of the new facility was accompanied by an air show which featured several unusual aircraft, including a Polish built and registered *Wilga 80*, and a *Long Ez*, with its rear-mounted propeller. Other aircraft included *Chinook* helicopters, gliders and even model aircraft.¹¹⁹

A non-directional radio beacon was installed at the airport in 1989 and was in operation by May that year, the beacon, which transmitted a continuous identity signal enabled pilots to find the Kingaroy aerodrome even in poor weather and was an important feature, especially during medical emergencies.¹²⁰

Prior to the upgrading of the Kingaroy airport the most important airport in the South Burnett, and certainly the only one capable of receiving large aircraft was at Wondai, indeed, the strip at Wondai was considered to be extremely safe, several large transports had landed there including an R.A.A.F. *Hercules* and the aircraft of the state premier, Sir Johannes Bjelke Petersen, had regularly used the strip until the Kingaroy airport had been upgraded. However, at 11 a.m. on 26 July, 1990, a private aircraft took off from the Wondai airport. The aircraft had landed only minutes previously and a passenger named Rayham Francis had disembarked. Aboard the aircraft as it took off that morning were five men, Anthony William Hammett, James Brady, David Charles Ferrier, Kenneth Gerrard Newton, Peter Weir and Dr James Dellavedova. Shortly after take-off the small aircraft crashed into trees at the end of the airstrip, James Dellavedova was the only survivor.¹²¹

Witnesses at the Wondai airport at the time had watched the aircraft take off, the landing lights had been activated and they could see the strobe lights on the doomed aircraft, however, a few moments later they heard the sound of trees cracking followed by the huge explosion as the fully fuelled aircraft impacted and burst into flames. They ran to the scene to find the only survivor, James Dellavedova, attempting to beat out the flames on his clothing, for the other men there was no hope. One of these men, Peter Weir, fifty-three, of Blacktown, had been injured in a plane crash several years previously when his back had been broken, he had not flown since. While the plane was standing on the tarmac at Cairns airport prior to the fatal flight, Weir had

told his friends that he was flying for the first time since the accident, adding: 'Now I'm flying again and I think it's marvellous.'¹²²

In November that year a memorial plaque was unveiled at the site of the crash, the plaque recognised the work of Wondai's emergency services including the police, ambulance, fire brigade, S.E.S. and staff of the hospital. The memorial service held during the unveiling ceremony was conducted by Reverend Stuart James of the Wondai Anglican parish.¹²³

Another crash, this one at Nanango, occurred just months later when an ultra light smashed into trees at the Nanango aerodrome in September that year. The pilot, David Keys, was taken to the Nambour Hospital after he received facial, chest and leg injuries.¹²⁴ The most recent serious crash and one that created a double fatality occurred at Coolabunia when an ultra light struck power lines and burst into flames in December 1994. Both occupants of the aircraft were killed instantly.¹²⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Sixteen

Aviation and the South Burnett

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The Peanut Industry

At the end of the First World War, soldiers returning home from the Western Front and the Middle East were faced with numerous problems. After four years of war they had once again to adjust themselves into civilization, gone were the maddening months and years of death and destruction, the hell-like conditions, the poor food, sorrow and death. Arriving again in Australia they looked forward to a bright new future, unmarred by the horrors of war, the future held such promise of prosperity, of freedom. Even so, despite government promises to do what it could for returning soldiers, the men were frequently left to largely fend for themselves. War homes were provided to some families and, as we have seen earlier in this history, some soldiers went on to soldier settlements where they either stumbled and failed or, in the face of great adversity from numerous problems, finally succeeded.

The problems facing these returning soldiers were, indeed, facing many other small crop farmers at the time. Conditions for crops during the first twenty years of the century were frequently poor, the families on the land suffering alternatively from severe droughts or floods, the lack of money, primitive living conditions and isolation. Farmers could grow only what they could sell and in many cases the markets for their produce were so distant that it was impossible to grow any real commercial crop. Until the railways started bringing markets closer to the producers, selectors of land and their families could only grow the foods they required for home consumption and what they could realistically dispose of, through sale or barter, to local people and businesses. Vegetables, especially potatoes, pumpkins and maize, found a ready market, as did some meats, primarily beef and pork, but the producers had to be careful not to flood the market with these products. Without any form of fast and economical transportation system, the local market was a finite one, and over-production for that market could have meant financial ruin.

With these limited markets, and with such traditional food forms, it is understandable that when farmers were told that the future lay not in vegetable crops for the table, but in peanuts for a somewhat esoteric market, many of those farmers were profoundly sceptical.

Peanuts, ground nuts or earth nuts as they were also known, first came to prominence in Australia following the waves of Chinese immigration to the country after the discoveries of gold at places such as Ballarat, Bendigo and the Palmer River. The press later claimed: '... the celestials residing among us are extraordinarily fond of the ground nut, they regard them pretty much in the same light as the Englishman does his roast beef and plum pudding. Ground nuts have only to be tasted to be appreciated.'¹

As early as 1868 the *Brisbane Courier* was advocating the widespread cultivation of peanuts claiming that a Victorian oil factory had found peanuts to be far superior in oil content and quality to both cotton seed and sea-island seed. The newspaper columnist promoted peanuts as being excellent for pig food, bread making and even soap manufacture. The publication claimed that the peanut was already well established as a staple food in America and it was surprising that Australian farmers were not growing it in increasing numbers.²

The following year the same newspaper published claims that peanuts were being grown commercially in the Condamine region and that one farmer had claimed: '... For putting flesh upon pigs the last two seasons have proved to us that the peanut is unequalled.'³

Despite these claims, no serious attempt to grow commercial crops of peanuts was made until the next century. Some of the first farmers to attempt peanut cultivation in the Kingaroy district

included Samuel Long who, reportedly, obtained his seed from Chinese market gardeners at Nanango and planted three acres to the crop on his land at Charlestown.⁴ J. Johansen planted a crop of peanuts in about 1915 and was reportedly successful in growing a few small crops. Johansen's farm, located on the Bunya Highway, is today regarded as one of the region's more important historical sites. Johansen increased his peanut production in 1921 and later manufactured a crude peanut thresher which incorporated a bicycle frame by which it was powered.⁵

Later the Young brothers, Ben and Harry Young of Memerambi, also grew a successful experimental crop and were subsequently to design the first peanut thresher in Queensland.⁶ The brothers had moved to the Memerambi region in 1919, that year they planted approximately five acres to peanuts, the following year about forty acres were planted. Ben later went on to become a director of the Peanut Marketing Board, he died in October 1984 at the age of eighty-eight years.⁷ The brothers had an interesting genealogy, they were descendant from a Chinese gold digger named Ah Young who reportedly met his English wife on a ship which was subsequently wrecked in the Great Australian Bight. They were travelling from Western Australia to the east coast of Australia at the time of the shipwreck. Ah Young had been born in Canton province in 1838 and arrived in Australia with thousands of other Chinese gold seekers to work on the goldfields at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. The couple finally settled at Gympie where a street was later named after them.⁸

During these early years there were also a few crops of peanuts being grown in northern Queensland, but these were mainly by Chinese market gardeners and were for a small domestic consumption.⁹

Peanuts at that time did not have the social acceptance of today, indeed, few peanuts were ever seen in the household, although some manufacturers in Australia, primarily Chinese manufacturers, were including peanut oil and peanut cake in their various products. A report of the peanut industry in the United States, published in the *Maryborough Chronicle* in 1917, gave local farmers a chance to envisage what could be achieved here with such a crop, if only the industry were nurtured. The report also claimed: 'Frequent allusions have been made to the fact that the peanut is a profitable crop, that it is of easy cultivation and that it does well in the greatest part of Queensland. While we are too ... (set in our ways) to tackle this comparatively new crop and to grow it commercially, its cultivation is making great strides in other countries.' The report pointed out that in the United States, where the massive cotton crop had been destroyed by the boll weevil, farmers had turned to peanuts as an alternative, having done so they discovered that processing plant constructed for cotton seed could be easily and inexpensively transformed to peanut processing factories. This resulted in thousands of acres being turned over to peanuts, a marketing and research strategy being put into place, and it was even suggested that bread made from peanut cake was the equal to wheat bread and far more nutritious. Farmers discovered the added advantage that unlike many other vegetable crops such as potatoes, cabbages, onions and all the fruits they had been producing, peanuts were far more hardy, they stayed fresh longer, were easily transportable despite climatic conditions which frequently affected their traditional crops. Prices too were excellent, the farmers earning approximately ten U.S. dollars more per acre than cotton.¹⁰

In 1959 Miss G.V. Redman, the daughter of early peanut grower Malcolm Redman, wrote an account of her memories of the embryonic peanut industry and also included excerpts from her father's diary, written during a visit her father made to the United States in order to investigate peanut production. Miss Redman wrote:

We know that Jack Johansen was the first peanut grower on the small farm opposite the Crawford bore. As children we walked home from the Crawford School along that road and called in to see Mr Johansen or to receive some peanuts as often as it was possible.

Mr Johansen sold that farm and went to California to grow peanuts and to learn all he could about the crop. After a few years he returned and bought a farm on the Memerambi road near the farm owned for so many years by Mr Mantle Baker. It was on this farm that Mr Johansen built his small peanut thresher, which was powered by a push bicycle. He thrashed ... two bags per day. Later he built a larger thresher which would be very small by today's standard.

Some interest was shown in the growing of peanuts at this time. Mr (William) Muir, Mr Young and my father, Malcolm Redman, were among the first growers who grew Red Spanish.

A friend of my father's was Mr Blain then the Member in Federal Parliament for the Northern Territory. My father wrote Mr Blain to ask him to send samples of the peanuts grown in the territory. I can remember clearly the arrival of ten small bags of peanuts. They were all clearly labelled as to their variety.

My father and Mr Muir planted these peanuts in small plots on one property *Kia-Ora*, Crawford. They were carefully tendered and the growth observed. Among these varieties were some creeping varieties as well as the plants we know today.

When they were ready for harvesting Mr Abel of Peanut Products, Sydney came to visit us. He selected from the ten varieties those nuts he thought suitable for the confectionery trade, for making oil, and for sale for domestic use. He took samples to Sydney, and processed them.

From this stock has come the variety of peanuts grown today. Red Spanish, Virginia Bunch and there was also the White Spanish. My father and Mr Muir continued to grow these nuts and so a nucleus of seed was formed ...

In 1929 my father and mother went overseas. Whilst in U.S.A. my father endeavoured to learn as much as possible of the peanut industry in the U.S.A.

I will give some facts as are contained in my father's diary of that visit.

It was in Washington on September 20, 1929, that he visited the Department of Agriculture to get information on districts where peanuts were grown. This Department of Agriculture urged the necessity of shaking all soil from peanuts when pulling, so as to reduce risk of dampness causing peanuts to go mouldy.

September 22, 1929, he left Washington for Norfolk and went on to Suffolk.

An entry in the diary, September 21, says — 'Cabled Agent-General, London today as follows: Agricultural Department informs me that peanuts are not stored in silos here. Suggest Taylor make enquiries France and elsewhere. Cost of cable \$1.20'

In New Norfolk, September 23, 1929, he called at Old Dominion Peanut Company and in Suffolk saw Mr Holland of Holland and Lees, Peanut Merchants re the storage of peanuts. He found the storage was in the old style, as in dump.

Next he saw Mr Dixon, manager of Benthall Machine Co. who showed him over his very extensive factory, and quoted prices of peanut pickers at \$500 and \$515.

Then he went to McCormick-Deering to see planter and cutters, but there were none in stock. The Parker Trapton Co-operation Norfolk quoted peanut diggers at \$135.

At Lummas & Co., Peanut Cleaners of Suffolk, Mr Lummas strongly recommended the use of peanut separator machines for grading and cleaning plants.

At Suffolk my father met the manager of the Govt. Experimental Station where he saw the different varieties under crop, and all machinery for preparing the land for peanuts as well as machinery for cutting tap roots and had the methods of harvesting explained.

At Lummas & Co's large and efficient plant the work was done by negro labour, women being paid \$1.25 per nine hour day, and men \$2.00. This company had a powdering machine which did good work.

At Folk & Co., Suffolk my father saw a Cole peanut planter and decided to buy one at \$31. The tariff on peanuts at that time in U.S.A. was, in shell, 4 cents, and kernels 6 cents per lb.

... It was during this trip that my father made tentative arrangements for the purchase of a peanut thresher. This arrived after much delay about permit and arguments about duty and the landed cost was £500.

This thresher was a Benthall thresher, made by the Benthall Machine Company, and was the first imported thresher in Queensland.¹¹

By 1921 the crop was finding more acceptance in Australia, the news of its success overseas was having a remarkable impact locally and many experimental attempts to grow the crop were

made in numerous regions of the country. In October that year the press reported that firms in New South Wales had installed machinery for the extraction of peanut oil, and this innovative move meant that local farmers in that region could find a ready market for their product. The press reported at the same time:

Hitherto the only market for peanuts has been the roasting or confectionery trade, this has limited production here, partly because of the fact that the market is controlled by the Chinese merchants, who prefer to import from the East, but largely because of peanuts grown in other than light-coloured soils usually become badly stained owing to the large quantities of iron compounds in the soil and are thus practically unsaleable in this market ...

At the present time peanuts are imported duty free, but the demand for a nut of high oil content which can be grown here is expected to exert an appreciable influence in favour of the local product. The oil content is largely a question of variety, and imported nuts do not contain the highest percentage of oil. The Department of Agriculture has been active in obtaining some of the white Spanish variety with an oil content of over 30 per cent, and now has seed available at some of the experimental farms.¹²

Three years later, in 1924, many farmers in the Kingaroy district had seen the potential and were growing significant amounts of peanuts. However, this enthusiasm was tempered by the realisation that the market for peanuts in Australia was still in its infancy. Certainly there *were* markets, but no organised marketing system had then been set in place, and the outlets for the crop were far away, usually in New South Wales. In February 1924 a local press report pointed out that: 'Owing to the considerable acreage under peanuts this year, and the probability of large yields, the question of obtaining a suitable market is occupying the attention of a number of people, including J.B. Edwards, M.L.A., who has been in touch with Mr A.E. Gibson, Instructor of Agriculture in Queensland. Unfortunately the department does not appear to possess much knowledge of the subject and Mr Edwards has now written to the Marrickville Margarine Co., of Marrickville Sydney, seeking further knowledge in this respect.'¹³

The Marrickville Margarine Company was prepared to offer a quotation to farmers for first and second class peanuts and the prices on offer seemed realistic, £40 per ton for top quality peanuts. Growers were advised to send samples of their peanuts to the company, with the warning that: '... Unfortunately a good deal of complaints had recently passed regarding the methods adopted in forwarding peanuts to market. The samples received compared very unfavourably with those imported from overseas (usually from Asian sources) which were usually well graded and bleached when exported.'¹⁴

Another report claimed: 'For some years past farmers of this very rich district have been "nibbling" at peanut growing in an endeavour to ascertain if the crop can be viably grown here. The results have been so good that so far those who were carrying out the experiment have increased the acreage devoted to this line, and others, going on the success of their neighbours, are devoting plots to its culture. The state of affairs at the present time is that there is a very large acreage carrying the plant this year. One man last year received just on £40 per ton for his yield from the Marrickville Company ... his return being about £20 per acre.'¹⁵

There was also something of a paradox here. Farmers attempting to grow their experimental crops of peanuts were also, at the time, still working at more traditional forms of produce, including the production of butter and cheese. At that time, as the margarine industry was growing rapidly in Australia and overseas, it was considered that margarine production would have a very serious detrimental impact on the dairy industry. Therefore, some farmers found they were facing a difficult question. How to continue dairying and making the butter factories profitable — factories in which they had heavily invested — but at the same time proceed to grow what was promising to be an extremely profitable crop, a crop that in turn would provide oil for the margarine industry which was so dramatically threatening the dairy industry? It was a question with no answers, for both industries were to continue to grow, at least for many years, and those farmers who found themselves in that predicament had to make decisions based upon the economic factors that would present themselves during the years ahead.

The rapid growth of a local peanut industry, with its relatively high prices, was almost inevitable. By 1923 and 1924 the demand for peanuts was growing strongly. Imports of peanuts to June 1923 had been substantial, and were valued at £36,631, and Australian producers were

racing to become a part of this extraordinary growth industry. In 1922 there was a record crop grown in the Kingaroy district, amounting to 246 tons.¹⁶ By April 1924 there were more than six hundred acres under peanuts in the Kingaroy district, one grower alone having 116 acres under the crop.¹⁷

By now the organisation of the peanut industry was strengthening dramatically. Under the government's Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act and the Primary Products Pool Acts, published in the *Government Gazette* on 23 August, 1924, the Queensland Peanut Marketing Board was formed that year with W.M. Wheatley as chairman, and the peanut pool began operating which would induce growers to put all their crop through the board. The decision to form the pool had been made during a meeting of growers on 6 May, 1924, at the Memerambi School.¹⁸ The first board meeting was held in the town hall at Gympie on 10 September, 1924.¹⁹

In the first year of its operation the board had one hundred growers with 691 acres planted to peanuts, a crop that would yield 231 tons then valued at £10,657/10/8d.²⁰ The first years' operations of the board were carried out in a small barn at Crawford, this was owned by William Muir — the first manager-secretary of the board. When the crop was first being prepared for market the board installed a simple shelling machine in Muir's barn, the machine was driven by an engine attached to the milking machines and Muir was reported to have carried out this work alone.²¹ Operations were later moved to a grain shed at the Kingaroy railway yards and in 1928 it was moved again to its present position. In Kingaroy the marketing board had constructed a modest processing plant which sorted and graded the peanuts, a government loan had been obtained and all growers were charged a levy from their returns. The monies thus raised were used in the construction of new peanut silos.

It was now becoming apparent that Kingaroy was embracing the fledgling peanut industry as no other regional centre. The climate and soil were perfect for the crop and markets were beginning to open up. A report of 1926 claimed: 'At the monthly meeting of the South Burnett District Council last week, the representative on the Council of Agriculture, Mr J.H. Sigley, in referring to the peanut industry in the Kingaroy district, said they anticipated about 750 tons of the commodity here this year, which is easily a record for any district in Queensland. Kingaroy was the first district going in for the crop in a commercial way, included in which was machinery to deal with it ... The estimated crop in Queensland this year was 900 tons, and he understood the market could absorb from 1500 to 1600 tons.'²²

These were, perhaps, the most dangerous years for the industry. Peanuts were still far from achieving acceptance in Australia, yet there were many growers in the Kingaroy district who were convinced that the future lay in peanut cultivation. A description of the industry at that time claimed: 'When the farmers of the Kingaroy district first embarked on this new undertaking there were many difficulties to face; still they persevered with the true spirit that has been associated with the man on the land since the beginning of the work of Australian pioneering endeavours. Knowledge of the industry was limited, but through their willingness to learn they have now gained an extensive insight into the industry both as regards cultivation and distribution.'²³

When the industry first began, a small variety of nuts was grown, primarily Spanish nuts, and these were considered suitable for the domestic market as they were the same types of nuts being imported from China and were receiving acceptance from Australian manufacturers. However, it was soon discovered that the demand for these small Spanish nuts was not as great as it could have been and growers changed to the larger Virginia Clusters variety. This meant that the growers were put to added expense, the seeds for the Virginia nuts were more expensive, but the growers prevailed and some very profitable crops were grown.

Yet there were many other problems facing the growers, one of these was the storage of the crop. During the formative years of the industry in Kingaroy and district, peanuts, after harvesting, were placed in bags and stored in a variety of barns and sheds where they were frequently damaged by mice, cockroaches, rats, damp and other climatic conditions, these conditions, especially moisture, badly affected the crops and resulted in large financial losses for the growers. This drawback was one of the primary reasons why the growers formed the Queensland Peanut Growers' Co-operative Association in order to construct the peanut silos where the peanuts could be held in dry storage, where they could be treated if affected by damp, where they could be protected from pests and where some form of control could be placed on their

distribution so that the market was not flooded one year and experience a scarcity the next. It was problems such as these which the newly formed Peanut Marketing Board had to overcome, and prior to the imposition of tariffs and the construction of the silos, they were problems which were solved only with great difficulty.



An excellent crop of peanuts almost ready for pulling. The grower, R.N. Findlay, shown in the paddock, was one of the first settlers to arrive on the Taabinga New Resumption late in 1911. The property, 'Abergeldie', is of mainly red forest soil and some black soil, watered by the Stuart River, about 2½–3 miles east of Kumbia. Photographed 18 February, 1929.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

The growth rate of the industry Australia wide was quite remarkable and statistics published in 1929 reveal that peanuts were quickly becoming one of the more important world crops. In 1928, for example, the United Kingdom had imported a total of more than 131,000 tons of both shelled and unshelled peanuts. Holland, Germany, France and a host of other countries were also importing vast quantities and the United States had some two million acres under peanut cultivation. In 1922 Australia produced only sixty tons of nuts, by 1923 that figure had escalated ten times and six hundred tons were produced. By 1925 the tonnage was up to more than nine hundred tons, most of which were grown in the Kingaroy region.²⁴

While it would be fair to state that few households were using peanuts or peanut oil for culinary purposes, the demand for both oil and peanuts within the commercial sector was rapidly gaining ground. Soap manufacturers such as Kitchen and Co., and the famous Lever Brothers, were beginning to incorporate peanut oil into their products, and the major food manufacturer, Heinz, in the United States, was ready to begin production of peanut butter in Australia.²⁵

In August 1928, while the silos at Kingaroy were under construction, a meeting of South Burnett peanut growers was held at the Memerambi Farmers' Hall to hear a tentative report on the working of the 1926–27 peanut pool. The meeting was called to place the financial statements of the previous years before the members present. However, the operations and management of the board were receiving severe criticism from some growers who claimed that the board's management was ineffective and inefficient. The press reported of the meeting: 'A general discussion took place regarding the board's operations which were criticised by several members of the audience who made allegations of inefficiency and bad management against the board and manager ... There were many lively exchanges between the chairman and several growers who plied him with a host of questions regarding the board's operations, and after they had been dealt with Mr J. Petersen (Home Creek) moved that the meeting had no confidence in the board or its manager.'²⁶

The marketing of the peanut crop had certainly been a difficult task for the board during the previous two years, foreign imports of good quality peanuts were being purchased in preference to the local product, and these difficulties had added to the growers' lack of confidence in the board. Yet the situation was steadily improving and new markets were becoming available. For example some manufacturers were realising the potential of peanut butter and several factories were moving into its production, thus creating another market for growers. Other industries were using peanuts for secondary purposes, again expanding peanut potential.²⁷

However, the expansion of the market to meet the ever increasing growing rate was a difficult task, and one the Peanut Marketing Board was to labour under for many years. While industry was utilizing more and more of the crop in products such as margarine, cooking oil and peanut butter, there was still a strong need to educate the public about the nutritional advantages of the peanut. In the annual report of the Department of Agriculture, tabled in parliament in September 1928, even as the new silos at Kingaroy were being constructed, parliamentary members were informed that peanut production was approaching the limit of consumption and that the department was making efforts towards encouraging the more general use of the peanut as a dietary article.²⁸

Attempts by the marketing board to have an embargo placed on imported peanuts remained unsuccessful. By 1929 three attempts had been made, the last had achieved a temporary embargo which was quickly lifted — much to the alarm of both the board and its members. During the fourth annual meeting of the board, again held at the Memerambi Farmers' Hall in February 1929, the board chairman, Charles Adermann, stated: 'The main feature of the year's activities were the obtaining of a complete embargo on importations of peanuts into the Commonwealth and the subsequent modification within a few months from its imposition. Undoubtedly the vacillating methods of the Commonwealth authorities produced a most costly experience for the growers engaged in the industry. Representations were made for the restoring of the embargo, but unfortunately proved unsuccessful.'²⁹

The sowing, harvesting and processing of peanuts at that time was a labour intensive business, there was little in the way of efficient machinery, especially for the small grower who, in order to crop relatively minor areas of land, could never afford to purchase some of the large and expensive harvesters that were beginning to come on the market.

In 1929, however, Mr M.A. Ridley of Biggenden invented a threshing machine that was both inexpensive and efficient, the press claiming: 'Realizing the difficulties attendant on the harvesting of peanuts, and also that there was no machine he knew of on the market capable of handling the crop satisfactorily, except at a figure beyond the means of the small grower, Mr Ridley, after experimenting for a considerable time, has succeeded in perfecting a combined thresher and bagger capable of handling a crop in a most satisfactory manner, simplicity and lightness together with soundness of construction, were features especially aimed at, and their combination in the machine shows how the designer has succeeded.'³⁰



Hilda helping her father, Alf Morris, bag peanuts, Durong, early 1930s.

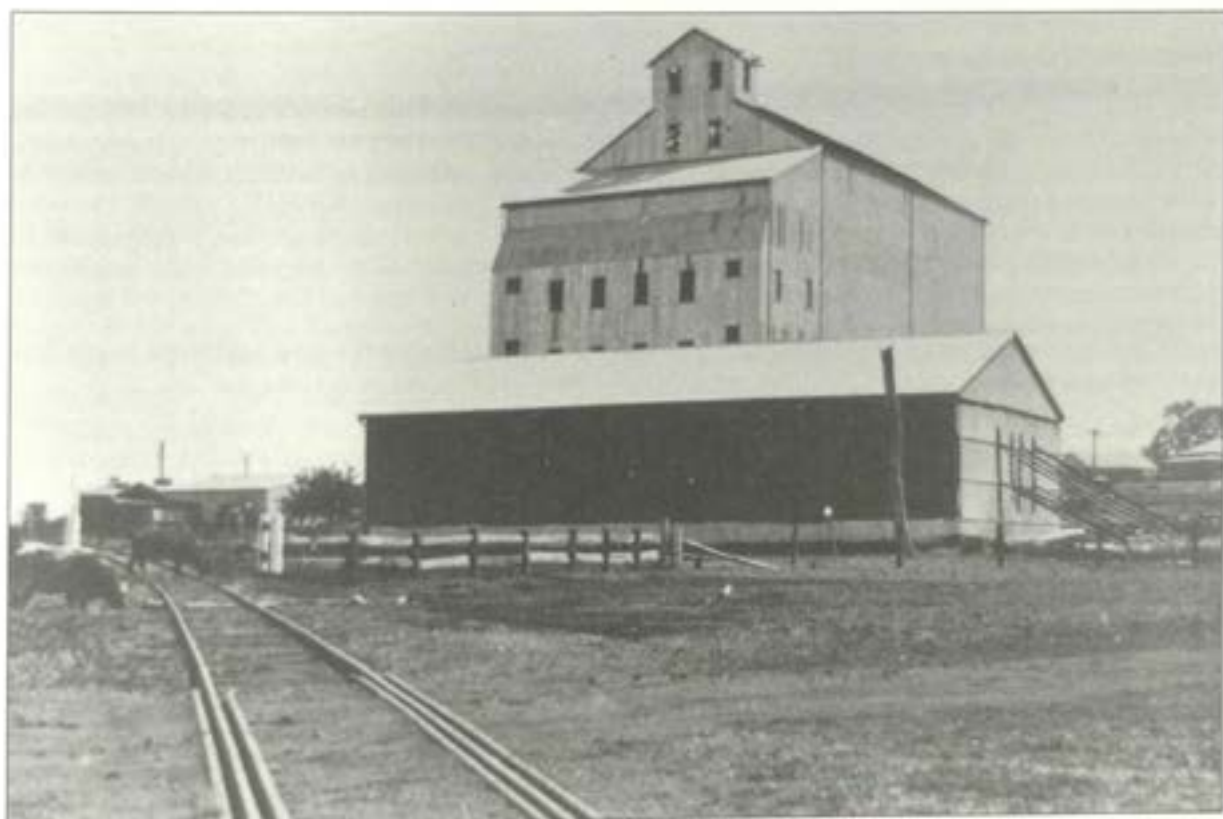
Source — Shire of Wondai Museum archives

The thresher was indeed something of a revolution to the peanut industry in the region. It was solidly constructed and capable of processing a crop with much greater ease and efficiency. The introduction of the thresher was welcomed by the peanut growers who saw that larger areas could now be quickly and more easily processed.



Peanut threshing at B. Torenbeek's farm, near Kumbia, 14 June, 1934. Bartel Torenbeek at the machine, was also one of the original selectors in the Kumbia district.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.



The first bulk storage peanut silos constructed for the Queensland Peanut Growers' Co-operative Association Ltd., at Kingaroy. They were opened on 3 August, 1929. The silos were destroyed by fire, 6 February, 1951.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

The opening of the new peanut silos, which were timber and iron constructions, was held on Saturday 3 August, 1929. This was a remarkable achievement for an industry that was still in its infancy. Only seven years previously the peanut crop had still been an experimental one, yet now producers were growing hundreds of tons annually and making provision for the storage of approximately three thousand tons.³¹

On Friday 2 August, 1929, the official opening party arrived in Kingaroy, this was comprised of Mr H.S. Gullet, the minister for customs, who would perform the opening ceremony, B.H. Corser, M.H.R., E. Abbott, the deputy controller of customs, J. Fletcher, a private secretary, and Senator J.H. Payne of Tasmania. That evening, members of the official party were guests of honour at a special dinner provided by the Kingaroy Shire Council, the dinner was held at the Club Hotel and was presided over by Mr J.H. Hodge, chairman of the council. During the long speeches given that night H.S. Gullet made a remark that clearly demonstrated the rapidity with which the peanut industry had grown since its first tentative steps a few years previously. He said: '... When peanuts were mentioned in the south they (other farmers) smiled as though these small nuts could be of not the least importance, but when he (Gullet) came to ponder over the figures of production and looked upon the development of the industry, he came to the conclusion that this was no smiling matter ...'³²

The following morning Gullet and his entourage visited a peanut farm belonging to Malcolm Redman where he was given a demonstration of a new threshing machine, he later inspected the butter factory, described as being: '... the largest factory in Queensland, if not Australia, at that time,' and afterwards the party moved to the site of the new silos, close to the railway station, for the official opening.

It was something of a gala occasion in Kingaroy and hundreds of people had gathered to witness the event, some coming from quite distant regions. The press later claimed: 'Long before noon, the scheduled time for the opening ceremony, a large concourse of people had gathered at the silos from all parts of the district and it was evident that the ceremony was to cause much satisfaction to those who have seen the industry grow from small dimensions to its present great size in the course of a very few years. Growers and others interested journeyed from far-off places with the one desire of being present for the launching of another great venture in the primary production field in Queensland.'³³

By this time a temporary tariff protection had been imposed on peanut imports, but Gullet informed the people present at the opening that such protection could not last as it was damaging to international relations, especially with China, which was suffering most from these measures. Gullet pointed out that if an embargo were to be placed on Australia, especially against the wool industry, then the country would suffer very badly. He went on to claim that Kingaroy was one of the finest agricultural districts in Australia and that the peanut silos were the most important constructions in the industry anywhere in the country.

After the opening there was an official luncheon in the interior of the new buildings, some five hundred people being catered for. The peanut silos were described at the time as:

The building is 100 feet long by 60 feet wide, and is about 100 feet high. The silos are supported by massive concrete pillars. On these pillars is a heavy rolled steel superstructure carrying 58 bins, capable of holding 3,000 tons of peanuts. Each of the bins is 58 feet deep and 10 feet 6 in square, while the whole area is a concrete floor with granolithic surface. At the rear of the main building and in close proximity to the double railway siding capable of accommodating 70 trucks, is the shelling and treating plant, or working house of four floors, the heavy hardwood pillars of which stand on a massive concrete base. The area of the working house is 60 feet by 32 feet. In it is housed practically all the machinery necessary for the treatment of the peanuts. The elevator pit is 16 feet deep by 17 feet long by 12 feet wide, with splayed in-takes to the foot of the elevator. A massive concrete drain, extending all round the building with suitable outlets, has been constructed to carry off all storm water into the creek. It is worthy of mention that more than 90 per cent of the sand and metal used for the concrete work is the local district supply, and as far as possible all local materials have been used in its construction. Hardwood timber used in the building, of which there is approximately 700,000 feet, was supplied by Mr D. Gallagher's sawmill, while large quantities of pine came from Nanango and Yarraman mills. The whole of the work was in the capable hands of Messrs Henry Simon (Australia) Ltd., and the building contractor was Mr A.W. Dunkley, Sydney, who erected the building under the supervision of Mr W. Baird, the firm's building inspector.³⁴

A later description of the building, written by a visitor, claimed that the operation was: '... very interesting, and indeed a revelation. About 130 girls are employed there. The large building contains 58 bins, each of which holds 52 tons of peanuts.'³⁵

By 1930 the growth of the industry was continuing, although there was considerable concern that the embargo placed upon Chinese peanuts would soon be cancelled. Some prominent growers in the Kingaroy district were called to Sydney where they met with members of both the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the federal government in an attempt to solve the problems arising from the embargo. Growers realised that the high demand for peanuts meant that they would have to continue growing them in substantial quantities in order to meet that demand, and those quantities had to be very carefully calculated so that the various markets which demanded either Red Spanish peanuts or Virginia Clusters were properly catered for. If manufacturers once claimed that they were not obtaining sufficient supplies, then the federal government would immediately lift whatever restrictions were then in force to allow the Chinese to fill any gaps in supply.³⁶

In May 1930 the first moves were made to arrange stricter regulation of the peanut industry state-wide. On the 29th of that month a notice of intention was made to issue an Order-in-Council to constitute a Peanut Board that would control the entire supply of peanuts in Queensland. A ballot was held on the question that resulted in 346 votes in favour with 62 against. The press later reported:

An Order-in-Council has therefore been issued constituting a Peanut Board for 10 years to apply to all peanuts produced for sale in Queensland. All peanuts produced for sale in Queensland are to be a commodity and will become the property of the board as owners. All peanuts must be delivered to the board in an unshelled condition and a grower shall not remove any of the peanuts produced by him from his premises except for delivery to the board or its agents unless the prior consent of the board has been obtained.

The board will consist of four elected representatives of the growers and the director of marketing or a deputy appointed by the minister.

The following have been appointed members of the new board: C.F. Adermann (Wooroolin), A.S. Clark (Sandhills) until August 27, 1931, and F.E. Peterson (Kingaroy) and A.G. Whiting (Atherton) until August 27, 1932 ...

The old Peanut Board now goes out of existence and this new board takes over all assets and liabilities of the old board. The new pool will last for 10 years, that is, until August 27, 1940.³⁷

Yet harmony among growers and the newly constituted board was short lived and there were soon voices of dissent — especially from growers farther north in the Rockhampton district who claimed that they were being treated unfairly. In October 1931 Rockhampton growers headed by Norman Neilson, the Central Queensland representative on the Peanut Board at Kingaroy, attended a large meeting of peanut growers. Neilson stressed the importance of the need to break away from the board and to form their own board at Rockhampton. Neilson claimed that the Kingaroy board had refused to pay arrears on the 1929/30 crop and that the grading of peanuts at Kingaroy was discriminatory.³⁸

The second manager of the Peanut Marketing Board was John Sommerville (Jock) Nesbitt who had come to Australia from Scotland in order to manage a shirt factory. However, he soon realised that the factory could never be a profitable concern and he arrived in Kingaroy in 1927. That year Nesbitt joined the Peanut Marketing Board as an accountant, William Muir was still manager. In 1932 Ralph Rowlinson took over as manager but remained in that position for only seventeen months, resigning in 1934. During that time Nesbitt was acting manager and upon the resignation of Rowlinson he took over the manager's position, remaining with the board in that position until 1963 when he moved as secretary/manager to the Navy Bean Marketing Board.³⁹

In 1958 Nesbitt wrote:

In the early years of the organised industry, production was confined almost entirely to the South Burnett district of Queensland, but some small quantities were produced around Buderim and Redland Bay, Degilbo, and at Sandhills and Emu Park, near Rockhampton, also Cooktown in the far North.

Production in the South Burnett, however, increased very rapidly in fact too rapidly in the early years and this led to a voluntary restriction of areas in 1930 to enable surplus production to be disposed of by the board.

By 1933, there was a shortage of supply and plantings were extended substantially for the 1934 crop.

In the early days of the organised marketing of peanuts, the whole world was suffering from the Great Depression and there were vast numbers of unemployed in every country, including Australia.

However, the advent of the peanut industry cushioned the unemployment in the South Burnett especially in the 1930s when the industry expanded considerably and many additional workers obtained employment. At that time the peanut industry was attracting applicants for employment from every State in the Commonwealth.⁴⁰



Executive members of the Queensland Peanut Board — September, 1937. **From left:** L.V. Young, J. Nesbitt (manager and secretary), J.F. Quilter, C.F. Adermann (chairman), R.R. Nothling and L. Cain (government representative), 21 September, 1937.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection.

Godfred Martinius Pedersen was chairman of the board from September 1932 for twelve months. He was born at Taars, Denmark, during the 1880s and arrived in Australia when he was nineteen years of age. Shortly after his arrival he took up 160 acres of land at Goodger, but after four years he exchanged his land for a draught horse which he then sold for £17. After other farming ventures, Pedersen acquired four thousand acres of land at Dangore in 1909. On 10 December, 1910, he married Margaret Rainey, the daughter of a Wooroolin farmer, and over the following years the first five of their nine children were born at Dangore. In 1918 the family moved to Wooroolin where Pedersen had purchased the farm belonging to Horace Buss. During the years of the Great Depression, Pedersen moved into peanut production and soon became the largest producer in that area, the press subsequently reported: 'In one year, about 1935, the Pedersen family grew more peanuts than had been grown up to that time on any other farm in that district.'⁴¹ Pedersen purchased a home at Hervey Bay in 1939 and moved there in 1948. He died at the Hervey Bay Hospital on 18 June, 1966.⁴² His wife passed away in 1971.

Norman James Christiansen was chairman of the board from September 1933 to August 1934. Christiansen was a native of Laidley and came to reside on the South Burnett with his parents in 1902. He was married to Miss Agnes W. Kilgour. In addition to his chairmanship of the peanut board he was active in public life and supported several sporting bodies.⁴³



Peanut sorting, 1935.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 125550



Peanut sorting, 1935.

Source — John Oxley Library print number 125548



Women grading peanuts at tables, Kingaroy, 29 May 1935.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection

By 1937 the industry had grown remarkably. The crop that year was in excess of four thousand tons and C.F. Adermann, who was still the chairman of the Peanut Marketing Board, estimated that the crop for the following year would be around seven thousand tons.⁴⁴ With this enormous increase in production it became a matter of some urgency that added storage facilities were constructed, and at a meeting of the board and growers at Wooroolin in October 1937, approval was given for the construction of a set of modern concrete and brick silos. The silos, estimated to cost approximately £50,000, were to be ready for the next peanut crop.⁴⁵ They were opened the following year at a cost of £57,750.

A description of the processing method then being used, was published in 1938, and concluded:

Immediately the peanuts arrive at the receiving entrance at the Kingaroy works they go into hoppers which deliver them to the machines which clean them and then convey them by an endless belt to the grading room. Here over 200 girls hand pick the perfect specimens and bag them for sale as peanuts in the shell. The others remain on the belt and are carried to the next department where they are then mechanically graded and shelled, split or desiccated according to the market requirements.

The total employees at the Kingaroy works number nearly 250 girls and men as well as the clerical and executive staff.

The machinery in the factory is the most efficient and modern to be found anywhere in the world and it is of interest to know that, with the exception of one machine, every section of the plant is Australian made. In fact, the engineers at Kingaroy have so improved and re-designed parts of the equipment that it has been copied and installed in American factories.

The machines themselves, in treating the nuts, after the hand grading, carry out their job in a way which to the layman can only be described as 'Human.' They grade, shell and split the nuts without assistance provided their apparent insatiable thirst for work is kept quenched with supplies of peanuts.⁴⁶



In 1938 the second group of silos were constructed at a cost of £57,750.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection

During Nesbitt's tenure as manager, almost thirty-six years, an enormous amount of progress was made. All the concrete silos at Kingaroy were established, branches were opened at Atherton and Rockhampton and productivity was dramatically increased through the installation of new machinery.

The original peanut silos, opened with such pomp and ceremony in August 1929, were destroyed by fire in February 1951. On Tuesday 6 February a small fire started in the luncheon room of the female workers and quickly spread to adjoining bag rooms and then onto the old wooden silos which were, at the time, filled with loose ungraded peanuts. The press claimed: 'Several hundred tons of loose peanuts were destroyed with these silos, and hundreds of thousands of empty bags were also lost. Some wooden parts of two blocks of cement silos were also burnt away. The Kingaroy Fire Brigade was quickly on the scene, and summoned help from surrounding brigades. In a short time brigades from Nanango, Yarraman, Wondai and Wooroolin had raced to the scene.'⁴⁷

All that afternoon and into the evening the fire-fighters battled with the blaze as volunteers from the Kingaroy platoon of the C.M.F. and also a number of civilians rushed to help. The Salvation Army and the Red Cross, assisted by some civilian aides, served food and drinks to the fire-fighters as the blaze continued. At one stage the Church of England and a nearby cafeteria were also threatened, both caught fire but the flames were extinguished by the fire-fighters. The manager of the Peanut Board, J.S. Nesbitt, later stated that the destruction of the peanuts was: '... the greatest single calamity ever experienced by the industry of the district.' He added that the shortage of peanuts, as a result of the fire, would affect the industry for at least a year.⁴⁸

During the height of the conflagration, burning peanuts were sent flying over numerous parts of the town and were responsible for starting several fires. One fire attributed to a burning peanut was started in a machinery centre three blocks away. The canvas roof of a car was damaged by a burning peanut, as was the new hat of a woman who had just walked out of a millinery shop when a flaming peanut landed on her purchase and burned a hole in it. A mass of burning peanuts was later dumped and buried at the site of the football oval, an inspection of the buried peanuts made a year later reported that they were still smouldering.⁴⁹



Kingaroy peanut silo fire, February 1951.

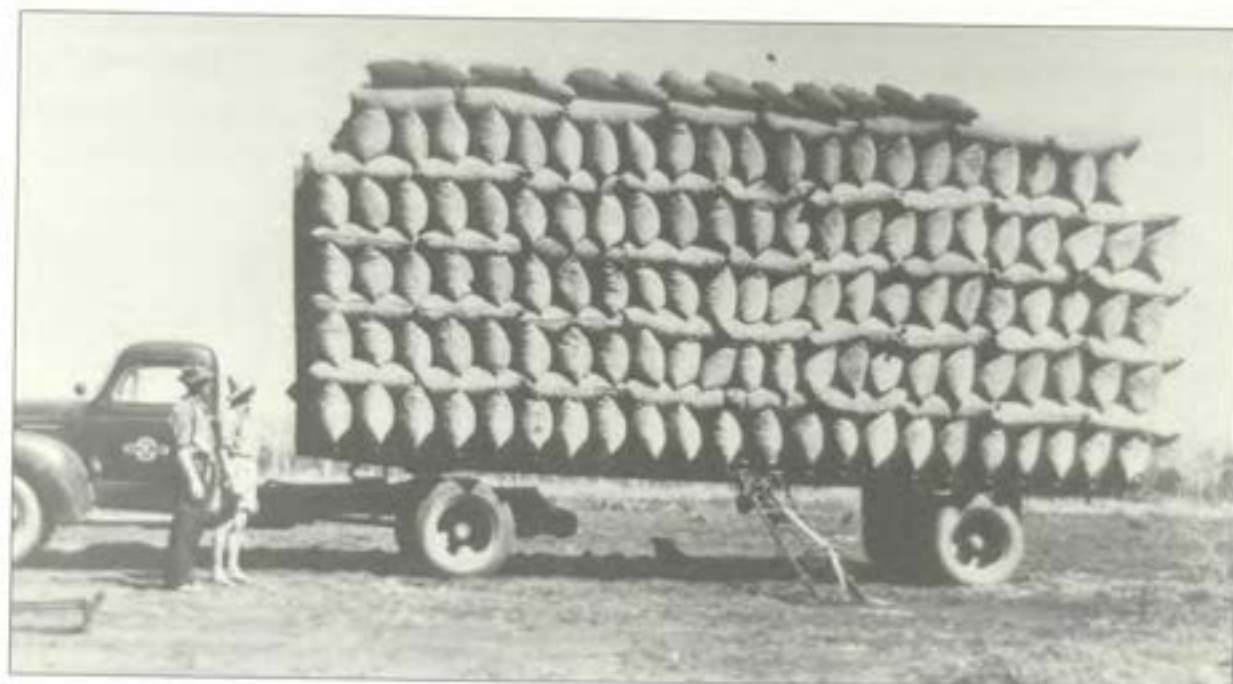
Source — Allan Wieden.

One man whose work and imagination greatly enhanced the progress of the peanut industry was Jim Eckart, himself a peanut farmer, who began growing the crop at Tingooora after the Second World War. One of his driving passions was to find a way to improve peanut harvesting and in 1947 he invented a two-row peanut puller, it was called the *Eckart Victory*, the prototype being built at the engineering workshop of Tom Cornish in Kingaroy. The machine was so successful that Eckart was able to establish his own engineering works and demand for the puller remained high, in fact many farmers, were impatient to clear more land and plant peanuts realising that the harvesting could be completed in a fraction of the time. Jim Eckart died of a heart attack, aged sixty-one years, in November 1980.⁵⁰

Another man who played a leading role in the development of machinery associated with the peanut industry was Harry Stolzenberg. In 1923, at the age of just nineteen years, Stolzenberg commenced business as a blacksmith in a shed near the junction of Booie and Malar Roads, a few miles from Kingaroy. Those first few years were difficult for the young man, the press later reported of him: 'An indication of the conditions under which he worked in those days is provided when it is made known that the only method of transporting materials from Kingaroy was by means of an ancient motor bike. It was quite a common sight for the townsfolk to see the young blacksmith riding to and fro with timber, steel and other odds and ends strapped to the frame of his motor bike, and to himself whenever the need arose, which it often did.'⁵¹

In 1932 Stolzenberg, in conjunction with Hans Peter Hansen, constructed his first stationary thresher at his Booie workshop. This prototype was built in just eight weeks and remained in service for more than twenty years. The second model was constructed two years later for Charles Adermann. That machine too remained in service for more than twenty years. Over the following years demand for the threshers grew dramatically and the small manufacturer even began to receive orders from New Guinea growers. The machine had its drawbacks, it was somewhat cumbersome, was driven by a tractor engine via a belt-drive and could only be moved from place to place with considerable difficulty. In 1939, with business burgeoning, Harry Stolzenberg moved his operations to Haly Street, Kingaroy where he designed and constructed a mobile thresher known as the *Walkie Talkie*. The first of this new model was purchased by the Somerset brothers of Durong, and proved so successful that the older stationary model soon became obsolete. In 1954 the *Walkie Talkie* was modified, resulting in the production of wooden framed pick-up models, the first of these being purchased by S.O. Petersen of

Coolabunia. Only three of these rare machines were produced at the Haly Street factory, they were later replaced by a steel framed model. The first to purchase this new model was a Kingaroy farmer and thresher contractor, J.C. Seabrook. Over the years this model too was streamlined and improved, the thresher becoming a pick-up model driven by its own engine. Of Stolzenberg, the man responsible for the dramatic improvement in the methods of peanut handling, the press later reported: 'Truly it can be said that the peanut industry is marching ahead with the years, and that side by side, step by step on the road to progress, walks the man who contributed in no small measure to its success, the one time Boobie blacksmith, Harry Stolzenberg.'⁵²



A load of 647 bags of peanuts at a Kumbia farm, ready for transport to the peanut silos at Kingaroy 18 September, 1947.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Meiers' collection

By 1958 the recent advance in peanut production had been as dramatic as earlier years. The first peanut crop after the formation of the Peanut Marketing Board was, as we have seen, 231 tons. By 1958 that crop had grown to approximately 19,000 tons with a market value of £3 million.⁵³

By 1959 the district was growing a record crop of approximately 27,000 tons and, alarmed that production might have overtaken consumption, the Peanut Marketing Board put an aggressive advertising campaign into place to help sell the crop. Tactics included an advertising campaign that would run nationally, and a week-long peanut festival to bring people to the region where they could experience peanut growing and consumption first hand.⁵⁴

As we have seen, J.S. Nesbitt resigned in 1963 and his place was taken by Oscar Higgins, another board employee of long standing. Higgins had been appointed to the position of secretary of the board in 1948. He moved up to assistant general manager ten years later, and after his appointment as general manager instituted innovative changes such as cold storage, electronic colour sorting and bulk handling.⁵⁵

Chairman of the board in 1949 was Norman McAllister, a peanut farmer of the Wondai district who was reputed to have been a tireless and energetic worker. McAllister was born on 8 April, 1901, in the Lockyer Valley region and moved to the Durong area when he was still quite young. During his early years he worked as a carrier in the Durong and Tingoora regions and during the 1940s went into partnership with Gordon McKell as a commission agent. He served as a lieutenant in the V.D.C. at Wondai during the Second World War. McAllister took up peanut farming in 1946 and was elected as a member of the marketing board in 1949, becoming chairman in 1952, a position he held until his death. He served a term on the Wondai Shire Council from

1949 to 1952 as chairman of the Works Committee. He died suddenly of a heart attack at his Wondai farm on the morning of Tuesday 21 April, 1964. He was replaced as chairman of the marketing board by John A. Bond, who served from June 1964 to March 1973.⁵⁶

John Bond was originally a sales clerk with Austral Motors in Brisbane. He arrived in the Kingaroy district during the 1930s and began working for Townson and Heaslip Pty. Ltd. He enlisted in the R.A.A.F. and saw service in England during the Second World War. After his discharge from service Bond went onto the land, farming at Wattlegrove and later at Wooroolin. He served on the Kingaroy Shire Council as both a councillor and deputy chairman. In 1955 he became manager of Universal Motors which subsequently became Bond and Postle Motors in 1960. When Owen Dawson became a partner in 1962 the name of the firm was changed to Bond and Dawson Motors. Bond was replaced on the Peanut Marketing Board by R.E. Magnussen.⁵⁷

Later general managers of the board included Chris Box, Jim Matheson and his successor Marc F. Desmarchelier. Marc Desmarchelier was appointed in May 1979, he was a qualified accountant and held an M.B.A. from the University of New South Wales.⁵⁸

The man who did much to get the peanut industry onto a strong footing in Queensland, and the second chairman of the Peanut Marketing Board, Sir Charles Adermann, died, following a major operation in Brisbane, aged eighty-two, at his residence in Dalby in May 1979. Adermann's career had been nothing less than sparkling. In addition to his role with the Peanut Marketing Board, he was chairman of the Kingaroy Shire Council from 1939 to 1946, he entered federal politics in 1943 as the member for Maranoa and subsequently took over the new seat of Fisher in 1949 following a redistribution of boundaries. He was chairman of the Parliamentary Committee from 1950 until 1958, and a member of the Standing Orders Committee for approximately the same period. He served as deputy leader of the National Party for more than two years. He retired from parliament in 1972. His state and commonwealth funeral took place on Friday 11 May, 1979, being attended by both the acting prime minister, Doug Anthony, and the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen.⁵⁹

The one force that has driven the industry since its inception has been the Peanut Marketing Board. In November 1991, under a restructuring programme, a poll, conducted by the Department of Primary Industries, voted almost unanimously for the winding up of the board, this meant that the board, a statutory marketing authority, would be converted to a company and a new co-operative would be formed. At the time of this historic change, Chris Box was general manager and Jeff Rackemann was the chairman of PMB Australia.⁶⁰ The Peanut Marketing Board ceased operations on 27 May, 1992, the event was officially published in the *Queensland Government Gazette* on 22 May, 1992. At that time the board transferred all its assets, property and liabilities to the Queensland Peanut Growers' Co-operative Association Ltd.⁶¹

One of the more difficult challenges that has affected the industry in recent years has been the outbreak of salmonella that occurred in 1996 and which resulted in the death of one person in Victoria. That month, batches of roasted peanuts supplied to General Foods for the production of peanut butter were found to be contaminated with salmonella mbandaka, the contamination having caused considerable food poisoning to people who had eaten the infected product. For a



C.F. Adermann.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council.

while the entire peanut industry staggered under this blow as the public ceased purchasing peanut products. Many major brand names including Kraft were forced to withdraw peanut butter and other peanut products from the supermarket shelves and the peanut roasting plant at Kingaroy was closed down while health officers moved in.⁶²

The outbreak was traced to processing at Kingaroy but was quickly remedied. By August 1996, Kraft and General Foods had resumed production of peanut paste.⁶³

Chairmen of the Peanut Marketing Board have included, among others: W.M. Wheatley, Charles Adermann, F.C. Petersen, G.M. Pedersen, N.J. Christiansen, N.J. McAllister, J.A. Bond, R.E. Magnussen, Bruce Johnston, Jeff Rackemann and Arch Winning.

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Seventeen

The Peanut Industry

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The Navy Bean Industry

Prior to the Second World War there was no commercial navy bean industry on the South Burnett, the demand for navy beans was met through imports from countries such as Canada, Japan, Argentina and the United States. However, the war brought enormous changes, both socially and economically, and created the genesis of the navy bean industry which today is valued in many millions of dollars.

In order to obtain an economical and highly nutritious food with which to feed its troops, during the Second World War the United States Army actively promoted the planting of the navy bean crop in Australia and it was from this modest beginning that the industry slowly grew and with it the structure and organisation of marketing and storage facilities, the establishment of the Navy Bean Marketing Board and the Bean Growers' Co-operative Association, and the introduction of new and more superior navy bean varieties.

After completing investigations into various regions during the war years, the Department of Agriculture and Stock chose the Kingaroy region to commence experimenting with navy bean production, and the United States Army supplied the necessary seed. The first crop is reputed to have been grown at Mannuem by Mr J.L. Tyrell, however, as there was no means of harvesting, the crop was simply ploughed in. Encouraged by the successful growth of that initial crop, the Department of Agriculture and Stock, in association with the U.S. Army, imported horse-drawn harvesting equipment from California, and several local growers planted crops of beans, among them was E.C. Truss who was later to become a chairman of the Navy Bean Marketing Board.

During the war years the Commonwealth government issued contracts through the Food Control Directorate of the Department of Commerce and Agriculture and hired out the imported harvesting equipment to contract growers. Production rose quite dramatically, from 387 tons in 1942-43 to 535 tons in 1945-46. These beans were controlled by the government under the Food Control Regulations of the National Security Act. According to the Bureau of Census and Statistics, by June 1946 there were 111 growers of navy beans under contract to the government, thirty-nine in the Killarney and Tannymorel regions with seventy-two on the South Burnett.

There were attractive incentives for growers to embrace the navy bean industry, the market was steadily growing and plant and equipment used in the production of other crops could be easily adapted to the production of navy beans.

At first growers experimented with a number of varieties including the Californian Small White, Mitchelite, Sanilac, Pinto, Otenashi, Asada Pearl and Great Northern, although production eventually turned almost entirely to the Californian Small White variety or C.S.W.¹

In the early years of its operations the navy bean industry suffered problems similar to those that had earlier been experienced by the peanut industry, there was considerable concern over the long term viability of the market, growers who did embrace it as a war-time measure were concerned that once the war ended the market would dwindle and virtually die. In those days the domestic market for baked beans was relatively small and it would take years of struggle and endurance before large and wide-scale markets were to be firmly established.

On 7 November, 1946, the Navy Bean Marketing Board was established in Queensland under an Order-in-Council, and four growers were appointed as representatives to that board. The new board met for the first time on 27 November, 1946. One of the first issues before the board was to consider the offer of the state government of some harvesting equipment. At that time the

government owned two headers and eight cutters at Kingaroy, a header and six cutters at Warwick and four more cutters in Brisbane. This equipment had been hired out to growers during the war years and was now on offer to the Navy Bean Marketing Board for £1400, about £400 less than its original cost. The board decided against purchasing the equipment which was eventually acquired by growers in the Warwick district.²

At around this time a similar board, established at Guyra, was constituted in New South Wales. The Queensland board, and its New South Wales contemporary, were faced with a number of immediate problems, they were constituted to design marketing strategies, to enhance grower profitability and to provide for long term industry growth. One of the main obstacles facing both the boards and their growers was the quality of the beans then being produced, the amount of stones and other waste products in the crop, the provision of economical cleaning and processing facilities and the reduction in freight costs.

During the war years the Commonwealth government had appointed a company known as the State Produce Agency Pty. Ltd. of Brisbane to clean and handle the navy bean crop, and in April 1947 the Navy Bean Marketing Board appointed this agency to carry out its handling operations, although over the following few years there was considerable debate among growers and members of the board concerning the decentralisation of the industry and the possibility of establishing processing plants at both Killarney, near Warwick on the Darling Downs, and at Kingaroy. There were certain advantages to this plan, the navy bean crop at that time was a particularly dirty one, harvesting operations had not then progressed to the point where the crop was comparatively free of dirt, stones and other foreign materials, and so the growers were actually paying to have these foreign materials freighted to Brisbane for processing. This was one of the major problems that would plague the industry for many years. The canneries were constantly aware of the poor quality of the beans being delivered to their factories but it was a perennial problem, for machinery that would effectively remove the waste material could also damage the crop. At that time (1947) the State Produce Agency was charging 2d per bushel for receiving and handling the crop and 1/9d per bushel for cleaning the beans.³

In October 1956 the board appointed Annand and Robinson of Toowoomba and the Poultry Farmers' Co-operative Society in Kingaroy as its country agents for the reception and cleaning of the crop. Board members and growers believed that this move would substantially reduce the costs of sending stones and other waste products to Brisbane. Growers were not confined, however, to the local processing plants and were free to continue sending their beans to Brisbane if they so wished. In April 1956 the State Produce Agency informed the board that it could no longer continue to clean its beans and a contract was signed with Seed Graders Pty. Ltd. to receive, handle and store the beans. This company had purchased the bean picking and polishing machines previously owned by the State Produce Agency and increased their processing capabilities with the purchase of more modern and efficient machinery. Yet even this modernisation did not relieve the problem of waste products and, as G.S. Vinning points out in his history of the industry, grading losses were as high as fifty per cent and canneries continued to complain of the lack of quality.⁴

One of the more important aspects of the entire industry has been that of the implementation of a tariff system. Such a system had been on the agenda from as early as 1953, African beans were being landed in Australia in 1954 at 1/6d below the board's price, but at least two of the largest canneries stated that they would continue to purchase Queensland beans providing the quality remained at an acceptable level. Despite this decision, the two boards, Queensland and New South Wales, agreed to press for some form of protection in the industry. In February 1960 came the cessation of bean seed licensing which dramatically reduced the landed cost of beans to the canneries. The Queensland board was selling beans at 55/- per bushel but the landed price of imported beans had fallen to 52/6d. Facing such stiff competition, the board was forced to reduce its price to 50/- per bushel and pressure from both the Queensland and New South Wales boards brought about an inquiry into the importation issue.

The Tariff Board began hearing evidence in April 1961, although, despite the fact that the New South Wales board was one of the principal applicants in the case, that board did not appear to give evidence. Evidence on behalf of the industry was heard from only the Queensland board. The applications of the marketing boards were opposed by the Australian Canners' Association and a number of private companies including Waters Trading Co., H.J. Heinz and Co., Campbell's Soups

Pty. Ltd. and H. Jones and Co. After considerable debate and a wide scope of submissions the Tariff Board concluded that the navy bean industry was one that should have been encouraged, that there was an expanding demand for navy beans and that such expansion would be impracticable without some form of incentive. The final report recommended a duty of 3d per lb on bean seed imported for purposes other than cultivation.⁵

The 1961 inquiry results dramatically increased navy bean production in Australia. In light of this favourable decision and the increase in crop size, growers pressed for the construction of a regional cleaning and processing plant. However, as with most other fledgling industries, there were problems of finance. Growers also feared that if the industry did not expand as expected the tariffs governing imports would be removed, thus crushing the local industry. Despite these concerns and the fact that the contract with Seed Growers Pty. Ltd. was coming up for renewal, the board investigated the possibilities of constructing its own plant at Kingaroy and installing the necessary machinery. These investigations concluded that the board could, in fact, receive, store and process the crop for a similar amount to that being charged by the Brisbane company. Yet even so the growers were reluctant to commit themselves because there were no real guarantees that the industry would expand sufficiently to warrant the estimated expenditure of some £29,150 with an annual working cost in excess of £10,000.⁶

Labouring under these reservations, board members decided to shelve the concept for two or three years until the future directions of the industry could be more accurately forecast. Meanwhile, in an endeavour to reduce its costs, the board appointed the Peanut Marketing Board to stockpile and distribute the seed for the Kingaroy region.

In June 1964 the secretary of the board left the organisation and a dynamic and powerful secretary/manager was appointed, this was J.S. (Jock) Nesbitt, previously general manager of the Peanut Marketing Board with many years' experience in the storage, processing and marketing industry, having worked with the Peanut Marketing Board since 1934. There is no doubt that Nesbitt brought a level of knowledge and expertise to the industry that resulted in many positive and progressive improvements. That same year the board moved its operations from Brisbane to Kingaroy and a new rust resistant variety of beans was introduced which dramatically increased the quality of the beans to the canneries. The company of Annand and Robinson at Toowoomba was appointed agents to receive, store, grade, clean and dispatch the beans for 1964, but as this company was reluctant to provide added facilities to meet the expected future demand, at the end of June that year the board again began investigating ways in which it might acquire its own facilities. By this time the New South Wales Navy Bean Marketing Board at Guyra had become defunct and the Queensland board investigated the possibilities of investing in some of its machinery and also of obtaining more modern equipment. Discussions as to the viability of the project resulted in the formation of a committee appointed to investigate the proposed venture, this committee became known as the Provisional Bean Association.

Following the formation of this association, events moved quickly. These events were further hastened through a fire that occurred at the Annand and Robinson plant which resulted in a reduction of storage facilities. In consequence of this fire and Annand and Robinson's reluctance to enter into any long term agreement, the board decided that it would handle the 1965 crop itself. The Provisional Bean Association decided to form a co-operative with a capital of £50,000 in £1 shares. Soon afterwards the association instructed the board to acquire the necessary land, to investigate building requirements and also the requirements for plant and machinery.⁷

However, the raising of the necessary capital was, initially at least, a difficult issue. By December that year only 180 fully paid up shares and 2640 shares paid to five shillings had been applied for, and in view of the state government's reluctance to grant the board authority to strike a levy, it became necessary for the board to apply for a loan to the Bank of New South Wales.

Of primary concern was the acquisition of suitable land and the board believed that land close to the railway at Kingaroy would be more suitable, however, due to the size of the required land and the restriction of land size in close proximity to the railway line, it was decided, with the aid and active encouragement of the Kingaroy Shire Council, to take up land, owned by the council, at the corner of River Road and Youngman Street. Tenders were called for the construction of the building and the board accepted a tender for £18,000, the selected builder was Allan and Chambers of Dalby.⁸

Directors of the Bean Growers' Co-operative Association Ltd. were elected on 4 February, 1965, and the Provisional Bean Association then lapsed. In addition to all the members of the former association two new members were elected to the new co-operative board. In February 1965 the secretary manager, J.S.D. Nesbitt, told the press that the Bean Growers' Co-operative Association had been registered under the Primary Producers' Co-operative Association Act and that some plant was arriving from England while other parts were being manufactured in Kingaroy, Dalby, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. The Kingaroy branch of the Bank of New South Wales had agreed to meet the overdraft requirement necessary for the association's new commitments.⁹

A sub-committee was appointed to oversee the construction of the association's new building and the installation of plant and machinery. However, due to various problems, including the lack of finance and small crops, the facility took longer than expected to come on line and it was not until March 1966 that the previous year's crop was cleaned and graded. In his history of the industry, G.S. Vinning points out that the association had its own board of directors with its own manager and secretary and staff and that the Navy Bean Marketing Board regarded the association more as an agency than as an integral part of the board, the board paid the association a fixed fee for its services which the association found insufficient and was therefore forced to seek other avenues of revenue raising.¹⁰

Another tariff inquiry was held in 1967, this inquiry was brought about following submissions from the canneries that local production was not sufficient to meet demand, particularly in times of poor seasons such as the 1965 drought. The Navy Bean Marketing Board demonstrated that it had made every effort to fill market requirements with the implementation of facilities. The board requested that there be no alterations in the current rates of duty and that if imports were permitted at a lower duty then they should only be allowed if the Australian crop was first fully absorbed, that the rate of duty was such that the imported beans were not cheaper into store than the local variety and that other provisions were set in place to safeguard the price and the clearance of the Australian crop. As with the 1961 inquiry, the debate was lengthy and complex but ultimately the Tariff Board recommended that the reduction could adversely affect the local industry and called for a review after five years. The review never eventuated but over the years there has been considerable agitation from both the board and the canneries concerning the issue, particularly during times of poor seasonal conditions and when countries such as Canada, the United States and Ethiopia were importing beans for 30.82 cents per kg, duty paid, compared to the board's price of 46.64 cents.¹¹

During its first few years of operations the association ran into financial problems, these problems came about through a number of reasons, a series of poor seasons which adversely affected the crop, the capital costs of establishing the venture being in excess of estimated costs, and a substantial rise in operating costs that resulted in an operational loss of \$13,384 in 1966. Realising that the expected tonnage of navy beans was not going to service the bank loans, the co-operative became an agent in the handling of other crops such as soya beans. The association also obtained the agency for the Barley Marketing Board and attempted, not too successfully, to increase its share capital.

The 1968 season was a bumper one for growers and yielded almost three times the crop of previous years, yet even this bounty was to prove problematical for the association which did not have sufficient storage facilities and found itself in the position of having to borrow funds to provide such facilities. The association was able to declare excellent profits for the year, but facing a high tax rate and the problems of financial security, the subject of introducing a levy was again investigated and ways were considered in which the association could streamline its operations to reduce taxation. These were matters that took a considerable time to formulate but they were problems that needed to be urgently addressed. A series of growers' meetings which took place from July 1969 to August 1970 ultimately saw a number of amendments being made to the rules of the association and provided for a common board of directors for both organisations — the Navy Bean Marketing Board and the Bean Growers' Co-operative Association Ltd. Additionally, an amendment was made to provide for the business to be taxed as a co-operative rather than as a private company and finally the growers accepted a levy scheme which was promulgated on 18 June, 1970. This move enabled the board to strike a levy on all beans delivered to the facility, to use the funds to provide added storage facilities and to make other arrangements that would improve the handling and processing of the crop. As an added benefit the levy was not considered to be an income to the association and was therefore not taxable.¹²

A diversification programme has also been implemented which provides added income to the board, this programme includes the storage of sunflower crops, the cleaning, grading and storage of grain sorghum, the storage of soya beans and the cleaning, grading, pickling and storage of barley. Additionally, the board earns income from the sale of agricultural chemicals, weigh-bridge charges and private cleaning and grading.¹³

By 1976 the situation for navy bean growers and the board was beginning to look brighter than at any time during the previous quarter of a century. Reflecting back over those years since the Second World War it was relatively simple to see the highs and lows of the industry. At no time during those years had production of navy beans outstripped domestic needs, there had never been a domestic surplus. The industry had gone through two major periods, the first was categorised by the early days of the industry when there was little marketing aggression and almost the entire crop was being taken by two major canneries. A rejuvenation occurred during the 1960s that was marked by a change in board directorship, alterations to methods of crop handling, the move of the board to Kingaroy, the installation of new facilities, more aggressive marketing and the demand for tariff protection. Additionally, the Department of Primary Industries was working with growers to produce new breeding varieties designed to be rust resistant and to grow upright which would result in a bean that was cleaner and safer to grow under sometimes difficult seasonal conditions.¹⁴

By 1968 the acreage under cultivation had doubled, subsequently trebling production. Between 1967 and 1972 production of navy beans on the South Burnett increased rapidly, for the 1967-68 year 10,770 acres were planted to the crop, this had risen to 14,229 by 1972 — by far the largest planting anywhere in the state, the next largest being 1,445 acres on the Southern Downs.¹⁵



Executives of the Navy Bean Marketing Board, 1970. Left: Edgar Burt, manager, the Navy Bean Marketing Board. Centre: Errol Truss, chairman, the Navy Bean Marketing Board and the Bean Growers' Co-operative Association Limited. Right: Keith Campbell, manager, the Bean Growers' Co-operative Association Limited.

Source — Bean Growers Australia archives, reproduced with the permission of the South Burnett Times.

In 1970 Errol Truss, then chairman of the Navy Bean Marketing Board, told an industry seminar that: 'The greatest problem in the navy bean industry at present is under-production. This is unique in primary industry today. Practically all other crops are having problems because of over-production. As a result prices are falling and the return per acre to the grower is decreasing ... In the past, navy beans have been somewhat of a "Cinderella" industry, and often have been grown when it was too late or unsuitable to grow anything else. Under these conditions naturally the crop would be risky. Any other crop would have been the same. Navy beans are a profitable crop to grow, and those growers who have planted them as a major crop have had excellent results. With the advent of new varieties most of the risk, particularly at harvest time, is gone, and beans can now be grown with a great deal more certainty.'¹⁶

In 1974 an agronomist was appointed to assist growers with crop management practices, while plant breeding work was still being carried out by the Q.D.P.I. A full time breeder was appointed by the Q.D.P.I. in 1983 and the Navy Bean Marketing Board contributed both financially and tangibly towards the research work that was being carried out. By 1991 the board was employing three full-time agronomists and one technician.¹⁷

Yet, like so many other farm-based industries, the vagaries of season and markets

dictate growers' returns and since 1972 when growers experienced an excellent crop with adequate prices the industry had fluctuated tremendously, much of this fluctuation has been caused through seasonal conditions overseas and the availability, or otherwise, of imported navy beans and their prices. As E.C. Truss pointed out in his 1984 paper on the navy bean industry, while the industry had yet to meet domestic requirements, one of the problems facing the board was that of attracting enough farmers who were prepared to make a long term commitment. Truss also pointed out that there were three important challenges to the industry which needed to be addressed. These were that average yields had to increase, that growers had to produce a minimum of seven thousand tonnes per year and that such a target had to be achieved on a more consistent basis. Truss ended his paper by stating: 'Even though the industry is some 38 years' old, many growers are now only beginning to admit that they've finally learned what to do to make a real success of navy beans ... Much is to be done and time is fast running out ...'¹⁸

In 1987 Keith Campbell, general manager of the board, pointed out that due to the successful negotiation of an export contract with H.J. Heinz in the United Kingdom, it would be necessary for a crop of some twelve thousand tonnes in 1988 in order to meet both export and domestic demands. In his paper, *The Navy Bean Industry — its Future*, Keith Campbell explained that: 'During the past season when it became known that there was a world-wide shortage of navy beans, we were bombarded with an avalanche of enquiries from world traders.' However, he also pointed out that the government would be progressively withdrawing its tariff on navy beans from twenty-five per cent to just two per cent, (and later to no protection) adding: 'This action adds a note of urgency to the industry to maintain an efficient level of research and technology, to be continually improving the bank of knowledge and expertise in respect of navy bean production.'¹⁹

The present company structure of Bean Growers Australia arose from the merged activities of the former Navy Bean Marketing Board and the Bean Growers' Co-operative Association Ltd. which took place in April, 1993. Today, Bean Growers Australia is the major processor of navy beans, chick peas and adzuki beans and also processes a variety of other agricultural commodities including popping corn, soya beans, wheat, barley, mung beans, maize, sorghum and oats. The board has published details of the organisation's history and functions stating: 'The co-operative set up an agricultural store on the River Road plant site in 1967. In 1975 premises in Youngman Street were purchased and the operations and trading activities of the merchandising business were transferred to this location. Other branches were set up in Mundubbera (1988) and Murgon (1986). Mundubbera closed in 1990 and the Murgon business was combined with the merchandising business operated by the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association Ltd. This store was purchased outright by Bean Growers Australia in October, 1995, and trades as Burnett Rural.'²⁰

In addition to the South Burnett, beans are received at Kingaroy from other areas including Mareeba, Dimbulah, Emerald, St. George, Lockyer and Fassifern Valleys and Biloela.²¹

Bean Growers Australia is a major shareholder of a Melbourne based grain and pulse trading business which operates both domestically and internationally. The consolidated after-tax profit for Bean Growers Australia for the 1995-96 financial year amounted to \$178,897.²²

In 1991 John Calvert, who had been a member of the board for three years, became chairman of the board.²³

Members of the Navy Bean Marketing Board, Bean Growers' Co-operative Association Ltd. and Bean Growers Australia

Harry Bird	Tingoora	1946-60
Alwyn Francis	Kumbia	1946-52
Thomas Brewer	Mount Sturt	1946-51
Michael Patrick Roche	Danderoo	1946-69
Michael Brewer	Mount Sturt	1951-58
James Leslie Tyrrell	Kingaroy	1952-61
Thomas Grayson	Tannymorel	1958-70

Douglas Ernest Barrie	Kumbia	1960-69
Ronald Arthur Wagner	Grayson	1964-70
Errol Clifford Truss	Kingaroy	1965-92
Raymond Paul Moore	Kingaroy	1970-73
Edward (Ted) Steffensen	Coolabunia	1970-73
Ivan Peters	Laidley	1970-96
Eric Harold Cross	Kingaroy	1970-82
Colin Aubrey Noller	Kingaroy	1973-79
Niven Vaughan Hancock	Kumbia	1979-92
Graeme Dudley Dickenson	Kingaroy	1982-88
Trevor Fredrick Rook	Kumbia	1992-
John Edward Calvert	Nanango	1988-
Oscar Bugno	Dimbulah	1992-1996
Enrico Cobassi	Mareeba	1996-
Colin George Hoey	Clifton	1996-
Brian John Sadler	Caboolture	1993-

Chairmen

Douglas Barrie	Kumbia	1964-67
Errol Truss	Kumbia	1968-91
John Calvert	Nanango	1991-

Managers

J.S.D. Nesbitt	1964-65	The Navy Bean Marketing Board
J.A. Moore	1964-68	The Cooperative
E.C.N. Burt	1965-79	The Navy Bean Marketing Board
K.M. Campbell	1968-79	The Cooperative
K.M. Campbell	1979-92	Manager for both enterprises
K.M. Campbell	1992-	Bean Growers Australia

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Eighteen The Navy Bean Industry

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Crime and Justice

The Gold Commissioner Robbery

Following the discovery of gold by James Nash at Gympie in October 1867, and the subsequent discovery of gold at Fat Hen Creek, Kilkivan, soon afterwards, both regions became inundated with people, mainly men who were seeking their fortunes on the goldfields. This vast influx saw people of all classes and characters, they brought wealth and industry to those portions of the colony, and were the pioneers of progress. However, there was one class of person who was certainly not welcomed, these were the bushrangers who plagued travellers on the narrow bush tracks, stealing gold from miners and dealers, money from merchants, horses from cattle and sheep stations, and even, occasionally holding up residents of country hotels.

On 26 June, 1868, Gold Commissioner Clarke of Kilkivan and a doctor named Mason, left J.D. Mactaggart's *Kilkivan* station on horseback to travel to *Boonara*, some fifteen miles farther west, where they were to hold an inquest into the death of a man whose body had recently been discovered in the bush. The body was that of a man named William Kirkrouse who had come from the West Coast region of New Zealand and who was generally known as Billy the Bellman. His body had been found on the *Boonara* run by a shepherd.¹

About fifteen minutes after Clarke's departure from Mactaggart's station, another party, comprising Constable Burke and several other men who were to give evidence at the inquest also left the station for *Boonara*. Meanwhile, however, about three miles from Mactaggart's station, Commissioner Clarke saw a man attempting to conceal himself behind a tree. Suspecting foul play Clarke took his pistol from its holster and put it in his pocket ready for immediate use. By that time the man was only twenty or thirty yards in front of them. The press later reported:

He, (Clarke) rode up to within a short distance of the tree, when the man rushed from his place of concealment armed with a short double-barrelled gun and said, 'Look out or I will blow your b...y head off,' at the same time discharging one of the barrels at him, the charge passed over Mr Clarke's head. This caused his horse to shie (sic) and Mr Clarke was thrown. Whilst on the ground, or in the act of rising from it, the bushranger discharged a second barrel at him, but again without effect. As soon as that occurred Mr Clarke drew his revolver and presented it at the man, saying, 'I have you now,' and he also called upon Doctor Mason to charge the man. At this juncture a second bushranger appeared on the scene, and coming forward from behind a tree, presented a double barrelled gun at Mr Clarke saying, 'If you do not throw away your revolver I will shoot you.' As a matter of discretion Mr Clarke chose the former alternative and threw away his pistol.

After (the first shots were) ... fired Doctor Mason made what our Americans cousins would call, 'tracks', giving as his reason for so doing that he had no firearms. Mr Clarke was then taken by the bushrangers for three-quarters of a mile along a gully away from the road and was there searched, but fortunately had no property on him ... They then ordered him to remain at the same place for half an hour, and left him.²

As soon as he had been freed, Commissioner Clarke returned to *Kilkivan* station, however, in the meantime the party of men who had been following them to *Boonara* had come upon Clarke's horse close to the scene where the attempted robbery had taken place. Concerned that there may have been an accident of some kind, they searched for Clarke and soon afterwards discovered Doctor Mason's hat in the middle of the road. The *Nashville Times* later stated: 'The constable then galloped on for four miles when he overtook Doctor Mason who informed him of what had taken place. They saw two gentlemen some distance in advance of them and gave chase, but the

men went off into a dense scrubby gully. They were followed for a long distance by the constable who came upon one of their camping places where he found guns, ammunition, revolvers and a number of articles. Burke was then assisted by some men from Mactaggart's station and also some black boys, but failed to trace the bushrangers. It is reported that the men mistook Mr Clarke for a gentleman who had been selling stock and who they suspected of having a large sum of money. When informed of their mistake, one apologised to Mr Clarke for, 'having fired at him.'³

The men who had perpetrated this crime were suspected of having carried out several other similar depredations in the region, including the holdup of the Currie Hotel, near Gympie, in April 1868 during which a bank manager, R.D. White, armed with two revolvers, managed to hold them off, for a while at least, until he was forced to flee from the hotel. Yet even this robbery was something of a farce, the bushrangers finally leaving the hotel the following morning with just £15 in cash, a bottle of cheap brandy and a plum pudding.⁴

Johnny Campbell

The most notorious criminal to roam the Kilkivan/Manumbar/Widgee region of the late 1870s was certainly an aboriginal man named Johnny Campbell. Campbell was born among the *Kabi* people of the Wide Bay region and he roamed throughout the district of Wide Bay, along the Mary River and down into the South Burnett. He was a short, powerfully built man with sloping shoulders, a broad face and high cheekbones. From a relatively early age he took a keen interest in the opposite sex and this, among other things, was to lead him to the gallows. He was reputed to have once attempted to assault a schoolmistress as she was riding through the property on which Campbell was working, the woman had fought him off with a stockwhip and the owner of the property is reputed to have had Campbell whipped for the offence.⁵

Campbell and his brother Willie were well known on *Manumbar* station during John Mortimer's tenure, indeed, the two brothers would often attend the Sunday School which the Mortimers provided in the region and were reputed to have been excellent and willing students. However, once away from the influence of Sunday School the brothers became notorious as robbers and rapists. *Wilderness to Wealth* co-author, J.E. Murphy's article on Campbell, published in *People* magazine 1966 claimed that the attacks made on white settlers were so fierce that a return was made to punitive raids, white vigilantes hunting and shooting aboriginal people in retaliation. Murphy claimed that two white men on *Widgee* station, Andrew Ogilvie and James Caufield, when stopping to refill their water canteens at a waterhole on the present site of Woolooga, noticed that the surface of the water was covered with a greasy scum. Upon closer examination they discovered the bodies of five aboriginal people in the waterhole and that their skulls showed evidence of bullet holes. Despite these reprisals, and possibly as a direct result of the flogging Campbell had received at the squatter's hands, the depredations of the Campbells continued.

Effie Fitzgerald was one of the Campbell's victims, the brothers waited near her hut to ensure there were no men around and when Willie began calling out to her she fled in panic, taking her baby and another child she was looking after with her. Wading across Wide Bay Creek she effected an escape and hid all night in the scrub.⁶

Other attacks on lone female victims followed. The daughter of Yankee Williams at Brooyar was fishing in the creek close to her home on *Widgee* when Campbell suddenly emerged from the scrub on the opposite bank of the creek, wading quickly over the creek towards his intended victim. The girl fled in terror, screaming as she did so. The screams brought Yankee Williams, armed with a gun to the scene, and after shooting off a few bullets in the general direction of Johnny Campbell the intending rapist made a hasty departure. Campbell was guilty of attacking and molesting a girl of ten years at her house on Black Snake Creek, the following day three houses at Mount Coora were ransacked, clothing and other items were stolen. On 16 July, 1879, three mounted troopers set out in search for the men but Campbell was so clever at eluding pursuit that he even managed to confuse aboriginal trackers. While police and civilian volunteers were combing through scrub in the Gayndah district, Campbell was roaming unmolested in the region of Kilkivan.

Willie Campbell and his notorious brother now parted, permanently, Willie possibly realising that his brother was leading him inexorably towards a hangman's rope. Over the following two

years or so Campbell continued to evade justice, his bush-craft allowing him to easily evade the police parties that were sent after him. He gathered a small band of similar men around him and they moved through the scrub together, stealing where possible and living off the land. Campbell was considered something of a mystic by some of his trackers, his footsteps would mysteriously disappear from the trail they were following only to reappear hundreds of yards and often many miles from where they had disappeared. In order to do this Campbell would climb onto the shoulders of one of his followers who would then carry him, sometimes for considerable distances, to the closest fence. Campbell would, reportedly, walk along the fence and later descend, once again onto the shoulders of one of his men, who would put him down miles later. Thus the trackers of the outlaw were often confused and thrown completely off the trail.

Campbell always appeared to need close contact with a woman and sometimes kidnapped women from their respective aboriginal clans. One of these he later murdered by crushing in her skull.

Using his legendary bush-craft Campbell continued to evade the police trackers and, at times, even raided the police camps for rations while the officers slept. On 9 August, 1879, he rode up to a hut on a stolen horse and kidnapped a young aboriginal girl, just twelve years of age. The girl's mother attempted to prevent the crime and was knocked to the ground, Campbell then beat her savagely. He next robbed a house near Gympie, terrorising a woman living there and stealing a watch. Another lone woman was robbed at Sheep Station Creek, cowered before a double-barrelled carbine. Campbell stole a quantity of goods but the woman and her child managed to flee from the scene.

By this time Campbell had established such a reign of terror throughout the Wide Bay and Burnett districts that settlers were reluctant to leave their farms and families unprotected. On 31 October, 1879, Campbell changed his tactics from robbing farmhouses and attacking women to bushranging. That day he stuck up a bullock driver and miner in the Ringtail Scrub near Tewantin. The bullock driver stopped but the miner urged his horse into a gallop and fled away, Campbell fired at him with his carbine but missed.

Campbell once again moved inland and continued his depredations, robbing a settler's home near Kilcoy, terrifying the wife into such a state that she collapsed. The government posted a reward of £50 but it did not prevent Campbell from continuing his career of crime.

In March 1880 Campbell and a female companion set out for Tewantin where Campbell wanted to attend a corroboree. On the 15th of that month Campbell was surprised by a group of aboriginal men and, after a fierce struggle, was captured by them. The aborigines who captured him were given a reward which consisted of clothes, provisions, fishing boats and nets. Campbell was taken by Cobb and Co. coach to Gympie, his wrists were handcuffed, his ankles shackled and an iron collar had been placed around his neck.

Upon his capture Campbell was charged with the capital offence of having: '... committed a criminal assault on one Jane Macalister, at Kipper Creek, Northbrook, on February 10 last.' Jane Macalister had been fifteen years of age at the time of the attack. Campbell appeared in court at Ipswich on 27 July, 1880, he was handcuffed and a new kind of security belt had been placed around him onto which the police officers could hold him in check at all times. The leading witness for the prosecution was Jane's married sister. The evidence for the prosecution claimed that on the morning of the offence Campbell had appeared at the farm where Jane and her sister were staying and had threatened to shoot them both with a revolver if the younger woman did not agree to go with him to the creek bank and there have sex with him. Jane gave evidence at the trial but she wept bitterly all through the proceedings. Despite a spirited defence from Campbell's lawyer and the fact that Campbell claimed that Jane Macalister had readily agreed to go with him to the creek, the jury found Campbell guilty after deliberating for only fourteen minutes. Campbell was brought before the court again the following day to receive his sentence. Upon passing the death sentence, Chief Justice Lilley stated that Campbell could expect no mitigation of his sentence.

Johnny Campbell went to the gallows on Saturday morning, 16 August, 1880.

Tommy Donn

One of the bushrangers of the South Burnett, a man who travelled extensively around the Nanango and Esk regions during the 1870s and who once worked on *Nanango* station was Tommy Donn. Donn was reputedly an excellent horseman who worked on a number of stations, but he felt that his real talents lay in stealing and quietly selling some of the region's best thoroughbreds, or, 'doing a bit of shaking,' as he termed it. In this enterprise he was evidently quite successful. At one time he even escaped from custody and stole a horse from the Wivenhoe police paddock. It was a dark rainy night when Donn lifted two rails from the police paddock, making a wide opening in the fence, and simply led the horse through, despite the fact that the paddock was being guarded at the time by two troopers.

Thereafter the police waged a personal vendetta against the horse-thief, a vendetta that came to an unexpected and tragic end. Donn was eventually apprehended by a Sergeant Balfour not far from Wivenhoe, and taken to Nanango to stand trial. Whilst waiting for the circuit court judge to arrive, the bushranger was kept in the police stockade under the care of Sergeant Swords. Unfortunately for Swords, Donn was planning his escape. When his guard was not watching, the horse-thief ran at the stockade gate, leapt to the top, climbed over and disappeared into the nearby scrub.

Swords and several other troopers quickly saddled their horses and went after the runaway. However, the escapee heard them coming and climbed a tree, where he stayed until the pursuing police galloped past.

For a while, it seemed that Swords would not be able to pick up Donn's trail, but he was informed that Donn had been seeing a local shepherd's daughter. The shepherd's name was Wymer, and Swords planned to trap Donn when he next paid a visit to the lady.

Shortly after hearing of Donn's attraction for the Wymer girl, Swords set off in company with two men, well known Nanango identity James Raper, who was acting as a guide, and police tracker named Billy Lillis. Swords ordered both men to shoot on sight once they found Donn. As they approached the shepherd's hut the figure of Tommy Donn could clearly be seen at the building, walking and talking with members of the Wymer family. Fearing that an innocent victim might be shot, Swords rescinded his shoot on sight order, stating that he wanted Donn alive. However, as they approached the hut, Wymer's dogs began barking, warning Donn, who ran out of the rear of the building and disappeared into the scrub. Swords was furious, he cursed the Wymer family and threatened them with arrest for harbouring a fugitive. That night he and his two men went to *Barambah* station to rest for the night before setting out once again on Donn's tracks.

However, the humiliation of losing his quarry a second time proved too much for Swords. At *Barambah* he ate a meal and retired early. Sometime later a shot was heard, and rushing to Swords' room, the housemaid was shocked to discover that Swords had used his service pistol to shoot himself in the head.

Afterwards, Tommy Donn simply disappeared from sight, and was never officially heard of again, although, naturally, he remained on the police wanted list for many years.

During the 1930s James Raper's son met a man travelling on a road near Nanango. The man was bent with age and grey. Recognising Raper, who looked remarkably like his father, the old man stated that he was Tommy Donn, the same man whom James Raper had once hunted. The young man was startled, and took some convincing. However, sometime later, a Mr G. Wilson also recognised the old man as being Tommy Donn. After this there were no more sightings of the old bushranger.⁷

The Kilkivan Mass Burglary

Before the railways were pushed through to other fledgling centres such as Goomeri, Murgon, Wondai, Kingaroy and finally Nanango, the railhead at Kilkivan formed the most important inland centre for the people of the South Burnett, it was, in fact, the capital of the region at that time, and as such it flourished. This prominence, added to its attraction as a gold bearing centre

and being geographically close to the major gold region of Gympie, also created certain problems, especially in relation to crime and criminality and there were many cases of both small time and major crimes committed in the district.

The people who committed these crimes achieved varying degrees of success and failure, some crimes were elaborate affairs while others were simple offences that had little or no impact on the general community.

One crime which affected the small community of Kilkivan to a considerable extent was the mass burglary that took place in February 1898. For sheer audacity this ranks as one of Kilkivan's more infamous crimes. On the afternoon of Friday 11 February that year a stranger walked into the small township, having arrived from the direction of Nanango. He spoke with a few people and told a group of boys that he was: '... a noted pugilist.' That night almost every house in the town was entered and robbed, the press later claiming that the perpetrator of the crimes had: '... left very few houses unvisited.'⁸

The following morning there was considerable consternation in the town when people began to compare notes and it was realised how extensive the crime had been. Constable McLoughlin, who had only been stationed in the town for a few weeks and did not know the countryside particularly well, immediately mounted his horse and went in search of the suspect, finally tracking him down on the road to Brooyar, about a mile from *Woolooga* station. The press claimed:

The suspected man, who gave the name of Patrick Burk, (also reported, probably more accurately, as Burke), had been describing himself the previous evening to some of the Kilkivan lads as a noted pugilist and taking up his role again now offered to have a friendly set too with the arresting officer, but the latter declined, and clapping the 'Darbys' on his wrists escorted him to *Woolooga* Station where they remained for the night. A horse being procured next morning the prisoner was escorted safely to the lockup, and being brought before a local Bench on Monday morning was remanded for eight days to enable the arresting constable to procure the necessary evidence ... Burk had been following the railway line all day, but had carefully avoided being seen by any of the lengthmen or keepers of gate-houses. Many of the houses visited by the burglar on Friday night were occupied by women and children only, and in more than one instance a dastardly assault was attempted beyond mere robbery, and poor old Mrs Wray (Ray) ... who has gone far past the allotted three score years and ten, shows on her wrists the marks of the villain's grip quite plainly. In country places and on selections etc., it is a matter of necessity that the breadwinner is frequently from home at night, and for any scoundrel who interferes with women and children so situated, the American plan of lynching is just about good enough.⁹

A later report claimed that Burke was also known as Burgess and was subsequently arrested on suspicion of having committed the infamous murders at Gatton on Boxing Day 1898, the same year as the Kilkivan robberies and assaults. The Gatton killings had been a brutal affair. Michael Murphy had been killed and his two sisters, Norah and Ellen had both been raped and murdered. Even their horse had been killed, its throat slashed. During his break-in spree at Kilkivan Burke had attempted to sexually assault a widow named Annie Jane Ray, and at his trial, held at the Gympie District Court before Judge Miller, Mrs Ray had stated that she had been in bed at about midnight on 11 February when she heard someone moving around her house, she had called out but had received no answer. Then, to her horror, the handle on her bedroom door had slowly turned, the door had opened, and in the darkness Mrs Ray could see only a shadow crawling along the floor towards her. When the shadow reached the bedside table Mrs Ray saw that it was a man who rose up and got into bed with her. Mrs Ray started screaming and the man took fright. She subsequently identified Burke as the man who had attempted the assault but the judge instructed the jury to bring down a not guilty verdict. On charges of robbery the judge also pointed out that as no charges of felony or entry had been proved against Burke, the jury was to find him not guilty and the suspect was freed. The press report following the trial claimed: 'Burke's arrest caused considerable excitement at Kilkivan at the time. Burke was in Gympie for a few days about the time of the February flood and carried out with him a bag containing tinker's instruments.'¹⁰

In July 1901 a team of professional burglars who were evidently well versed in the methods of opening safes, broke into McKewen's store in Kilkivan, entering through the back door and taking

away a large safe. The safe was discovered the following morning close to the business area of the town and about half a mile from McKewen's store. It had been carried away on two pieces of timber, the doors had been smashed open and lying close by were a splitting wedge, an axe and a sledge hammer which had been stolen from Mr Poacher, the blacksmith, the previous Saturday night. Poacher later identified the tools. The press reported: 'The operators were evidently past masters in the art of cracking a safe, for the manner of opening showed very skillful manipulation.'¹¹

However, the thieves would almost certainly have been dissatisfied with their haul, the safe had contained only three ounces of gold, partly retorted, a little alluvial gold, a few shillings' worth of silver and a few copper coins. McKewen at the time had been holding a considerable amount of cash on hand, it having been pay day on the railway works and many of the gangers had purchased their weekly requirements that day. The press report of July 1901 continued: 'No doubt the scoundrels had counted (on this), as pay is made in hard cash. Fortunately Mr McKewen did not trust his treasure to the safe, but placed it elsewhere.'¹²

The May Family Tragedy

As with all other rural regions of the colony, the South Burnett has not been isolated from the ravages of crime. Over the years the district has experienced a wide cross-section of crime from petty theft to wilful murders, suicides, horse stealing, cattle duffing, robberies and even arson.

One of the greatest tragedies ever to occur in the South Burnett happened during the winter of 1902, when a well liked and respected farmer named Albert May, was so ashamed and disgusted by a pending minor court case against his wife, that he decided to end it all by killing his entire family.

The tragic events were first made known to the public on 25 August that year, when Julius May, Albert's brother and neighbour heard the sounds of a person approaching his small selection. His wife told their daughter to open the shutters to see who was coming. This she did, and called out that it was her uncle, Albert, and that he was running.

'For God's sake, come quickly,' Albert shouted as he saw the shutters open. 'Bertha has killed all the children and shot herself.' Bertha was Albert's wife.

Albert wasted no more time in explanations, with just this statement and little else, he turned and hurried back towards his selection. Julius and another man named Martin Oscargarde, a close neighbour, ran to Albert's house. As they approached, they heard another shot, and then all was silent.

'I hope there is no-one in the house mad enough to shoot us,' Oscargarde said quickly.

'We had better go,' Julius replied. 'Come on, we are men, we will have to go.'

They rushed on and went to the back door of the small, three-roomed house and found that the door had been fastened inside.

'Smash it in, Martin,' Julius shouted to Oscargarde.

Oscargarde quickly did so and when the door flew open a wooden batten fell to the floor. The two men rushed into the first room, which was in darkness, the shutters being closed, and they could see nothing. Oscargarde struck a match and the first thing they saw was a baby in its cradle, gasping its last breaths, with its arms over a claw hammer that had been embedded in its chest.

Oscargarde ran to another room and returned within moments to state that the other children were all dead, they had been killed with the hammer, their skulls crushed. In the front room of the house they found Mrs May in bed, she looked natural, and for a moment they expected her to speak, but on closer inspection they saw that she too was dead. The house was still full of powder smoke as they entered and they could not see very well. Julius called his brother's name three or

four times, expecting him to be somewhere in the shadows of one of the rooms, and then in the third room, they found Albert's body lying on a stretcher, a Winchester rifle was still grasped in his hands, he had shot himself in the head. Close by was an oilcloth, on which Albert had written in chalk: 'Thank Mrs Labudda for it.'¹³

In all, six people died in the tragedy. Albert, Bertha, his wife, Ellen, who was just seven years of age, Christina, five, Carl, two and Lizzie, the baby, was just ten months' old.

The following Monday, the bodies were interred near the house in crude coffins the neighbours had constructed the previous night. The mother was buried in a coffin with her two youngest children, one in each arm, and the two other children were buried in separate coffins close by. There was an unusually large attendance at the funeral, two hundred people being present.

But what exactly had occurred on that tragic day, and why had Albert May killed his entire family?

Bertha May, it seems, did not get along well with her mother, Mrs Labudda, and shortly prior to the tragedy, the daughter had commenced proceedings against her mother for defamation, her mother having accused her of stealing money from her house. This, and this alone, had been the cause of the deaths. The killings had been completely unexpected. Albert May had been a quiet man, a German migrant who had lived in the colony for approximately thirty years, he had arrived at Nanango from Boonah some three years prior to the murders.¹⁴

Following the subsequent enquiry a report of the tragedy claimed:

Hardly anything has been talked of in this district during the past week but the Wooroolin tragedy, which for gruesome horror surpasses everything in the way of crime that has so far been known or heard since the earliest days of the settlement. The particulars elicited in the Police Court at Nanango during the magisterial investigation held last week have cleared up in the minds of the majority of people any doubts that existed as to whether Mrs May had any hand in the destruction of herself and family, as was at first reported, although there are a few persons who still believe the first story told by Albert May that his wife had killed half the family and then shot herself ... The defamation case, it may be added, was adjourned for a fortnight by the magistrates, and in the interval Albert May seems to have taken the matter so much to heart that he resolved to blot out his whole family, and himself in one insane act. It was a most unhappy family quarrel, and the end of it terrible, but there is little doubt from what transpired at the inquiry that Albert May brooded over and magnified the incident until he went crazy about it, or a man so quiet and peaceable as he was could never have committed such a deed. He was a hard working and sober man, and although struggling had made himself a nice little house, and got a fair start at farming, and this makes it all the more difficult to understand why he should have spoiled all and ended his own and his family's life in the way he did. He had been some three years on his homestead selection of 160 acres, and came to Nanango district from Boonah, where he was married to his wife in the German Lutheran Church. He was only 31 years of age, and his wife about 27 years, and it is very rare for anyone to take a despondent view of things so early in life. There was a very large attendance of neighbours at the funeral, and both the victims of the murder and the perpetrator of it were buried close together, but not in the one grave, about fifty yards from their former home. The sight of the bodies after death was one never to be forgotten by those who saw them, and it will be a long time before some of the neighbours will recover from the shock received in preparing them for the grave. They were decently buried amidst a gloom and a sorrow at the sudden ending of six lives.¹⁵

The Unfortunate Case of Henry Corbett

One of the most unfortunate criminal cases ever to take place in the Nanango district occurred in June 1903 when Henry Corbett, who was very drunk at the time, took a cocked rifle from his swag and shot the proprietor of the Royal Hotel, Mr Joseph Gillespie.

The case against Corbett was substantial and even from the very beginning he had little hope of getting away with the crime, it was one of those unfortunate sets of circumstances that led to death for one man and imprisonment for the other.

The sequence of events began on 8 June that year when Corbett, unable to be admitted to the local hospital, took a room at the Royal Hotel. That day he drank heavily, mostly beer, and the following day he again consumed a large amount of beer. On the third day he changed his drink to whisky and again consumed a large quantity. About ten o'clock that night he went to his room, but as the candle was low he walked downstairs to the kitchen to request another. The young woman on duty at the time, Florence Elizabeth Rose Jones, refused Corbett's request for another candle stating that the one in his room still had plenty of life. She went up to his room to check that the candle there was burning, and then returned to the kitchen to help Corbett back to his room as in his drunken state he was having difficulty mounting the stairs. However, Corbett brushed her aside stating: 'For God's sake leave me alone, I hate a female to touch me.'¹⁶

Despite this outburst, Rose Jones continued to help the drunken man, when she got him to his room she held the door open for him while Corbett used obscene language towards her. At this stage the proprietor of the hotel, Joseph Gillespie, appeared on the scene and ordered Corbett to bed.

A little later Rose Jones looked in on Corbett through his window and saw him struggling to pull a rifle from his swag, muttering as he did so: 'I hate to shoot a female, but I must this night of the Lord.'¹⁷ Rose Jones reported this to her employer who again went to Corbett's room. Soon afterwards Rose Jones heard a gunshot followed by Joseph Gillespie shouting, 'My God, I'm shot!'¹⁸

Acting-sergeant of police, Owen Nugent, was immediately sent for, he found Gillespie lying on the floor with a wound to his right breast underneath the collarbone. Corbett was lying almost senseless on a mattress in a bedroom, he muttered: 'I didn't do it. Oh that cursed drink.'¹⁹

What exactly happened in that room after Joseph Gillespie went there for the second time that night is still something of a mystery. Whether Corbett shot Gillespie deliberately or not is a moot point. At his subsequent trial Corbett claimed that the weapon had discharged after he had taken it from his swag. He added: 'It was an accident, I was getting my rifle out of the swag. I put it on the table and I must have touched the trigger.'²⁰

The charges against Corbett were reduced from murder to manslaughter, he was tried at the Supreme Court in Brisbane in August 1903 and found guilty with a strong recommendation to mercy. Mr A. Fees, Corbett's defending council, stated that as Corbett had already spent two months in gaol while on remand the judge should exercise some compassion and release the prisoner. However, the chief justice stated: 'Various opinions are entertained by various people as to the object of punishment. Certainly one is that it shall act as a deterrent. I do not regard (the) prisoner as one of the criminal class, and probably no one more deeply regrets the unfortunate result of his drunkenness than he does. But sitting here as a minister of justice, I am not justified in treating drunkenness, leading to loss of life, as a trifle, and letting the offender go free. That would be most injurious, and quite inconsistent with my duties on the Bench. It is an offence against the law to get drunk in the first place, and the man who gets drunk is liable to be punished for it. I cannot accept the suggestion that he is less liable to be punished for the second offence because he had committed the first. The law has distinctly laid down that a man who gets drunk is responsible for what he does in that condition, and cannot set up the defence that he is innocent of any offence during his drunkenness.'²¹

Corbett was then sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, without hard labour.²²

The Millewski Murder Case

One of the most minor cases to be brought before the bench of magistrates at Nanango occurred in July 1898 when a man named August Millewski was charged with using foul language in a letter he had reportedly written to the Nanango Divisional Board. The letter had been unsigned and Millewski claimed that he was not its author. He was questioned at length and reassured the magistrate that he had not written the letter, however, he was found guilty of the offence and fined £5.²³

Few people who witnessed this seemingly insignificant affair could have realised that the slightly built man with a brooding face and dark brown beard standing in the dock, a man charged

with such a minor offence, would later come before the police court in Nanango charged with wilful murder. The charges related to the killing of an Indian man named William Nabby, more often referred to as Wallum Nabby, at Nabby's small selection near the Booie road, Nanango.

Nabby was a small farmer who lived in a modest humpy and was a neighbour of Millewski. He worked in the area for wages and grew corn to supplement his income. The killing of Nabby was alleged to have taken place on 8 August, 1907. At the police court held at Nanango on 23 September, 1907, Millewski and his wife were remanded to stand trial at the Circuit Court Maryborough in October that year.²⁴

According to his prison record, Millewski was born in Germany in 1855 and had emigrated to Australia in 1887. His profession was described as 'farmer', and his religion as Lutheran. He was five feet seven and a half inches in height and carried several distinguishing marks on his body including a scarred hand and 'varicose veins on both legs'. He was not illiterate, his prison records tell us that he could both read and write.²⁵

Together with his wife, Emily, who had been coerced into aiding in the killing, Millewski's trial began on 15 October before Chief Justice Sir Pope Cooper, the prisoners pleaded not guilty. J.J. Kingsbury was crown prosecutor and Lionel Lukin, instructed by W.J. McGrath, appeared for August Millewski. Emily Millewski was not initially represented by any solicitors, arrangements had been made in Brisbane to have one solicitor represent both prisoners, but even at the preliminary Police Court hearings, previously held in Nanango, Emily had declined the offer of a solicitor. Justice Cooper expressed the opinion that Emily Millewski should be represented and appointed his associate, a Mr Douglas, to undertake the defence. He was assisted by a solicitor named Gordon of the firm of Moreton and Gordon, and the trial was adjourned for an hour so that these men could go through the depositions.

When the trial recommenced, the first witness was Acting Sergeant Patrick Joseph Dower who stated:

On Saturday, 10th August, Millewski called with vegetables and fruit at the police station. I asked him if he had seen Wallum Nabby out there lately; he said: 'I saw him passing my place last Sunday;' (I) said, 'Do you and Wallum Nabby ever speak now?' he said: 'Oh, yes, sometimes;' (I) said, 'When were you speaking to him last?' he said: 'About two months ago; he came and asked me if I would give him a revolver, as he wanted to shoot Mr Gordon, solicitor, for charging him £32,' (he) also said: 'He came to me on another occasion and asked me if he knew in what part of his house a man name Pegner slept, as he wanted to place dynamite under the house and blow him up;' I said: 'That seems rather strange, as Pegner was one of the best witnesses he had when he was charged with the murder of Johnny Doo;' Millewski said: 'Oh, he doesn't understand, he has a down on all the witnesses,' he then went away. Constable Glennie made a report to me at 5 p.m.; the following morning I and Constable Glennie went to Wallum Nabby's farm, which is four miles on the Booie road; looked into the door of Nabby's hut, which was open, went in and did not see him; made search through his selection, which is thickly timbered; made enquiries from neighbours within a radius of a few miles, and returned to Collin's paddock, near Nabby's selection; searched there till night; then returned to Nanango. On (the) following day, August 12th, went with Constable Glennie to Nabby's selection; looked through the door of the hut; saw no one there; we made further search through the selection; at 11 a.m. went to the residence of August Millewski, which is about a quarter of a mile north of Nabby's selection on the Booie road; on arrival there saw a young girl, Alice Millewski, outside the door; she is 15 years of age; spoke to her; she replied; then went into house where Mrs Millewski was; (I) said to her, 'Have you seen Wallum Nabby about lately?'²⁶

On being asked this question Mrs Millewski replied that she had seen the Indian man passing their selection the previous week. Sergeant Dower told her that they were searching for the missing man and that if she knew anything she should report it immediately. Mrs Millewski then became nervous and replied: 'I would like to tell you everything but I am frightened of Millewski.' After a pause she added: 'I do not wish to be drawn into the case, but I will tell you everything. Millewski shot him.' Upon further questioning Mrs Millewski revealed that her husband, using a revolver, had shot the Indian man at his hut on the previous Thursday morning. She then revealed that early on Thursday morning, sometime between 12.30 and 1 a.m., Millewski had got out of bed, dressed himself and told his wife to get up and also dress. Emily Millewski at first

refused and her husband went away for a while. Millewski walked to his son's, Alex's bedroom and ordered him to also get up, telling him that he was going to Nabby's hut to kill him. Alex was seventeen years of age at the time, he had been born on Millewski's selection and had left school at Nanango when he was thirteen years of age. Also living in the house were two daughters, Alice, fifteen years' old and Ada, four.


Upon being ordered to get up, Alex at first refused, saying that his father could do what he liked but he would have no part in it, however, when Millewski said: 'Wallum Nabby will come here one night and put dynamite under the house and blow us all up,' Alex became frightened and did what his father ordered. Millewski then returned to his own bedroom and again ordered his wife to get up, adding: 'Come on, come on, you can hold the lantern. Alex is coming.'

Reluctantly, Emily got out of bed and dressed and went into the small dining room of the house where her husband and son were waiting for her. Millewski told his son to fetch a pistol which Alex kept loaded under his pillow and Alex did as he was ordered, handing the revolver to his father. Shortly afterwards Emily, her son and her husband, left the house. Millewski handed her a hurricane lantern and ordered her to: 'Come behind and keep it (the lantern) covered so that the light would not be seen.' Obediently she followed her husband and son, using a fur-necked cape to shade the light. Stealthily approaching the hut on Wallum Nabby's selection. Mrs Millewski and her son hid behind the fowl-house while Millewski returned home to find a strong knife with which to prise open the Indian's door. About fifteen or twenty minutes later Millewski returned and ordered his wife to stand behind him as he opened the door. He told her to hold the light high so that he could see inside. Soon afterwards Millewski had the door open, he stepped inside and as Emily held up the light he produced a revolver, walked up to a bunk where the Indian was lying and shot him once. Alex Millewski later testified: '(I) then saw Wallum Nabby jump up, he sang out, "Millewski" twice, he then fell back on the bunk, tried again to get up, father then fired two more shots at him.'

Millewski and his son Alex then lifted their victim and carried him outside where Millewski used a hardwood rail to strike him a heavy blow to the head. They then dressed the murdered man in a pair of moleskin trousers and hob-nail boots and placed the body into a corn sack. The sack was tied to a pole and Millewski, aided by his son, carried the bundle into an adjoining paddock, Emily Millewski lighting the way. The three then parted, Emily returning home. She was later joined by her husband and son. She was given the revolver which she wrapped in a piece of grey flannel placed it in a tin and buried it in their garden. Upon making this confession to the two police officers she returned to the garden with a mattock, dug up the weapon and handed it to the police. Sergeant Dower examined it and found that it was a seven chambered revolver, two of the chambers contained cartridges, the other five chambers were empty.

After the questioning of Emily Millewski, Alex Millewski volunteered to show the police what had become of the body. He led the officers to a paddock approximately 50 or 60 chains from Nabby's hut and there they discovered the embers of a burnt tree and a fire. In the fire were the remains of what appeared to be a human body. Sergeant Dower returned to Nanango to enlist the services of Doctor John W. Tarleton and another man named Michael Lafferty, Nabby's employer. When they returned to the scene of the fire they raked the coals around the bones and retrieved: '... two blutcher boot heel irons, a button which appeared to have come from a singlet, some pieces of burnt leather and a corn sack.' Doctor Tarleton later testified that the embers of the fire contained: '... the calcined remains of a human body in the midst of the fire ... the body was lying on its back, feet extended, with left arm beside the body and the right arm underneath; the remains had evidently been calcined in the same fire that had consumed the tree; (I) could see the bones distinctly ... the viscera remained as a flimsy network of carbon and was better preserved in the upper parts of the body, (I) took it that these parts had been better protected (from the flames) ... the skull was broken up and the contiguous parts lay inches apart in the ashes.'

The remains were placed into a small wooden box and taken into Nanango. Dower, accompanied by Constable Glennie and another constable named Gilday, then returned to Millewski's house and examined the clothing worn by August Millewski on the morning of the murder, the clothing was stained with dried blood. Dower then arrested Emily and charged her with wilful murder.

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		07	
No. <u>105-07</u>	Name <u>August Millewski</u>		
Native place <u>Germany</u>	Education <u>Raw.</u>		
Year of birth <u>1855</u>	Height <u>5' 7 1/2"</u>		
Arrived in Colony (Ship) <u>Unknown</u>	Weight <u>9 1/2 10 1/2</u>		
Year <u>1887</u>	Colour of eyes <u>Blue</u>		
From where <u>Germany</u>	Colour of hair <u>Dark Bro.</u>		
Trade or calling <u>Farmer</u>	Complexion <u>Redd</u>		
Religion <u>Lutheran</u>	Build <u>Prop</u>		
Date when Portrait was taken <u>Oct. 22-07.</u>	When and where tried <u>15 Oct. 07</u> <u>St. Maryborough.</u>		
Offence <u>Wilful Murder.</u>	Penalty <u>Death.</u>		
		<u>Executed Dec. 07</u>	
Marks and special features <u>Large mole & small birthmark at side stomach,</u> <u>Small blue spot between shoulders, Small mole under rt armpit,</u> <u>Large Scar inside 2nd + 3rd lb finger; Varicose veins both legs.</u>			
PAST CRIMINAL HISTORY.			
Where Detected	When	Offence	Penalty
		<u>Nil.</u>	

The prison record sheet of August Millewski, hanged for murder in 1907.

Courtesy — State Premier's Department.

At this stage there was still no sign of August Millewski who had fled to Brisbane. He was arrested there shortly afterwards. Yet the question remained, why had Millewski killed the Indian? It seems that in October 1905, two years previously, Nabby had been arrested and charged with burning Millewski's barn. During the subsequent trial one of the witnesses had been a Hindu man named John Doo who had given evidence against Nabby. Despite this evidence Nabby had been released, but within a month John Doo had been murdered and Nabby had been arrested for the crime. Nabby was tried at the Supreme Court in Brisbane and acquitted. But since that time Millewski had harboured a deep resentment against Nabby and swore revenge. During questioning, Alex revealed that some time previously August Millewski had been speaking to a man named Antonio Sardi who had confided in Millewski, telling him that Nabby was swearing to get even with him and that he would not use a gun but would find some other way. He had asked which room in the house Millewski had slept. Alex revealed that he had purchased his pistol in Ipswich about two years previously, he kept it loaded and under his pillow because he believed that Nabby was intent on doing the family harm. Alex also revealed that his father

was a violent man and that he had frequently threatened his mother. Millewski's daughter, Alice, also gave evidence in support of this, stating that on the morning of the murder her mother had been particularly frightened and that, '... (I) have seen my father strike my mother, he struck her with his fist, he doesn't always treat her kindly.'

Giving evidence in her defence at the trial, Emily Millewski claimed:

I went to Wallum Nabby's ... because I was frightened my husband would do me some injury; (I) told a true story to Sergeant Dower; (I) remember putting away the revolver, (I) put it away for fear of an accident, Millewski might have come and fired it off at me. (I) have been living at Nanango with my husband over twenty years; my husband has treated me very cruelly, he made me work hard, stumping ground, felling trees and pulling fences up; he has beaten me, one time he knocked me down with his hands and tried to choke me; he made me hold the plough while he drove the horses, he tried to poison me twice and threatened to knock my head in with an axe last winter.²⁷

During the trial evidence was given that the entire affair had originally been a carefully orchestrated plot by Millewski to have Nabby hanged. Nabby and Millewski had fought bitterly over stock and fences and after coming to blows in Nanango Millewski had planned revenge. Two weeks after the fight Millewski's barn had been burnt down, Millewski brought charges against Nabby, the principal witness being Johnny Doo. Nabby was acquitted at the subsequent trial which was held in Brisbane. Several weeks later Doo's badly battered body was discovered on the road near Nabby's front gate and it appeared that Nabby, in an effort to gain revenge on the man who had testified against him, had murdered his fellow Hindu. However, during Millewski's trial both Mrs Millewski and her son testified that Doo had also been killed by Millewski who had attempted to shift the blame onto Nabby so that he would be hanged.

At the conclusion of the trial the jury found August Millewski guilty of wilful murder and his wife Emily not guilty. Emily was immediately discharged and August Millewski was sentenced to death.

Millewski's defence team appealed to the High Court but the appeal was overturned in November that year.²⁸

Millewski went to the gallows on 16 December, 1907, his anger and hostility towards his wife going with him to the grave. The press reported:

August Millewski, sentenced to death recently at Maryborough for the brutal murder of an Indian named William Nabby at Nanango in August last, was executed this morning at the Boggo Road gaol in the presence of the usual spectators, namely the prison officials, police, press representatives and a few others.

Shortly after eight o'clock Millewski, escorted by a posse of warders, headed by the Lutheran Minister, was marched to the scaffold, the condemned man showing little concern and walking firmly.

Asked if he had anything to say, Millewski replied that it was because of his wife that he was now on the scaffold. He knew nothing about the affair until he was arrested in Brisbane, and he hoped that his wife would be put in a furnace and burnt to ashes for swearing such lies against him in the court at Maryborough. He then referred to his financial affairs and the conduct of his solicitors and expressed the wish that his two young children who had treated him well, should be well cared for.

Death was instantaneous and at the end of quarter of an hour the body was placed in a coffin, and removed for burial.²⁹

The Mysterious Death of Lloyd Cubitt

In May 1916, at the height of the Great War in Europe, Lloyd Cubitt, a Victorian, (also reported as Cubit and Kubic) and his Swedish friend, a man named Perrson, were camped in the scrub at Burrandowan, some forty miles from Kingaroy, they had almost completed a fencing contract for a settler named Val Jeppersen, and, on the fateful evening of Cubitt's death, were enjoying a meal in their tarpaulin tent. The only illumination came from a kerosene lantern that was placed on

the small table where the men were eating their meal. Suddenly a call came from the darkness outside, and immediately afterwards a shot was fired. Perrson saw his friend stumble and cry out. Cubitt then rolled to the ground and began groaning. Perrson was later said to have received a great fright, he ran from the tent into the darkness and kept running for approximately three miles, taking off his boots and running even through prickly pear barefooted as he was frightened his footsteps would give his position away to the attacker. Perrson returned later with another friend, a man named Otto. The press reported: 'Both of them were apparently very frightened. When they mustered up courage to return to the camp they discovered that Kubic (Cubitt) was dead. The lamp had been blown out and the place was in total darkness. Before going over they called at Mr Townson's selection, and Mr E. Rae, who was working there went over with them. Mr Rae then came on to Kingaroy and reported the matter to the police.'³⁰

There was a considerable amount of mystery concerning the entire affair. After a post mortem had been held it was discovered that Cubitt had died after the bullet had shattered his spine and torn its way into his liver. The projectile was of a .32 calibre and it was alleged that the only rifle of that calibre in the vicinity belonged to a man named Schubert who owned a small selection not far from the scene of the murder. Schubert claimed that he had been in Kumbia on the day of the killing and that his rifle had been carefully locked away in his cabin.

Lloyd Cubitt had originally come from Tasmania, it had been his intention, having completed his fencing contract, to join the A.I.F., and he was scheduled to be recruited on the day after his murder. The press described him as: '... a find stamp of a young man, 22 years of age.'³¹

Examination of the scene of the murder revealed a bullet hole in the side of the men's makeshift tent. Footprints were also discovered in the sand close to the tent, these prints were of naked feet, there was also an indentation where a man had sat down and taken off his boots.

Following the post mortem examination, Cubitt's body was buried in the Taabinga cemetery. Police trackers spent considerable time investigating the scene but no further leads were procured. There was some speculation that the crime had been committed by an aboriginal man who had recently 'escaped' from the Barambah mission (Cherbourg) but there was no evidence to support this and the crime went unpunished.³² Jack Townson, in his account of the event, published in *The Big Scrub*, claims that the killer was eventually tracked to Auburn where he set alight a pile of logs and shot himself on them.³³

The Kumbia Tragedy

On Friday 29 October, 1920, a farmer named Kussrow drove his sulky to a small holding at Kumbia owned by a selector named Walter George Bauer. Kussrow simply wanted to borrow Bauer's corn planter. Upon arrival at the selection he called out but received no answer. He investigated and soon discovered the bodies of Bauer and his sixty years' old mother, both had died from gunshot wounds. At first Kussrow thought that the dead woman was simply asleep. A report of subsequent events stated:

Pulling up his sulky on arrival at the house, he called out, but receiving no answer got out and went to the back steps, where he again shouted out, but there being no response he looked inside the open door, and saw Mrs Bauer lying in the passage, as he thought at first asleep. He then ascended on the verandah, and looking around saw the body of the son Mr W.G. Bauer lying in a pool of blood in the sitting room. Naturally very much upset, Kussrow at once went to a neighbour's, Mr R. Janetski, and informed him of the facts. The latter went to Mr Oberle's and they immediately proceeded to Kumbia and informed Sergeant Price of Kingaroy by telephone. That officer in company with the Government Medical Officer, Dr F.G. Meade, at once drove to the spot. On arrival they found Mrs Bauer lying face downwards in the passage, with an apron rolled up clasped in her hand, together with a pair of stockings and a pair of spectacles. Underneath the body was the other hand clasping an ordinary millet broom. On examining the body the doctor found a bullet wound on the left side of the head, behind the ear, and afterwards found the bullet embedded in the brain, this being the undoubted cause of the death.

An examination of the son's body was then made. He was lying on his back in a pool of blood, and beneath his legs was a 32 Winchester rifle, which was found to contain an empty cartridge evidently recently discharged. Alongside the body was found another empty

cartridge shell. There was a bullet wound in the right side of the head behind the ear, and the missile had come out on the top of the head near the forehead, whilst a spent bullet was found in the middle of the room.

Both bodies were cold and stiff, and Dr Meade expressed the opinion that the tragedy must have occurred sometime before 9 and probably 11 am. on the previous day (Thursday).

So far no cause can be assigned for the dreadful tragedy. Bauer was a single man, and his mother, as stated above, had been paying him a visit, having been there a couple of months. She had, it is stated, intended to leave Taabinga for her home on the very day of the tragedy, and had her belongings packed ready to do this ...

The bodies were brought in to Kingaroy on Saturday and interred at the Taabinga Cemetery.

The Sergeant of Police at Kingaroy stated that he was satisfied from inquiries made by him, that Bauer shot his mother and then committed suicide. So far he had not been able to ascertain Bauer's motive.³⁴

A magisterial enquiry was held into the affair on Friday 5 November, 1920, the magistrate hearing the case was Mr M.J. Hickey. Several people gave evidence, including a local police officer named Sergeant F. Price, William Richard Janetzki, a neighbour and Christian Frederick Bauer, a brother of William Bauer. Sergeant Price stated that there appeared to be no motive for the crime, his investigations had revealed that the mother and son had enjoyed a very close relationship and indeed William had been Mrs Bauer's favourite son. William Janetzki told the court that Mrs Bauer had visited her son on many occasions and that there had never been any trouble between them, it was Janetzki's belief that Bauer had shot his mother accidentally and then, in panic and remorse, had turned the rifle on himself. Christian Bauer, William's brother, corroborated that evidence, stating that there had never been any enmity between his late brother and mother, they had always been on the best of terms.³⁵

The Bone Pointing Murder

An event that rocked the small community of Barambah (Cherbourg) in 1922 was centred around the ancient aboriginal ritual of pointing the bone. This mystical craft has been practiced by the aboriginal people from time immemorial. Aboriginal historian Fred Borchardt claimed, quite accurately, that the bone pointing practice was one steeped in ancient mythology and that it was a powerful rite. He wrote:

Most mysterious and awesome of all aboriginal rites was 'pointing the bone' a small pointed bone (animal or human) or a pointed stick was obtained. To this was attached a string. For this purpose a thread of hair from the head of the victim-to-be was very often used. If a thread of hair could not be obtained the string used had to touch the victim's body in some way (unknown, of course, to the victim). The potential murderer stole away into the night, and when at some distance from the camp would squat upon the ground and point the bone towards his victim. He would 'sing the bone' for some time and then casually return to camp. The one to whom the bone was pointed would not see the action, nor would he be told. But by some mysterious means which eludes our reasoning, he would know. Full bloods that I have questioned say that it is made known to him in a dream. But whatever this means, the result was soon apparent. The victim would become ill and eventually die, a well defined case of mind overcoming matter. At times a small receptacle was attached to the end of the string. Evil magic was 'projected' into the victim as before, but in this case some of his blood was supposed to travel along the string into the receptacle. If the vessel with its contents was burned the one 'pointed' would die; if the bone-pointer wished to keep his victim ill for a length of time all he had to do was to heat the vessel occasionally; and if the vessel was thoroughly cleansed the ailing one would recover.³⁶

News of the pointed bone murder at Barambah was first released on 17 October, 1922, when the body of an aboriginal man was discovered floating in Barambah Creek at the settlement. According to an erroneous report in the press, at first it was believed that the man had died of natural causes as there appeared to be no suspicious circumstances. However, this was soon disproved when residents at the settlement themselves stated that the victim had been murdered, and an examination of the body revealed foul play. The press reported: 'They said that a

blackfellow who indulged in witchcraft had pointed a death bone at a number of blacks who died from natural causes.³⁷

The report went on to state that on the previous Saturday afternoon a number of aboriginal people had gathered at the settlement with the object of killing five men who had been involved in the bone pointing episode. One was reported as having escaped and was hiding in the bush, but the other four were captured and: '... at the point of the spear and a threat of death', were compelled to confess. The police at Murgon were sent for and the four men were incarcerated in the Barambah lock-up.³⁸

The victim of the murder was George Tyson who, subsequent reports claimed, was capable of killing his victims by pointing the bone. Several men had died under mysterious circumstances and Tyson had been accused of their killings. Following the incarceration of the murderers of Tyson, the press claimed:

Armed with spears and other weapons of tribal war, the aborigines of Barambah Settlement gathered at the corroboree ground at the Settlement on Saturday afternoon for the purpose of inflicting retribution by murder on four aboriginals who, it is alleged, murdered George Tyson, a full-blooded black, whose body was found in Barambah Creek near the headquarters of the Settlement on Tuesday, 17th October. The blacks were stern in their resolve to spear the alleged murderers to death. They had four of them in charge, one having escaped to the bush. At the point of the spear and the threat of death, one of the blacks confessed to his captives to having with four others murdered George Tyson. At this stage the alarm was raised, and the Superintendent (Mr B. Lipscombe) being informed of what was going on went to the scene, and his presence had the effect of quietening the blacks and staying their intentions. He immediately informed Sergeant Christie, of the Murgon police, who, with Constable Jahnke, hastened to the Settlement, and with the Superintendent restored order, and took the evidence that was readily forthcoming in regard to the alleged murder of George Tyson. For protection, the four accused were detained by the police and placed in the lock-up at the Settlement in charge of Superintendent Lipscombe. It is stated that five of the boys were concerned in the murder, and their names are: Billy Diblin (also reported as Delbin and Delben), Peter Clark, Billy Brown, Charlie Clark McKay, and Phillip O'Brien. The last named, being suspicious, escaped and it is believed is hiding in the bush. (In fact it was Charlie McKay who had escaped to the bush). It is understood that, acting under instructions, Sergeant Christie arrested the four boys mentioned yesterday afternoon or this morning on a charge of murder, and steps will be taken to bring the missing aboriginee (sic) to justice.

The death of George Tyson, whose body, as stated, was found in Barambah Creek on October 17th, indicates a tragic ending of a story of reversion to tribal custom. George Tyson was an old man of about 60 years of age, and according to what may be fairly authentic particulars learnt from a number of aborigines, he was known as an aboriginal doctor or spirit man, well versed in the superstitious craft of the tribal days. Several deaths having occurred, no doubt from natural causes, the superstitious natives attributed these deaths to the wicked charm of the old blackfellow, who they alleged pointed the 'death-bone' at the men who had died. In the tribal days when the wise men decided to get rid of the troublesome man of the tribe they ordered him to die, which order was given effect to by pointing a 'death-bone' at the condemned man. His death invariably followed, probably by a hit from a nulla nulla, but never the less he died. George Tyson, a harmless good-tempered old blackfellow, was accused of being the 'Bone Pointer,' and the relatives of the men who had died vowed vengeance. For over 12 months George Tyson's life was in danger from plots and sinister intrigue. He managed to escape the designs of his intended slayers for a long time, but he knew that they would have his life, some time, when he was unaware. According to information received, one night about a week before the body was found, George Tyson, as was his custom, visited a friend's hut. The friend played him false. He was enticed to come inside by welcome words and signs. When he stepped inside he was seized by five men, thrown to the ground, and while four of them held him, the other one throttled him to death, steel-like fingers, gripped his wind pipe and suffocated him. 'The Bone Pointer' was dead! No more would he work his evil machinations! With stout cord they bound the lifeless body to a pole and carried it to the creek. Weighted, it sank in the water. George Tyson was dead. A victim to tribal custom and superstition! The natives in their superstition believed they had done no wrong. It was an open secret amongst the blacks that George Tyson had been murdered. They knew it was going to happen and when it did happen they were not surprised. About a week after the tragedy the body floated to the surface. The natives held their silence when the police viewed the body, who after furnishing the necessary report,

gave the order for burial. There appeared to be no suspicious circumstances. The blacks knew better! Rumblings of discontent were heard in the camp. The more civilised blacks revolted against what they said was a cruel crime. The discontent grew stronger. The blacks became determined to bring the offenders to justice. On Saturday the whole camp rose in war-like manner. The lust for vengeance had been aroused. At the point of the spear they forced one of the alleged culprits to make a confession.

The police have now the matter in hand and the concluding chapters of the story of the death of the 'Bone Pointer' will probably be told in the white man's Court of Justice.³⁹

The four accused, Peter Clark, Billy Delbin (Delben) Phillip O'Brien and Bill Brown were brought before the Police Court at Murgon on Friday 1 December, 1922, and pleaded not guilty. Delbin stated to the magistrate that he had wanted to kill Tyson because Tyson had pointed the bone at his wife who had subsequently died. The magistrate heard that Delbin had seized Tyson when they got him to the hut, and tripped him up. Tyson had fallen against the wall and the four men had all assisted in strangling him. The killers had tied Tyson with some wire, carried him to the creek, stabbed him in the belly with a knife, tied a stone to his belt with a piece of wire, and thrown him into the water.⁴⁰ The following day all four men were committed to stand trial at the next Circuit Court sittings in Kingaroy.⁴¹

The trial was held in May the following year (1923) before Justice George Lionel Lukin. W. Dickson was Crown Prosecutor and the four men were defended by W.L. Salkeld. Approximately twenty witnesses were examined and the case lasted all day. After two hours of deliberation the jury returned with a guilty verdict with a strong recommendation to mercy. Lukin sentenced them to life imprisonment.⁴²

The McLeod Case

Just as tragic was the case of Colin Clive (also reported as Clyde) McLeod who murdered his brother Ronald Roderick McLeod at Woolooga in 1932, and was later committed to an insane asylum.

On 28 June, 1932, the two brothers walked into Kilkivan, they were obviously somewhat down at heel, quite literally, one of Colin McLeod's boots was later described by the police who tracked him as having no heel. Indeed, it was this distinctive track that ultimately led to the murderer's capture.

The tragedy occurred during the Great Depression when employment was hard to find, many men were tramping the roads looking for work, in order to survive they relied upon ration cards, issued at local police stations, hand-outs from friendly farmers, and whatever game they could catch or shoot. Government rations were valued at six shillings per week, a pittance barely above starvation level. On that June day, the brothers obtained ration cards from the police station at Kilkivan, the police officer who issued them later stating that the brothers had been: '... on quite rational and friendly terms.'⁴³ Following the issue of their ration cards the two men went to the Kilkivan Mercantile Store where they were served by one of the business's partners, Henry Rockemer Zahnleiter, exchanging groceries for two ration cards. The brothers then visited the butcher shop of J. Roberts, they were served by the shop's bookkeeper, Eileen Bishop, who provided meat to the men in exchange for two more ration cards. The men then apparently left the town, walking towards Woolooga with their swags and rations. Colin McLeod, at 26 years, was the younger of the two, his brother was aged 28 years. They camped for several days at Cahill's Bridge, over Wide Bay Creek. They were seen there by several people, James Cahill, a farmer with a property nearby, his son, Walter Domerick Cahill, who actually spoke with the two men for about forty-five minutes, and later by a young girl, Dorothy Hilda May Heath, 13 years of age.

The precise sequence of events on that fateful night are still something of a mystery. Colin McLeod later testified that he and his brother had always argued over small things, and on the evening before the murder they had had a heated argument over 'inventions'. Evidently the two men had slept that night without any kind of reconciliation, and in the morning, still harbouring a strong enmity against his brother, Colin had taken up a heavy stick and struck Ronald a blow or several blows to the head while he slept.

Whether he had actually wished to kill his brother or not is a moot point. After committing the crime, Colin, seeing blood pouring from his victim's ears and nose, had certainly attempted to revive him with water from the nearby creek, however, his attempts all failed and Ronald died within minutes of the injuries being inflicted.

Colin was now in something of a quandary, covering his dead brother with several old bags, and burning the stick he had used to kill him, he spent several days at the scene of the crime attempting to decide what to do, a witness, a young schoolgirl named Dorothy Hilda May Heath, later stating that she had seen both men alive on 30 June when they had been speaking with Walter Cahill, but on 1 July when she again passed over the bridge she had seen only one man walking about and the other man was lying on the creek bank covered with bags.

Colin McLeod evidently decided that the best course of action for him to take was to abandon the body of his brother, taking his brother's ration cards with him, and to attempt to evade justice by disappearing into the bush. Shortly afterwards, James Cahill, who knew that the two men had been camping near his farm, went to the creek to ensure that all was well, when he found the decomposing body of Ronald McLeod, he informed the postmaster at Woolooga who telephoned Constable John McKenna of the Kilkivan police. McKenna went directly to the scene of the crime, carried out a preliminary inspection and later telephoned the police station at Maryborough to request assistance in tracking down the killer.

Doctor Luther Morris of Gympie was sent for and upon his arrival he carried out a post mortem on the body where it lay on the creek bank. The doctor concluded that the man had been murdered, his skull had been fractured and that the brain was badly contused.

Over the following days the police tracked Colin McLeod, finally catching up with him where he was hiding in a gully at Running Creek, near the road to Boompa. One of the arresting officers later testified that about a mile from Running Creek he found the tell-tale boot tracks going in the direction of Boompa. The tracks were followed for three and a half miles where they became indistinct on hard rocks. Casting around for the tracks, one of the officers suddenly stumbled upon McLeod hidden in a gully. After a brief chase he was arrested, interrogated and taken to Kilkivan where he soon afterwards appeared before the Police Court which was presided over by J.E. Landy P.M.

The events created a sensation in Kilkivan and even the press in Brisbane rushed up to cover the proceedings. McLeod, however, seemed disinterested in the events unfolding around him, news reports claimed that he paid little attention to the proceedings, yawned frequently and watched the sunlight move slowly over the top of a desk. At the conclusion of the prosecution's case, Detective George Keefe produced a hand-written statement which he claimed was a confession in McLeod's handwriting. The confession stated: 'My brother Ronald R. McLeod and I were looking for work travelling the roads on the 1st of July. We had a row. We were always having rows. I wanted to fight him and he would not. I got up in the morning and hit him on the head twice, then I tried to bring him around with some water and could not, and he died, so I packed up and left him there yesterday.'⁴⁴

Landy found sufficient evidence for a trial and remanded McLeod to stand trial at the Circuit Court in Maryborough on 26 July that year.⁴⁵

McLeod appeared before the Circuit Court in August 1932 but the case was adjourned, for reasons the defence lawyer, Mr F. O'Rourke, '... did not wish to make public.' The case again came before the court in November that year but as the accused man had by that time been certified insane by two doctors, he was later transferred from the Brisbane prison to the mental hospital at Goodna.⁴⁶

The Glenore Grove Murder

On the evening of 31 August, 1933, the body of a young woman named Clarice Murphy was found in a billabong at Glenore Grove. The woman was wearing a dress with one torn strap, there was evidence of violence on her body and a large stone had been tied with a rope around her neck. A subsequent post mortem examination revealed that the woman had been attacked, an attempt had been made to strangle her, but she had still been alive when her attackers had placed her in the water.

Following the discovery of the body, a massive police investigation swung into action, preliminary enquiries were made of the woman's background and it was discovered that she had worked at a hotel at Crawford, about three miles from Kingaroy. Witnesses who knew the woman were sought, but the first real break in the case came when Constable James Francis Fallon, based at Kumbia police station, received the following letter: 'If you require information on the Glenore Grove tragedy you can come along to Harry Freeman's farm at Boyneside where you will find me employed. You will have to arrest me as I was with the man who did for the girl found at Glenore Grove some weeks back. Further information when we meet.' The letter was signed simply, 'Jack.'⁴⁷

Police went immediately to the farm and interviewed John William Burgurst Smith who admitted to aiding in the murder of Clarice Murphy. Smith claimed that the man responsible for the actual killing was John Wyatt Noon, who was also living locally and who was quickly arrested.

Whether or not the police would have finally caught up with the killers is a moot point, at that stage all they had in the way of evidence was the body, the stone that had been tied around her neck, some burnt clothing and other items including some jewellery and women's clothing, and a description of a car that had been parked with a fly tent at around the time of the killing. However, following the murder Smith began suffering badly with his conscience. He wrote to his mother at Wauchope, admitting that he had played a part in the crime and asking her advice. His mother wrote back, advising him that he should give himself up to the police as it was the only honourable thing to do.⁴⁸

Over the following few weeks, as the investigation continued, the entire tragic sequence of events was revealed.

The murdered woman was born Clarice Margaret Proctor at Newcastle on 20 June, 1902. She married Aloysius Ballan Murphy at Sydney on 25 September, 1920, however, the marriage lasted for only three months and Murphy abandoned his wife. Clarice then became involved with another man named Stanley Eric McCrow, and they went through a marriage ceremony at Sydney on 19 January, 1924, even though Clarice was still married to Murphy. The couple had a child but this 'marriage' also lasted only until 1932 when they separated. Clarice then went to live with her mother, Elizabeth Mary Rozelle.

Clarice later went to Taree where she took a position as a domestic with a woman named Noon, the mother of John Noon. About that time John Noon also arrived in Taree, taking up residence in a house next to his mother, Noon and Clarice enjoyed, '... a certain amount of intimacy,' despite the fact that Noon, himself a divorcee, was engaged to be married to a young woman, the daughter of Ernest Wilhelm Liefgase, a farmer of Crawford.

At Taree, Clarice introduced Noon to a friend, a boot-maker named Arthur Benjamin Burns, the two men started travelling together, earning a living by repairing boots and shoes. At Port Macquarie they met John Smith, who joined the team and was employed in canvassing business for them. Clarice joined the three men at Kempsey and continued her relationship with Noon. However, by this time Noon was becoming concerned that his relationship with Clarice would affect his engagement. The case was further confused when jealousies arose between Burns and Noon over Clarice, and following some heated arguments, Burns subsequently left the others.

By now Noon was determined to dispose of Clarice before the group returned to Kingaroy. He sent a letter to his daughter, requesting that she open a private trunk he had stored at his house where she would find a bottle of pink crystals, the crystals were, of course, strychnine. When the strychnine arrived Noon told Smith what he intended to do, Smith did not try to dissuade Noon and, in fact, procured a bottle of stout in which Noon intended to mix the strychnine before giving the poison to Clarice.

According to a later report which quoted some of Smith's testimony:

The statement set out that Smith first met Noon at Port Macquarie, New South Wales, on June 1. Noon had a car in which he was travelling doing boot repairing. He accepted a job from Noon on June 17. The woman Murphy arrived at Taree by train and joined them, travelling with Noon. Noon and Murphy often had quarrels and, shortly before leaving Casino on August 19, Smith stated, Noon said to him, 'I'm going to do away with her, as I cannot take her to Kingaroy, because I have a girl there to whom I am engaged.'

Smith also stated that Noon told him that he had written to his daughter at Taree for some poison. He was with Noon when Noon received a small parcel by post at Casino. Noon opened the parcel disclosing a green-coloured bottle and stated. 'This is strychnine.'

On August 19, Smith's statement continued. Noon said to him: 'Get a bottle of stout, as I am going to put the strychnine in it for her.'

A bottle of stout was obtained on the night of August 20. They camped under the fly of a tent.

Noon suggested that they should drink the stout and Murphy agreed. Noon filled two mugs which he and Noon ... (and Murphy) drank. Noon then went to the opposite side of the car and got the strychnine.

He tipped some into a mug which he filled with stout and gave it to Murphy. She refused to drink it saying that it was too bitter. Earlier that night Noon had asked him to put strychnine in the stout, but he refused to do so.

The statement continued: 'I was awakened about 3 or 4 o'clock by Clarice screaming out "Little Jack! Little Jack!" Noon said "Get out while your luck is in".'

The statement added: 'I jumped out from under the fly quickly, as I thought he might kill me. They continued to struggle under the tent fly, and I remained outside, too scared to go back for a while. When I ventured back she was stretched out on the ground and gave a gargling noise in the throat.

'Noon was standing alongside her and he said to me, "Go and get a stone, as we will have to put her down and sink her to the bottom", I got a large stone and brought it back.

'Noon said, "Come on, now. We will get her down to the water. You get hold of her feet, and I will get hold of her head".'

The statement added that they carried her down to the lagoon about 50 yards away. Noon sent him back for the stone and rope and when he returned, Noon was squatting alongside Clarice. He saw Noon place his hand over her heart and say. 'She is done.' Noon tied the rope round her neck. Noon put the stone on her chest and said: 'Come on now. Let's get her in.'

The statement then related the throwing of the body into the lagoon.

It was further alleged in the statement that the clothes and other articles belonging to Murphy were either burnt or thrown away.⁴⁹

During their subsequent trial, held in Brisbane in February 1934, Noon claimed that it was Smith who had attempted to strangle Clarice, however, it was clear to the jurors that it was Noon who had had the motive, wishing to conceal his relationship with Clarice from his fiancée, if Smith ever had any kind of motive it was never revealed.

Defence for Smith claimed that Smith was only an accessory after the fact, that when the two men had thrown Clarice into the billabong both men had believed her to be dead. Yet, as the prosecution argued and as the judge confirmed during his later summing up, Clarice had still been alive when she was put into the water, therefore both men were responsible for her death. Justice Macrossan stated at the end of the trial: 'Each prisoner must take full criminal responsibility for his own acts so far as such acts caused or contributed to the crime ... Smith is quite old enough and has no excuse of immaturity. It was suggested that Smith was going to rely on personal fear, fear of Noon who was the master mind.' Macrossan then instructed the jury that if they found one man guilty then both should be found guilty. Both were found guilty.⁵⁰

The Case of the Masked Man

At 8.45 on the morning of 1 December, 1941, dairy farmer James Edmund Ogden of Windera, told his wife that he was about to take their cream to the railway siding at Windera, a distance of approximately six miles. Also working on the farm at that time was a young man, seventeen years of age, Charles Henry Sedgemann, an unfortunate youth who had lived a 'hard life' and who had come under the control of social security authorities. Sedgemann, described as being: 'bad tempered, self willed,' and: '... having less than average intelligence of a lad his age,' had been employed at the farm since the previous August. In the country he had adapted readily to the

easy way of life, he got along well with his employers, Mr and Mrs Ogden, and was said to have been particularly fond of Mrs Ogden whom he would sometimes treat to a soft drink, occasionally walking up to eight miles to buy it for her from the nearest store.

On that fateful morning Mr Ogden, with his truck of cream cans, told Sedgemann to dampen down a bundle of hay ready to be chaffed when the farmer returned.

Ogden returned to the farm at 11.45 that morning and noticed that his wife did not meet him as was usually the case. Shortly afterwards he heard a gurgling sound coming from the direction of the verandah of the house, and upon investigating he discovered his wife lying on the verandah floor, she was unconscious with her face covered in blood. Ogden called to Sedgemann and when he received no answer he put his wife in the truck and drove towards a neighbour's farm, that of Mrs Margaret Trevor. As he approached Mrs Trevor's gate Sedgemann suddenly appeared from the scrub, he was carrying Ogden's rifle. Ogden said: 'What are you doing with my rifle?' Sedgemann replied that he had seen a masked man on the property, he had informed Mrs Ogden who had told him to bring the rifle and some cartridges from the house and to see who the masked man was, however, before he could do so the alleged intruder had disappeared. Ogden informed the youth of his wife's injuries, and bringing Mrs Trevor from her farm, drove quickly to Murgon to seek medical help, however, it was too late, before help could be procured, Mrs Ogden had died.

What exactly happened that day at the farm remains something of a mystery. Sedgemann stuck firmly to his story that he had seen a masked man and knew nothing of Mrs Ogden's injuries. A police tracker and an aboriginal tracker from Cherbourg were called to the scene and an examination was made of the area where Sedgemann claimed to have seen the masked rider. No horse tracks were found. The young man also continued to talk to the police about two radio programmes he had listened to on the previous evening. One of these programmes had been a serial dealing with murders, the other, a play entitled *Martin's Corner*, had featured a masked bicycle rider. Expert opinion was called for — including that of the acting government medical officer, Dr J.C. Thompson, of Brisbane, who stated that he had known Sedgemann when he had been an inmate of the Diamantina Receiving Depot. He said that Sedgemann did not have an average intelligence and that he had once been allowed leave from the depot and had lived for three or four days on carrots alone.

The investigating police officer from Murgon, Sergeant Edward Walter Witt, later testified that he had discovered an empty cartridge shell in the remains of a fire at the rear of the farmhouse and that he had fired a shot from Ogden's rifle, the firing pin marking on the shell was found to be identical with that discovered in the fire.

It appears that Mrs Ogden had mildly reprimanded the youth for some misdemeanour, and Sedgemann had taken great offence to this. He then procured the rifle from the house and shot Mrs Ogden.

When these details were given in evidence at the subsequent trial, it took the jury only half an hour to return with a guilty verdict. Sedgemann was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour.⁵¹

Notes and Sources

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8. M/C. 17 February, 1898, p 2.
9. Ibid.
10. M/C. 16 January, 1899, p 2.
11. M/C. 17 July, 1901, p 3.
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23. M/C. 4 July, 1898, p 2.
24. M/C. 24 September 1907, p 2.
25. Prisoner's records, 105.07, Queensland Premier's Department.
26. M/C. 16 October, 1907, p 3.
27. M/C. 18 October, 1907, p 2.
28. M/C. 23 November, 1907, p 4.
29. M/C. 17 December, 1907. For full particulars on this case see: M/C. 24 September, 1907 p 2; 16 October, 1907 p 3; 17 October, 1907 p 3; 18 October, 1907 pp 2–3; 23 November, 1907, p 4; and the official prison sheet of August Millewski, number 105.07, Queensland Premier's Department.
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31. Ibid.
32. M/C. 9 May, 1916, p 4 and 11 May, 1916, p 4.
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35. M/C. 12 November, 1920.
36. Borchardt, p 7.
37. M/C. 22 November, 1922, p 5.
38. Ibid.
39. M/C. 24 November, 1922, p 9.
40. M/C. 2 December, 1922, p 11.
41. M/C. 5 December, 1922, p 5.
42. M/C. 10 May, 1923, p 5. See also: Circuit Court, Kingaroy, 8 May, 1923, QSA HOM/J466 23/4068.
43. M/C. 16 July, 1932, p 10.
44. *Truth*, 17 July, 1932, p 1.
45. M/C. 16 July, 1932, p 10.
46. M/C. 9 November, 1932, p 5.
47. M/C. 18 November, 1933, p 6.
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51. SBT. 26 March, 1942.

A History of Electricity on the South Burnett

Kingaroy

During Queensland's formative years the people of the colony, in town, city and country, used a variety of means to provide heating and illumination. Wood stoves were generally used for cooking, candles and kerosene lamps were mainly used to provide lighting. These were adequate services for that time, the later introduction of gas, primarily for lighting, and later still for cooking, was seen as one of the most technological marvels of the age. However, true modernity did not arrive in the colony until the new invention of electricity was introduced. The introduction of electricity into the South Burnett region took many years, some centres not receiving power until the mid 1960s — approximately eighty years after it was first introduced to Brisbane.

Up until the turn of the century only a small number of Queensland country towns enjoyed any kind of electric power. Thargomindah, for example, was the first town in Australia to have a hydroelectric generating plant, using power from the local artesian bore. Work on the plant began in 1893. This was followed by power being supplied to Charters Towers in 1897 and Rockhampton in 1898.

During the Boer War the installation of electricity into Queensland country towns stagnated somewhat, this was due primarily to a combination of a lack of funds and a lethargy on the part of local authorities. However, Toowoomba issued an Order-in-Council for the supply of electricity in 1905, followed by Warwick in 1912, Ayr in 1914, and thereafter supply began reaching many of the smaller centres.

However, for the people of the South Burnett, the wait for any kind of electric supply, even a modest supply limited to small areas, was a long one. Kingaroy, the first town on the South Burnett to have electricity installed, was not connected to supply until 1925.

Ten years before power was introduced to the South Burnett, the slow and ponderous march towards electric lighting and power was having a mixed reception with the people of the region. There had been at least one concrete proposal, that of Jacob Bonding in 1915 who sought a long term contract to supply power, but nothing appears to have come of the issue. Some distrusted this new system of electricity, claiming it would be overly expensive and, in any case, what was wrong with gas and kerosene? These methods of power and light had served generations of families. Electricity was a new and emerging technology and many people failed to understand the impact electricity would have on their lives — especially for those on the land.

In May 1917 the press was urging people to have a more liberal attitude towards the emerging technology, claiming that the introduction of electricity should not be seen as a harbinger of evil or financial ruin, as many believed. 'The advantages of electric power are obvious,' the press stated, 'and only need to be practically demonstrated to overcome existing prejudices and conservatism, and to be adopted ... by the man on the land.'¹

The ignorance which foreshadowed the introduction of electricity into the South Burnett is understandable, times were changing in many ways, traditional aspects of life were altering with such rapidity during the first two decades of the twentieth century that many people were having difficulty keeping pace with such radical alterations to their lifestyles. They were experiencing the introduction of motor cars, flying machines and the possibilities of relatively fast and economical international travel. Following the war of 1914–18, even attitudes had changed, no longer were women relegated to the kitchen, now they were driving buses, forming businesses,

striving for equality in a rapidly changing society. Thus, the introduction of electricity was simply one more aspect of this metamorphosis, the old ways were dying, the birth of a new society was being, sometimes reluctantly, experienced.

In May 1917 the press, in an attempt to expose the public to the advantages of electricity, made several comments that were of particular interest to the man on the land and more specifically to the dairy farmer. The report claimed:

Unlike any other commodity, an electric supply system cannot be adulterated; the same mains which supply power for lighting may also be used for purifying the milk supply, charging accumulators, driving motors, etc. While the electric motor which illuminates the home so brilliantly and cheaply may be used for driving the sewing machine, ventilating fans; working a refrigerator or vacuum cleaner; driving the washing or ironing machines, cooking a meal or warming a toast-rack, flat-iron or coffee-pot. All quietly, conveniently and what is more to the point — cheaply. Electrical cooking has not, as yet, made the strides in Australia that was expected; though in Great Britain and America it is fast ousting the older and clumsier methods. Outside the house a large motor will drive the pumps for the water supply; the milk separator, the shearing machines, the fodder-press, the circular saw, and practically any farming machine without the aid of piping, foundations and heavy accessories. From the municipal view-point the same supply will drive the stone crusher for street metal; the main pumps for the town water ... This question of the purification of the milk and water supply deserves more than passing attention, and might well form the subject of careful research work for some of our Australian University post-graduates. At Liverpool, England, several experiments were made on the efficacy of the electrical system of the purification and sterilisation of milk, and were found entirely satisfactory. The result was quoted thus: 'The electrical treatment is a commercially practicable method of reducing the total number of bacteria by 99.93 per cent, and of destroying all disease-producing bacteria ... and milk will keep perfectly well for three or four days after treatment. The chemical composition and taste of the milk are unaffected. So that from this point of view the description "raw milk" is accurately applicable.'²

Despite descriptions such as this it was to be many years before the introduction of electric power into the district received any real consideration, and even then it was subject to financial difficulties.

The first consideration of installing some form of electric lighting system into Kingaroy was made by Jacob Bonding to the Kingaroy Shire Council in June 1915. Bonding was seeking a thirty years' franchise to supply power to the town. The council agreed to the proposal subject to an agreement to allow it to take over the undertaking after fifteen years, however, these were times of war, the country was struggling to supply manpower and equipment for the conflict on the Western Front, and under such pressure nothing more became of the issue.

In late May 1917, Mr G. Paine, managing director of the Electric Construction Company, visited Kingaroy to ascertain what possibility there may be in creating sufficient interest in an electricity supply proposition. He told the press that his company could begin to supply the town with power in about three months' time, but it would depend on the level of acceptance to the scheme. Paine stated that in order for such a scheme to be financially acceptable, no less than fifty consumers would have to agree to be connected. Evidently Mr Paine's investigation proved a failure as no power was subsequently supplied.³

In 1920 the council was again considering the possibilities of installing power, this time from Mr John Nebe of Coolabunia, who placed a comprehensive scheme before the council. The scheme was thoroughly investigated, a £3000 loan was sought but the Treasury Department could not provide the money.

For the following few years the possibilities of installing power to the town became somewhat remote and the project was allowed to languish. A deputation that was to have met with the state treasurer in February 1923 was set back until June due to fiscal problems, although an application for an Order-in-Council to provide electricity to Division Four was published in the *Queensland Government Gazette* and the *Kingaroy Herald* in April 1923.⁴

In June 1923 the council considered the possibility of setting up an electric authority which could provide power not only to Kingaroy but also to Wondai, Murgon and Nanango. G.S. Venman,

the shire clerk of the Kingaroy Shire Council, published an advertisement in the *Kingaroy Herald* stating that it was the council's intention to apply to the Treasury to borrow £9000 for the purpose of installing lighting and supplying current to Division Four of the shire.⁵

On 18 June, 1923, the Treasury advised that a loan of £9000 had been approved but the project was still the subject of considerable controversy in Kingaroy.⁶

By August the question was receiving widespread publicity. Many public meetings had been held in Kingaroy, a committee had been formed to canvass the town to place a positive view before the electors, and a poll was planned to discover if the people really wanted electricity. The press claimed: '... There are a number of opponents of the scheme but it is anticipated that a big majority will be in favour of the progressive move ...'⁷

The question put to the people of Kingaroy was whether or not the local council should go to the state government to request a loan of £9000. The local committee promoting the scheme was primarily comprised of businessmen who went to considerable expense in having literature printed that outlined the positive aspects of electricity. The poll was held on Saturday 25 August, 1923, and in some instances committee members even drove electors to and from the polling booths. G.S. Venman, the shire clerk, was returning officer and the result was strongly in favour of the loan, 304 electors voting for the loan with just 95 voting against it.⁸

On 12 October, 1923, the Department of Public Works advised the Kingaroy Shire Council that the governor had approved of an Order-in-Council authorising the shire council to supply electricity to Kingaroy.⁹ The consulting engineer appointed to oversee the project was T.W. Bridger, based at the Telegraph Chambers in Queen Street Brisbane. On 7 November, 1923, the council sent a telegram to Bridger stating: 'Please call necessary tenders in connection with installation electric light number four division Kingaroy.' Bridger wrote back including plans and specifications for the proposed power house and advising that the advertisement calling tenders would be published in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane newspapers and also in various engineering journals.¹⁰

Over the following two years the project gained ground so that by the time the power was due to be turned on in the town its cost had risen to approximately £10,000. The electricity authority became an operating concern on 24 January, 1925, and power was formally switched on at Kingaroy at a special ceremony to mark the occasion on Wednesday 28 January, 1925, the press reporting:

The night for which the people of Kingaroy, with a few exceptions, have looked for, came at last, when on Wednesday night, the official switching-on ceremony of the Kingaroy Shire Council's electric light and power scheme was consummated. The people turned out in large numbers to do honour to the occasion. The plant which is housed in a galvanised iron building in the Council's paddock, consists of one ... twin cylinder suction gas engine, and one ... single cylinder suction gas engine, supplied by Messrs Ruston and Hornsby Ltd., England, an Akroyd wood producer, a 40 kilowatt generator, and a 10 kilowatt generator supplied by the Queensland Machinery Company as agents for the Crompton Electrical Company; a six panel switchboard supplied by the Norman Bell Coy. Ltd., Brisbane. The pumping equipment is an Alston head plant, coupled to an electric motor of which Buzacotts, Brisbane, are the agents. The total cost of the plant, power house and fittings is estimated at just over £10,000, and was manufactured either in England or Australia, thus cutting out foreign material.

The switching-on ceremony was largely attended, and was performed from a dais ran out in front of the verandah of the shire hall nearest to the power house, from which the current was laid on. Councillor O.G. Badcock in his opening remarks reviewed the circumstances leading up to the installation of the scheme which was now happily completed.

Mr J.B. Edwards, M.L.A., who performed the switching-on ceremony, in the course of his speech, spoke of the conditions which existed in the early days of the town's history ...

The ceremony was followed by a smoke concert, at which representatives were present from Kumbia, Murgon, Wondai, and Dalby Chambers of Commerce and Councils.

The Deputy Chairman (Councillor O.G. Badcock) presided over the happy gathering, when a lengthy toast list was submitted.

In speaking to the toast of the evening 'Kingaroy Electric Authority,' Mr J.J. Grier, government electrical engineer said he was quite optimistic with regard to the success of the scheme. They were starting off in the right direction; they had a good plant well laid out, and the consumers at present would be well catered for, but there were certain essentials necessary to make the scheme a success. Those essentials were that the consumers had to co-operate with the Council in obtaining further consumers, not only for lighting, but for other purposes, for which electric energy can be used.

In their remarks the previous speakers had stressed the use of electric light, but the one important part had been left out, and that was the advantages it was to the ladies in the home by which the work and labour of the household could be reduced and in that way they could help the council to meet their financial obligations.¹¹

Murgon

With the successful installation of electricity at Kingaroy it was clear that other centres in the South Burnett would soon move towards making arrangements for their own supply. On 17 June, 1927, the Murgon Shire Council wrote to the assistant under secretary of the Home Secretary's Department requesting advice concerning arranging a feasibility study. The department replied on 25 June advising that the services of an electrical engineer named J.J. Grier could be provided at a cost of five guineas per day. Meanwhile, on 4 July, 1927, an application to the Treasury Department for a loan of £10,000 to cover the costs of electrical installation was refused, and Grier's services were not required.¹²

The concept stagnated, somewhat, until 1928 when proposals were again mooted to have a power station installed at Murgon. In May that year a sub-committee of the council was formed to investigate a report made by Mr A.E. Axon of the firm of Messrs A.E. Harding Frew, consulting engineers of Brisbane. Axon had made a survey of the town early in 1928 and in his report claimed that the town contained sufficient population to make the electric supply scheme a successful venture.

Members of the council sub-committee also visited Kingaroy where they carried out an investigation of that town's electricity supply system. The committee had examined receipts and looked at total costs to calculate how much such a system would cost and what the financial returns might be. Murgon, being a smaller town than Kingaroy, meant that the installation of such a plant would be considerably cheaper. It was also proposed that the plant be powered by a crude oil engine, rather than a suction gas engine, a move that would further reduce costs. The proposal presented to council included the provision of twenty-three street lights, at an estimated annual cost of £11 each, and a special scheme which would automatically provide lighting to the shop windows of business-people, this lighting would operate independent of any other switching system and would be controlled entirely from the power station itself.

Drawing attention to the advantages provided in Kingaroy following the introduction of electricity there, the press claimed: 'The outstanding feature of the Kingaroy scheme was the hard struggle to interest the townspeople in the advantages and cheapness of electricity and the subsequent realization by the very same townspeople of those blessings. All kinds of appliances are now sought after, and one noteworthy innovation is the warming up of their picture show by electricity. What this means in hard cash to the show proprietor will be imagined on these cold nights.'¹³

Formal notification appeared in the *Government Gazette* in August 1928, of the council's intention to apply to the necessary authority to proceed with the electrical supply to Murgon, but three months then had to lapse before the state government could approve the scheme, after which the council would be allowed to make an application to the Treasury for a loan to cover the initial costs of installing the system. Plans were moving ahead and sites were selected for the construction of lighting poles. The chief railway electrician from Maryborough visited Murgon to prepare an estimate of supplying electricity to the Railways Department, the press reporting: 'Some 50 lights were marked on the plan including the following: railway station, refreshment rooms, station-master's residence, men's quarters, hired hands' quarters, engine shed, coal loading bank, and several lights distributed over the yard to assist in shunting operations ... there is no doubt that such a busy station as Murgon warrants expenditure in this direction for the protection of the

public and the railway officials themselves. Quite a lot of night shunting is done and as the railway yard is somewhat congested, even at ordinary times, a properly lighted yard would tend to considerably minimize the danger present when several trains are being handled at the one time.¹⁴

That same month the Brisbane engineer A.E. Harding Frew was appointed consulting engineer to the project, Frew formally acknowledged his appointment by letter at the meeting of the council held on 14 August, 1928.¹⁵ By October the proposal was moving slowly ahead. At a council meeting held on Tuesday 9 October, 1928, the council received a letter from the Commercial Bank of Australia offering a loan of £10,000 for the lighting scheme. The loan was repayable over a period of twenty-one years at six per cent interest.¹⁶

By early November the three months' notice required by the Electric Light and Power Act had expired and consulting engineer A.E. Harding Frew was preparing to call tenders for the project. There were several distinct areas of tender, these included the supply of machinery and the construction of the power house and concrete foundations upon which the machinery would be installed. The building was to be constructed with galvanised iron walls, and would be situated close to the railway station so that oil in bulk, for firing the crude oil engine, could be easily brought to the power house. Another tender called for the construction of the electrical engineer's residence, a six-roomed cottage, '... of modern design.' The main switchboard was also put out to tender and was to be: '8ft wide and surmounted by an 8-day clock.' Other tenders included the provision of wooden poles and cross-arms, the supply and erection of wires, cables, insulators, lightning arresters, meters and other instruments, and finally the construction of street lighting fittings and lamps.¹⁷

On 30 November the press claimed:

Last Tuesday (20 November, 1928) was an important date in the history of electric light at Murgon. At 10.15 a.m. a special meeting was held when the formal application for the loan of £10,000 was adopted. Later on in the day at the general meeting a letter was read from the Lands Department advising that the power house site of $\frac{3}{4}$ acre had been approved and surveyed. The most important document read at the meeting was the letter from the Department of Public Works, approving of the granting of the Order-in-Council ... Mr A.E. Axon, M.E., A.M.I.E.E. (Aust.), representing Mr A.E. Harding Frew, the Consulting Engineer, advising the council in connection with the scheme, was present at the meeting in the afternoon. He had come up from Brisbane with a report for the Wondai and Goomeri people as to the best way of supplying electric light to those townships, and opportunity was taken by the council to discuss several points in connection with our own scheme. Mr Axon definitely stated that, with the hearty support of the townspeople, the scheme would be successful and the estimated cost of £10,000 would not be exceeded. After the meeting was over, in company with the chairman (Mr J.A. Heading) and the clerk (Mr N.S. Griffiths) the power house site was visited and suggestions considered regarding the most suitable positions for the power house and the engineer's residence, and also rail facilities for the delivery of the crude oil in bulk.¹⁸

In February 1929 A.E. Harding Frew informed the council that tenders had been received for five contracts, including the supply of the power plant and auxiliaries, at a total price of £6322.¹⁹ By April that year the Department of Public Works informed the council that the site selected for the power house in Macalister Street had been granted and that the land would be placed under the control of the council acting as trustees. The tender of George Wood was accepted for the construction of the power house, the tender price being £997/10/-. Another tender, from Mr T. Mills, of Urangan, Hervey Bay, was accepted for the construction of the engineer's residence at a cost of £597/17/-.²⁰

Over the following months the consulting engineer kept the council informed of the progress being made, anticipating that the plant would be installed and ready for testing by September that year. (1929).²¹ A crude oil tank with a capacity of three thousand gallons was purchased from a Brisbane firm and transported to Murgon where it was erected in the power station yards. A pipe was later laid from the tank to the oil hydrant in the railway yards, enabling the oil to be pumped directly from the railway wagons into the oil tank at the power house. This provision eliminated the need to construct a railway siding into the power house and saved considerable expense.²²

By July 1929 a total of £9125, of the original loan of £10,000 had been expended. Contractors included T. Mills who built the engineer's residence, William Adams and Co., Lawrence and Hanson, the Electric Construction Co., who supplied the electrical equipment, and George Wood, the builder of the power house. Mr E.B. Young, formerly of Cunnamulla and Coolangatta was appointed clerk of works with the recommendation that: '... if satisfactory', he would be promoted to engineer-manager for the Electric Light Authority.²³

By the following month the people of Murgon were told that: 'everything was proceeding satisfactorily.' The power house with its substantial engine mountings had almost been completed and the engineer's residence, 'a very modern home,' had been handed over by the contractors to the council. The erection of power poles had been progressing steadily, the man responsible for this work was Mr W.H. Jeffery who had previously installed power poles for the towns of Cunnamulla, St George and Proserpine. The press claimed: '... The erection of poles has given an air of progress to the town and it is very gratifying to note that practically all the poles were obtained in the Murgon Shire within a few miles of the town.' Special lights, called 'Holophan' lights were planned for the lighting of the war monument in the town square, these lights were ordered from the firm of Robert Bryce and Co. Many houses had already been wired ready for connection and others were on a waiting list. A Mr Sands, of the firm of Ruston and Hornsby Ltd., had arrived in Murgon to supervise the unloading of the engines that had recently arrived in the town, and a Mr Crossley, who was to superintend the installation of the engines was then working on a similar job at Proserpine and would move to Murgon when that work had been completed. E.B. Young had now been appointed engineer-manager and was to oversee the installation of the machinery.²⁴

The engines for the power station were supplied by the British firm of Ruston and Hornsby, and owing to a clause in the customs tariff regulations the council was fortunate in securing a four cylinder engine, with twenty per cent more power, rather than the three cylinder engine they had ordered. The smaller engine had been subject to considerable duty while the larger engine was duty free. A smaller two cylinder engine was also purchased in order to run the power house at a reduced level during the night. The switchboard was supplied by the Engineering Supply Company of Australia, the cable for the mains came from William Adams and Co. A later report stated, '... The plant is replete with all the latest appliances and auxiliaries, one very important item being the oil filtering apparatus or separator which results in a saving of 75 per cent on the oil account.'²⁵

Other machinery installed at the power house included two compressed air cylinders for starting the engines, and several motors for pumping water to the cooling tower.

The electricity scheme was officially opened on Tuesday 12 November, 1929, the press reporting: 'Out of the darkness cometh light. These words aptly describe the happening at Murgon on Tuesday night last when the Minister for Public Instruction and Works, Mr Reginald Macdonnell King, officially switched on the electric current from the recently installed electric light works. The erection of the plant marks another important step in progress in the Murgon district which, from small beginnings, has grown to that state when it is now considered one of the most important districts in the State. Mr King was accompanied on the tour by the Director of Education, Mr J.B. McKenna and Mr J.B. Edwards, M.L.A.'²⁶

Both King and McKenna had arrived by rail at Kingaroy that morning where they were met by J.B. Edwards. The three men formed an inspection party and visited several schools in the region. After some refreshments at the Club Hotel, they travelled by car to Memerambi, Wooroolin and Tingoora Schools, and later had lunch at Wondai. At each centre the minister granted the school children a holiday for the day. Later that afternoon the ministerial party visited the Murgon State School and the Rural School, awarding prizes of electric irons, reading lamps and torches to winners of a recent essay competition in which the children had written of local industries.

That evening King performed the ceremony of switching-on the lights, the ceremony taking place in the yard of the power house. The press reported: '... in an instant the whole town was brightly illuminated. The band then played the National Anthem.'²⁷

The total cost for the installation of electricity to the town had gone slightly over budget, the final figure ending at £10,200, but this over-expenditure had been justified by the purchase of

the oil separator which, in the long run, saved money on oil purchases. Another additional expense had been the fencing of the engineer's residence.²⁸

Unlike some other centres such as Maryborough, which experienced enormous difficulties with the power supply systems — particularly in relation to machinery breakdowns, the system installed at Murgon was an immediate success, the reliable crude oil engine giving little if any trouble and the number of people wanting to be connected to the system growing larger each month. Indeed, 1929 was something of an auspicious year for Murgon, for in addition to having the electricity turned on for the first time, the council also managed to effect other improvements including the concreting of footpaths and beginning work on the School of Arts.²⁹

At this time the promised lighting system at the railway yards had not been installed. However, the railway lighting was ready for operation by October 1930 and it was officially opened by the minister for public instruction, Reginald Macdonnell King. King and his entourage travelled to Murgon on the morning of Friday 17 October, they inspected the Barambah settlement and later opened the new Rural School. The lighting system was officially switched on by the minister at 7 p.m. that night, lighting the yards with forty-seven lights which, '... brilliantly illuminated the platform.'³⁰

Nanango

Meanwhile, Nanango too was attempting to obtain some form of power supply, council members and members of the Nanango Chamber of Commerce keeping a close eye on the success or failures of other centres and attempting to obtain the best possible supply for the most economical price.

In January 1923 the local press called upon the townspeople to awaken from their lethargy and to back any sound moves to have power supplied to the town. The report claimed: 'The assertion has frequently been heard locally — in reality an admission of civic apathy on the part of the individual townsman — that Nanango is drifting hopelessly into the backwash of decadent country towns. Such a state of affairs, if it were true, is, of course, traceable in a larger measure to a lack of public spiritedness. If it is true, it is high time the drift was checked.'³¹

The author of this report went on to state that Nanango should be carrying out investigations, as Kingaroy was then doing, in installing power to the town, pointing out that the tax-payer would not have to foot the bill but that such a scheme would be financially self supporting and that, in any case, Nanango was desperately in need of both power for the home and an adequate system of street lighting.³²

On 22 September, 1926, J.O. Hamilton, the secretary of the Nanango Chamber of Commerce, wrote to the City Electric Light Company in Brisbane requesting a costing for the supply of power from Brisbane. On 24 September that year the manager of the company, Mr J. Just, replied that while it was technically possible to provide supply to Nanango, costings would depend on the expense of constructing lines from Brisbane to Nanango.³³

Over the following years little, if anything was achieved, however, in 1929 the president of the Nanango Chamber of Commerce, Mr D. Casey, and its secretary, J.O. Hamilton, in conjunction with other members, again discussed the possibility of obtaining power. The chamber then invited Mr W.G. Counsell, (also reported as Counsel) an engineer of Warwick, to come to Nanango for the purpose of submitting a solid proposal for the construction of an electric light scheme.

Counsell reported favourably on the matter and the chamber then made a recommendation to the Nanango Shire Council and the Nanango butter factory advising them that they should combine to construct a lighting plant. The factory sought the advice of their consulting engineer, Mr H.G. Camfield of Wildridge and Sinclair Ltd., and the council took advice from Mr A.E. Axon of the firm of A.E. Harding Frew, consulting engineers of Brisbane. Both engineers recommended the introduction of the scheme. However, the introduction of power to Nanango was not to be incorporated without some opposition, and letters to the press were frequently vitriolic. The question was later put to the people in a local poll and the 'yes' vote won by four votes to one.³⁴

On Wednesday 14 September, 1932, representatives of the Nanango Shire Council and management of the Nanango butter factory met at the factory to discuss the issue, the press later reporting: 'It was officially stated at the conclusion of the conference that agreement has been practically reached and only a few minor formalities remained to be finalised. This is good news and there should now be no delay in pushing the scheme ahead.'³⁵

Following this positive response, the council took action under the Electric Light and Power Act of 1896, applying to the governor for an Order-in-Council authorising the shire council to supply power. The order was granted on 28 July, 1932. A loan, not to exceed £2500, was granted by the Treasury to enable the council to cover the costs of installation. This loan was repayable in twenty-one years by half-yearly instalments.

The power house was to be a part of the butter factory. The plant purchased by the council consisted of a belt-driven Crompton Parkinson alternator. There were, in fact, two alternators, the largest was of 55 K.V.A. capacity and generated three phase power. Its output was larger than the perceived requirements of Nanango for many years ahead. The power supply was a Ruston-Hornsby crude oil engine of 22 h.p. the system was controlled through a modern switchboard which consisted of three marble panels, the board was 7 feet 6 inches high and 6 feet wide. It was designed by A.E. Axon and built by the Brisbane Electric Construction Company. The board was erected in the factory engine room in a specially built recess, it was framed in polished silky oak. The company of Wildridge and Sinclair installed all the machinery under the direction of an engineer named V. O'Shea.

Power to the people of Nanango was officially turned on at a special ceremony on Saturday 25 March, 1933. The official ceremony was preceded the previous evening by a gala ball at Tara's Hall, a boxing tournament on Saturday morning, horse racing that afternoon, and the Nanango Shire Council proclaimed a public holiday for Saturday, requesting that all businesses close their doors by 10.45 that morning.

Over two thousand people turned out to see the event, the minister for mines, James Stopford, performing the official switching-on. The *Nanango News* enthused: 'That Nanango can enter into, with enthusiasm, the celebrations of the greatest event in its history was proved on Friday and Saturday night when the switching-on of electric light festivities were held and the actual switching-on ceremony was performed by the Minister for Mines, the Hon. James Stopford M.L.A. Even the most optimistic person would never have anticipated such a tremendous crowd as patrolled Drayton Street on Saturday night ... many of whom travelled long distances to be present, and when the Minister pressed the button and Nanango actually had light, the pent up feelings of the gathering were released in an outburst of cheering never equalled before ... Nanango became a city to behold.'³⁶

Over the following twelve months the system proved to be an effective one for the town, consumers connecting to power in their hundreds. In March the following year Councillor Charles Stewart McClymont, chairman of the Nanango Shire Council, announced that if the rate of progress then being experienced was, in fact, maintained, then the system would pay its way.

In March 1934 the people of Nanango were startled by the sound of what appeared to be a series of warning whistles coming from the butter factory where the power house was located. The *Nanango News* later published: 'Several shrill whistles from the Nanango power house at eight-thirty o'clock last Sunday night startled the whole town. Pedestrians and loaded motor cars rushed to the butter factory where the power house is situated expecting that some tragic happening had taken place. Telephones rang, anxious folk endeavoured to get in touch with the factory. It is stated that even the folk in church became restless. The engineer is at the power house alone for the earlier part of the night, and perhaps he had been electrocuted. There were many wild surmises. Engineer O'Shea was perhaps more surprised than the startled residents when he saw the crowd gathering round the entrance to the engine room. Nothing had happened, only this was the hour just twelve months ago that saw the switching-on of the electric light in Nanango. The engineer remembered the anniversary of the memorable event.'³⁷

Nanango's first major power blackout occurred on the afternoon of Saturday 23 December, 1939. The blackout was caused following a storm which broke over the town at approximately 2.30 that afternoon, the storm brought severe gusts of winds which ripped branches from trees and one of

these branches dropped across power lines on a pole at the corner of Alfred and Fitzroy Streets. The branch brought two power lines into contact with each other welding them together and causing an instant blackout to consumers on the town side of the Drayton Street Bridge. The engineer was quickly on the scene and he searched until darkness for the fault, recruiting assistance and continuing his search after dark. The following day the fault had still not been found and the engineer decided to pull power from a larger section of the town so that he could conduct tests which finally revealed the problem.³⁸

Wondai

While Kingaroy and Murgon were enjoying the luxuries of this new power source, other centres such as Wondai were still attempting to obtain a supply of electricity at a rate that could be afforded by the relatively small numbers of people then living in those centres. In Wondai the history of the electricity supply was, at first, a depressing one. Moves to have a supply of electricity installed into Wondai were first mooted at around the time Murgon was being connected. At that time the Wondai Chamber of Commerce initiated a movement to have a supply installed. A chairman, Mr P.H. Outridge, was appointed to a committee, he was aided by W.C. Fuller, the shire clerk, and G.D. Griffiths. These men waited upon the Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Company who were then in the process of constructing a butter factory at Wondai, and requested that the dairy company provide the machinery necessary to supply electricity in bulk to the council. However, in November 1930 the dairy company refused this application, and afterwards a Mr G. Stanley attempted to float a company in order to provide bulk supply, yet this too did not receive the necessary support and was abandoned. Members of the Chamber of Commerce then approached the Gympie Electric Light Company with a proposal that they supply power to Wondai, however, after investigating the proposal the company decided not to proceed with the project.

In March 1933 an Order-in-Council was granted to Wondai and finally the chamber of commerce members approached F.H. Jones, the owner of the local sawmill and joinery works at Wondai, and requested that he provide the plant and machinery for power. Jones was promised a contract which stipulated a payment of 4½d per unit for a guaranteed amount per annum over a period of ten years. He saw that such a proposition would be a sound business venture and plans were almost immediately prepared. Brisbane electrical engineer A.E. Harding Frew was appointed consulting engineer and Lieutenant-commander A.A. Joyce, an engineer, paid several visits to Wondai to offer advice and estimates on the scheme. The system included 26 street lights and more than one hundred consumers were contracted to be connected to the mains. The press later reported: 'The Wondai sawmill and joinery works are supplied with power by two suction gas engines, both of which are British built. One is a Kynock 95 h.p. and the other a Davy Paxman 40 h.p. The installation of the electric light system necessitated an alteration whereby the sawmill and joinery work machinery could be separated from the power house when not required ... The introduction of the scheme into this local industrial centre has entailed a good deal of work which has been carried out by the proprietor and his staff, and during the whole proceedings the ordinary work (of the mill) has gone on as usual.'³⁹

Jones's son, Mr E.F. Jones, was appointed the first overseer of the electrical department of the power house and the power to Wondai was switched on for the first time on the evening of 25 August, 1933. The press claimed:

Never before in its record had Wondai shed such a ... ray of light over its people as it did tonight when the official switching-on ceremony of the electric light took place. Punctually at 6.45 p.m. at the Shire Office, Mr J.B. Edwards, M.L.A. touched the button and the whole township presented an animated appearance of brilliance and beauty. In the main street vehicular traffic was diverted into their respective avenues in order to give the people every advantage of sharing in the prevailing carnival spirit. In the Memorial Hall a grand 'Electric Ball' was in sway and in the Oddfellows' Hall opposite a good company assembled to pass away the night in a similar manner. Novelty entertainments were held and confetti battles were engaged. The Wondai Town Band played selections suitable for the occasion.⁴⁰

It was indeed a festive night for the people of Wondai who had gathered in their hundreds outside the Town Hall.

After the ceremony, Councillor Outridge presented J.B. Edwards with the nickel-plated switch that had been used to turn on the power. The switch had been inscribed: 'Presented to J.B. Edwards Esq., M.L.A., electric authority switch on, Wondai, 25/8/33.' After the ceremony official guests were invited to a supper and the 'Electric Light Ball', of which the press wrote: 'The Memorial Hall ... presented a gay scene with its brilliant decorations. Six huge lamp-shades were suspended from the ceiling whilst crepe paper of varying hues was also in profusion. Beneath this was a line of Japanese lanterns electrically lit. The stage was transformed to represent a double pergola and arch and was decorated with bougainvillea and baskets of flowers. Iceland poppies adorned the supper tables.'⁴¹

The press later published a report outlining biographical details of those who had performed leading roles in the installation of supply to Wondai:

No one is more deserving of the honour of being associated with the electric light scheme than the proprietor of the Wondai Sawmill and Joinery Works (Mr F.H. Jones), who is supplying the electrical energy in bulk to the council. Mr F.H. Jones is one whom Wondai numbers among its best known citizens, having settled in Wondai over 26 years ago. Throughout the whole of this period Mr Jones has been associated with the sawmill and timber industry, having been in partnership in the early days with Messrs Thompson and Thompson. Over 21 years ago, Mr Jones set up business on his own account, and from that time has contributed very materially to the industrial section of the town. His business is a hive of industry week in and week out, and today the mill with its many adjacent buildings, and up-to-date power house (in which are housed the two engines and alternators) stand as a living testimony to the valuable contribution made to the growth of Wondai. Mr Jones has always taken a keen interest in town affairs for many years. His association with the electric light scheme strengthens his interest in the growth and progressiveness of the town.

When Mr P.H. Outridge first came to Wondai he possessed many 'mind's eye' schemes for its growth and development and soon set about to put them into effect. He was a zealous and keen advocate for the erection of the butter factory at Wondai and played an important part in finalising this important move. Mr Outridge has held many important offices in Wondai, having been president of the chamber of commerce, A.P. and I. Society and the Wienholt Hospital Board. After having been town member of the Wondai Shire for three years, Mr Outridge, at the recent local authority elections, polled a large majority for the position of chairman which he had justly earned. Realising that Wondai was far behind its neighbouring towns in lighting facilities, Councillor Outridge again assumed the leadership, and in collaboration with other public bodies initiated a move for a lighting scheme which has now been consummated. It is said that this scheme is the cheapest in the South Burnett.

Mr Charles Fuller, shire clerk to the Wondai Council, has also demonstrated his ability. He was one of the keenest agitators for the electric light for Wondai, and today he shares in the honour of having contributed to the scheme, and rejoices in its consummation.⁴²

Bulk Supply

However, by the time Nanango and Wondai were constructing their own power plants, the system of independent generation was already a thing of the past. With an ever increasing population throughout the state it soon became obvious to the state government that there would be many material advantages in providing a power system that could meet the demands of the future.

The Wondai Shire Council was to the fore in promoting this concept, despite the fact that the council had only relatively recently connected to its own independent supply. This council put such a proposal before the Royal Commission on Electricity in May 1936, only approximately three years after both Wondai and Nanango had connected to their own generators. The Wondai proposal was a far reaching concept based on the British design, it was presented to the commission by the shire chairman, P.H. Outridge, during the commission's sittings at Wondai on Wednesday 27 May, 1936. The introduction to the submission claimed:

By gleaning knowledge from other countries and adopting the ideas most suitable to Queensland conditions will mean the avoidance of much of the preliminary troubles in the development of our State and aid considerably the formulation of a policy for electrical development.

In the British Isles we find that the policy there is to divide the country into zones. Each zone is handed over to a Board to administer and see to the reticulation, supply and development of electricity as a utility for public use. These Boards have their own power houses situated near coal fields ... In Queensland we find that comparatively near to several closely populated areas coal fields exist, notably Ipswich, Burrum, Baralaba and Bowen. Further north we find more advantageous conditions for a large Hydro-Electric Scheme in the Barron Falls. The system of zoning or rationalising could be well adopted to Queensland.⁴³

The proposal encompassed a large section of the state. The Wondai Shire Council proposed that the undertaking should be administered by a joint local authority board which would decide on policy, and the actual running of the project would be carried out by an executive appointed by the board. The estimated cost of this proposal was around £960,000. However, there were concerns that the project could not supply power as cheaply as some local authorities were then generating it, particularly Kingaroy with its wood-burning power plant that was reputed to have been the most economical in the state.⁴⁴

Other advantages that would result in the application of the concept were numerous. The Wondai Shire Council pointed out to the commission that in addition to bringing power to the existing larger centres, most of which already had their own power, a power station at Howard, near the Burrum coalfields, could easily and relatively inexpensively provide power to such regions as Tiaro, Howard, Pomona, Cooroy, Eumundi, Yandina, Woombye, Palmwoods, Tingoorra, Wooroolin, Goomeri, Hivesville, Proston, Kandanga, Kenilworth, Biggenden, Mundubbera, Eidsvold, Monto, Mount Perry, Gin Gin and a host of other smaller regional centres.

Additionally, the Wondai Shire Council pointed out the ancillary advantages, the improvement of conditions to primary producers, the encouragement of secondary industries, the regular employment of miners on the Burrum coalfields, improved markets for primary and secondary producers through more employment, the creation of strong demand for Australian copper for wiring and other components, this was especially desirable as the world was then being flooded with copper from the Congo; more employment for electrical engineers, linesmen and other associated trades and more employment for timber-getters and sawmillers in supplying poles.⁴⁵

The concept gained almost universal acceptance. In July 1936 the commission sat at Maryborough and heard evidence from a number of witnesses, including Mr S.R. McMeekin, the manager of the Maryborough power house who stated that bulk supply could be provided more inexpensively due to the increased number of potential consumers. C.D.W. Rankin, the manager of Queensland Collieries Ltd. at Howard, pointed out to the commission that the district was eminently suited to the production of coal for such a scheme. The only voice raised against the proposal was Mr A. Anderson, the part owner of the Pialba electric light works who claimed it was not economically sound to have one central power plant. That afternoon members of the commission visited the Howard site to inspect the fuel and water supplies.⁴⁶

Yet, for a while at least, the concept was to stagnate and one of the alternative schemes being considered by the commission was for the supply of electricity from Kingaroy to other South Burnett centres. The press later reported:

... the Commission is considering a scheme of electricity development in the South Burnett district. The area proposed to be included in the scheme comprising the Shires of Kilkivan, Murgon, Wondai, Kingaroy and Nanango. There are 15 towns of reasonable size in the area, having a total population of 11,000 living in 2000 residences. Seven of these towns already have a public electricity supply and the proposal envisages one large power house at Kingaroy using suction gas produced by local wood fuel for driving the generating plant. The area would be supplied by a suitable transmission system, the whole scheme being in the hands of a Joint Electricity Board. The Kingaroy power house, by reason of its advantageous day load and the use of wood as fuel, has, at the present time, one of the lowest generating costs of any country power station in Queensland, and the use of this power house as a generating station, with its base load and low fuel cost, would permit of a satisfactory rural extension and a generally completely satisfactory scheme.⁴⁷

In October 1938 the news was released that Wondai would be connected to the Kingaroy power house, the line would run through Tingoorra and the scheme would save consumers a total of

approximately £600 per year. Consumers were advised that from 1 March, 1939 Jones' sawmill would no longer supply the town's power.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, regional centres such as Kilkivan and Goomeri were still attempting to find a way in which an economical electricity supply could be obtained for both towns. A meeting of electors was held in the Hall of Memory at Goomeri on 11 March, 1939, with shire chairman Councillor Thomas Herbert Spencer presiding. He explained to those present that despite many attempts to have such a supply brought to the region no success had been achieved and it seemed that the most likely course of action would be to take supply from Murgon. The meeting terminated with a strong vote in favour of such a project.⁴⁹

The gazettal of approval for a £3600 loan to enable the Murgon Shire Council to erect poles to the boundary of the Kilkivan Shire was announced by the Murgon Shire Council during its meeting of December 1939.⁵⁰ An Order-in-Council was issued to the Kilkivan Electricity Authority on 18 January, 1940, authorising that authority to take supply from Murgon. By February 1940 good progress had been made, many of the poles had been erected and the transformers and other pieces of equipment had arrived. While the official contract between the Murgon Shire Council and the Kilkivan Shire Council was not signed until 19 June, 1940, (Murgon signed on that date) and 2 July, 1940 (when Kilkivan signed) the official switching-on ceremony took place at Goomeri on 2 May, 1940.⁵¹

The switching-on ceremony was performed by the chairman of the State Electricity Commission, Mr S.F. Cochran, the press jubilantly reporting:

Such happenings only occur once in the history of a town and Goomeri rose to the occasion in a manner worthy of the event.

The streets were decorated with strings of coloured bulbs which, bursting into light at the auspicious moment, brilliantly illuminated the scene in marked contrast to the darkness which had prevailed.

Fortunately the night was dark and moonless which threw into stronger relief the darkness around the brilliant circle. The upturned faces of the expectant multitude, the long lines of cars, bunting etc., all combined to make such a striking spectacle as is seldom seen in a country town. The proceedings were opened by the parade march of the Murgon Band. The Bandsmen, each with a small torch on his cap, formed a striking display, playing and marching with military precision, preceded by Band Major Telfer with the drums bringing up the rear.

A feature of the display was a band of minstrels and a lorry decorated for the occasion, who enlivened the proceedings with music (more or less discordant) and songs, some of which were composed and written especially for the occasion.⁵²

The electrification of Cherbourg began in 1945, the supply being laid to the community from Murgon.⁵³ The official switching on ceremony took place at Cherbourg at 7.30 p.m. on Friday 22 November, 1946.⁵⁴

Other centres throughout the region were connected to the system over the following years, although for some it was a long wait, Maidenwell, for example, did not receive power until May 1962 when the residents were finally connected at a 'Carnival of Lights', the official ceremony being performed Cr. A. Anger of Nanango.⁵⁵

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty

A History of Electricity on the South Burnett

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- 5 K/H. 25 June, 1923, p 2. Details of correspondence regarding this issue may be seen in file: General Correspondence, Kingaroy Shire Council archives.
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12. For copies of these letters see: correspondence box 1927, Murgon Shire Council archives.
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16. M/C. 13 October, 1928, p 5 and 14 November, 1929, p 8.
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21. M/C. 25 May, 1929, p 8.
22. M/C. 20 June, 1929, p 2 and 14 November, 1929, p 8.
23. M/C. 18 July, 1929, p 2.
24. M/C. 1 August, 1929, p 2 and 12 August, 1929, p 8
25. M/C. 14 November, 1929, p 8.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. M/C. 4 February, 1930, p 7.
29. *Ibid.*
30. M/C. 25 October, 1930, p 4.
31. N/N. 12 January, 1923.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Copies of these letters may be read in N/N. 8 October, 1926.
34. N/N. 31 March, 1933, p 4.
35. N/N. 16 September, 1932, p 2.
36. N/N. 31 March, 1933, p 4.
37. N/N. 30 March, 1934, p 3.
38. N/N. 18 January, 1940, p 1.
39. M/C. 26 August, 1933, p 11.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. SBT. 29 May, 1936.
44. N/N. 24 November, 1938, p 3.
45. SBT. 29 May, 1936, p 8.
46. SBT. 12 June, 1936, p 1.
47. SBT. 7 October, 1938, p 3.
48. *Ibid.* p 7.
49. SBT. 10 March, 1939, p 2.
50. SBT. 22 December, 1939, p 6.
51. Contractual agreement between the Kilkivan and Murgon Shire Councils, agreement commencing 1 May, 1940. Murgon Shire Council archives.
52. SBT. 10 May, 1940, p 2.
53. SBT. 24 May, 1945, p 1.
54. For further details on the supply of electricity to Cherbourg see file: Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement Electricity, 1945–47, Murgon Shire Council archives.
55. For full details of the celebrations see: N/A. 17 May, 1962, pp 1 and 9.

The South Burnett Regional Electricity Board

Proposals for the establishment of the South Burnett Regional Electricity Board began in earnest in 1946, establishing a scheme whereby a single board would control the supply to all the towns in the South Burnett. The new board would take over the electrical authorities from the shire councils and private operators and set up a central office in Kingaroy.

A conference to discuss the issue was held at Kingaroy in December 1946 and it was decided that the South Burnett Regional Electricity Board should be set up so that the development work could begin. Chairman of the Electricity Commission, Mr S.F. Cochran, stated that it would be necessary, in the first instance, to appoint a preliminary board that had the powers to arrange office accommodation, make laws, select suitable staff and to do anything else necessary to enable the board to function. An Order-in-Council would then prescribe the date at which electrification undertakings could be transferred from Goomeri, Murgon, Wondai, Kingaroy and Nanango, and also from the privately owned undertakings of Yarraman and Proston.¹

The State Electricity Commission was constituted by legislation in 1938, its task was to coordinate all the electrical undertakings in the state. The Regional Electric Authorities Act was introduced in 1945, '... by which any part of the State can be constituted as a region of electricity supply under the control of a Regional Electricity Board charged with the electrical development of the particular area.'² Each of the regional electricity boards was to be comprised of a representative of the State Electricity Commission and a number of members of local authorities. The Wide Bay Regional Electricity Board was subsequently constituted and held its first meeting on 26 September, 1945. The South Burnett Regional Electricity Board was formed in 1947 with its headquarters in Kingaroy.

On 21 March, 1948, the first of the important changes in policy was made when Nanango was connected to power from the Kingaroy power station.³ Yet such a board was to have only a relatively short life, in May 1951 a report from the state electricity commissioner, Mr N. Smith, stated that action had been taken by the commission to effect an amalgamation between the South Burnett Regional Electricity Board and the Wide Bay Regional Electricity Board, the amalgamation taking effect on 1 July that year. The advantages of such an amalgamation would be the lower cost of supply to consumers and the more rapid development of supply into rural areas.⁴ Two representatives from the South Burnett would be appointed to the new board, one to represent Kingaroy, Nanango and Rosalie shires, the other to represent Wondai, Murgon and Kilkivan.⁵

By that time the power station at Howard was almost a reality. In January 1946 the Wide Bay Regional Electricity Board had authorised the chairman of the State Electricity Commission to place an order for the generating plant for the Howard station, and over the following years the construction went ahead. The station was officially opened by the mines and electricity minister, Mr W. Power, on Saturday 15 September, 1951, after six years of negotiations and construction work. The cost had been approximately £3.5 million.⁶

The advantages of electricity supply to regional centres were profound. At that time approximately 25,000 people were living within the South Burnett region, they occupied about 6400 dwellings. To bring power to as many of these people as possible, between June 1953 and June 1958 approximately 650 miles of power lines were laid and an additional 130 miles of lines were erected from the Howard power station to the power station at Kingaroy. Farmers in ever increasing numbers were utilizing electricity for a number of purposes, electrically driven irrigation systems which required a minimum of attention and freed up the tractors that had once driven the pumps. In their residences home-makers were rapidly employing the new power system

and while electrical appliances were still then relatively expensive, the sales of such appliances rose dramatically, refrigerators, stoves, irons, jugs, toasters, hot water systems and a host of other appliances made home life so much easier, it was time to dispense with the petrol irons, the wood stoves and the dangerous kerosene refrigerators.

Kilkivan joined the grid in October 1954, the official switching-on ceremony being performed by G.H. Devries, M.L.A. The ceremony was followed by a civic dinner hosted by the chairman of the shire council, Councillor Thomas Herbert Spencer.⁷

Blackbutt was supplied with electricity on 20 November, 1953, the switching-on ceremony being performed by the minister for mines and immigration, E.J. Riordan. Power came under the Blackbutt-Benarkin-South Yarraman system which was installed at a cost of £45,000 by the Wide Bay Regional Electricity Board. The power was at first supplied by a generating unit at Yarraman owned by Mr C.W. Budgen who was under contract to the board until a line could be constructed to the power station at Howard.⁸

By 1958 twelve sawmills in the South Burnett had adopted electrical power, dispensing with the time consuming steam power, in the bush the sense of isolation vanished almost overnight as power lines were constructed to even the most remote centres, forestry cottages, timber-getters and mill hands in sawmill barracks all enjoyed the immediate benefits.⁹

Cinnabar, one of the last centres in the South Burnett to join the family of electric power, was connected in 1961, the official ceremony being performed by E. Evans, the minister for mines, main roads and electricity. The ceremony took place at 8 p.m. on 24 March that year at the Cinnabar Hall.¹⁰

Yet the plant at Howard, which had promised so much for the consumers of the South Burnett, was to have only a relatively limited life. By 1968, despite upgrading in machinery and facilities, it was becoming evident that the cost of power generated from the station was far more than that generated from the station at Swanbank. While there still remained an abundant supply of coal on the Burrum coalfield, the relatively small area of supply was no longer a viable proposition and the fate of the station at Howard was sealed.¹¹

In March 1972 the mines minister, R.E. Camm stated that the station would be downgraded to that of a booster station, however, it remained in operation until Tuesday 24 June, 1980, when, at 9.25 p.m. the master switches were turned off for the last time and a caretaker staff was installed to maintain the buildings and machinery. A small selection of machinery and equipment was later sent to Brisbane for use in the Tennyson and Bulimba power stations.¹²

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-one

The South Burnett Regional Electricity Board

1. SBT. 12 December, 1946, p 10.
2. *Souvenir of the Official Opening of Howard Power Station*, 15 September, 1951, Wide Bay and Burnett Regional Electricity Board, Maryborough, p 4.
3. N/A. 25 March, 1948.
4. N/N. 24 May, 1951, p 1.
5. N/N. 17 May, 1951, and *Souvenir of the Official Opening of Howard Power Station*, 15 September, 1951, Wide Bay and Burnett Regional Electricity Board, Maryborough, p 5.
6. M/C. 17 September, 1951, p 2.
7. Document detailing guests at the function may be found at the Kilkivan Historical Society.
8. For further details on the official opening see: K/H. 26 November, 1953, p 6.
9. SBT. 18 September, 1958, p 7.
10. *The Gympie Times*, 11 March, 1961.
11. M/C. 26 March, 1968, p 2.
12. M/C. 22 September, 1981, p 11.

Neumgna Coal and the Tarong Power Station Project

For many years there had been widespread belief that the enormous amount of coal located at the Neumgna/Tarong coalfields could act as the fuel supply for a large power station, explorations of the field had revealed a significant coal belt with very little overburden. Coal had first been seen in the region after the First World War when Neumgna became a soldier settlement. Bill Grouder, an early selector, is reputed to have discovered coal while digging a well on his property, the coal was struck at a depth of approximately sixty feet. However, little was done to exploit the find.

Harry Graf is reputed to have been one of the first men to bring coal to the surface while sinking a well. Those first few chunks of coal were used to fire a blacksmith's forge in order to sharpen picks. Harry Graf was born at Haden on 25 October, 1893, and lived on the family farm until 1919 when he moved to Neumgna. His daughter, Mrs N.J. Springate, later wrote that Harry Graf: '... started digging a well in 1922-23, dug fifteen feet and came onto coal. He then dug deeper when water started seeping through. The next morning there was water in the hole and it has supplied the farm ever since. All digging was done by hand with the help of Roy Fischer. The story told to many was how dad burnt the coal in his stove, giving great heat, but it did not take long to discover that he had burnt his stove out.'¹



Harry 'Pop' Graf, who is reported to be one of the first people to discover coal at Tarong.

Courtesy — Mrs N. J. Springate

Harry Graf married Carrie Fischer on 10 June, 1925, the couple had three daughters. They sold their property in 1935 before moving to South Nanango. Carrie Graf died in 1940. Harry Graf later retired to Nundah and died on 10 June, 1966.²

The now defunct *Nanango News* later gave the year of the discovery of coal as 1926, but according to a hand-written account in the archives of the Nanango Shire Council the following information is recorded: 'Started digging well 1922-23, dug 15ft and came onto coal. Then dug through coal when water started seeping in. Help of digging the well was given by Mr Roy Fischer who later became (Graf's) brother-in-law.'³

In 1936 three other men, Oscar Neilson, Charles Dugdell and Robert Armstrong applied to the Coal Board for permission to open up the coalfield, coal had been discovered on Armstrong's property, portion 64, parish of Tarong, however, the board refused permission for the mining project to proceed. Over the following years it became increasingly obvious that a very large coalfield was situated in the region, coal was discovered on a number of

adjoining properties and even workers employed on road-works were reputed to have discovered coal. According to Wal Richardson, one of the coal pioneers of the district, the chronology of coal discovery in the region was as follows:

- 1926: Harry Graf, portion 108, parish of Neumgna. (yet it appears that coal was actually discovered in 1922/23).
- 1927: Herb Lewis, portion 14 parish of Neumgna (Mick Cumming's property).
- 1933: Lloyd Sanders, portion 136, parish of Neumgna.
- 1934: Tom Walsh, portion 66, parish of Tarong.
- 1935: Charles Offer, portion 112, parish of Neumgna.
- 1937/38: Jack Wallison, parish of Neumgna.
- 1939: Wal Richardson, portion 111, parish of Neumgna.
- 1939: Bill Hood, portion 67, parish of Tarong.
- 1940: Bert Seeley, portion 59, parish of Tarong.
- 1940: Colin Rohlf, portion 107, parish of Neumgna.⁴

Another early pioneer of the coal industry was Bill Gardner who, in 1978, stated that coal had first been discovered in the Yarraman district in 1946. The *Ipswich Times* of 25 August that year claimed that coal had been discovered on a Yarraman grazing property and that a bore had been sunk to a depth of 110 feet, coal was discovered in an eight feet seam at ninety feet. During the 1950s Mr Gardner became involved in the search for coal on a property owned by C.J. Richardson and a number of local residents formed a syndicate to pump out a well where coal was reported to have been found. After a few difficult attempts to clear the well of water, coal was brought to the surface and upon analysis was discovered to be of an excellent quality. However, due to a lack of finance the syndicate folded and nothing more was done to exploit the discovery.⁵

Ted Franey, a blacksmith at Nanango, was among the first to commercially use the coal at Tarong, he would go to the coalfields in his german wagon each week and cart in eight or ten bags of coal that he had dug out of a cutting on the side of a road, using the coal in his forge.⁶

One of the leading proponents of the coal prospecting era in the region was John Alfred (Nobby) Smith of Nanango, who, during a press interview held in 1979, claimed that he and a number of other men had drilled successfully for coal but as there was little market for the product and as the Coal Board would not guarantee the sale of a percentage of the coal, the business venture did not succeed. There were six men involved in the project, each had invested approximately £128.

Prior to the establishment of the power station at Howard, the coalfields at Tarong were being considered as a fuel source for a new power station to be situated in that region. Many local residents believed that with an increasing demand for power the obvious answer was the utilisation of the Tarong/Neumgna coalfields and the construction of a power house on the site. One of the strongest advocates for this was Cr. D. McCauley, the Nanango/Rosalie representative on the South Burnett Regional Electricity Board who, in 1947, made a determined but unsuccessful attempt to have the coalfield thoroughly investigated to prove that the coal deposits in the region were both suitable and in sufficient quantities to warrant the construction of a power house. Despite McCauley's persistence and sound reasoning, nothing came of the matter at that time — primarily due to the difficulties of obtaining generating machinery from post war Britain and because of the unfavourable results of some small scale geological testing.⁷

Nobby Smith, however, was determined to do what he could to exploit the coal deposits and took out several mining leases in the region, he owned what was known as a 'mud-puncher' boring plant and despite this ancient and inefficient piece of machinery was able to make several bores during which time he discovered that there was, in fact, a large scale coal deposit in the area.

In 1967 Nobby Smith met several representatives of Conzinc Riotinto (Australia) (CRA), these representatives were in the area searching for information regarding possible mineral deposits. Smith showed them the coalfields and test drills were subsequently made which confirmed considerable deposits of coal. CRA sent a boring plant to the region in 1968 and Nobby Smith was signed to a contract. Once again Smith showed geologists where they could find coal and six sites were selected for drilling. These too were extremely successful, and soon afterwards the company began buying properties in the region.⁸

There are seven named seams in what later became the Meandu coal deposits, these include the Ace seam, with only a very limited area, the King seam, the largest and richest of the seams, Queen, Joker and Prince, Baron is a very poor quality seam and Duke seam is beyond conventional open cut methods. The lower seams have less economic value as they contain a number of stone bands. The only seams capable of being economically mined are King, Queen, Joker and Prince, the other seams having an ash content that is too high or are too deep.⁹

In early December 1972 the *South Burnett Times* revealed that on the 19th of that month the minister for local government and electricity, Mr H.A. McKechnie, would inspect the coalfield. The inspection had come about following advice from W.A.M. (Bill) Gunn, the member for Somerset, who had presented a strong case to the Electricity Commission concerning the viability of a power station being constructed near the coal belt. The minister's inspection coincided with the monthly meeting of the Nanango Shire Council, after which a luncheon was held followed by the ministerial inspection of the site.¹⁰ During the council meeting McKechnie told councillors that it would be his recommendation to state cabinet that the Nanango district should receive preference for the establishment of such a power station. He said that the government had considered sixteen possible sites and that the number had been reduced to just four, one of which was at the Neumgna coalfield. He said that his government was pursuing a policy of decentralisation and that for defensive reasons it was also not advisable to have all the state's power stations situated along the coastal belt. A spokes-person for the company CRA (now Rio Tinto) backed claims that the region was suitable for a power station, saying that the coal, '... was of an ideal type for use in power-houses.' This remark was supported by a geologist who had inspected the site and who claimed that the small amount of overburden made mining problems negligible.¹¹

A public meeting called to discuss the issue was held at Nanango in May 1973. W.A.M. Gunn, the member for Somerset, told 'an enormous crowd,' that much of the twelve months he had then spent in politics had been devoted to preparing a case for the construction of a power-house in the Neumgna-Tarong region. He said that he believed a cabinet decision would be made by June or July that year, and that the other major contender for a power-house was West Moreton. While it was acknowledged that the site at Tarong could be supplied from the very large coal resources of the region, one of the major drawbacks was the lack of water. Gunn said that a study had been conducted into the feasibility of constructing a dam on Cooyar Creek that could be a more than adequate supply of water for the proposed power-house. Gunn split his case for the dam into three categories, firstly, the need for decentralisation, secondly the economic necessities and thirdly the environmental aspect. The meeting ended with a nine point resolution stating the reasons for the establishment of a power house at Tarong. The nine point plan stated:

- There is ample coal of a good quality available and that the price is at least competitive;
- Within a radius of 200 miles of the coalfield lives 75 percent of the people of Queensland;
- No environmental problems exist;
- The siting on this coalfield will greatly assist in the Government's policy of decentralisation;
- The towns of Nanango and Yarraman are both served with a good town supply of water; Nanango is fully sewered and Yarraman will be sewered in the near future;
- In the Brisbane Valley and the South Burnett all the amenities required of an expanding economy are available;
- The coalfield is within 18 miles of a registered airfield and within 12 miles of a landing strip in Nanango;
- This region is connected to the capital and the seafront by a first class road system. It has a rail system from Kingaroy to Gympie and Yarraman to Brisbane.
- Any water storage development for use by the power house could in future years be used to supplement the water needs, both rural and urban in the Moreton Region.¹²

The minister for local government and electricity, Mr H. McKechnie, continued to push for the establishment of the Tarong power station. He told state cabinet that the cost of coal from Tarong would be only \$3.00 per ton compared to \$9.00 per ton for Ipswich coal. In fact the cost of Ipswich coal was then approximately \$5.70 per ton but this still represented a very significant saving in the ultimate cost of electricity.¹³

In December 1973 the commissioner for electricity, Mr E.D. Murray, revealed that in his annual report tabled to parliament the State Electricity Commission was recommending that Tarong be considered as the next major power station in the state. The report pointed out that Tarong had been considered the most feasible after a study of twenty possible sites had been made. The report proposed the construction of a 1100 megawatt coal-fired station powered by four 275MW generating units, the coal supplies to come from local deposits mined by open cut methods. It went on to point out that long term planning indicated that further generating capacity would have to be provided by the mid 1980s. A feasibility study was also being prepared regarding water supply.¹⁴

Over the following years there were continuous problems and delays and the state government came under scathing attack for not making a decision regarding the siting of the new powerhouse. These problems were compounded by a statement made by executives of the A.C.T.U. who threatened to call out forty-three affiliated unions if the decision was made to locate the power station at Tarong. The member for Somerset, W.A.M. Gunn, stated: 'No elected government, irrespective of the party it represented, could allow a situation to develop whereby a policy was dictated by the Trade Union Movement. This would be a challenge to the Parliamentary system.'¹⁵

In October 1975 the press reported that the state government had decided to defer any decision regarding the Tarong site, having made a decision to proceed with two other major power developments, the extension of the Gladstone power station and a hydro-electric project for Wivenhoe on the Brisbane River. On the South Burnett and especially in Nanango, the news was received with considerable dismay. Land speculators, anticipating a boom in the real estate industry following a cabinet decision to site the station at Tarong, had already invested heavily in real-estate sub-divisions, and many other investment opportunities such as businesses within the township were already in the speculative stage.¹⁶

For two more years the project stagnated, the Howard power station had been marked for closure and with higher demands on electrical supply it was becoming increasingly obvious that a further power station would have to soon be constructed. The Gladstone power station and the Wivenhoe pumped storage hydro-electric scheme were expected to be able to provide sufficient power until 1985 when a new station would have to come on line. This being so, the State Electricity Commission called for tenders for the supply of coal for the next power station, the tenders closing on 24 June, 1976. There were seven tenders, these were associated with the coal sources at various locations, Blair Athol, Wandoan, Millmerran, Acland, Tarong, Taroom and Brigalow and West Moreton.¹⁷

By November 1977 cabinet was still contemplating the siting of a station at Tarong, much of the decision making process being dependent upon the feasibility of constructing a water supply dam in the region. The final decision could only be made after an investigation which was then being carried out by the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission into the feasibility of constructing a dam on the Boyne River near Proston that could be used as the water source for the proposed power station. There were two other sites being considered as possible sources of water, the Wivenhoe Dam, then under construction, and a dam near Kenilworth on the Mary River, however, both alternatives were generally considered to be too expensive due to the cost of constructing lengthy pipelines to Tarong.¹⁸

Facing stiff competition and a well organised campaign from the people of the Millmerran district, the people of the South Burnett were galvanised into action to present their own strong case to have the power station located at Tarong, and in February 1978 a petition signed by many thousands of South Burnett residents was sent to the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, pointing out the advantages of having the station at Tarong.¹⁹

During a cabinet meeting held on Monday 13 February, 1978, the decision was made to locate the power station at Tarong, two days later the local press jubilantly headlined: 'Yes We Won.'²⁰ Coincidentally, in September that year, while plans went ahead for the construction of the Tarong power station, the chairman of the Wide Bay Burnett Electricity Board, Alderman C.J. Nielsen, announced that the long obsolete original power station site at Kingaroy, the first power station on the South Burnett, constructed in 1924 and opened in January 1925, was to be sold.²¹ The station was later transformed into the town's heritage museum, funding for the project coming as



Stuart Lister, former manager of Tarong.

Courtesy — Stuart Lister.

Stuart Lister was educated at the Brisbane State High School, leaving in 1944 at the age of fifteen to begin an electrical apprenticeship with the electricity department of the Brisbane City Council. While completing this apprenticeship Stuart Lister also undertook night study for a diploma in mechanical and electrical engineering through the Queensland University. Upon completing his studies and his apprenticeship he worked as an engineering assistant with the electricity department of the Brisbane City Council, and moved to the South Burnett Electricity Board at Kingaroy in 1951 as an electrical engineer. In 1952 he returned to the Brisbane City Council as plant efficiency engineer, where he remained until 1955. From that time there followed a number of appointments, including the Townsville Regional Electricity Board, the Northern Electric Authority of Queensland, based at Townsville where he was firstly, engineer generation design and construction, responsible for the establishment of the Collinsville power station and later (1971–73), development manager. Then followed an appointment to the Queensland Electricity Generating Board as Gladstone project engineer, responsible for the establishment of the Gladstone power station and later as chief engineer, power development. He was appointed manager of the Tarong project in 1979, a position he maintained until 1986.²⁴

In May 1979 the Queensland Electricity Generating Board announced that a total of ten tenders had been received for two contracts, the supply of generators and of boilers for the station, a further seven tenders had been received for the first large scale testing of Tarong coal, this tender involved the excavation of approximately 23,000 tons of coal which was to be transported to the power station at Swanbank for testing, the tests were necessary so that the boilers could be designed and manufactured to match the precise mineralogical components of the coal. During the early months of operations at the Gladstone power station there had been considerable problems caused through the mismatching of coal type to boilers, and the state government was concerned that the same mistake was not repeated at Tarong.²⁵ In August that year the Queensland Electricity Generating Board announced that the first major contract, that of the supply of four steam turbo generators, had been awarded to C. Itoh and Co. (Australia) Ltd. The generators were to be manufactured by Hitachi Ltd. in Japan. The general manager of the board, Mr Fred McKay, said that the generators would be the largest of the sixteen power stations

part of the Australian bicentennial program, the museum being administered by the Kingaroy Historical Society.²²

In February 1978 the group manager of Conzinc Riotinto, John Keogh, announced that drilling on the coalfields had commenced on a large scale and the company envisaged a seven years' programme to assist with the development of the state's next power station project. Keogh told reporters that CRA would require a permanent labour force of some 325 people and the company was preparing to construct up to 240 houses in the region. Keogh stated that the entire project would take four distinct stages, power station construction, power transmission, water supply and coal supply.²³

In 1979 Stuart Lister, a former Kingaroy electrical engineer, was appointed manager of the Tarong power station project. Lister had worked at the Kingaroy power station when it was still using suction gas and diesel engines.

Stuart Lister was born in Brisbane on 17 May, 1929, the son of John Wesley and Stella Victoria Lister. Stuart's father was a pipe fitter at the Brisbane abattoir who had served in the A.I.F. during the Great War.

in Queensland and that the first plant was expected to arrive on site in 1983.²⁶ Also that month the state government decided that the first unit should be in operation by May 1984, this meant advancing the schedule by seventeen months and placing enormous strain on the project, the largest construction then taking place in the state.²⁷

Work on the site progressed steadily over the following months. In March 1980 the Queensland Electricity Generating Board opened up the site for public inspection and received an enormous response, buses acting as a shuttle service to the building complex. Project manager, Stuart Lister, told the press that the response had been so great that the site would be opened to the public more frequently.²⁸ Also that month the board accepted the tender of C. Itoh (Australia) Ltd. for the supply of the four boilers for the station, the contract price was in excess of \$147 million, the largest single contract of the entire project. Itoh, which had also won the contract to supply the station's four generators, was contracted to supply the first of the boilers ready for the commencement of operations in 1984, with the remainder coming progressively on line by 1986. Each boiler would burn up to 180 tonnes of coal an hour.²⁹



Rocky Creek access road, part of the extensive earthworks undertaken by the contractor — Thiess Bros. 6 June, 1980.

Source — Tarong power station archives.



New construction office, showing No 1 plant room and condenser for air conditioning, constructed by R.F. James Pty. Ltd. 1 July, 1980.

Source — Tarong power station archives.



Interior view of the new construction office, showing air conditioning ducts and hangers prior to installation of frames to support the suspended ceiling. 1 July 1980.

Source — Tarong power station archives.

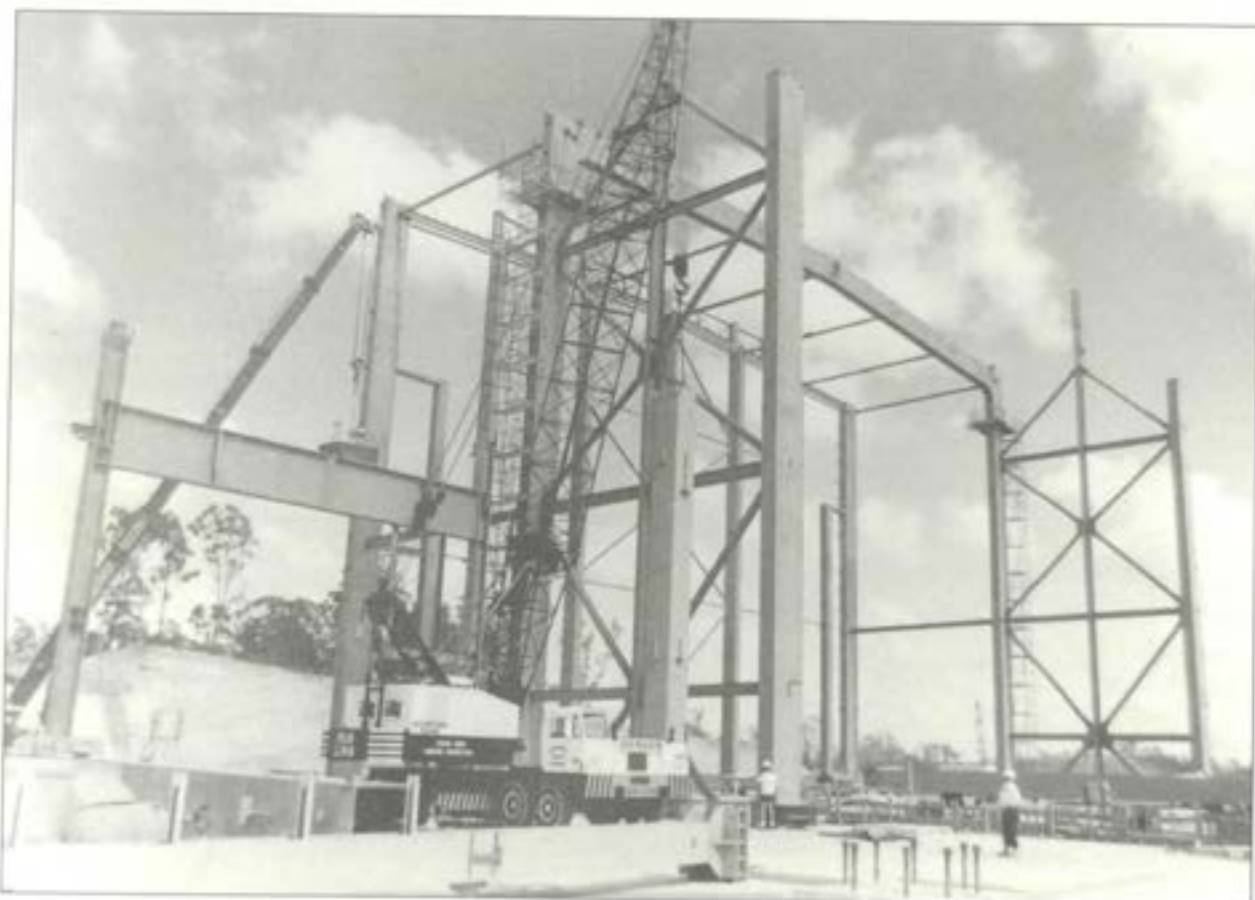
By July 1980 there were more than six hundred people working at the construction site and two more large contracts had been awarded. Evans Deakin of Brisbane had won the contracts for the supply of the condensing and feed heating plant for the four 350 megawatt turbo generators at a cost of \$32 million, and Transfield (Qld) Pty. Ltd. had been awarded the \$16 million contract to design and construct the two cooling towers. Each of these reinforced concrete towers would be 118 metres high and 75 metres in diameter.³⁰ The cooling towers were required to service the generating units, each tower cooling the circulating water used in the station's condensers where spent steam was to be converted to boiler feed-water and returned to the boilers.

Also in July 1980 the Darling Downs based coach company, McCafferty's, won the \$3 million contract to transport workers to the Tarong power station, this was a major transportation contract spread over a period of seven years. Coach services were to provide buses running regularly from Nanango and Yarraman to Tarong. The coach company purchased four hectares of land in Nanango which it could utilise as a terminus and workshops.³¹

In October 1980 a contract worth \$660 million was signed by representatives of Pacific Coal Pty. Ltd. (a subsidiary of CRA) and the Queensland Electricity Generating Board for the supply of coal to Tarong. This was the largest single contract ever to be signed in Queensland to that date.³²

In December 1980 a modern office complex was opened at the site, this office, designed to accommodate up to one hundred personnel, was one of three permanent buildings then on site, the other two being the fire station and the main gate-house.³³

In January 1981 approximately sixty men employed by Pontello Queensland Ltd. went on strike at the complex protesting against the retrenchment of nine men who had been laid off prior to Christmas 1980.³⁴ Also in January, work commenced on the construction of the station's single chimney, this too was to be a massive undertaking, 203.5 metres high, housing four flues, one for each boiler. Approximately one million bricks and 12,500 cubic metres of concrete were to be used in the chimney's construction.³⁵



Erection of steelwork for the No 1 boiler house and the turbine house, contractors D. & R. Fabricating Pty. Ltd., and John Holland (Constructions) Pty Ltd. 7 January, 1981.

Source — Tarong power station archives.



This view shows the progress of No 1 boiler house, rows 5, 7 and 9 of the turbine house and purlins and girts affixed to the No 1 annexe. Trucks are delivering concrete to the P.F. mills in No 2 boiler house. 7 April, 1981.

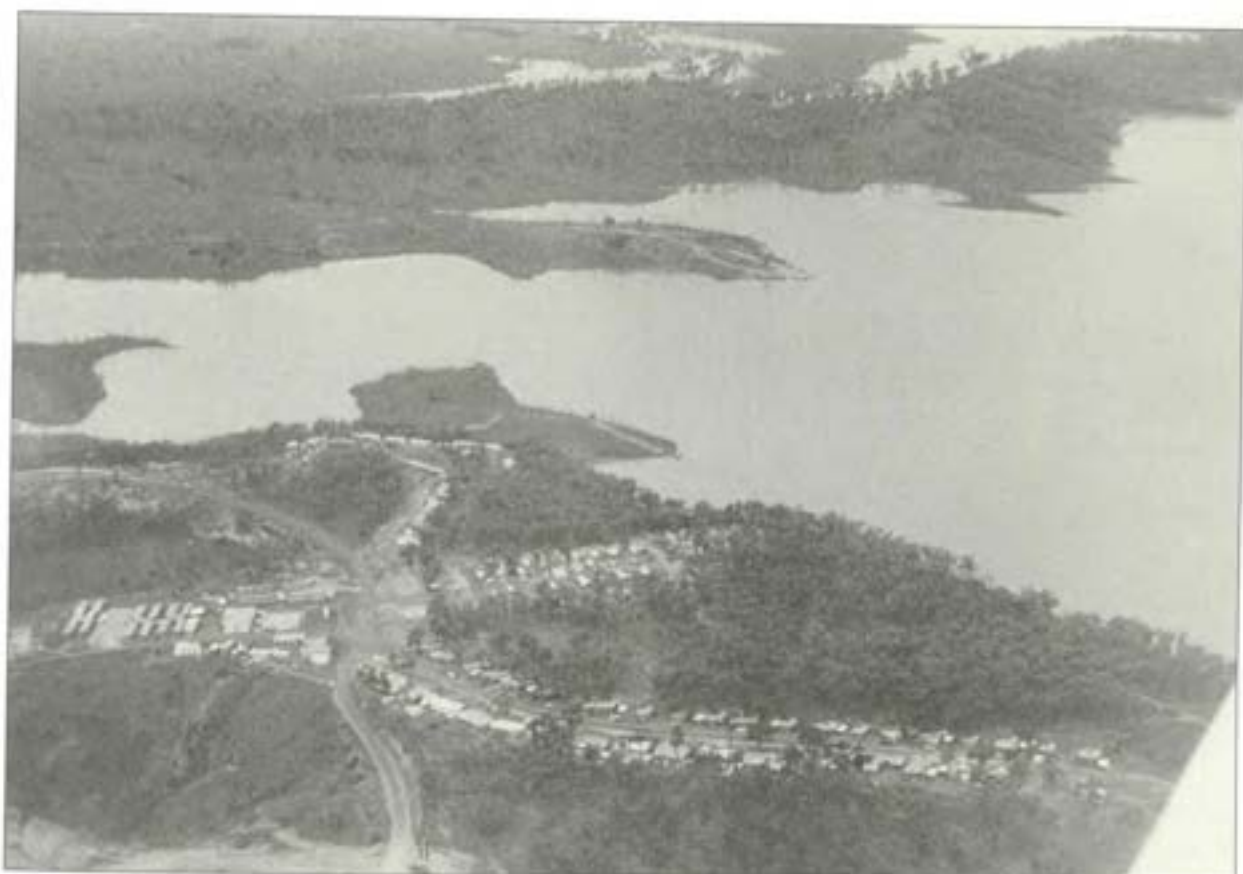
Source — Tarong power station archives.

In March 1981 the managing director of Pacific Coal, Don Carruthers, signed a \$10 million contract with the American firm of Bucyrus-Erie for the supply of a 3000 tonne drag-line for the Tarong coal mine. The drag-line was to be manufactured in Queensland by Evans Deakin Ltd. at both their Brisbane and Maryborough workshops, the expected commissioning of the drag-line was September 1983.³⁶

The first death at Tarong came on Monday morning, 16 March, 1981, when a thirty-six years' old rigger named José Yeste-Sanchez was killed after falling eleven metres to the ground from a platform where he had been involved in steel construction of the turbine house. The Yarraman ambulance rushed the injured man to the Nanango Hospital where he was later transferred to the Kingaroy Hospital, however, he died at 11.15 that morning. Yeste-Sanchez was a Spanish national, his parents in Spain were immediately notified, a post mortem examination showed that death had been caused by a fractured skull. The body was later flown to Spain for burial. The Queensland Electricity Generating Board site manager at Tarong told the press that men at the site stopped work for a day as a mark of respect for the dead man.³⁷

One of the buses transporting workers to the site crashed in May 1981 after coming into collision with a car. The accident occurred at the corner of Burnett and Appin Streets, Nanango, the bus driver, Ronald Christian Rohlf, was thrown from his seat as the bus went out of control and struck a fence at the Nanango State School. The driver of the car, Gayle Michelle Thompson, was admitted to the Nanango Hospital with leg and head injuries.³⁸

By June 1981 the total work-force employed at the Tarong construction site was 995, and only one per cent of available man hours had been lost due to industrial stoppages in the two years since the project had first started. Work was then proceeding as planned and it was expected that the first of the massive 350 megawatt generators would be brought into production by May 1984. Landscaping of the site was under way and more than five thousand trees had been planted.³⁹



The Boondooma Dam site during its construction. Note workers' accommodation in foreground, barracks on left.

Source — Alan Keates, Wondal Shire Council.

The most significant event in the modern history of the Wondai/Proston regions was the state government decision in 1978 to construct the dam at Boondooma. The dam, which was to be built on the Boyne River north of the junction with the Stuart River, would provide water for the Tarong power station. This was a huge undertaking that would pour money and materials into the region and provide work for a great many South Burnett people. Accommodation for the work-force would be provided by the construction of a large camp-site at Boondooma, this would be comprised of several permanent houses, seven staff houses, married and single staff quarters, caravan park berths and hundreds of single men's rooms.⁴⁰ The cost of the camp-site would be in the vicinity of \$1 million, it would provide accommodation for approximately 160 people and would be largely serviced from Proston. Additionally, in order to meet the requirements of extra road works created by the construction of the dam, the Wondai Shire Council also established a workers' camp at Proston. A council work-force of about twenty people had to be accommodated in caravans at Proston.⁴¹ It was estimated that the camp would be required for approximately two years and would have many facilities including hot water, a toilet block, laundry and showers.⁴²

The dam itself was to be an enormous construction, the total cost of the project was estimated at around \$65 million, with the cost of the dam itself close to \$12 million, the dam would be capable of holding around 46 billion gallons and the Tarong power station would use approximately 6.6 billion gallons annually. The pipeline from Boondooma to Tarong would be ninety-three kilometres long and almost a metre in diameter.⁴³

By October 1979 work was under way on the \$1 million access road to the dam site. The road was being constructed by the Queensland Water Resources Commission in conjunction with the Main Roads Department and the Wondai Shire Council. By that time too the caravan park established for the workers was in operation and the main workers' village at the dam site was in the process of being established. Around thirty men were then employed on preliminary work at the dam site, and the look-out area had been constructed. The work-force was estimated to rise to around two hundred, and a further two hundred men would be involved in laying the pipeline to Tarong.⁴⁴

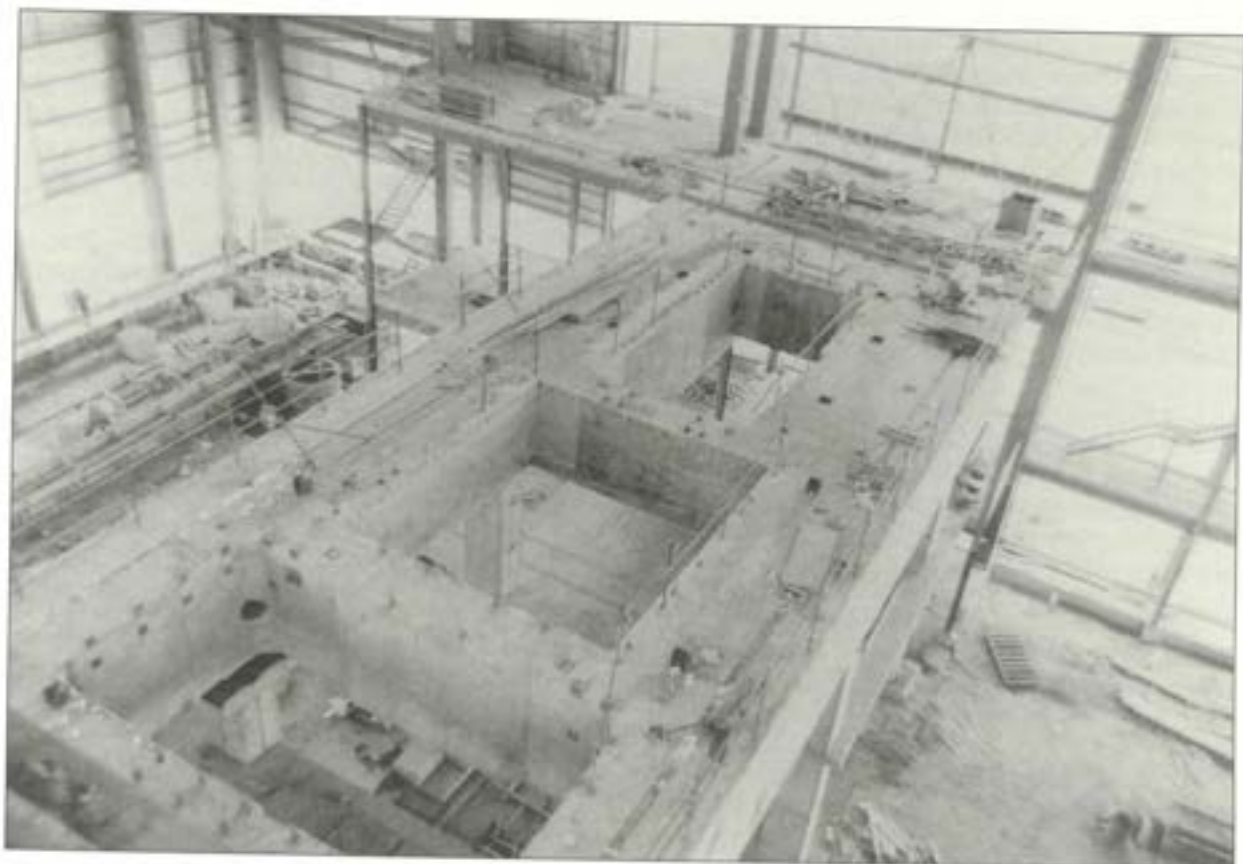
By July 1980 the small township that would spring up at the site of the dam was almost completed. Engineer in charge with the Water Resources Commission, Mr P.A. Johnson, told the press that the township would be comprised of eighty-six single men's quarters, thirty-six homes for married men and twenty-two caravan park sites. Other constructions on site would be a single men's mess hall, a canteen and a community hall.⁴⁵

The first rock blast at the dam site occurred in April 1980, the inaugural blast clearing the first sections of rock where the dam was to be constructed.⁴⁶

In December 1980 the Queensland Water Resources Commission announced that the tender for the actual construction of the dam had been awarded to the Queensland company of White Industries which had provided the lowest tender. The storage contract included the construction of two rock-filled embankments with concrete faces, a concrete spillway and inlet and outlet works.⁴⁷ The tender for the clearing of the ponded area at Boondooma was awarded to B.J. Mearns of Proston for a total cost of \$237,890. The work involved the clearing of 1089 hectares of land.⁴⁸

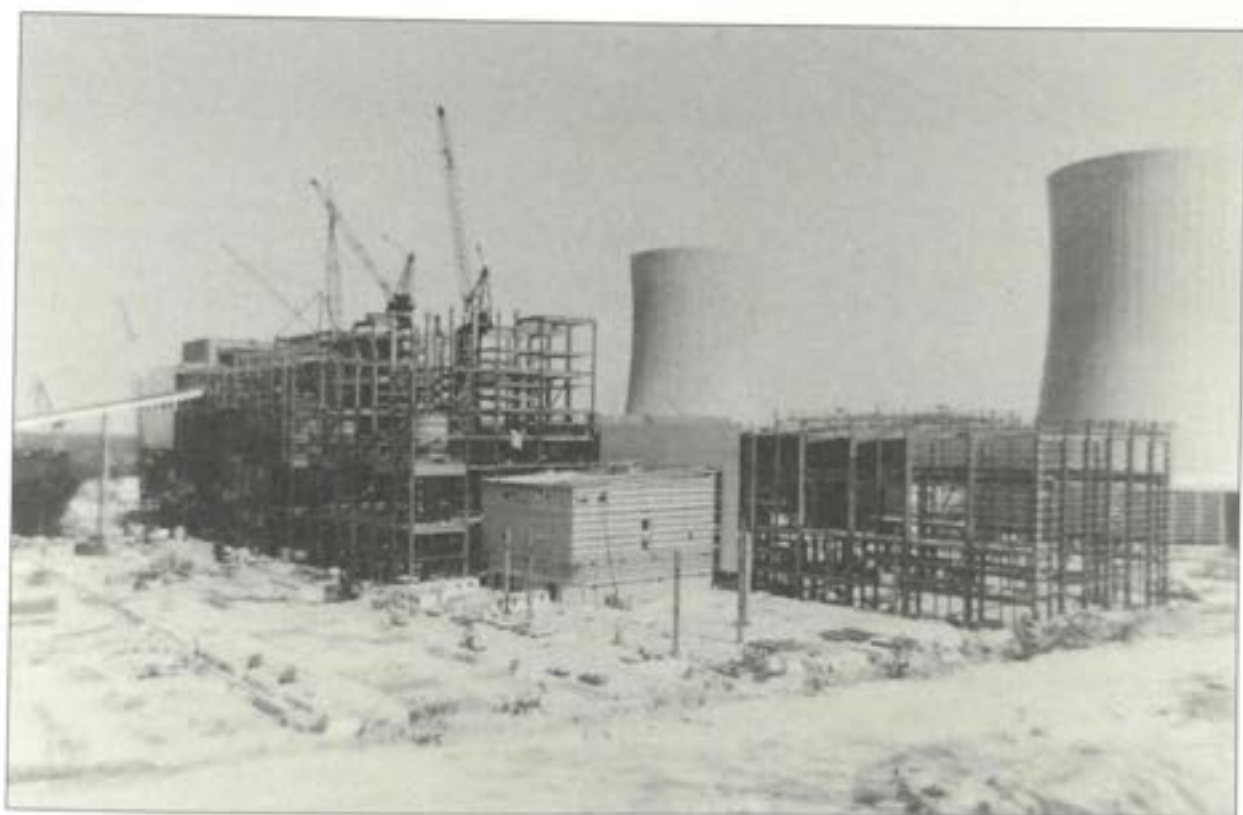
The first death at the site of the Boondooma Dam construction occurred in May 1982 when an excavator driven by John Francis Cutelli slipped into a trench. Cutelli was killed instantly in the crushed cabin, he was later cremated at Maryborough.⁴⁹

In February 1982 the state government announced that two major contracts associated with the construction of the pipeline from Boondooma Dam to the Tarong station had been awarded. The water resources minister, Mr Ken Tomkins, said that the 96 kilometre pipeline was being constructed in two stages. Stage one had been contracted to Clough Engineering Group of Milton, the contract price being \$7.81 million to lay 51.2 kilometres of concrete lined steel pipe, and the second contract was awarded to Kilpatrick Green Pty. Ltd. of Kedron for the manufacture and installation of six large electric pumps, the price being almost \$3 million.⁵⁰ Soon afterwards the state government accepted the tender of Roche Brothers for the contract involving the excavation, laying and welding of 44.8kms of the steel piping, the price being \$6.5 million.⁵¹



Completed No. 1 turbo-generator table top. 9 February, 1982.

Source — Tarong power station archives.



View from S. E. batter showing power station construction. 10 December, 1982.

Source — Tarong power station archives.

In March 1982 another fatality, the second, occurred at Tarong when foreman, Vincenzo Tomassetti, was killed while helping two workers to dislodge a wooden wedge with the aid of a crowbar. The foreman and his two men were fifteen metres up a cooling tower when Tomassetti lost his footing and fell. Work stopped at the site the following day as a mark of respect for the victim.⁵²

In June 1982 the project received a severe blow when workers at the site went out on strike demanding a shorter working week. Unions were calling for a thirty-five hour week but were apparently willing to accept a 36.5 hour week — although they had turned down an offer of thirty-eight hours per week. Premier Johannes Bjelke-Petersen stated that the state government would stand firm on the issue and that the workers must maintain a forty hour week — later adding that if an agreement could not be reached the project would be closed down.⁵³

On Monday 5 July workers at the Tarong site voted to accept the state government's offer of a thirty-eight hour week.⁵⁴ However, the disputes were to continue. That same month fifty men were stood down after eight members of the Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association went on strike, the men were stood down because they could no longer work without the F.E.D.F.A. members who were crane drivers. The eight workers had gone on strike to obtain an allowance of \$8.00.⁵⁵

By October 1982 the new 127 kilometres transmission line from Tarong to South Pine in Brisbane had been completed. The new line, which had cost \$20 million, included 303 support towers, some up to fifty-one metres high. The line could be used to carry supply to the enormous drag-line that would clear the overburden from the coal layers.⁵⁶

By the end of 1982 approximately 1600 people were working at the site and the project was proceeding on schedule. An emergency gas turbine had been delivered to the plant and was then being installed, as was the station's first turbo generator and the first of the main boilers. The cooling towers were almost completed, switchgear and control panels were being installed and the administration building had been completed.⁵⁷

On Monday 15 November work at the power station came to a halt for a few minutes as the first of the huge power generators was lifted into place by two cranes. For many of the Japanese engineers who had worked for three years on the project it was an emotional moment, coloured streamers were hung from the generator and it was ceremoniously sprinkled with sake, (rice wine).⁵⁸

By April the following year the station was capable of producing its first tentative supply of electricity following the successful installation of the emergency gas turbine generator. The \$6 million generator, supplied by G.E.C., was capable of producing 15 megawatts of electricity.⁵⁹ The contract for the second power line from Tarong to Brisbane was let to the Australian company, Electric Power Transmission, in May 1983. The line, from Mount England near Wivenhoe Dam to Tarong, would cost \$8 million and would be completed in time to co-ordinate with the completion of the station's second generating unit in 1985.⁶⁰ By June 1983 the work-force at the site had reached two thousand and approximately sixty per cent of the estimated budget had been expended.⁶¹

In June 1983 the first production blast at the Meandu mine took place when seventeen tonnes of water gel explosive was placed into ninety drill holes and detonated, resulting in the blast of more than 60,000 cubic metres of coal.⁶²

Another strike occurred at the power station site in late June 1983 when members of the Metal Trades and the Electrical Trades Unions walked off the job because Japanese engineers on commission work were carrying out assignments that union members believed should have been carried out by wages personnel. E.T.U. members went on strike on 27 June and nine other unions went out three days later, 1700 men were then on strike. While previous strikes had involved such issues as accommodation and working hours, this was the first strike to involve 'an industrial principle'. The strike was resolved soon afterwards.⁶³

Meanwhile, Pacific Coal's enormous operation at Meandu was gearing up; 'Hannibal', the drag-line was in operation, its boom measuring one hundred metres and its bucket capacity being approximately ninety tonnes. Coal was transported by trucks to the coal handling plant where it

passed through rotary breakers before being transported by conveyor belt to Tarong. The belt had a carrying capacity of 1500 tonnes per hour.⁶⁴ The coal in the mine is situated in five sloping seams which are separated by shale and sandstone. Before mining had commenced the geological estimates of the coal reserves in the region were set at approximately 180 million tonnes, more than sufficient to keep Tarong operating for its estimated life of around three decades. The first coal to be transported by conveyor to the power station took place in November 1983, the coal was to be used to fire the boiler in preparation for making tests on the generating plant. The transportation of the coal was in two stages, from the mine to the storage area where thousands of tonnes of coal were to be held, and from there to the boiler units.⁶⁵

By January 1984 testing of the first generating plant had been carried out, the series of tests designed to bring the plant to maximum output by the end of that month.⁶⁶ Another strike occurred that month when members of the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Foundries and Shipwrights' Union walked out over the question of Australian workers being allowed to work alongside Japanese technicians. Through that month the tests continued, despite the strike, project manager, Stuart Lister, stating that the 350 megawatt Number One generator was operating at eighty per cent capacity and supplying more than ten per cent of the state's electricity needs. The commissioning tests were scheduled to lead to placing a commercial load on the machinery by May that year.⁶⁷

Amid growing union action progress at the site moved slowly towards final commissioning. Following several months of delicate commissioning tests, by early May all was in readiness for the single generator to come commercially on line, the total cost of the project, including, the power station, the construction of Boondooma Dam, road-works, pipelines and high voltage transmission lines was approximately \$1330 million. Over four years after the first truck-loads of earth had been moved from the site, once part of historic *Tarong* station, the Tarong power station was ready to begin its work.⁶⁸ The remaining three generators were not expected to come on line for some considerable time. The second generator was due to be commissioned on 1 May, 1985, the third on 1 February, 1986, and the last by 1 November that year.⁶⁹



R1 conveyor from Pacific Coal's product load-out bin showing drive and take-up tower, 9 May, 1983.

Source — Tarong power station archives.

Over the years of its construction and following its final commissioning in 1984, Tarong has had an enormous impact on the region generally and on Nanango in particular. Prior to the commencement of work on the station, Nanango, like almost all other regional centres throughout the South Burnett, had been suffering a depression, shops and factories were closed and unemployment was at high levels. For years the economy of Nanango had been steadily declining following the down-turn in industry, the decline of the dairy and timber industries, the closure of the cheese factory, the railway station, the butter factory, the brickworks and sawmill all played a significant role impacting heavily on the regional economy, these factors were heightened with a general down-turn in the rural sector that came about through a drought which lasted two years and which saw the population of the shire drop dramatically.⁷⁰

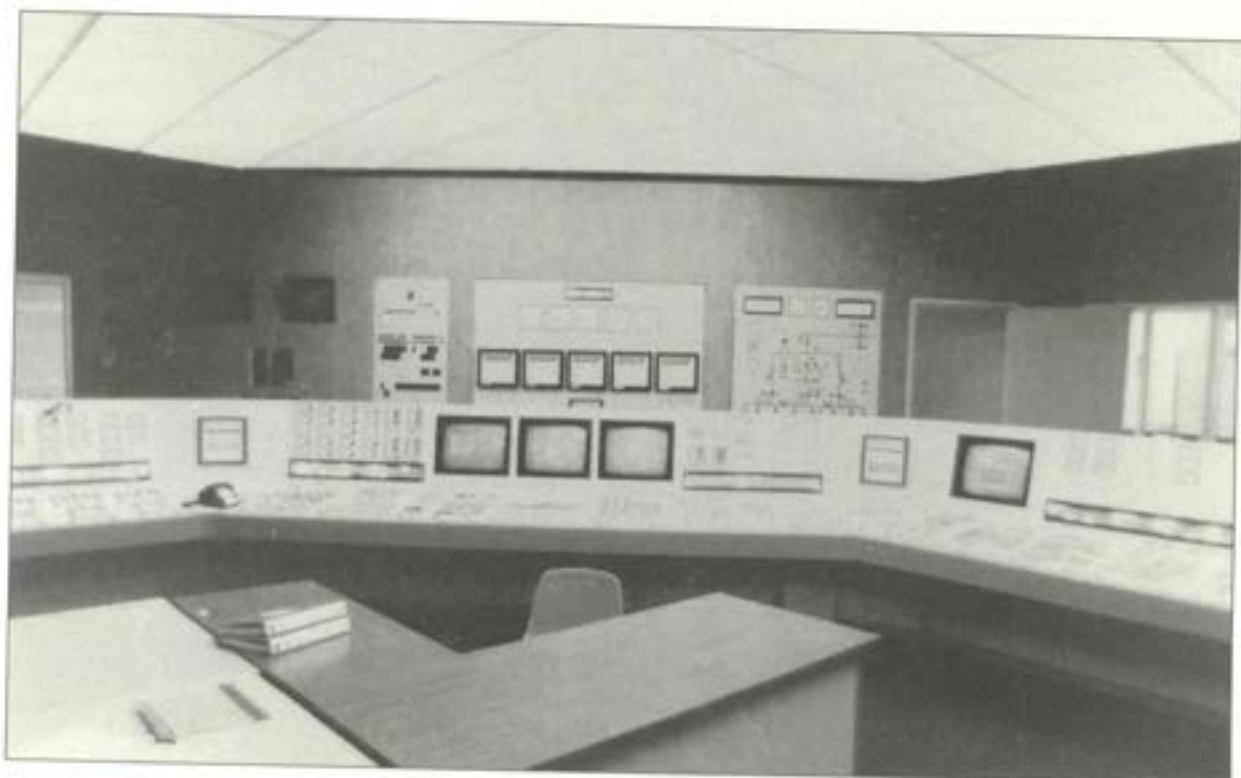
However, over the following four years all this was to dramatically change, as Tarong progressed, unemployment levels dropped considerably and the Queensland Electricity Generating Board added greatly to the general prosperity of the region through the provision of added facilities such as housing and public works.⁷¹ The board was responsible for the construction of more than 230 houses in the area as many hundreds of workmen, electrical engineers and miners and their families flooded to the South Burnett. This influx completely revitalised the region, shops re-opened, factories once again began production, local authorities pushed ahead with aggressive public works. Not since the discovery of gold in the Nanango district, more than a hundred years previously, had such a boom been experienced.

The Tarong power station was officially opened by the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, on Friday 4 May, 1984, the premier describing the event as one of the most significant in the history of the South Burnett. The opening ceremony and unveiling of the official plaque were followed by an audio-visual presentation, afternoon tea and a tour of the site, approximately one thousand invited guests attended the function. The premier was presented with a framed colour photograph of the project.⁷² The following day Tarong was thrown open to the public and more than 15,000 people toured around the site, forty buses running a shuttle service from the station to the Meandu mine.⁷³

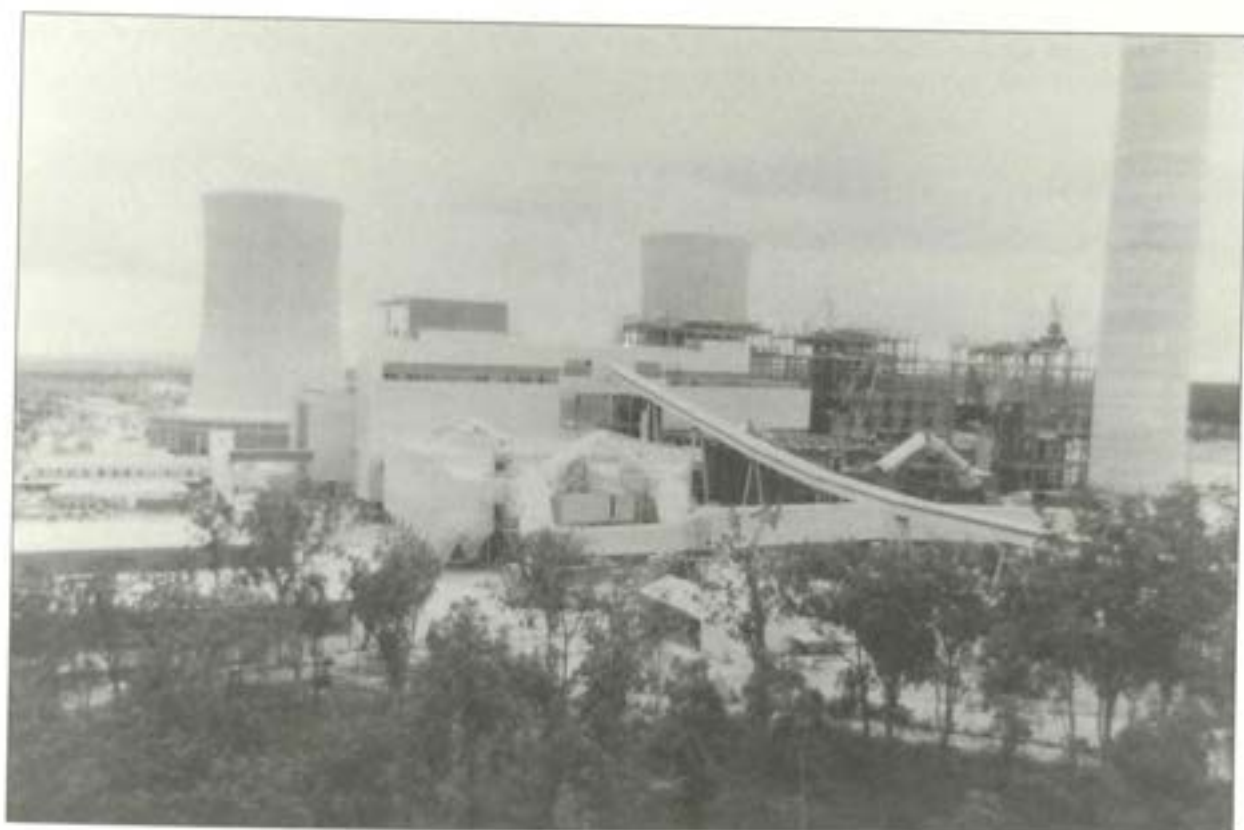


No 2 unit 6.6kV switchgear (Hawker Siddeley, left rear). 415V switchgear (G.E.C. — foreground). 2 February, 1984.

Source — Tarong power station archives.



Commissioning of No 2 unit control desk and wall panels. 5 September, 1984. Source — Tarong power station archives.



Overall station from the south west. 2 February, 1984.

Source — Tarong power station archives.

The second generating unit came on line as scheduled in May the following year, by that time the station was providing a quarter of the state's electricity requirements. Meanwhile work on the installation of the station's other two units remained on schedule with about a thousand construction workers still on site.⁷⁴

The power station came up to full capacity, one week ahead of schedule in July 1986. Mines and energy minister, Ivan Gibbs, said that the last of the four generators would be undergoing tests until November that year when its output would then be dispatched into the state grid. By that time, with the construction project almost completed, the number of workers on site totalled just 350.⁷⁵

The man who had been at the helm of this giant undertaking from its inception, the Tarong project manager, Stuart Lister, went on to become general manager responsible to the electricity commissioner for the management of Queensland's major power stations as well as the design and construction of all new power station projects. He retired in December 1992 and now lives in Brisbane.⁷⁶

Over the following years the station functioned with only few problems, coal coming from the Meandu mine being perfectly suited to the boilers. In January 1987 Pacific Coal commissioned a coal preparation wash-plant in order to wash the coal before it was sent to the power station. Prior to this most of the station's coal had come from King Seam, the largest and cleanest seam on the coalfield, however, with coal coming from smaller seams containing higher levels of stone, it was necessary to install the wash-plant in order to deliver a consistent quality coal to Tarong.⁷⁷

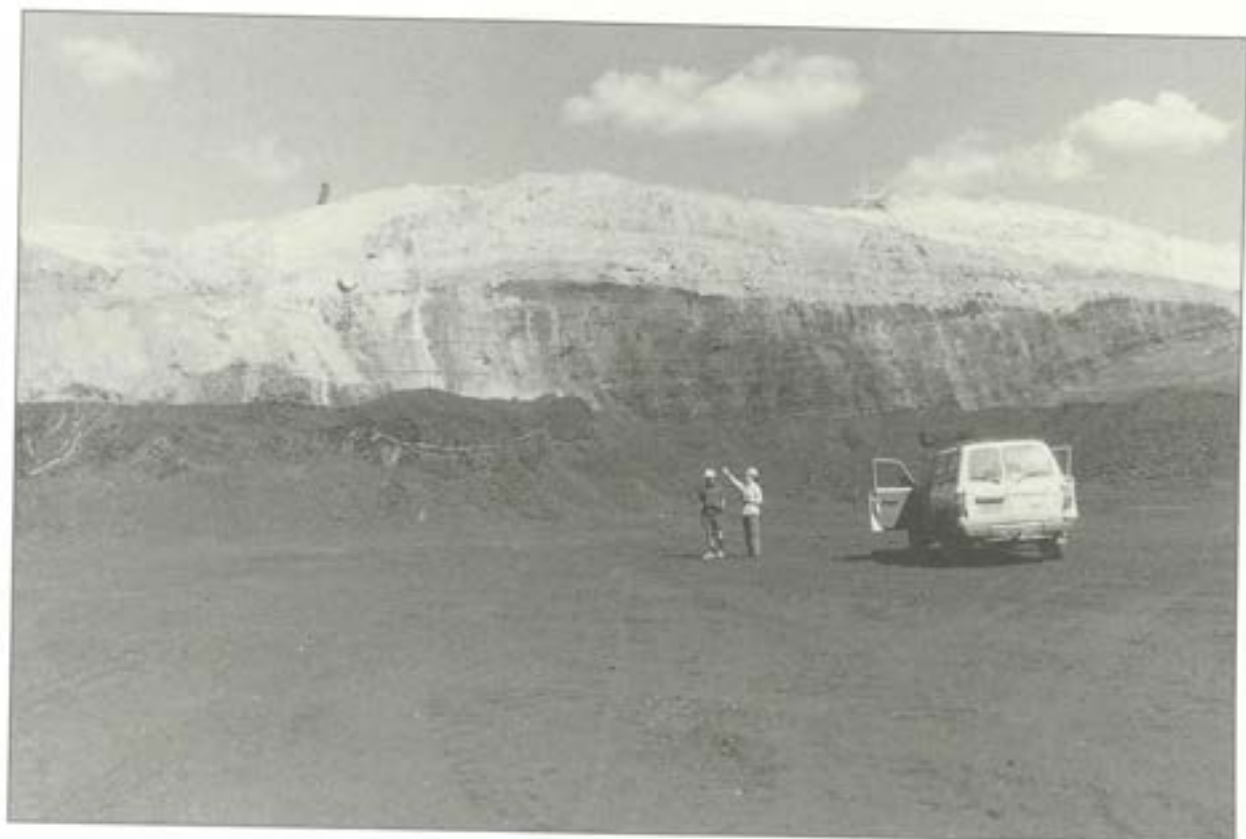
Through the 1990s the South Burnett, like most other areas of Australia, suffered from a severe drought, and the level in Boondooma Dam dropped dramatically thus placing into jeopardy the water supply for the power station. As the drought deepened a decision was made by state government to construct a pipeline from Lake Wivenhoe in order to provide a secondary source of supply to the station. This pipeline was completed in nine months at a cost of \$76m and was opened in November 1995.⁷⁸

In February 1988 the road leading to the Meandu mine was named in honour of one of the region's early coal pioneers, Nobby Smith. The Nobby Smith Way sign was officially unveiled by the chairman of the Nanango Shire Council, Councillor Reg McCallum.⁷⁹ Nobby Smith died the following month and was buried at the Nanango cemetery.⁸⁰



A typical band of coal at the Meandu mine. This photograph was taken at the King Two seam.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.



King Two seam at the Meandu mine, an almost endless band of coal stretching into the distance.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.



The drag line at Meandu mine clearing overburden.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews.



Some of the truck fleet at the Meandu mine.

Photographed by Dr Tony Matthews

Today the Tarong power station is operated by Tarong Energy Corporation Ltd., formerly Austa Electric, and is one of the state's leading power stations. Its generating capacity is 1400 megawatts with a permanent staff of approximately two hundred and seventy people, it uses up to five million tonnes of coal per annum.⁸¹

At Meandu there is an extensive rehabilitation program which was set in place to ensure that the site is rejuvenated following the open cut process, this includes stripping the topsoil from before the path of the mining operations and stockpiling it for later use, re-contouring and re-spreading of topsoil, fertilization and finally broadcast seeding with a number of species including grasses, acacias and local eucalypts.⁸²

In 1994 the mine received the Premier's Award for Environmental Excellence and the following year received a commendation award in the Premier's Awards for community relations.⁸³ On 21 July, 1995, the Tarong National Park was gazetted, this park borders the mining lease and is managed by rangers from the Bunya Mountains National Park.⁸⁴

Achievements through 1996 included a major scheduled shut-down of the drag-line for servicing in July, this was only the second occasion since the drag-line had been commissioned in 1983 that the boom had been lowered. The shut-down created a hive of activity with two hundred contractors and Tarong employees performing numerous tasks associated with the maintenance of the drag-line.

Both the mine and the power station were opened to the public on 15 June, 1996, approximately four thousand people visited the power station with some three thousand visiting the mine.⁸⁵

The mine completed a major development programme in the mid 1990s, to establish three new mining areas (King IV, Southwest and King II). During this period the mine also established a truck and shovel fleet to augment its overburden removal and replaced its belly dump coal haulers with a fleet of four 165 tonne rear dump trucks. These initiatives were part of a programme aimed at extending the mine life well into the 21st century.

Both the mine and power station continue to support local endeavours, for example, as we have seen earlier in this publication, Tarong Energy and Pacific Coal each donated \$10,000 towards

the publication of this history, and they have also been generous in their donations to other causes. For example, in October 1996 Austa Electric, now Tarong Energy, donated a fire engine to the Nanango Rural Fire Brigade, the hand over being officially made by the general manager of the station, Burt Beasley.⁸⁶ The Nanango emergency services facility has been established on land donated by the mine.

The future of power generation and transmission in Queensland is likely to be interesting, Tarong will be coupled with the Wivenhoe Dam hydro-electric generating facility and other power stations such as those at Callide, near Biloela and Swanbank, will be linked together. Linkage of power stations in North Queensland will also almost certainly take place and two new power stations are to be constructed near Townsville. Negotiations are now underway for the establishment of a new gas powered station at Oakey and Shell Minerals have introduced a proposal to construct a thermal power station on the Acland coal deposits north of Oakey.⁸⁷

The Tarong power station and its adjacent mine are, of course, controlled by two different general managers, the present manager at the power station is Burt Beasley and at the mine Charlie Lenegan is in charge.

Burt Beasley was born in Toowoomba on 4 December, 1950, the son of John and Irene Beasley, both of whom are now deceased. John Beasley was an electrician who worked with the electricity board based in Toowoomba. Burt Beasley was educated at Toowoomba prior to commencing his bachelor of mechanical engineering at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (later the University of Southern Queensland), commencing his studies in 1968 and completing his degree in 1971. He later undertook (1974–76) a graduate diploma in business administration and from 1980 to 1982 completed a German language course with the University of Queensland.

His first position following his graduation in 1971 was as an assistant mechanical engineer at the Bulimba power station, he moved to Swanbank in 1973, also as an assistant and was promoted to mechanical plant engineer in March 1974. Two years later he became assistant efficiency engineer at Swanbank, then acting efficiency engineer and was finally promoted to efficiency engineer in May 1978. Since then he has worked at a number of positions including resources manager and later production manager at Callide B power station, becoming manager of Callide B in August 1990, then executive officer seconded to the Queensland Generation Corporation Implementation Project, a position he held from August 1994 to January 1995. He was appointed manager at Tarong power station on 29 May, 1995, taking over from Ron McGuigan. Burt Beasley was married in July 1982, he and his wife, Donna, have one daughter.⁸⁸

CRA (now Rio Tinto) has transferred a number of general managers to Tarong over its first 15 years. Kevin Barden, the first general manager, was responsible for the development and start up of the mine. His successors were Michael Noakes (1987–1992) who subsequently transferred to Kelian Gold in Indonesia and Peter Marshall (1992–1994) who subsequently transferred to Kaltim Prima Coal in Indonesia. Charlie Lenegan took over the role of general manager in mid 1994. Prior to this appointment he had worked in a number of CRA operations (including Kaltim Prima Coal and Argyle Diamonds) as well as in a number of overseas countries (including Zimbabwe, England and the United Arab Emirates.)

The mine employed around 300 people in mid 1996. The workforce included production operators, trades people and a number of people in specialist roles (including engineers, surveyors, geologists, accountants, safety specialists, supply specialists and computer specialists.) There has been remarkably low turnover of the workforce which is comprised of people recruited from the local area as well as a number of people who have been recruited from elsewhere and have chosen to settle in the South Burnett. While the majority of employees live in the towns of Kingaroy, Nanango and Yarraman, a number live on small holdings within commuting distance of the mine.

Today the power industry faces an interesting future which will be controlled by a number of variables, competition coming about through the rationalisation of the industry which will see power stations and groups of stations competing with one another for the electricity dollar, competition which may mean a reduction in charges to consumers, but additionally there are many other aspects that may be thrown into the equation. These include the provision of power from New South Wales through the Westlink project, the availability of gas, specifically gas from Papua New Guinea, and possibly power generation development from other competitors. In 1997

Queensland and New South Wales governments reached a historic agreement on a corridor to connect Tarong with the national power grid. The Queensland section of the corridor will begin at the border near Texas and extend to Tarong between Dalby and Chinchilla.⁸⁹ Charlie Leneghan admits: 'There are a lot of uncertainties in the future, you won't see long term contracts any more, and what we are doing is working to position ourselves to secure our future.'⁹⁰

Brief Chronology of Tarong

The following chronology of the construction and operations of Tarong may aid researchers:

- February 1979. The state government announces that Tarong is the preferred site of a new 1400 megawatt power station.
- August 1979. The state government announces that the schedule for the project is being pushed ahead by seventeen months.
- December 1979. Site works at Tarong are started.
- April 1980. The construction of Boondooma Dam and associated pipeline is commenced.
- September 1980. Meandu Creek Dam is completed.
- October 1980. The contract with Pacific Coal is signed, this contract is to provide coal supplies from the Meandu coalfield to Tarong.
- January 1981. Work commences on the construction of the chimney and structural steel for the boilers.
- October 1981. The first of four boiler drums is lifted into place.
- September 1982. The first of four turbine generators arrives at the site.
- November 1982. Water storage at Boondooma Dam commences.
- January 1983. The administration complex on site is completed.
- March 1983. The emergency gas turbine is completed and becomes operational, test loads provide electricity to the state grid.
- July 1983. The chimney is completed, the work-force peaks at 2040.
- September 1983. Boondooma Dam is officially opened.
- October 1983. Switchboard completed, the official opening of Meandu mine.
- November 1983. The first coal is burnt at Tarong.
- December 1983. The station's first generator is linked to the state grid.
- February 1984. Water arrives by pipeline from Boondooma Dam and Number One generator is tested at full load.⁹¹
- May 1984. Tarong power station is officially opened by the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen.
- May 1995. Number Two generating unit delivers its first commercial load.
- October 1985. Electricity production reaches 1000 megawatts representing forty per cent of Queensland's electricity generation.
- February 1986. Number Three generating unit delivers its first commercial load.
- October 1986. Construction of the fourth high voltage transmission line (to Toowoomba).
- November 1986. Number Four generator delivers its first commercial load and Tarong begins working at full capacity.
- June 1990. A major overhaul is completed in a record breaking period of just twenty-eight days.
- January 1993. The Australian National University announces that the station is a world leader in reliability.

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-two

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77. SBT. 28 January, 1987, p 6.
78. *Bush Telegraph* Vol 3 No 6, 1996, p 7.
79. SBT. 17 February, 1988, p 3.
80. SBT. 30 March, 1988.
81. *Tarong, a New Generation in Power*, p 5.
82. Willmott, p 87.
83. SBT. 13 October, 1995, p 6 and author interview with Charlie Lenegan, conducted at Meandu, 28 May, 1997.
84. *Meandu Messenger*, December, 1996, p 6.
85. *Meandu Messenger*, September, 1996, pp 1, 3 and 7.
86. SBT. 25 October, 1996, p 7.
87. SBT. 7 March, 1997, p 13.
88. Curriculum vitae of Burt Beasley and author interview with Burt Beasley conducted at Tarong on 2 June, 1997.
89. SBT. 10 June, 1997, p 3.
90. Author interview with Charlie Lenegan, conducted at Meandu, 28 May, 1997.
91. SBT. 2 May, 1984.

The Great Depression and the Home Front During the Second World War

During the years 1929 to 1934 the world experienced the tragedy and trauma of the Great Depression. It was not as long as the depression of 1873 to 1896, but it profoundly affected the lives of all Australians who relied largely upon exports of produce and minerals. There were many causes of this depression, including the slump in agriculture due to over-production in certain regions and through maldistribution. This was aggravated by a fever of speculation in the United States that led to a withdrawal of funds from Europe and finally to the infamous Wall Street Crash of October 1929. The crash quickly resulted in massive unemployment as factories, ship-builders, retail giants and other large scale businesses either closed their doors or substantially reduced their operations. In Australia the roads became dotted with men looking for work, they moved from town to town, village to village seeking employment of any kind either in the commercial centres or on farms as labourers, shearers, drovers, anything that would give a day or two of pay or even simply a meal.

Government rations were issued to those men and their families who could prove that they were destitute, however, these rations were extremely basic and few could live on them without supplementing their diet either through casual work or from hunting or fishing.

The South Burnett region was home to hundreds of itinerant workers moving from farm to farm or town to town, they worked at harvesting the maize, ploughing, weeding and a host of other rural duties. In Kingaroy a considerable body of men was camped at the show-grounds. These men contracted themselves out to daily labour, returning to the show-grounds at night or on the weekends, and they fiercely guarded their rights to obtain whatever work was available on a local level.

In March 1931, at the very height of the Great Depression, the tranquillity of Kingaroy was broken with the arrival of a group of Italian men who were seeking work. The arrival of these men was to lead to an ugly situation, the press later reporting: 'A few days ago a party of about a dozen Italians journeyed from the North, and it is stated offered their services for farm work at very low wages. A body of white local unemployed living at the show-grounds strongly resented their action, and it is understood gave the newcomers certain time in which to leave the town. The Italians remained, and a brawl took place yesterday, wherein, it is said, a knife was used. The whites eventually overpowered the Italians, and threw them, bag and baggage out of the show-grounds. The Italians appealed to the police, who advised them to leave the town. They were eventually escorted to the railway station and placed on the train for Theebine. The situation looked angry for a time at the station, and several of them had knives handy as if they anticipated another attack. It was reported that a second detachment of their countrymen was to have arrived today, but they were advised against doing so, and evidently took the warning as no more Italians arrived here.'¹

The Depression affected everyone, from high financiers to the poorest farmers and labourers. The banking system, the same system that had done much to foster growth through corporate and private loans, was incapable of helping in any significant way.

Following closely on the heels of the Great Depression, and largely as a result of it, came the Second World War. Throughout the 1930s there was a considerable build up of military power world-wide. Fascist governments were adopted by Spain, Germany and Italy, and Japan's increasingly antagonistic stance had been clearly demonstrated ever since the infamous Mukden Incident in September 1931. Britain and other Western powers were certainly increasing their military capacity, including the United States. In January 1939 President Roosevelt called upon

Congress to authorize US\$525 million in military spending.² It seemed reasonably clear that war was approaching and once again, if the mother country was to be involved, then Australians, as a matter of social conscience, would also fight.

For the people of the South Burnett the growing aggression in Europe seemed far away. Winter crops needed harvesting, there was business to attend to, and the threat of a possible Japanese invasion seemed implausible, despite the evident affiliation between Germany and Japan. When Neville Chamberlain announced that Britain was at war on 3 September, 1939, the people of the South Burnett were alarmed, and possibly perplexed, although, as with almost all other centres throughout Australia, there was a powerful feeling of profound patriotism. Despite this the readiness of Australian forces was certainly not at its peak. Colonel E.E. Patterson, commanding officer of the Wide Bay Regiment from 1936 to 1942, later admitted that at the outbreak of hostilities the regiment had units at Maryborough, Tiaro, Gympie, Murgon, Wondai, Kingaroy, Childers, Howard and Bundaberg, adding, however: 'Our only transport was four light horse-drawn wagons and we were in a bad way for weapons ... we had sufficient rifles for only two companies ... transport consisted of one truck which we were permitted to purchase second hand for £60.'³

The full mobilization of Australian forces did not immediately follow Canberra's announcement that war had been declared and, initially at least, only specified militia forces were ordered to report. There was, however, even in those early days and long before Japan entered the war, a belief that Australia may well be the target of aerial bombing and plans were made to have certain classes of people evacuated from the cities to rural regions. This evacuation programme was to cover children and pregnant women, mothers with young children and aged people. The organisation would centre around regional religious bodies, the Red Cross, local branches of the Defence League and the Q.C.W.A. Housing would be arranged wherever spare accommodation was available and the refugees would be met at the local railway stations.⁴



Nanango Light Horsemen in camp, Caloundra 1939. **Front. L. to R:** S. Kluver, R. Atwell, Rex L'Estrange, D. Bright, J. Stephen, W. Rossow. **2nd row:** J. Hunter, N. Scott, Bill Jensen, R. Kassulke, G. Well, K. McCallum, Hollis Cook, R. Glanville. **3rd row:** Jim Gentry, Ron Calvert, G. Gentry, H. Roberts, J. Vines, R. Cooper, T. Vines, J. Hatchman, S. Broome, Ed. Langan, C. Cornish. **Far back:** Richard Smith.

Source — Nanango Shire Historical Society, Arthur Bright collection.

The organisation of the war effort, particularly in those early days of the conflict, was somewhat fragmented. No one really knew what would be required, veterans of the First World War and those people who had served on the home front during that time could only fall back on those experiences and begin to place into effect organisations and facilities that had then been required. Volunteer A.R.P. (air raid precaution) wardens were called to service, as were volunteers to perform many other tasks in the event of air raids, including the guarding of vital facilities. Evacuation plans were drawn up and a census made of all vehicles in case they were needed for general evacuation.⁵

A.R.P. Wardens were recruited for every town and village throughout the South Burnett, these were issued with some basic medical supplies as well as stretchers in case of air attack and the need to move injured people. Each warden was provided with a badge, an arm band and an identity card. These cards were the wardens' authority, they entitled the wardens to enter homes and enforce the air-raid laws. Other volunteers included ambulance bearers, voluntary and auxiliary motor cycle patrols who also acted as message couriers, and demolition squads, men who would take charge of dangerous buildings following air attacks and make them safe or pull them down. All of the volunteer personnel were trained in handling the crises which might follow a bombing attack.⁶

Organisations such as the Queensland Patriotic and Australian Comforts Fund and the Red Cross were rapidly formed, members volunteering their services, patriotic funds administered through these organisations steadily grew. The president of the Queensland division of the Red Cross, Lady W. Wilson, made a strong appeal for the formation of Red Cross branches in all regions of the state.⁷

The Comforts Fund provided a number of important items and services to the troops, including personal comforts, sporting material, recreational equipment, mobile canteens, talking picture show units, club rooms and leave accommodation. The fund organisers allocated set quotas to each of the local authorities in the state. In 1943, for example, Kilkivan was required to raise £405. Kingaroy £600, Murgon £525, Nanango £420 and Wondai £375.⁸ The ladies of the Comforts Fund began a cafeteria service at the military airfield at Kingaroy in 1942, the service provided hot food and drinks to serving personnel at the airfield and the profits went to providing additional comforts to men serving at the front.⁹

The Red Cross also expended its energies in providing medical aids and comforts, as did the various branches of the Queensland Country Women's Association the members of which raised large amounts of funds and worked at the manufacture of netting camouflage. They also knitted socks and balaclavas and supplied cakes and gift parcels to the troops. Another area where women played a decisive role in the war was through the Australian Women's Land Army, volunteers worked on farms to aid in the production of crops and other duties while the men were serving in the armed forces.

As with the Great War, recruitment stations began operating at all major centres throughout the region, groups of recruits were farewelled at functions hosted by the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. (R.S.L.) and its Women's Auxiliary.

One of the first casualties of the war — although killed accidentally — was South Burnett recruit Edward Andrew Walsh, a twenty-four years' old air force cadet who was killed in New South Wales when the *Hawker Demon* in which he was travelling crashed. The cadet was the only son of Andrew Walsh (Senior), a farmer who owned a property on the Manumbar Road near Nanango.¹⁰

Private Bernie Barbeler, twenty three years of age, from Benair, was killed in action in 1941, he was the youngest son of Mr and Mrs W.J. Barbeler and had enlisted twelve months previously.¹¹

Private Jack Parker was among the first war victims from the South Burnett region, and was the first married man from the Kingaroy region to die. He was killed in action in 1941, his wife receiving a telegram from the minister for the army in July that year.¹²

Another early casualty of the war was Able Seaman Don Johnston, who was serving aboard the ill-fated *H.M.A.S. Sydney* when that ship engaged the German cruiser *Kormoran*, in November 1941, more than six hundred officers and men died during the action.¹³

The war effort was the predominant issue of the time and local government authorities moved rapidly to do what was necessary to promote that effort. There were many meetings at public halls, frequently organised by officers of the local government, to promote the ideals of patriotism and to raise funding. These were profoundly patriotic affairs echoing the almost aching patriotism that had characterised such meetings during the First World War. For example the people of Nanango were called to a patriotic meeting at Tara's Hall in July 1940, the hall was decorated with flags and ribbons and local singers gave renditions of the popular songs that were then helping to fuel the patriotic fervour throughout the British empire. The *Nanango News* reported: 'Miss Royle ... struck up a patriotic chord when she sang that grand old inspiring song, "Rule Britannia", and the audience rose in a body and sang the refrain with great patriotic fervour ... Miss Royle's second contribution was the solo, "There'll Always be an England".'¹⁴ The songs were followed by rousing speeches given to promote items such as recruiting and fund-raising, prominent among the speakers were Nanango Shire Council chairman, Councillor C.S. McClymont, Doctor J. Sexton and the manager of the Timber Corporation's mills, George Watt. The evening concluded with a declaration of loyalty which one speaker put into words: 'We, this assembly of citizens of the Nanango Shire, in this grave hour of national emergency, declare our loyalty to His Most Gracious Majesty and his Empire, exhort all to whole-heartedly unite in service, sacrifice and financial assistance to the nation in the present time of critical danger, and unreservedly pledge ourselves to expend in every direction open to us our utmost energies in the prosecution of the war until our cause triumphs.'¹⁵

There were several different loans which the government had devised to raise money to prosecute the war, including the issue of war savings certificates. These were issued in three denominations, £1, £3, and £10. These certificates were redeemable by the government after a period of seven years at their face value, and purchasers would obtain the certificates at a reduced rate which gave the purchasers an investment potential. The £1 certificates could be purchased for sixteen shillings, the £5 certificates for £4, and the £10 certificates for £8. These certificates could be paid for by instalments by joining a war savings certificates group, no person could own more than 250 £1 certificates and the certificates were free from all taxes and stamp duties.¹⁶

As in the First World War there were many large fund-raising events held right throughout the South Burnett. For example, following a patriotic fete held at Murgon in April 1940 the press enthused:

Flags were waving and business places decorated and, from an early hour of the morning, great activity prevailed.

The street stalls in charge of ladies displayed a great array of goods of various descriptions which soon found purchasers and nobody escaped the vigilance of the young ladies armed with note books who demanded sixpence for a ticket on — the doll, the pound note, the ham, the cushion etc, not to mention only a few of the raffles offering.

The public was in a generous mood and responded readily to these demands ... The crowd followed the procession to the show-ground — and it was some procession. Preceded by the two 'Guardians of Law and Order', well mounted ... followed by twenty-one decorated cars and floats, the Salvation Army Band, Boy Scouts and Cubs and a brigade of Abos in full war undress and paint.¹⁷

Wondai too put on a feverish patriotic display in 1940, the rally taking place in July that year. A huge parade, certainly the largest ever witnessed in the town, left Sundstrup Park to wend its way through the streets, there was a plethora of floats, all with a war message, N.J. McAllister's truck, for example, had been transformed into *H.M.S. Arc Royal*, the local diggers' association manned a realistic looking pill box, complete with weapons, there was a mock tank and a display of doors, windows and walls with the strident message, 'Walls Have Ears.' Fund-raising for the war effort totalled £6400 for the day, including investments in war savings loans.¹⁸

Several regions in the South Burnett were raising money for a war plane, this fund, administered by well known Goomeri businessman Terry Wise, obtained contributions through a variety of fund-raising events. They were later able to forward a substantial amount to the federal government and this money was used to purchase two *Tiger Moths* which were used for air training at the No 2 Elementary Flying Training School at Archerfield. The secretary for the Department of Air wrote to Terry Wise in 1941 informing him that the aircraft had been named

Barambah 1 and *Barambah 2*, and that photographs of each aircraft would be taken and forwarded to the fund-raising committee.¹⁹

The need for home defence was one of the Australian government's primary objectives. In 1941 the Northern Command Headquarters based in Brisbane issued an order stating that all .303 rifles and sights for those weapons held in civilian hands were to be handed in to the authorities. Purchasing orders were given for each surrendered weapon.²⁰

In addition to the A.I.F., volunteers could serve in the 49th Battalion Home Service, Area 47, based at Maryborough which maintained sections throughout the Wide Bay and Burnett. This was primarily designed to form units for domestic defence for people who, for whatever reason, were unable to join the A.I.F. Conditions of entry into this defence force were similar to that of the army, enlistment was for the duration of the war, applicants had to be of A.I.F. physical standards and aged between twenty-one and forty years. Pay was set at the pre-embarkation rate of the A.I.F., that is, privates, five shillings per day with three shillings married allowance or four shillings a day for a wife and a child. The volunteers could be called to service anywhere within Australia or any territories under its jurisdiction, preference was given to unmarried men under thirty-five years of age.²¹

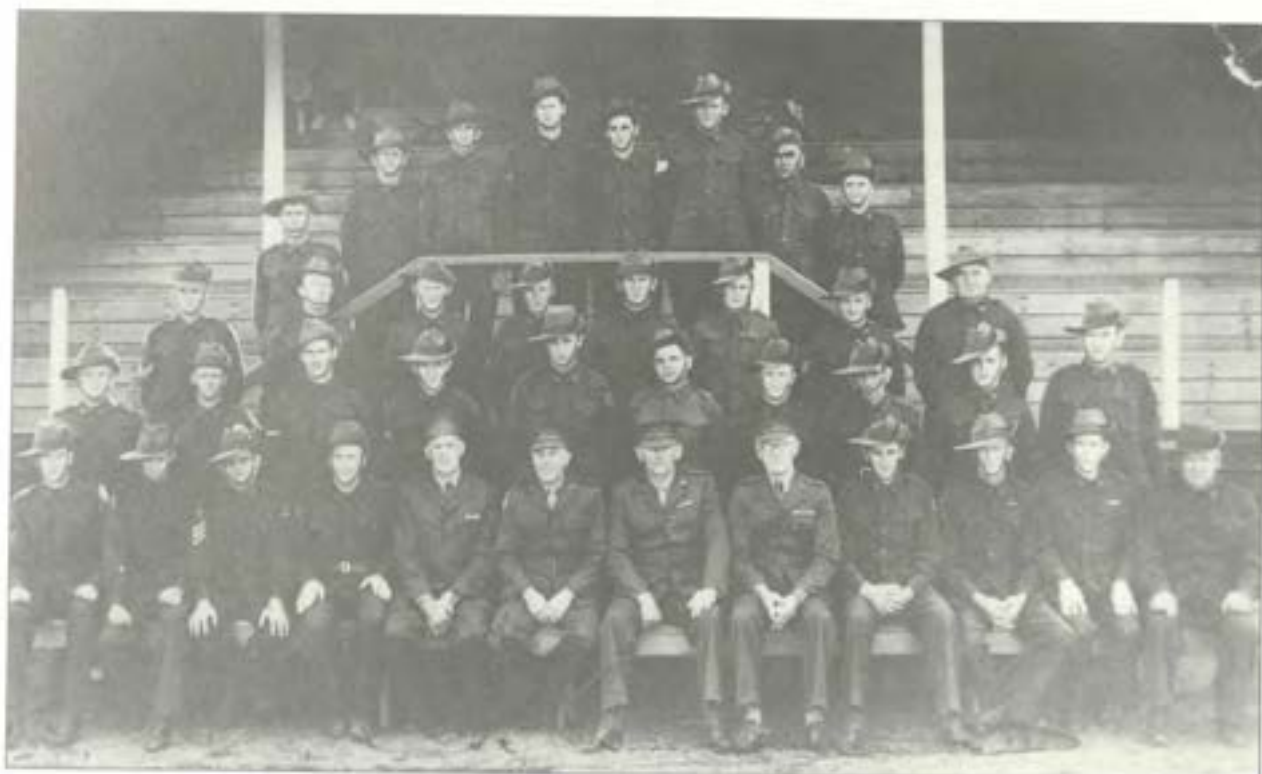
Additionally, volunteers were being accepted into the Returned Soldiers' Volunteer Defence Corps, a home guard organisation, formed with the sanction of the army, that played an important role in defence. Initially at least, this part-time force was left almost entirely to its own resources, composed mainly of members of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A., it had to find its own parade grounds, its own instructors, and was forced to drill with broom sticks rather than rifles, the press later reporting: 'The Old Soldier spirit of these veterans of the last war was sorely tried and their patience was tested to very near the breaking point during those very early troubled days when equipment was undoubtedly short ... after the debacle on the Continent (the defeat of the British Army in France and subsequent evacuation at Dunkirk), our rifle supply had to be sent overseas to make good the shortage ... this could not be told to the V.D.C. at the time and we had to depend on the goodwill of these veterans to bear up in the matter of seeming inaction.'²²

By June 1941 platoons had been formed in Murgon, Kingaroy and Nanango and further organisation of other platoons in various centres was taking place. The force was supposed to have been made up of two returned soldiers to every civilian volunteer, but as there were many more civilian volunteers than returned soldiers, this equation was rapidly abandoned. The men drilled and were trained in using weapons, although their equipment was very poor, especially during the first few years of the war.²³

Initially, at least, the volunteers for this organisation were treated as little more than civilians in military clothing, but following Japan's entry into the war and the subsequent stiffening of military attitude towards home defence, the regulations governing the administration of the V.D.C. changed dramatically. As the war escalated, volunteers were regarded as more than merely a 'Dad's Army', personnel received better training and equipment and the regulations governing enlistment and discharge were modelled more on the lines of the regular army. During the early months of the war volunteers could resign at will from the V.D.C., the only requirement was that they had to give two weeks' notice, however, under the new regulations the volunteers, once enlisted, were contracted to serve for the entire duration of hostilities and could only leave upon receiving a proper discharge. Should an emergency arise such as a Japanese invasion, the volunteers could be called up to serve as full time regulars. Members of the organisation became eligible, under certain conditions, for pension rights and compensation for death or injury. The corps accepted men between the ages of eighteen and sixty years, and for many of the younger men who knew they would eventually be called up into the full-time army, the training in the V.D.C. was a good way in which they could become used to the basics of army life and methods before they were called up. Rifles were issued to the volunteers to replace their broomsticks, although these weapons too were certainly not the latest Lee Enfield design but were generally the older weapons used during the First World War. Equipment and clothing then began to be issued and slowly the V.D.C. began to look and act as a military body.

Despite the early set-backs in obtaining recognition and, more importantly, a reasonable supply of equipment, enthusiasm in the project never appeared to waver, and indeed many volunteers spent almost all their spare time in training, some even volunteering to train during their annual

holidays. Over the following months there was heightened activity, men were enlisted in ever increasing numbers, uniforms and rifles were issued, duties assigned, training progressed and slowly the unit came alive as a moderately successful fighting force. They were posted to guard duties at aerodromes, some were sent to the coast to watch for the approach of enemy ships or landing craft, and they were trained, as Churchill had promised, to fight on the beaches.²⁴



Murgon V.D.C.

Source — Cleo and Keith Goodchild collection

Later in the war members of the V.D.C. on the South Burnett were frequently used as aeroplane spotters, although other personnel, including many women, also volunteered for this task. Their duties included manning specified spotting posts that were equipped with telephones and manuals. The posts were constantly manned, day and night, aircraft were identified, and reported into a control headquarters.²⁵ In December 1942 volunteers spotted and reported an American bomber that was in distress, the aircraft was flying west from the coast through 'soupy' weather. It finally undertook a successful forced landing on the property of Mr P. Kearney at Boonyouin. The aircraft was damaged during the landing but the crew escaped without injury.²⁶

In addition to forming a part of the now much publicised Brisbane Line, the region of the South Burnett was excellent training ground for the soldiers, many of whom had previously had little or no training. Infantry and armoured divisions practiced in the rough and heavily timbered country simulating real warfare. Their camps were basic, often simply canvas tents or crude huts, the one highlight in the soldiers' lives was the occasional leave pass, generally only for a few hours, during which they would flood into the nearest town to drink at the local hotels, play two-up, and enjoy the weekly picture show before being trucked back to camp that night. Regional dances in halls such as Gallangowan, Elgin Vale, Booie and others were inundated with soldiers during dance nights and there were frequent problems and jealousies caused through the imbalance in numbers between men and women.²⁷

In 1941 came the news that Trooper George Burns, the son of a well known Wondai family, had been killed in action. George Burns had enlisted shortly after the outbreak of war in 1939. His troopship left Sydney in January 1940 after the trooper had spent his final Christmas leave with his family. His father was R.L. Burns, he and his wife had owned the property *Avondale* at North Mondure before retiring to Wondai. George's brother Bill had also enlisted in the services, joining the R.A.A.F.

George Burns wrote frequently to his family. He informed them that he had arrived in the Middle East in February 1941, a fact that had come as something of a surprise to him and his fellow troopers as they had believed they were destined for England. In Palestine they had received extensive training and George Burns had been drafted into a tank corps. In a later letter to his parents he told of being in the front line trenches in Egypt from where his division would soon afterwards launch the attack that would cost the young soldier his life. The press later reported: 'The tanks were in the forefront of the attack, flattening the barbed wire entanglements and making openings which the Infantry used so effectively. Really the marvel is that so few of the spearhead of the attack paid the Supreme Sacrifice. But George was fated to be one of them. He passed to Valhalla on January 3rd, the day after his 24th birthday.' Following the arrival of the telegram at his parents' house informing them of their son's death, the town of Wondai went into mourning. The next Saturday at the picture theatre the entire audience rose and stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect for Burns.²⁸

George Burns' commanding officer, Major Macarthur Onslow, later wrote to the dead soldier's parents. The letter, addressed from 'Somewhere abroad', stated: 'George fell at Bardia as the result of a direct hit from a shell which killed him instantly, and we buried him the following day upon the escarpment overlooking Bardia. George proved himself to be a grand soldier and a good comrade and you may be sure we are one and all proud of him and his comrades who have given their all for Australia. They have added lustre to the record of our Troops and will for all time be an inspiration to those who are carrying on the work they commenced.'²⁹

In October 1941 came the news that another South Burnett soldier had been killed, this was Private George Garrad of Murgon. Garrad was born in Ilford, England, in 1910, and was therefore thirty-one years' old when he was killed. Prior to joining the A.I.F. he had worked at a sawmill at Manumbar. On 17 May, 1941, had been involved in a raiding party led by an officer named Lieutenant Guest. The object of the party had been to raid the German lines, inflict what casualties they could, capture a prisoner for interrogation and return to the Australian lines with certain vital information. The raiding party, some thirteen in number, was very successful, they found a group of Germans preparing defensive positions in no man's land, Guest rushed in, lobbed in several grenades and emptied his revolver while his patrol also charged, it was during this charge that Garrad received a wound in the lower chest. Lieutenant Guest later wrote:

It only lasted about two minutes when what remained of the Germans were crying for mercy with their hands up, about fifteen in all. A quick check on the Patrol and I found that George was lying outstretched with a bullet through the lower portion of his chest. Before we could do anything the prisoners, seeing that we were such a small party started to break so we were forced to shoot the lot with the exception of one ... I detailed six men to move off with George towards our own lines while the remainder checked up on the damage done. The patrol accounted for over thirty Germans killed ... George remained conscious the whole trip back, over 4500 yards which must have been a nightmare for him. We got him away for medical attention as soon as we arrived back, but the Doctor informed me later that the bullet had passed through his lung and so George passed on next day, a more gallant end man never had.³⁰

Entertaining the troops who were stationed in the region during the war was always something of a logistics problem and one woman who rose to the occasion was the well known entertainer Elizabeth Louise Keen, later described in the press as having been: '... a born entertainer.'³¹ Mrs Keen was born in Tasmania and, as a child, lived in Western Australia. She was married in Sydney and during the 1930s moved with her family to Goomeri. She was the church organist at the Goomeri Church of England for thirty-five years until her failing eyesight forced her retirement and during the Second World War she achieved a certain degree of regional fame for her legendary concerts at the Red Cross and Comforts Fund evenings. She died in June 1980, her husband having predeceased her twenty-six years previously.³²

One of the South Burnett's more famous World War Two characters was Archie Caswell, a descendant of one of Murgon's first settlers. Archie Caswell became well known throughout the region due to his exploits as a prisoner-of-war under the Japanese and because of his incredible talent as a radio engineer.

Caswell was born at Murgon in July 1913 and attended the Murgon High School and later the Ipswich Grammar School. He volunteered for service in 1941 and joined the R.A.A.F. He was a trained radio engineer and was readily accepted into the service. He was farewelled from Murgon on Saturday 21 June, 1941, during a special dinner held in his honour at the Pixie Rose Cafe. After the dinner he was presented with: '... a very nice belt fitted with pockets,' his friends claiming that they hoped he would bring it back to Australia filled with souvenirs of his adventures.

Caswell certainly had his share of adventures. He sailed shortly afterwards for Singapore, was soon transferred to Palembang in Sumatra and was captured there when Sumatra fell to the Japanese. Like tens of thousands of other allied personnel Caswell found himself living in the hellish conditions imposed upon him by his captors, but during the three years that followed his spirit remained unbroken. Using his radio engineering skills he managed to manufacture several radio sets capable of picking up Allied broadcasts and thus he and his fellow prisoners were kept reasonably aware of the true war situation. This was an enormous boost to morale but the possession of such radio sets was strictly forbidden by the Japanese on pain of death. In order to prevent detection Caswell made miniature radios from an uncertain conglomeration of parts and wires that he scavenged wherever he could. These wonderful pieces of radio engineering, a marvel even by today's standards, were cleverly concealed in such unlikely places as hollow table legs and even water bottles.³³

Caswell survived the war, he weighed just six and a half stone when he was released from the Japanese prison camps, and later made his home at Maryborough where he continued with his radio work and also became involved in television engineering.³⁴

Another man who won acclaim for his courage was Edward Richard Webster Blackmore. Blackmore was born in Wondai in 1910, he left school at the age of thirteen years and became a labourer but soon wanted more out of life and following a course at a business college in Brisbane became secretary to a professor who was embarking on a trip to Italy where he was to write a biography on Benito Mussolini. Blackmore found that he had a natural talent for languages and during the war became an intelligence officer. He was badly wounded on Bougainville by an exploding land mine, he lost his right arm below the elbow and also his sight. Undeterred, he later obtained the agency for William Rogers Hunting Knives and set up a successful manufacturing business in Brisbane.³⁵

In March 1942 news came that another of the region's servicemen had been killed, this was the well known Kingaroy solicitor, H.J. Wagner. Born at Toowoomba in 1903, Wagner was the son of Mr and Mrs H.J. Wagner, his father being a monumental mason. He was educated at the Christian Brothers' College Toowoomba and Nudgee College in Brisbane. Upon leaving school he was articled to Mr E.W. Cleary, a solicitor of Toowoomba, and after completing his articles he came to Kingaroy in 1928 where he went into partnership with O.S. Bond under the business name of Bond and Wagner. Wagner had been active on the recruiting committee at Kingaroy until his own call up in early 1942. At first he was attached to the legal administrative branch of the R.A.A.F., and was later transferred to north Queensland. Only six weeks after he joined the service he was killed in an aircraft crash in north Queensland.³⁶

By March 1942 — following the fall of Singapore the previous month and the increasing possibility of invasion, blackout tests were made to ensure that towns and villages in the South Burnett could not be detected from the air at night. These tests coincided with further requests for added civil defence personnel including A.R.P. wardens and boy runners.

Until Japan entered the war in December 1941 no-one on the South Burnett really considered that the region could be a target for bombing attacks, there simply was no enemy to carry out such attacks, however, with the Japanese threat growing it soon became evident that measures of protection would have to be carried out. Air raid wardens received further training, slit trenches were dug at strategic positions such as schools and near public buildings and black-out procedures were set into place. These procedures were tested by the wardens who moved quickly to remedy any lights that might have been showing, but the wardens too came under attack from the press due to their habit of striking matches to light their cigarettes while on patrol and thus possibly alerting any potential enemy. Apart from the R.A.A.F. aerodrome at Taabinga and possibly the individual power stations and railways, there were, of course, few military targets on the South

Burnett of any worth to the enemy and the region's towns and villages were never at any risk. Nevertheless the police, in conjunction with local authorities and business managers worked together to minimize the risks, for example on 4 September, 1939, the sergeant of police at Nanango wrote to Bob Morris, the shire clerk at Nanango, stating:

I have received instructions to formulate plans for the protection and safeguarding of all essential services in my Police District, such as, water supply, electric power, petrol depots, sawmills, butter factories, bridges and railways etc., and in order to do so the Local Authorities and Proprietors and Managers of such concerns should be interviewed, and arrangements made, for employees to be organised, so that they will be available to provide the necessary protection to such undertakings, when required.

One does not know to what extent the enemy sympathisers (if any here) may go to, and it is essential that we be on the alert for anything that may crop-up.

Should you decide on any plans, please advise me so that I can render all assistance in my power as Officer in Charge of Police for this, the Nanango District.³⁷

Another letter dated three months later also demonstrates the heightened awareness and fear of enemy alien attack:

Information to hand from the Military Intelligence Branch of the Defence Department has advised that confidential information has been received from the South that GERMANS and persons in sympathy with the enemy cause, may commit acts of sabotage during the coming month. They stated that munition works, wharves, shipping, water supplies, electric light and other undertakings may be attacked. They are of opinion that small bombs may be used. State Authorities should take whatever action they consider essential.

Should anything come under your notice at your works which you are suspicious of, please get in touch with me without delay.³⁸

Yet the only targets that may have featured in Japanese military strategy were the cinnabar mines at Cinnabar. The role of these mines during the war cannot be underestimated, mercury was vital to war production and was especially important in the manufacture of explosives. As we have seen earlier in this history, during the war years and particularly from 1939 to 1942 there were numerous press reports, both locally and as far away as London, that described in detail the importance of the cinnabar deposits in the Kilkivan region and listed the military uses for the product. These press reports would certainly have been located and filed by Japanese intelligence services.

During the blackout tests that were held at Wondai in February 1942 there were some embarrassing events, one woman, on going outside to check the effectiveness of her blackout curtains, found that she had locked herself out of her house; another man breached the blackout regulations when it was discovered that the lights from the valves of his wireless set could be seen reflecting on the wall behind the set. One man drove into the street to experience the blackout and used his car headlights on full beam, others could not be bothered putting up blackout screens, they simply turned off their lights and went to bed.³⁹ Another exercise in Murgon soon afterwards achieved similar results. One person was told to extinguish a light and did so, and while the warden was waiting in the darkness outside he heard a woman saying to someone else in the house: 'I wonder if the old b... has gone yet.' Another warden was almost run over in the dark.⁴⁰ In Nanango one warden believed that the entire exercises were a complete waste of time and did not even get out of bed when the air raid siren was sounded.⁴¹

During the war years the Australian military used the South Burnett extensively for manoeuvres and at times there were hundreds of thousands of soldiers undergoing training in various regions. As a result the people of the South Burnett became used to seeing men in uniform on the streets of the towns and villages. Soldiers on leave frequented the public houses and dance-halls, tanks and trucks could regularly be seen rumbling through the streets of towns like Goomeri and Kilkivan. Timber workers in the scrub were sometimes surprised by the sudden arrival of columns of tanks and thousands of soldiers, some were even surprised by bullets striking trees in the forests where they were working.

In the towns military police patrolled the streets looking for malcontents, drunks and men who were absent without leave. One of the most notorious incidences of such men was that of Sydney Alfred Lewis, aged twenty years, who would disguise himself as a military policeman in order to steal from and assault his victims. Lewis's *modus operandi* was to stop men in the street or in the lavatory of a public house and, claiming to be looking for deserters, start searching them, anything of value would be confiscated. He was caught, however, in Nanango, and subsequently sent to Brisbane prison for two months.⁴²

By this time too the impact of the war was creating certain shortages in the state, many retail items were becoming scarce including tea and tobacco, despite the fact that tobacco was being extensively grown at places such as Texas. Many retail businesses were forced to reduce or cease home deliveries because of the lack of petrol.⁴³ By the end of March 1942 tea was being rationed to a weekly allowance of just one ounce per person.⁴⁴ Scrap materials such as waste rubber, rags and paper were being carefully recycled under a wartime salvage scheme controlled by the Commonwealth Salvage Commission.⁴⁵

Rationing was never a real problem to the people of Australia during the war — unlike Great Britain which suffered years of tedious rationing for almost the entire war and, because of continuing world shortages, for years afterwards.

Almost all vital products remained unrationed in Australia during the war years, although in addition to tea, there was rationing of petrol, clothing, meat, butter and sugar. Of these, petrol was one of the most objectionable subjects of rationing — at least for those people who were fortunate enough to own motor vehicles and for business-people who relied on motor transport in order to conduct their business. Petrol rationing was brought into force in October 1940, a Liquid Fuel Board was appointed and this board regulated the amount and types of fuel rationed. At first the rationing was not too severe, however, from 1 April, 1942, new and more stringent measures were taken to preserve fuel and tighter rationing was imposed. The ration varied according to the type of vehicle a person drove and whether or not the vehicle was used for business or private purposes, business people receiving more liberal rationing. The April 1942 ration was set on a fixed scale, those with 3 horsepower motors receiving an entitlement to seven gallons per month, this ration increased through the various powers of engines to thirty horsepower which received an allowance of seventeen gallons per month. On average this allowance allowed the operator of a vehicle to drive a total of sixty-five miles per week.⁴⁶



Food for Britain Day, Nanango, World War Two.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives

Meat was in abundance, especially in rural regions like the South Burnett, however, it was finally placed on the ration list in January 1944.

At first this imposition created alarming confusion and hostility, a hostility directed not only against the government but also against the butchers who were forced to bear the brunt of public discontent. While there had been several months' warning, when rationing was finally introduced it caused both dismay and alarm. People could not understand why a product, evidently in such abundance, should be rationed at all. They complained that without meat they could not feed their families. Housewives said that men going out to do hard labouring work such as farmers and saw-millers required a solid meat-based meal before doing so. Newspapers and magazines were encouraged by the government to provide recipes for meatless meals and to promote other Australian products as meat substitutes — foods such as peanuts. Sausages were not rationed but they were limited by the amount of sausage skins available.

The war, of course, also created significant shortages of manpower and almost every industry felt the impact of this shortage, timber mills could no longer find mill hands, factories produced less products due to a labour shortage, shops and offices were all under-staffed. In 1942 the local peanut crop was taken off with the help of aboriginal workers from a variety of regions including Cherbourg and even as far away as Thursday Island. The men worked under a gang system and not as individual workers, they were employed through the Peanut Marketing Board and earned up to £1 per day for picking the crop.⁴⁷

In July 1942 news came that a man who had volunteered from Proston had been killed in a plane crash at Dromana, Victoria. The victim was Flying Officer Robert Terrance Elcoate, the son of one of the region's more popular medical practitioners, Doctor R.L.G. Elcoate. Flying Officer Elcoate had enlisted in the R.A.A.F. approximately two years previously and had been attached to various flying fields in Queensland and New South Wales. He was born at Echuca and educated at the Melbourne Grammar School.⁴⁸

Another local man to be killed in an R.A.A.F. crash was Flight Sergeant Robert Donald Woods, who was killed during operations at a base in northern Australia. Woods was born at Kingaroy on 19 November, 1921, the son of Mr and Mrs D. Woods, formerly of *Bonnie Brae* and later of Crawford. Woods was educated at Crawford and Brighton State Schools and the Brisbane Boys' College. He married Nell Jopling on 12 May, 1942, and was employed at the tax office Brisbane prior to his enlistment. He entered training with the R.A.A.F. on 9 November, 1940, and was killed in 1943.⁴⁹

As the war continued, so the death toll mounted. In September 1943 the director of the South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association, Mr J.W. Johnston, received the following message from the Ministry of Air: 'Deeply regret to inform you that your son, Pilot Officer Stanley Maxwell Johnston, has lost his life as result of air operations at Watlington, Oxfordshire, on September 2, 1943. The Ministry for Air ... (expresses) profound sympathy in your sad bereavement.' Stanley Johnston was born on 21 January, 1920, he was educated at the Wooroolin and Memerambi State Schools and later at the Ipswich Grammar School. He joined the R.A.A.F. in 1941 and after passing through various training schools was posted to Canada for flight training. He was commissioned in April 1942 and posted to England for operations.⁵⁰

A few days later the news arrived that Sergeant William Lewis Eisenmenger, the youngest son of Mr and Mrs W. George Eisenmenger of Merlwood, had been killed in action against the Japanese in New Guinea. The dead soldier had been twenty-six years of age.⁵¹

Less than two weeks later, in October 1943 a local member of the V.D.C. was accidentally shot while attending a parade at Cloyna. The victim was Fred Rosenblatt who was rushed to the Wondai Hospital, and for a while it seemed he would recover. However, hopes faded and he died quietly on 9 October. Fred Rosenblatt was a well liked and highly respected member of the community. Born at Ropely on 11 July, 1902, he later moved with his parents to Byee, on the rail line between Murgon and Proston. He married Ruby Violet Brand on 27 September, 1927, and later moved with his wife to Hivesville. Rosenblatt's funeral took place at the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mondure, a Union Jack draped over the coffin on which was placed Rosenblatt's hat, belt and bayonet. Over one hundred and thirty members of the V.D.C. from Kingaroy, Proston, Cloyna, Mondure, Murgon, Hivesville and Wondai saluted as the casket was borne to the

grave by Rosenblatt's four brothers and two brothers-in-law. The Last Post was sounded by Private Stan Jones of Murgon.⁵²

During the Second World War there were many soldiers, sailors and airmen from the South Burnett region who were killed during service. One of these was Wing-Commander Gordon (Peter) Panitz of Wondai. Panitz was killed, aged twenty-eight years, on 22 August, 1944, during air operations over France. A brief biography of his service career later claimed:

Youngest son of Mr and Mrs F.S. Panitz, of Surfers' Paradise, Peter, after education at Southport High School, engaged in the family business of baker (in Britain he was affectionately alluded to by his mates as 'The Battling Baker') but found time to gratify what might be termed 'airmindedness.' He became proficient (at his own expense) in aviation as a member of the Queensland Aero Club, and, after enlistment, received his Wings at Amberley in 1941. Going to England, his rise was meteoric, and in 1943 he was awarded the D.F.C. for Meritorious Services. Extracts from Press paragraphs tell:

'Two Australian pilots shot up and destroyed an important power station in Brittany. They were Flight-Lieutenant Gordon Panitz and Flying-Officer Donald Pratt.

'No 1 Junkers destroyer, of an Australian *Mosquito* squadron is Squadron-Leader G. Panitz. "Panitz is the most aggressive Hun-hunter I have known since the Battle of Britain days" says his commanding officer, Wing-Commander G. Howden. "It is all the same to him whether he is attacking them on land, sea, or in the air".

'An Australian *Mosquito* squadron leader, Wing-Commander G. Panitz blew up the middle span of a railway bridge across the Loire at Briarc, and then went on to shoot up his 22nd train.

'One of the squadron's most brilliant Pilots, Squadron-Leader (later Wing-Commander) Gordon Panitz, D.F.C. who subsequently took command of a notable Australian *Mosquito* squadron, had a magnificent record as a train-buster. He wrecked 22 trains, destroyed two J.U.88s, wrecked three enemy transformer stations, damaged four ships, and made many attacks on German motor transport in his brilliant *Mosquito* sorties.' (Quoted from 1944 edition, *R.A.A.F. Saga*).

Mr F.S. Panitz has been advised that the wreckage of Wing-commander Panitz's aircraft has been identified at Bona, near Nevers, France. On the night of 22nd August, 1944, the aircraft struck the side of a hill, both occupants were killed instantly. They were buried in one grave in Bona cemetery. In direct defiance of the German commandant, full burial rites were afforded these airmen by the Curé (vicar) of Bona Church, and some 300 people attended the ceremony. The bodies were wrapped in parachutes. The grave is well tended.⁵³

Another South Burnett serviceman who flew sorties over occupied Europe was well known Nanango identity Gordon John McCauley, the eldest son of David and Eleanor McCauley, early residents of the region.

Gordon McCauley was born at Nanango in 1910 and grew up on several farms through the region attending a number of schools. He started work at Walters and Michel and Co. (later Symes and Sons) general store in Drayton Street and remained in that position until the war. He joined the R.A.A.F. in 1942 and completed a course for air gunners at Evans Head. In 1943, following completion of his training, he was posted to England where he underwent a familiarisation course and then flew as tail gunner on Lancaster bombers. He completed thirty night bombing raids over Germany and other Axis controlled territories working with the R.A.F. squadrons 12 and 626. After the completion of his tour he spent some time instructing in England and returned to Australia in 1945. Gordon McCauley settled again at Nanango taking a number of positions including the management of the Nanango Co-operative Trading Society. He married in 1950 and was heavily involved in community events. He retired in 1972 due to ill health. Gordon McCauley died at the Nanango Hospital on 11 January, 1986 after a long illness.⁵⁴

Hec. Nichols was another serviceman who flew into enemy territory, as a navigator he was required to help with the delivery of supplies and secret agents to the French Resistance. His diary was later published as a book entitled *Special Duties*. Hec. Nichols, a well known Murgon identity, died in 1968.⁵⁵

Tragic accidents occur at any time but during time of war accidents, by the very nature of military training and travel, are inevitable. In August 1941 Mr A.T. Stephen and Miss M. Stephen of *Moondah*, Memerambi, received word that their nephew, Wally Stephen, had been killed accidentally in Victoria. The soldier had attempted to enlist in the A.I.F. but had been rejected, he then joined a volunteer home defence unit. At the time of his accident his unit had been shifting camp from Terang to Geelong, Wally Stephen had been leaning from a train window, waving to some of his friends on the platform, when his head struck a platform post, the young soldier was dragged from the train and thrown beneath the carriage wheels where he died instantly.⁵⁶



Crowd at Kilkivan railway station to farewell recruits going to army camp, September, 1942.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society



Recruits leaving Kilkivan railway station, September, 1942.

Source — Kilkivan and District Historical Society

By this time the number of deaths was becoming tragically monotonous, Lance Corporal Alf Sorensen, a former employee of the Kingaroy butter factory where he had worked for seventeen years since leaving school was killed in action in New Guinea on 10 November 1942.⁵⁷ Flight Sergeant Alan Rees, killed in 1942.⁵⁸ James B. Wood of Goodger, died in a military hospital, also in 1942.⁵⁹ Acting Staff Sergeant Malcolm Johnston McCallum, the son of early Nanango settler Malcolm Mclean McCallum, was killed in action on 5 July, 1942, McCallum had been a foundation member of the Nanango Light Horse Troop and had enlisted shortly after the outbreak of war.⁶⁰ In March 1943 Mr and Mrs C.R. Blythman of Wooroolin received word that their son, Sergeant Henry James Blythman had died of wounds he had received while in action near Buna Mission New Guinea on 30 December, 1942.⁶¹ Flying Officer Gordon Howie, the son of Mr and Mrs F.A. Howie of Booie Road, Kingaroy was killed in action in 1943. Howie had been educated at Kingaroy and later joined the Justice Department, working at the C.P.S. Office at Kingaroy. He joined the R.A.A.F. in 1941 and his last letter home expressed jubilation that after spending lengthy periods undergoing training in Australia, Canada and England, he was at last going into operations.⁶²

As with the First World War the control and observation of aliens during the Second World War was one of the government's priorities, and in regions such as the South Burnett where there were so many immigrants of German extraction, the observation and possible internment of aliens became an important local issue. An intelligence officer, usually a World War One veteran, serving in the Volunteer Defence Corps, was appointed to each of the various centres throughout the South Burnett. These were men, usually in responsible positions within the local government structure, who could be trusted with the exacting duties of examining aliens, collecting intelligence about them, liaising with the various alien communities and when necessary, making recommendations to the relevant authorities if it was believed that certain persons were acting suspiciously and should be at least interrogated or interned.

In the Goomeri district, for example, the local intelligence officer was Percival Marmaduke Perrett, a man who had served as a private during the First World War, and had been elected to the Kilkivan Shire Council in May 1939. On 8 September, 1939, just five days after Britain, France and Australia declared war on Germany, the local press reported: 'It is learned that action is to be taken in Brisbane to intern certain aliens ... Plans are complete in this measure which is the result of close co-operation between State detectives and the Commonwealth Investigation Branch. Keepers of hotels and boarding houses are required to keep an alien register which requires them to obtain all particulars of people not of British nationality or naturalised Australians. This means that nationality, date of their arrival, their previous place of abode, what vessel they arrived by, the date of their departure, the vessel (if any) they departed, and their destination will have to be noted. All officers in charge of police stations in any part of Australia are alien registration officers.'⁶³

The position of local intelligence officer was not a popular one and many of these officers were faced with continued hostility from the German and Italian migrant communities. Percy Perrett, however, became highly respected, even by the migrant communities he was ordered to watch, he would meet German migrants at the train and drive them to their homes; he became close friends with many of the migrants, a warm and lasting relationship that endured long after the war years. One of the German immigrants Mr Perrett was to become involved with was a young woman whom he met at the Goomeri railway station and later drove to her home. This woman could speak only a little English and in attempting to communicate the woman, said that she: 'Hurta Finger.' Perrett commiserated, asking how she had hurt her finger but was finally made to understand that her name was, in fact, Hurta Finger. This woman was later interned, along with so many other German and Italian nationals, and Perrett went to extraordinary lengths to obtain her eventual release.⁶⁴

One man who served meritoriously during the Second World War was Murgon identity Harold Latham, who previously had won a Military Medal for bravery on the Western Front during the First World War. Harold Latham was the son of early settlers to the region, his father having taken up land at Redgate in 1907. When war broke out in 1914 Latham immediately volunteered, was accepted, and posted to the famous 9th Battalion, the first to land at Anzac Cove on 25 April, 1915. However, young Harold had lied about his age and when his underage status was discovered he was discharged and returned home. He again enlisted as soon as he turned twenty-one years and was posted to the 15th Battalion. He was appointed to attend a non-commissioned officers'

school and upon completion of the course was posted to France as a corporal. While in France he won his sergeant's stripes and was awarded the Military Medal after he single-handedly captured a German machine-gun post.

Upon being discharged in 1919 he carried on a dairy farm in the Goomeribong region and later married Kathleen Munday. The farm was eventually leased and the couple opened a cafeteria in Goomeri which they later sold to take up a farm at Stonelands. When the Second World War broke out age was again against the veteran, upon volunteering he was told that this time he was too old to enlist. However, he attached himself to one of the militia groups and was successful in having himself posted to New Guinea. He survived the war and eventually died, aged eighty-two years, in 1976.⁶⁵

By 1945 it was becoming increasingly obvious that the war was drawing to a close. The final Berlin offensive had encircled the German capital, and when Hitler and his wife, Eva Braun, committed suicide in their underground bunker and Soviet forces completed the capture of that city, it was evident that soon the men of the South Burnett, those who had survived five years of war, would be returning to their homes and families. On 8 May, 1945, the Western world celebrated V-E Day, a day that was rejoiced throughout the South Burnett with typical gusto, services were held in many churches and halls, flags were flown, people joined hands in the streets and sang patriotic songs.

However, in Australia the celebrations were tempered by the knowledge that despite Germany's defeat, Japan was still fighting and vowing that any invasion of its shores would result in unbelievable human destruction. Then came the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, followed by Japan's formal acceptance of the Potsdam Ultimatum. The war was over and the people of the South Burnett went fully into celebration mode.

One of the first of the South Burnett's soldiers to return home following the cessation of hostilities was Corporal W. Graham of Goomeri. Graham had been captured during the early stages of the war and had spent four and a half years in prisoner-of-war camps in Italy and Germany. When he arrived home, ill and tired in August 1945, he was met at the Goomeri railway station by friends, relatives and members of the R.S.S.A.L.L.A., the press reporting: 'It is regrettable that Corporal Graham is not enjoying the best of health and it is the earnest wish of his many friends that ere long he will be fit and well again.'⁶⁶

Another early return from captivity was Sapper Eddie Bauer, who had been farewelled at a special function in his honour on 22 February, 1941, had been captured following the collapse of Singapore and had spent the following three and a half years in Japanese hands. He was welcomed home at another special function, held at the Tingoorra Hall in November 1945 and was presented with two cheques totalling £95.⁶⁷

One by one, in small groups, the women and men who had served in the war trickled home, no longer were wives forced to work long hours on their farms in order to complete the work the men should have been doing, slowly, life returned to normal, the V.D.C., was stood down in October that year, returning their uniforms, weapons and ammunition, all that remained was to mourn those who would never return.

Rationing of many items, especially food and petrol, continued for years after the war. In fact there were few real shortages in Australia but this country was still supplying goods to Britain where the shortages caused by the war were continuing. The Australian Labor Party government under Joseph Benedict (Ben) Chifley, remained strongly in favour of rationing as long as those goods were needed in Britain. Sugar, one of the staple crops of the state, remained on the rationed list until July 1947 by which time Britain was obtaining sufficient supplies from Australia and the West Indies.⁶⁸ Petrol was scheduled to become an unrationed item on 6 June, 1949, and the concession rapidly cast doubts on the validity of continuing with other forms of rationing, especially everyday necessities of which there was evidently an abundance such as butter and tea.⁶⁹ However, the proposed cancellation of petrol rationing was to be delayed, there was still a shortage of petrol, and many people, when supplies were temporarily made available, began to hoard the fuel which added to the problem. By the end of 1949 the supply of almost all goods was back to normal and petrol officially came off the restricted list under Robert Menzies' new government in February 1950.⁷⁰

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-three The Great Depression and the Home Front During the Second World War

1. M/C. 18 March, 1931, p 6.
2. M/C. 14 January, 1939, p 1.
3. M/C. 28 February, 1959, p 2.
4. SBT. 8 September, 1939, p 7.
5. M/C. 23 September, 1939, p 5.
6. N/N. 8 January, 1942, p 4.
7. Appeal by Lady Wilson, and *Instructions for the Formation of Branches of the Australian Red Cross Society*, War Savings Appeal file, Murgon Shire Council archives.
8. *Queensland Patriotic and Australian Comforts Fund*, publication, 1943 Battle Stations Appeal, p 3.
9. For details of this scheme see: N/N. 25 November, 1943, p 1.
10. N/N. 4 April, 1940, p 2.
11. K/H. 30 June, 1941, p 2.
12. K/H. 7 July, 1941, p 2.
13. For details of Don Johnston's last letters home see: K/H. 4 December, 1941, p 2.
14. N/N. 4 July, 1940, p 1.
15. *Ibid*, p 6.
16. N/N. 4 July, 1940, p 6 and *War Savings Certificates*, Commonwealth Treasury, 1 March, 1940.
17. SBT. 26 April, 1940, p 2.
18. SBT. 18 July, 1940, p 6.
19. SBT. 10 April, 1941, p 2.
20. M/C. 17 December, 1941, p 3.
21. N/N. 6 March, 1941, p 1.
22. SBT. 30 April, 1942, p 1.
23. N/N. 12 June, 1941, p 3.
24. SBT. 30 April, 1942, p 1.
25. SBT. 9 July, 1942, p 3.
26. K/H. 23 December, 1942, p 2.
27. SBT. 8 November, 1989, p 22.
28. SBT. 23 January, 1941, p 3.
29. SBT. 1 May, 1941, p 8. This report also carries a poem written by one of George Burns' fellow soldiers.
30. SBT. 23 October, 1941, p 3.
31. *The District News*, 16 June, 1980, p 1.
32. *Ibid*.
33. SBT. 26 June, 1941.
34. For a detailed account of Caswell's experiences during and after the war, including Caswell's own memoirs, see: *Electronics Australia*, January 1995, pp 38– 42 and *Electronics Australia* pp 34– 37, a copy of which may be found at the Wondai Museum archives, file 7120/LCA4.
35. For further details of Blackmore's career see: *The Australian*, 3 May, 1996, p 12.
36. SBT. 12 March, 1942, p 1.
37. Letter from Police Station Nanango to Shire Council, Nanango, dated 4 September, 1939, Historical Items file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
38. Letter from Police Station Nanango to Shire Council, Nanango, dated 10 January, 1940, Historical Items file, Nanango Shire Historical Society.
39. SBT. 12 February, 1942, p 5.
40. SBT. 19 February, 1942, p 5.
41. K/H. 26 February, 1942, p 2.
42. N/N. 26 October, 1939, p 2.
43. M/C. 4 March, 1942, p 5.

44. M/C. 30 March, 1942, p 2.
45. For examples of this type of salvage and the general operations of the commission see file: Wartime Salvage, Kingaroy Shire Council archives.
46. SBT. 3 April, 1941, p 8.
47. SBT. 14 May, 1942, p 3.
48. SBT. 16 July, 1942, p 5.
49. K/H. 1 July, 1943, p 1.
50. SBT. 16 September, 1943, p 1 and K/H. 9 September, 1943, p 2.
51. SBT. 30 September, 1943, p 1.
52. SBT. 14 October, 1943, p 4.
53. SBT. 1 April, 1948, p 6.
54. SBT. 29 January, 1986, p 28.
55. SBT. 5 September, 1995, p 2.
56. K/H. 1 September, 1941, p 2.
57. K/H. 26 November, 1942, p 1.
58. K/H. 14 January, 1943, p 3.
59. K/H. 8 October, 1942, p 2.
60. K/H. 9 July, 1942, p 2.
61. K/H. 25 March, 1943, p 6. For an obituary on Sergeant Blythman including details of his war service see: K/H. 25 March, 1943.
62. K/H. 11 November, 1943, p 2.
63. SBT. 8 September, 1939, p 7.
64. Interview with Ailsa Stanton, Percy Perrett's daughter, March 1996.
65. SBT. 4 August, 1976, p 3.
66. SBT. 23 August, 1945, p 3.
67. SBT. 8 November, 1945, p 1.
68. M/C. 3 July, 1947, p 3.
69. M/C. 7 June, 1949, p 1.
70. M/C. 9 February, 1950, p 1.

The Print Media

The media in the South Burnett has, since before the turn of the century, been represented by a number of publications. Prior to the establishment of regional newspapers the reportage of the news of the South Burnett was carried out by newspapers such as the *Moreton Bay Courier*, the *Maryborough Chronicle*, the *Gympie Times* and the *Toowoomba Chronicle*, each of those publications printing sections on the various regions throughout the South Burnett. One of the more prolific publications in this regard was the *Maryborough Chronicle*, which accepted both paid and unpaid articles from a variety of correspondents, professional journalists and part-time authors in the South Burnett region. These newspapers were generally forwarded, at first by mail coach and later by rail to the various townships and villages dotted throughout the South Burnett, and as they covered events close to the farmers' hearts, items such as stock production, growing methods of various crops, mining matters, rainfall, local magisterial events, regional political issues and even overseas news — particularly British news — they were widely accepted and read. These publications, in addition to offering the most recent news, also gave farmers and other settlers a forum in which to discuss issues of importance, topical letters to the editor were frequent and served to air differences of opinion and to bring matters of regional importance before the people whom those matters affected.

On the local level there has been a plethora of newspapers published on the South Burnett, these have included the *Wondai Times and South Burnett Observer*, the *Nanango News*, the *Nanango Advocate*, the *Kingaroy Herald*, the *South Burnett Times* and the *Beacon*, a publication of the *South Burnett Times*, the *Goomeri Advertiser*, the *Murgon Mail* and the *Murgon News* later becoming the *District News*. Another was the *Murgon Advocate and Goomeri Advertiser* (not to be confused with the second *Goomeri Advertiser* which was a much later publication), this newspaper was owned by the Shaw Printing Company Ltd., its manager in 1932 was H.J. Shaw and the newspaper's office was in Macalister Street Murgon.¹

Many of these publications have remained in print for only a few years, the *Kingaroy Guardian and Taabinga Times* for example, which began publishing on 5 September, 1930, ceased publication by September 1938, the *Murgon Mail* began in August 1939 but ceased publication in February the following year. Unfortunately, of all the early papers that once proliferated on the South Burnett, only the *South Burnett Times* still survives, and of those earlier publications, few of the original issues remain to provide us with the wealth of history they would have included in their pages. Over the years many of these issues have been lost, due to various reasons, not least of which was a major fire during the early 1930s that destroyed previous issues of the *Kingaroy Herald*. Others have survived, at least in part, their pages preserved on microfilm at depositories such as the State Library of Queensland.

The *Nanango News*

The first newspaper in the South Burnett was the *Nanango News*, founded by Patrick Joseph Macnamara on Saturday 16 December, 1899, and later sold to William Horsfall. It was a weekly paper, appearing each Friday until 15 June, 1934, when it changed to a Thursday publication in order for country readers to be able to obtain a copy prior to the weekend.

The *Nanango News* was one of the region's more popular papers. In 1899 a well known and highly respected publisher, editor and journalist named P.J. Macnamara arrived at Nanango to become the driving force behind the newspaper, he was later described as being: '... one of the best known State pressmen of his day.'² The *Nanango News and Burnett Advocate*, was a four page publication and contained about three columns of advertisements.

Patrick Joseph Macnamara was, as his name implies, of Irish parentage, his father, Patrick, was also a newspaper man and editor of the *Mudgee Guardian* in New South Wales. P.J., as he was more popularly known, established the *Southern Queensland Bulletin*, the forerunner of the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, the first issue being released on 28 March, 1885. At the age of twenty-five years he married Isabella Phoebe Arnett in Sydney, the year was 1873. Isabella was born at Bothwell, Tasmania, the daughter of a convict who had been sentenced to transportation for 'coining' (counterfeiting), and sent to Van Diemen's Land in 1838 aboard the convict vessel *Recovery*.



P.J. Macnamara, founding editor of the *Nanango News*, in 1899.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives, Neil Collins' collection

P.J. Macnamara was very public minded, he served as an auditor to the Southport Divisional Board from 1887 to 1890, became a councillor on the Southport Shire in 1891 and in 1892 was elected its president. He nominated for the newly created seat of Albert in 1888, one of six candidates, but did not stand for election.

He disposed of his interests in this paper in 1893 and with his wife, Isabella Phoebe and their six children, joined William Lane's ill-fated Utopian expedition to set up a New Australia colony in Paraguay. Macnamara sailed from Sydney with other colonists aboard the *Royal Tar* on 16 July, 1893, the expedition's leader, William Lane, was also a journalist and founder of the *Queensland Worker*.

The colony in South America failed and approximately a year later Macnamara and his family, after spending nine almost penniless months in Buenos Aires, returned to Australia. One daughter, May Phoebe, was married in Buenos Aires and remained in South America.³

For a while after his return to Australia, Macnamara worked for a Beenleigh newspaper and was evidently sufficiently successful to enable him to move to Nanango where he set up the South Burnett's first newspaper, the *Nanango News*. A subsequent report of his work claimed: 'He and his daughter, Sophie, used a primitive hand press and often toiled throughout the night working under a hurricane lamp to produce their early issues of the *Nanango News*.'⁴

A press report of Macnamara's involvement in the newspaper, published twenty-three years later, long after Macnamara's death, stated:

P.J. Macnamara wrote his first leader under the cross-heading of 'Introductory', beneath a quotation, which included a claim to reserve always '... his right to applaud his opponents or censure his friends, as the truth may require.' Surely, the spirit of P.J. Macnamara still lurks hereabouts! He says, in the course of about a column in this, his first, leader: 'Our motto is: 'Measures, not men.' Today we seem to have plenty of formidable measures in the political arena at all events. And towards the close, he said: 'The main purpose and constant object of this journal will be to do what lies in its power to promote local and district advancement,' and — reader, mark you this — 'we hope to have the hearty co-operation and assistance of all sections of the community in so doing.' Just now I glanced at a photographic group on the office wall. Amongst them sits P.J. Macnamara, his Panama hat on the grass beside his feet. I am sure he did his best to 'promote local and district advancement,' but — I wonder — did he get that co-operation he so earnestly sought?

The *Nanango News and Burnett Advocate* in its first step on the public stage asked that those who received it through the post should subscribe to it and help the paper to help the district. Its editor told his readers that he was sending out the first few issues on approval,

'so that people can see for themselves what the *Nanango News* is intended to be. Life is too short, and we are too busy setting type and writing articles to ride twenty and thirty miles and back and to spend three solid hours in arguing with a man whether he should invest a whole threepenny bit in purchasing the local paper each week, probably to find in the end that he will most judiciously and cautiously terminate the interview by remarking, "Send me a few issues of your paper, and if I like it I will subscribe".'⁵

Some of the local business-people who advertised in that first historic issue included John Darley, in fact Darley's was the very first advertisement. Darley advertised that he was running an auctioneering and commission agent business. The Butt Brothers announced they were general store-keepers selling groceries, drapery, boots and fresh bread. J. Collins, the proprietor of the Star Hotel, thanked the public for their support. The Nanango sawmill's manager, John Heiner, advised that he had recently added new machinery to the mill and was prepared to supply any class of timber. R.F. Stidolph stated that in conjunction with George Muller he was commencing business as a coach painter and sign-writer. D. Corbett, the butcher, established in 1877, was trading in opposition to W. Dales. W. Selby and Co. advertised their Commercial Stores. W. Hamilton was the host of the Commercial Hotel. D. Downing could, '... Always be found on deck' as a hairdresser and tobacconist, John Kendall ran an express van once each week from Esk to Nanango and return. T. Healy stated that he was opening a boot shop and that his son, Frank, 'still heals the soles of the Nanangoites.' H. McGinley was a commission agent and F. Bowler was a blacksmith.⁶

Patrick Joseph Macnamara's wife, Isabella, died, aged fifty-six years, on 23 November, 1903, and by then the newsman was relatively wealthy, a wealth that enabled him to build the Palace Hotel and adjoining shops and later the Palace Theatre — all of which were destroyed by fire in 1913. He was also involved in many community events and for a while served as the local undertaker. The newspaper was sold to William Horsfall circa 1910 and P.J. Macnamara was killed, aged sixty-nine, on 15 May, 1915, after being thrown from a sulky when his horse took fright. According to the cemetery register, lodged at the Nanango Shire Council, Macnamara died at the Nanango Hospital of a 'ruptured intestine.'⁷



Nanango News printing room, 1930s. L. to R. Henry Hill, John Kraft, Lionel Kennedy.

Source — Nanango Shire Council archives

One of the region's more well known characters to work at the *Nanango News* was Arthur John William Bright, son of Harry Bright and grandson of John Bright who had purchased Goode's Inn from Jacob Goode. Arthur Bright began a six years' apprenticeship at the *Nanango News* when it was owned by John Darley and William Selby, the editor was Charles Edward Eastaway. Eastaway's wife, Alice Emily Frances Eastaway, was reputedly related to the British naval hero, Admiral Horatio Nelson. She died at her residence, *Ilfracombe* in Gipp Street, Nanango, on Saturday 27 August, 1938.⁸

The *Nanango News* was later purchased by David Frank Walters and John Michel who continued with its operation until 1936 when it was sold to the *Kingaroy Herald*.⁹

Action leading to the sale of the *Nanango News* commenced in April 1936. During the evening of Tuesday 31 March that year, executives of the *Nanango News* met with executives of the *Kingaroy Herald* to discuss a possible deal. On the following Friday David Walters of the *Nanango News* wrote to Arthur Johnson, managing director of the *Kingaroy Herald*, to outline his proposal, he offered to sell the business, including all plant, buildings and land for a total of £1350, excluding book accounts. (There was an alternative deal to include the book accounts of £400).¹⁰ Johnson replied on 5 May stating that the price was too high and offering £1050 for the business, this offer was based upon a valuation carried out by an independent Brisbane company, Carmichael and Co., which had actually valued the business at £1078.¹¹ On 13 May David Walters sent a telegram to Johnson at Kingaroy accepting the offer, and the contract of sale took effect from 1 July, 1936.¹²

The Kingaroy Herald

The second newspaper to appear on the South Burnett was the *Kingaroy Herald and Burnett Advocate*. The first edition of this weekly publication was printed by the Burnett Newspaper Company on an old style hand press on Tuesday 5 July, 1906, its first editor and manager was Archibald Blue and the business was initially owned by a small group of shareholders.¹³ These shareholders were Archibald Blue, John Blue, a master mariner of Maryborough, Alice Isabella Blue, the wife of Archibald Blue, Mary Jane Blue, a 'spinster' of Sydney, Robert Alfred Blue, a school teacher at Maryborough, Isabella Menzies Blue, also described as a 'spinster' of Sydney, and James Macintosh Murray, an articled law clerk of Maryborough. These people took out their shares in the company on 12 June, 1906. On 4 September, 1906, three other shareholders joined the company, these were Henry Randall, a sugar miller of Maryborough, John Crawford Robertson, a doctor, formerly of Maryborough but then practicing in Sydney, and Ann Crawford Robertson, Dr Robertson's sister who was described in company documents as a 'spinster'.¹⁴



Archibald Blue, founder of the *Kingaroy Herald*.

Source — Wondai Shire Council.

A few days after the first edition was released, the *Nanango News* published: 'We are in receipt of the first issue of the *Kingaroy Herald* which made its debut a couple of days ago. It is printed in magazine form and encased in a blue cover and is a neatly got up little paper. It is somewhat of a venture financially, however, as until Kingaroy is three times its present size it is doubtful if it can support a paper of its own.'¹⁵

The paper was then situated in a building at the corner of Kingaroy and Alford Streets where Woolworths was later constructed. The newspaper subsequently published: 'The turn of the century had been left six years behind

when a group of Maryborough business people with confidence in the district decided to start a newspaper in the flourishing village of Kingaroy — for little more than a village it was at that period. Even at that stage its potential was obvious. Thus the Burnett Newspaper Co. Pty. Ltd. first came into being.¹⁶



The first Kingaroy Herald building on corner of Kingaroy and Alford Streets, established in 1906. In the car, (a French Darracq), is Archibald Blue. Others on the staff, standing, were (from left): Charles Hill, T. Thaetcher, C. Galloway, B. Neale, Maggie Wittkop and W. Lambert.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Meares' collection

Archibald Blue, as we have seen earlier in this publication, was killed by an irate German migrant whom Blue had accused of treacherous behaviour during the First World War. Upon Blue's death the paper was reluctantly taken over by Charles H. Johnson who continued to manage its affairs until his own death in 1922. At the time of Archibald Blue's death the newspaper was in a critical condition and Johnson was forced to write to shareholders asking that they make allowances in their demands for money because Alice Blue, Archibald Blue's wife, was in desperate financial difficulties. Writing to H.G. Watson, a dentist at Maryborough who evidently had some interest in the paper and who was possibly able to influence one of the shareholders, Henry Randall, Johnson stated:

The main thing is to get Randall and (Dr Crawford) Robertson out and for Mrs Blue to have the whole thing in her hands. Try and get Randall to forego the interest owing if possible, pointing out what a big struggle the unfortunate widow will have for years ... I have put my shoulder to the wheel to do what I can to help, although I am sure that even ... if I do succeed, it will be years ere it becomes a paying proposition. I almost forgot to say there is an old fashioned Darracq motor car also. Have advertised it for sale for three months at £35 but cannot even get an offer. The house they live in is Mrs Blue's ... but Archie had even got £99 on that from the bank so you can see that things are anything but bright. With more careful management and close attention to business, however, I think in time we will pull through although I may tell you that the balance sheet shows the thing at present to be almost insolvent.¹⁷

The commissioner of taxation in Brisbane was also interested in the affairs of the newspaper and sent a memorandum to Charles Johnson in 1918 seeking taxation returns. Johnson replied:

Mr A. Blue, the late manager, and practically the sole proprietor, was killed during a quarrel with a German named Hoffmann on October 7th, 1916. He was his own book-keeper, manager and editor, and besides that went in for a very large amount of public work such as president of the A.P. and I. Society and different Chairmanships etc. On his death I was begged to take the position and for the sake of the widow and family consented to do so after considerable pressure as I had retired from work. On going through the books and general affairs of the company I found them in such a fearful state of muddle ... whilst it was evident to me that the business had been run on such bad lines that it was absolutely insolvent and could certainly not have paid more than 10/- in the £, if that, had it been sold as a going concern. Mr Blue was not a practical printer and this may have been something to do with it. I happen to have nearly 50 years' experience in all departments of the business besides being a tradesman, and at once set to work to completely reorganise everything — so much so that only one of the original staff remains. After quite a lot of trouble and worry I have got things straightened up but find it practically an absolute impossibility to get any returns for the years mentioned. No balance sheets can be found and no stock sheets ... I may say I have no personal interest in the business whatever and am soley (sic) here to do the widow and orphans a good turn so can have no reason to mislead in the matter ...¹⁸

It seems clear that the company was in some difficulty but there is always the possibility that Johnson may have been overstating the facts in the case. In his letter to H.G. Watson the previous year he had stated that the balance sheets were in existence, yet to the Taxation Department he wrote that there were no balance sheets. His use of the word 'orphan' to describe Blue's children is also revealing, the children were not, of course, orphans, and therefore the question must be posed, did Watson deliberately use the word in an attempt to evoke sympathy with the Taxation Department?

Upon Johnson's death in 1922, his son, Arthur Frederick Johnson, took control and managed the publication until 1956 when Archibald George Blue, the son of the original manager, was able to take control. A.G. Blue was born in 1903 and later won a bursary to the Maryborough Grammar School. He married Jessie May Bassett at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Creek Street Brisbane in 1927. Blue had learned the printing trade from the bottom, serving his apprenticeship as a printer and rising to the position of managing director of the paper. While under his control the newspaper on three occasions won the prestigious Bowater Award for Queensland's best country weekly newspaper. A.G. Blue spent his entire working life at the paper, with the exception of four years during the Second World War when he served as a sapper in the A.I.F.¹⁹



Archibald Blue (Jnr.)

Source — Brian Blue collection.

In 1932 fire gutted the newspaper's premises opposite the court-house but with the assistance of the *South Burnett Times* it was able to continue publishing. A new building was later constructed on the site and new machinery installed.²⁰

As we have seen, the *Kingaroy Herald* purchased the *Nanango News* in 1936 and that newspaper remained in publication until 1942 when its compositors enlisted in war service and as it was almost impossible to find staff during the war years the publication closed down. After its closure the *Nanango News* appeared under the banner of the *Kingaroy Herald*. The *Kingaroy Herald* later published: 'In 1936 the Burnett Newspaper Co. Pty. Ltd. purchased the *Nanango News*, Nanango, from Messrs Michel and Walters and carried on the paper in that town until after the war broke out in 1939. With enlistments the company had no alternative but to merge the two papers,

hence the name *Herald News*. Then came the rationing of newsprint and as the circulation of the paper increased to such an extent, the management found it imperative to publish only once a week instead of twice.⁷

The *Kingaroy Herald* ceased independent publication in 1971, when it was purchased by the *South Burnett Times* its final edition being released on Wednesday 29 September that year. The owner of the newspaper, Archibald George Blue, died in December 1976.²¹



The second Herald building and staff circa 1919. This building, together with almost an entire block of other premises, was completely razed by fire in 1932. From left: A.G. Blue (son of the newspaper's founder), L. Wheeler, Miss E. Neubauer, Miss D.R. (Billy) Evans, J. Trussell, the manager C.H. Johnson, and A.F. Johnson.

Source — Kingaroy Shire Council, Harold Mears' collection

The Wondai Times, Murgon Record, South Burnett Times and associated publications

The *Wondai Times* was established in 1910, and published as the *Wondai Times and South Burnett Observer* for the first time on Saturday 5 October that year. In its leading article for that first publication the editor stated: 'Today marks another step forward in the progress of Wondai and district, inasmuch as that a paper is launched on the tempestuous sea of journalism, either to sink or swim, and we opine that once the initial shallows and sandbanks are safely negotiated our little craft will float buoyantly along on the broad tide of prosperity that surges right through this rich and fertile district.'²²

The first owners of the *Wondai Times* were H. Golden, L. Macfarlane, J.J. Quinlan, C. Carrodus, Dr David Junk, R.P. Cowen and a Murgon solicitor named E.F. McSweeny. J.C. Thompson was its first manager. About twelve months later, upon leaving the district, Carrodus retired from the board of directors and his interests in the business were acquired by Mr R.D. Wilson. Sometime later both Quinlan and Cowen left the district and their interests in the business reverted to the company. At that time J.C. Thompson, the manager, acquired a proprietary interest in the business. E.F. McSweeny was a very popular man in both Wondai and Murgon, he left the district in August 1921, when he moved to Brisbane to continue practising as

a solicitor, he was given a farewell at the Murgon School of Arts on Friday 29 July, 1921, during which he was presented with a gold watch, a gift from the people of Murgon. McSweeney had then been eleven years in the district.²³

For many years the newspaper was forced to struggle along with archaic printing systems. The first press was a hand-fed Wharfedale which was capable of printing 1600 pages per hour. Those first tentative editions of the publication were each comprised of four pages, it cost 3d and both the front and back pages were filled to capacity with advertisements, no editorial at all appeared on the front page and there were no photographs. The paper's creed was: 'For the cause that lacks assistance, for the wrong that needs resistance, for the future in the distance and the good that we can do.'²⁴

In 1921 the newspaper published:

It is just eleven years since the services of Mr J.C. Thompson were obtained to establish and manage the paper. Small premises were rented in Mackenzie Street, Wondai, and Mr Thompson and his son Jack were responsible for the first issue of the *Wondai Times* ... Shortly after the establishment of the paper Miss A. Thompson (later Mrs W.E. Kittle, Brisbane) joined her father and brother and at that time they comprised the staff. The paper was entirely hand set and the printing press was worked by hand, but notwithstanding, the *Wondai Times* of that period was a creditable production in which the proprietors and staff were entitled to have justifiable pride. Later, engine power and a type-setting machine were installed and the company purchased the small premises which were extended to the present (1921) dimensions. The staff was also considerably increased to cope with the progress of the paper which rapidly won wide district circulation. In 1919 the *Murgon Record* was established under the proprietary of the Wondai Newspaper Company. At the commencement of this year (1921) the *Wondai Times* and *Murgon Record* were incorporated in the *South Burnett Times* which was published bi-weekly.²⁵

In August 1921 the *Wondai Times* was renamed the *South Burnett Times*, when the publication was taken over by the South Burnett Newspaper Company. The first edition of the new *South Burnett Times* appeared on Tuesday 2 August, 1921, Volume One, Number Sixty, its price was 3d per issue.²⁶

One of the proprietors of the *South Burnett Times* was Wilfred Lacey Osborne, an early resident of the district and the man, who, in the past has sometimes been erroneously credited as being the first owner of the newspaper. However, Osborne did not become involved with it until he and his brother, Norman Foster Osborne, purchased their interests circa 1927. In 1949 the *South Burnett Times* reported:

The youngest son of Rev. Theodore Osborne, of Lismore, New South Wales, he joined in the great trek north from that State of young men seeking their fortunes in the then only partially developed areas of Queensland in the early days of this century. Coming to Murgon in 1907, in company with his brothers, when they started clearing and development of what was then practically unknown and virgin country. In later years he served on the Murgon Shire Council and was instrumental in negotiations with Kilkivan Council which led to the construction of the 'Manyung Development Road' ... As one of the first suppliers to the Murgon Butter Factory he was actively associated with what was practically the commencement of the dairying industry in the South Burnett. An ardent worker in the interests of the primary producer, he took a prominent part in the organisation and conduct of the Farmers' Union, the Primary Producers' Union and later of the Q.D.O. Twenty years ago, in company with his brother, Mr N.F. (Norman Foster) Osborne, they acquired the *Wondai Times* and, changing the title to *South Burnett Times*, carried on up to the present time, while still keeping his land interests.

His greatest effort was the formation and development of the Q.D.O. into the organisation of which he devoted years of hard work and energy, often to the sacrifice of his personal business interests and also his health. His was the guiding hand and driving force behind that organisation from its inception, which eventually carried to a successful issue the formation of what is probably the strongest primary producing organisation in Australia. The work entailed with this object in view to a great extent undermined his health, and after seeing the organisation firmly established on a sound footing, he was forced, by medical advice, to relinquish a great portion of the work of control. He died in harness, and

on his death-bed expressed regret at not being able to complete the agenda for the forthcoming conference.²⁷

On 1 September, 1933, Osborne released the newspaper's first publication using a new printing system, Intertype, that had recently been installed by: 'an expert from Brisbane.' A three H.P electric motor powered the new printing press, and the oil engine that had powered the old printing press had been: '... relegated to the reserves.'²⁸

W.L. Osborne died at the Brisbane General Hospital on Friday 4 March, 1949, leaving a widow, Evelyn, and four brothers, he was cremated at the Mount Thompson crematorium in Brisbane.²⁹

Another man who has played a significant role in the history of the newspaper was Colin Adam, its managing editor for many years. Colin Adam served his newspaper apprenticeship with the local newspaper at Longreach where his father, Godfrey John Adam, was employed as its manager. Colin Adam subsequently moved to Beaudesert to work briefly with the local newspaper in that town. He arrived at Wondai on 20 July, 1920, and worked on the *Wondai Times*, the forerunner of the *South Burnett Times*, as a compositor, and after about six months was transferred to the company's printing office in Murgon. He remained there for two and a half years until he was appointed manager of the Wondai office. In 1949, when Osborne died, Colin Adam was appointed managing editor of the newspaper. Adam remained in that position until January 1958 when he resigned, following the takeover of the newspaper by James Adams.³⁰

Evelyn Osborne carried on the business following the death of her husband, eventually selling the company to James Leslie Adams on 17 January, 1958. At that time the newspaper was still being published in Mackenzie Street, Wondai.³¹

James Leslie Adams was to guide the newspaper over many years. An electrician by trade, he rose from modest beginnings as a railway porter to the position of managing director of the *South Burnett Times*.

James Adams was born at Byron Bay in 1908 where his father was the station-master. During his childhood he travelled extensively throughout New South Wales and was educated at a number of schools as his father was frequently transferred to different posts. James Adams' first job was that of a railway porter at Como, later obtaining an apprenticeship as a fitter and turner at the railway workshops, and subsequently qualifying as an electrician. Over the following years he worked on many projects, and during the Great Depression purchased an old car and became a rabbit trapper. In addition to trapping rabbits he also worked at anything he could find, including land clearing. After the depression he worked on electrical installations associated with the first electric trains to be installed in Sydney, followed by a move to Brisbane where he was employed on the maintenance of lifts in city buildings. He worked at the hydro-electric station at Nymboida near Grafton, followed by a similar position with the station at Barron Falls in north Queensland. During the war years he was employed as a station engineer at St George and he later opened an electrical business at Longreach with a branch at Charleville. After selling out to his partner he went into the hotel business, leasing firstly the Central and Railway Hotels at Longreach and later purchasing the freehold of the Lyceum Hotel. At the age of fifty years he arrived at Kingaroy, having sold his hotel interests, and purchased the *South Burnett Times* which was then still based at Wondai. The date was January 1958 and the selling price was £5000. A month after purchasing the newspaper he married Alice Lefroy Powell who was then employed at a wool-broker's office in Blackall. Alice was born on 28 October, 1911, at Blackall, and following her marriage she entered into partnership with her husband. When Adams took over the newspaper it was a very small business selling only a handful of papers each week. Over the following decade Adams and his wife, Alice were instrumental in increasing the circulation by six times.³²

The *South Burnett Times* changed its format from broadsheet to tabloid following the addition of new equipment in November 1959. The first edition of the new-look publication was released on 5 November that year and was comprised of twenty-eight pages, the price was 6d per copy and the circulation was 3150.³³

James and Alice Adams were careful to keep the publication completely up to date and did not hesitate to spend significant amounts of money on installing new machinery. In November 1960,

when the newspaper was still located at Wondai, they had a £5000 Johannesburg Selektta Press installed, replacing the Intertype installed in 1933. The Selektta was reportedly the first of its kind to go into production in Australia and had arrived in Wondai only days after it was landed by ship from Germany. Two other similar machines were already in the country, one in Sydney and the other at Melbourne, but these machines were not in use and were on display at machinery showrooms. Weighing five and a half tons and measuring eleven feet by seven feet, the new press was capable of a top printing speed of 4000 sheets (8000 pages) per hour, including colour pages — red and green pages were then usually used to distinguish sports pages. Since purchasing the business in 1958 James Adams had poured more than £12,000 into improvements in plant, machinery and extensions to the building. Staff at the newspaper had been just four in 1958, by 1960 there were fourteen people working at the newspaper with a wages bill of around £9000 per annum.³⁴

In December 1961 the newspaper was moved from Wondai to 176 Haly Street Kingaroy, Adams stated at the time that the move was being made because the newspaper needed room to expand and that Kingaroy was a central point at which it could be published. The first issue from Kingaroy took place on 14 December, 1961, with no issues being missed during the change of address.³⁵

Times news editor during the move from Wondai to Kingaroy and in the initial years was George Greentree. He was a self-taught journalist, an untiring worker and a reporter who had a magic touch with the presentation of sports news. He later became editor of *The Murgon Leader* before moving to Caboolture.

In October 1962 the *South Burnett Times* installed another new printing press, this was a flat bed rotary press capable of printing sixteen pages at once. The machine was installed by engineer John Carter of manufacturers Gollin and Company.³⁶

Three other journalists served for short periods with the *South Burnett Times* before Keith Kratzmann was appointed in 1966. Adams gave him the opportunity to graduate firstly from his position on the printing staff to a sport journalist and then two years later he became editor.

Although he had no secondary education, Kratzmann had the ability to present local news the way readers desired it. This was also evident with his regular contributions to the *Courier Mail*, *Sunday Mail*, *Sunday Truth*, and particularly the A.B.C. regional news where coverage of the South Burnett was at a premium.

Kratzmann was to remain with the *Times* for a period of nineteen years being also involved in advertising before becoming sales and marketing manager for *The Catholic Leader*.

A number of other successful journalists were also employed in this period. Colleen Geraghty commenced in the same era, later became editor and won the inaugural Bank of New South Wales award in 1969. Geraghty then made her mark in Brisbane as a press secretary before travelling abroad.

Kingaroy born, Wayne Brown was another successful editor. His great scholastic record saw him later become newspaper manager. During this period, Dennis Watt was sports editor. Watt is now currently chief of staff with the *Courier Mail*. Former Gladstone editor, John Meiklejohn was also in the chair at Kingaroy for some considerable time. The continued success of the *Times* also owes much to the dedicated work of production manager, Bill Heineger. While Heineger often 'stirred the possum' with editors on meeting deadlines, his contribution over many years has been outstanding.³⁷

In 1968, following representations from the people of Mundubbera, James Adams and his wife opened a second newspaper, the *Central Burnett Times*.

In 1969 Adams and his wife launched another newspaper, the *South Burnett Beacon*, which was designed primarily to serve the region with high quality features, sports and reports. The newspaper was launched as an additional publication, but this later proved to be financially unviable.

Adams launched the *South Burnett Beacon* on 19 September, 1969, it was a weekly publication, released each Friday, and was promoted as being a completely different type of newspaper, not

related in any way to the *South Burnett Times*. Adams wrote that: 'Pressure on the space of the parent paper has become so great of late that the management has felt the need to expand so that it can give the South Burnett public a wider range of reading, both local and general.' Adams pointed out that some of the topics that had been crowded out of the *South Burnett Times* would find their way into the pages of the new publication, he claimed that the scope of the *Beacon* would widen once it had become established.

In charge of the new publication Adams placed an experienced author and journalist named Guy Wade. Wade was born and trained in Victoria and had a long and varied career as a journalist. During his younger years he had been associated with several Victorian newspapers before travelling to Canberra where he worked in the parliamentary press galleries for the *Canberra Times* and the Australian United Press. Later he moved to Singapore where he worked for the *Straits Times* group, covering events in Singapore itself and on the Malay peninsula. Captured by the Japanese following the surrender of Singapore in February 1942, Guy Wade remained a prisoner at Changi until 1945. Repatriated to Australia, he recuperated from his incarceration and soon afterwards returned to Singapore and Malaya, finally travelling to South Africa and Europe. He later returned to Australia and worked in Brisbane as a radio journalist for several years, he also took up relief work for journalists in regional centres including Dalby, Mount Isa, Caboolture, Longreach, Redcliffe and Surfers Paradise. In 1962 Wade was commissioned by the Dalby Town Council to write the history of the town, a history that was updated in 1988 by Tony Matthews. After completing this history Guy Wade again moved overseas and worked as a freelance journalist in a number of countries, including South Africa, Brazil and Europe, he also carried out promotional assignments in the Canary Islands and Yugoslavia. Upon returning to Australia, Wade spent several months working on the staff of Southern Newspapers Ltd. in the Latrobe Valley region of Victoria before taking up his post with the *South Burnett Times* as the *Beacon's* editor in August 1969.³⁸ Aub Knudsen also played a significant role in the operation of this newspaper, providing most of its sporting content.

The *South Burnett Times* has won a string of awards including the prestigious Bowater Award in 1967 and the first Bank of New South Wales Award for the best coverage of local news in 1969.³⁹

On 2 April, 1971, Adams launched yet another newspaper, the *Murgon Chronicle*, which was to be incorporated within the pages of the *Beacon*. In a pre-release editorial published in the *South Burnett Times* Adams stated that the new newspaper would in no way affect the coverage *Murgon* received within the pages of the *South Burnett Times*.⁴⁰

In October 1971 the *Kingaroy Herald* was incorporated within the mast-head of the *South Burnett Times*. In 1974 the *South Burnett Times* acquired the *Burnett Advocate* at Gayndah which was absorbed into the mast-head of the *Central Burnett Times*. In March of 1974 the newspaper purchased the Herald Printing Company.

Managing director of the *South Burnett Times*, James Adams, was certainly one of the most powerful forces behind the newspaper's progressive history. He died at the Kingaroy Hospital on Thursday 26 February, 1976.⁴¹ Alice Adams then appointed Wayne Brown, the former news editor of the newspaper, as its manager, and in 1979 Brown was replaced by Douglas Collyer, a qualified civil engineer from New South Wales.⁴²

Doug Collyer joined The *South Burnett Times* as managing director, with a significant shareholding in the company, in August, 1979. He and his family moved from Sydney where he was working as a professional engineer. The company remained in the control of Alice Adams and Doug Collyer and his wife Helen until sold to APN in March 1994.

Beginning in November, 1987 the company acquired a controlling interest in Forsby Pty. Ltd., the licensee and operator of radio station 4SB, now Radio 1071, in Kingaroy.⁴³

Another award came for the company in 1977 when the *Central Burnett Times* took out the Bank of New South Wales Award for Journalism.⁴⁴

In 1980 the newspaper joined the ranks of so many other regional publications when it purchased a Goss offset printing press system, replacing the earlier systems, the Goss offset

radically increased the quality of the newspaper's production in both its print and photographic areas. Almost quarter of a million dollars was expended on the new press and associated equipment.⁴⁵

In July 1981 *South Burnett Times* Pty. Ltd. acquired the *Burnett Herald* (formerly the *Monto Herald*) and in September that year the *Central Burnett Times* absorbed the *Burnett Herald* to become the *Central and North Burnett Times*. Through the 1980s the *South Burnett Times* and the *Central and North Burnett Times* went from strength to strength taking out several awards. The *South Burnett Times* won another Bowater in October 1981 and its sister paper won the VRG Photographic Award. Circulation of the *South Burnett Times* at that stage was 6839.⁴⁶ By 1984 circulation had increased to 8050 when the *South Burnett Times* won the Westpac Banking Corporation Award for Journalism in October that year.⁴⁷

Other acquisitions made by the newspaper include the purchase of the *Biggenden Weekly* in November, 1986, the *Western Times* at Charleville in January 1991 and the *Blackall Leader* in October 1992. On 1 March, 1994, Australian Provincial Newspapers acquired the *South Burnett Times*.⁴⁸ The company now also publishes a monthly newspaper called the *Herald* which is distributed free of charge.

There have been several other editors of the newspaper, including John Cameron, Kerry White, Anne Miller and Greg Berghofer.

Kerry White was born on 5 March, 1945, at Toowoomba, the son of Ken and Kath White who owned a general store, grain and petrol agency at Mount Tyson. He was educated at Mount Tyson School and Downlands College, Toowoomba. Kerry White began his working life as a bank clerk before completing two years' national service, including a period in Vietnam. He subsequently worked in sales with the *Toowoomba Chronicle*. Kerry White then attended a journalism course at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education prior to taking up a cadetship at the *Toowoomba Chronicle*. Since then he has worked as a sub editor with the *Sydney Morning Herald*, chief sub editor with the *Northern Star* at Lismore, and became the editor of the *South Burnett Times* in 1981, a position he held until 1984 when he resigned to become press secretary to the minister for education, handing over his responsibilities as editor to John Cameron. Kerry White is presently senior media adviser to Brian Littleproud, the Queensland minister for environment.⁴⁹

John Cameron is the son of Hector and Evelyn Cameron who lived on their farming property between Moree and Narrabri, New South Wales. John Cameron was born at Narrabri on 7 May, 1936. The family moved to Tenterfield during the war years where Hector Cameron was a buyer for the meatworks there. Towards the end of the war the family moved onto a dairy farm, near Deepwater, prior to John's parents returning to Narrabri in 1947. John was, at first, educated by correspondence, later attended high school at Narrabri and finished his education at Scots College, Sydney. After leaving school he worked with a stock and station agent prior to undertaking four years with a local government authority as purchasing and communications officer with their radio network. In 1958 he began working as a journalist for the *Narrabri Courier*. He remained with this newspaper for seven years when he moved as editor to the *Moree Champion*, a position he held for the following seven years when he moved as senior journalist to the *Dalby Herald*. Two years later he moved to the *Western Magazine* at Dubbo, commencing work there in 1977. In 1981 he moved to Gympie to work as senior journalist, chief of staff and acting editor of the *Gympie Times*. A move to Hawkesbury followed where he worked as editor on the *Hawkesbury Courier* and the *Hawkesbury Gazette*. In 1985 he and his wife moved to Kingaroy where John took over the position of editor of the *South Burnett Times*, a position he held until 1993 when he resigned, for health reasons, and was replaced by Anne Miller. John Cameron is currently senior media adviser to the Queensland minister for primary industries Trevor Perrett.⁵⁰

Anne Miller is the daughter of Cecily Marie and Reginald Bernard Miller of Sydney. During the Second World War Reginald Miller served in the armed forces, and following his discharge he married Cecily and moved to the south side of Sydney where Anne was born on 8 January, 1959. Anne Miller was educated at two Catholic schools, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and Brigidine College, Randwick. Completing her education in 1976 at year twelve, she began work at the *Daily Mirror*, Sydney, as a copygirl. Thirteen months later she was given her cadetship at the *Daily*

Telegraph, also in Sydney. Spending most of her cadetship working as a court reporter, Anne began sub-editing, while still a cadet, and then became a graded journalist. She has been working largely as a sub-editor ever since. Anne Miller remained with the *Telegraph* until 1984 when she transferred to the *Daily Sun* in Brisbane. At the *Sun* she became deputy chief sub-editor and was awarded her A grading. She remained with the *Sun* until 1989 when she resigned to work in a freelance capacity in Brisbane. Anne Miller returned briefly to the *Sun* when the newspaper was going through its final months, however, there was a general feeling that the newspaper was about to close and one month before its final edition Anne resigned. Anne Miller then moved to the Quest Group which publishes suburban newspapers in Brisbane, working with two of their publications for the following two years. In the meantime she had purchased rural property at Maidenwell, and when the editor's position at the *South Burnett Times* was advertised, following the resignation of John Cameron in 1993, she applied for work as a sub-editor but was offered the job of editor, taking up the position in January 1994. In 1995, due to ill health, Anne Miller resigned from the position of editor to become chief of staff.⁵¹

The current newspaper's editor, Greg Berghofer, is the son of George Berghofer, a fitter and turner by trade who is descendant from a German immigrant family. Greg's mother, Kathleen, came from Cessnock in New South Wales, the family later moving to the Darling Downs. Greg Berghofer was born at Toowoomba in 1959. He was educated at Centenary Heights and after leaving school took up a clerical position with T.F.D. Joinery for several years prior to moving to Brisbane where he worked for the State Works Department. Returning to Toowoomba, he found employment with Southern Cross Machinery as spare parts manager until he decided to undertake a bachelor of arts course majoring in journalism and enrolled at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education — later the University of Southern Queensland. Graduating in 1990, Greg Berghofer obtained employment with the *South Burnett Times* as a graded journalist in April 1991 when John Cameron was the newspaper's editor. As the business acquired more newspapers a position was created for a chief of staff, Greg Berghofer subsequently became the newspaper's second chief of staff. Upon the resignation of John Cameron, Anne Miller was appointed to the post and when Anne resigned from the position to become chief of staff, Greg Berghofer stepped into her place in November 1995.⁵²

The Kingaroy Guardian and Taabinga Times

There have been several other publications on the South Burnett including the *Kingaroy Guardian and Taabinga Times* which was in direct competition with the *Kingaroy Herald* and which was first published in 1930 with E.D. Speedy as its editor. Directors of the *Guardian* were B. Carroll, E. Carroll and R.J. Carroll.⁵³ With such a restricted advertising market it was evident that both newspapers could not survive and the *Guardian* was acquired by the *Herald* in 1938, according to the terms of the agreement the sale went through on 26 July, 1938, '... for the discontinuance of the publication of the newspaper the *Kingaroy Guardian* as from the fifth day of August 1938.'⁵⁴

A report of the event was published in the *Kingaroy Guardian* which stated: 'The public are advised that in consequence of negotiations between the controlling interests of the two local newspapers, the *Herald* and the *Guardian*, a mutual and satisfactory arrangement has been reached between them. As a result the publication of the *Guardian* will be discontinued as from the fifth day of August, 1938, upon which date the last issue will be published. Mr Don Speedy of the *Guardian* will join the literary staff of the *Herald*.'⁵⁵

The Nanango Advocate

According to the memoirs of Arthur Bright, who once gave up a milk run to work for the *Nanango Advocate*, the *Nanango Advocate* was started after the Second World War. Mr Bright later wrote: 'When the Second World War ended a young Scotsman (complete with bagpipes) retired from the airforce and established the *Nanango Advocate* in a ground floor room of the Palace Hotel. His name was Tom Simpson and with his wife and baby son resided in Nanango for about two years. He heard that I had been a printer and so I used to help him out between milk deliveries, as it was still the days of moveable type set up by hand. I liked the printing trade so it was not long before I was back in the trade which I enjoyed. I gave up the milk run to the

Sid Kahler family ... Tom Simpson sold the *Advocate* to J.M. and A.C. Richmond from Pittsworth and I stayed with him (Jock Richmond) for about fifteen years. During this time an old linograph (forerunner to a linotype) was installed and later replaced by a Number 5 Mergenthaler linotype. The Platen (used for jobbing) was replaced by a small Meihle, and both machines made for speedier and better productions. Failing health forced the Richmonds to retire and the *Advocate* was bought by Allan Cosier who later closed the *Advocate* and moved the plant to Murgon.⁵⁶

John Miller Richmond inserted a public notice in the pages of the newspaper on 3 July, 1947 advising that he had purchased the publication and that it was his intention to 'control and edit' the paper.⁵⁷ In April 1964 another notice appeared advising that Allan Cosier had taken control, the editorial claiming: 'Allan has been connected with the Singleton paper for a number of years and is a competent job printer ... He is young and enthusiastic, anxious to become a part of this community.'⁵⁸

The Goomeri Advertiser

The *Goomeri Advertiser* was started by a group of local businessmen of Goomeri in 1956, it was printed by the *Nanango Advocate* and was primarily a publication designed to bring local news and advertisements to the notice of the people of Goomeri and district. Principal among its writers were D. Wieland and G. Bourne, Mr I. Sharp was responsible for collating both news items and advertising. However, the life of the paper was to be relatively short. Originally, businessmen of Goomeri had believed that the *South Burnett Times* was not giving sufficient coverage to Goomeri news items and so the *Goomeri Advertiser* had been designed to remedy this problem, yet with the growth of circulation of the *South Burnett Times* and its subsequent better coverage of Goomeri, it appeared clear to the businessmen sponsoring the local newspaper that they could never hope to compete with the larger publication. In July 1959, members of the Goomeri Chamber of Commerce voted to close the paper, three years after it was first printed.⁵⁹

The Murgon News

The *Murgon News, Proston, Winderu, Goomeri and District Advertiser*, was first published by the Murgon Newspaper Company at Murgon on Saturday 30 May, 1930, its cover price was 3d and it was the only newspaper being published in Murgon at that time.⁶⁰

The Murgon Mail

The *Murgon Mail* was first published on 3 August, 1939, promising to '... give the residents of Murgon, Goomeri, Proston, Hivesville and the adjacent districts a full coverage of local news, together with a résumé of general news.' It guaranteed a circulation of one thousand copies and was a weekly publication, published from Lamb Street Murgon, its cover price was 2d. The proprietor of the newspaper was T. Clarke. In July 1939 Clarke wrote to the Murgon Shire Council requesting permission to attend and report upon council meetings, he claimed that his columns would be: '... open to the public at all times on all subjects, and I intend to keep it free from suspicion with one policy in mind, progress.'⁶¹ This was a short lived publication, it lasted only until February, 1940.⁶²

The Murgon Advertiser

The *Murgon Advertiser* was first published on Friday 2 January, 1948 from Lamb Street Murgon. In its first edition the editor gave what he termed as an 'editorial opinion' which outlined the newspaper's creed. He wrote:

Of all liberties, the freedom to know, to speak, and to criticize, stands first. The fact that the first action of a dictator, on gaining power, is to gag the press is the best proof that a free press is an essential safeguard of democracy.

The *Advertiser* is conscious of its responsibility as a medium of local news dissemination and healthy criticism. The gathering and interpreting of news, if discharged with a sense of responsibility, is a social service second in importance to none.

The qualities of character in a newspaper which stand the test of time are: Truth, Honour, Courage and Progressiveness.

A newspaper can, over the years, become a motivating creative influence in the life and progress of the town. The press has always played an important part in the life of the community, but it can only do this whilst it commands continuity of respect.

Because public opinion is so much guided by the press, every new attempt to increase its range, must be interesting to the community. So, we give you the first issue of *The Murgon Advertiser* and in so doing, we pledge ourselves to guard the interests of the town and district.⁶³

The Murgon News (1979 paper)

The *Murgon News* (not to be confused with the original *Murgon News*, published in May 1930) was first published in 1979, its business office was at the Murgon and District Development Bureau in Lamb Street Murgon. The newspaper was owned by Radio 4GY (Gympie) and Golden City Publications, it was printed by the *Gympie Times* and released its first four-page preview copy on Wednesday 10 October, 1979, although an earlier preview edition had been rejected due to lack of quality. Its first general release edition was published on 31 October, 1979. This was a free publication delivered by post to all regions in the South Burnett served by the postal system. It later became the *District News* and ceased publication with its final seventy-ninth edition on 13 May, 1981, it had been in operation for one year and twenty-seven weeks. The newspaper's editor was Neil Lomas, other staff included advertising executives Robert Dawson and Lindsay Marsden, with journalist Greg Brennan.⁶⁴

The Leader and Lower South Burnett News

The Leader and Lower South Burnett News, a Murgon publication, was first published on Wednesday 8 September, 1965, by Alan B. Cosier, the front page editorial of that first edition claiming: 'The company's objective in publishing this new paper is to satisfy the needs of a prosperous growing district. Without a newspaper a town is without its hard core to achieve and speak for the needs of the people who live in the towns and district'. The newspaper was a weekly publication, on sale each Wednesday, its head office was in the Krebs Building in Lamb Street. Its cover price was 6d.⁶⁵

The Murgon Hub

Another Murgon publication was the *Murgon Hub*, a newspaper published by the Murgon Development Bureau. Its first edition was released in December 1983.⁶⁶

The Tarong Mail

The *Tarong Mail* was first published in May 1981, publisher and editor was Eira Walcott with journalists Arthur Bright, (a descendant of John and Mary Bright — the second owners of Nanango's first hotel), Sue Neilson and Narelle Clarke.⁶⁷

The Nanango Sentinel and The Adviser

The *Nanango Sentinel* was first published in 1991 and covered the Nanango, Yarraman and Blackbutt regions. The newspaper was published at Sentinel House in William Street Kilcoy, its editor was Dr. Gary J. Turner with writers Madaleine Turner, Helen Sharp and Vanessa Masters. The paper's advertising manager was Neville Saffron and it was printed by the *Gympie Times*.⁶⁸

Another newspaper entitled: *The Adviser* is a free local community publication which is distributed to Benarkin, Blackbutt, Yarraman, Cooyar, Maidenwell, Brooklands, & Nanango, it is published by Julie Head, who is also, at present, a councillor on the Nanango Shire Council.

The Blackbutt Times and the Timbertown Tribune

The *Blackbutt Times* was published by James Weaver, who also published the *Yarraman and District Advocate*. Another Blackbutt publication was the *Timbertown Tribune*, a Gestetner reproduced news-sheet published by local author and historian Sydney Stocks.

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The Broadcast Media

Radio

The advent of radio in Australia, wireless, as it was then known, was one of the very important technological steps of the 1920s, yet few people at the time realised the impact this new medium would have on their lives. One journalist who, for the first time, listened to a concert broadcast from Sydney in April 1924 enthused:

... then comes the strains of the orchestra, every note of which is clearly heard in the rendition of the popular melody — mystic music that was carried over vast distances upon the far-flung ether and snatched up in passing ... It was difficult to realise, as one listened to the clear notes of the banjo solo, that the instrument ... and the latest one-step rendered by a full orchestra, were being played in Sydney ... those seated around the room in which the receiving mechanism was set up certainly experienced no difficulty in enjoying the concert in full ... In the whole realm of mechanical genius which this twentieth century has brought forth, there is nothing which more forcibly demonstrates the wonders of which the human mind is capable than the triumph of the wizard Marconi and the men he has inspired. Even the mind of the most unimaginative must be strangely stirred by the voice or note that is carried without visible means over almost limitless space.¹

One of the earliest radios in the South Burnett region was owned by a man named A. Strenzel, who installed a 'two valve wireless set' at his residence in Wondai in May 1925 and was reportedly able to listen to station 3AR in Melbourne, a considerable feat, it was then claimed, for a two valve set.²

State radio, 4QG, a service that promised to end the isolation of the man on the land, was introduced to Queensland on 27 July, 1925, up until that time the only radio services Queenslanders could receive — those few at least with access to the crude radio receivers of the day, were broadcast from Sydney or Melbourne.

Yet the introduction of this new and vital service to farmers was disappointing, as one account detailed:

The State Government broadcasting station, 500 watts, commenced operating tonight (27 July). The station was officially opened by (the premier) Mr (William Neal) Gillies, his speech being broadcast. Press representatives took down his speech from a six valve set in an adjoining room. The Premier in his speech said he trusted that many happy hours would be given to the children of Queensland, especially those in the far west. The people of the settlements out back would be brought into closer touch with affairs of the outer world. Wireless promised to be a powerful force for the advancement of mankind. The launching of the wireless movement should bring about a new era for the man on the land as it tended to remove the isolation felt by those in remote places. Difficulties would probably arise but the public would have to be patient for a few days until the station got into its stride.

City listeners-in reported the reception was disappointing. The voices of the announcer and Premier were hoarse and distorted. The singing was generally indistinct and rough. Fading was experienced twice and the tuning was too broad.³

If anyone on the South Burnett was attempting to listen to this historic broadcast then the results would certainly have been disappointing, especially so as even the listeners in Brisbane were having trouble picking up the signal. The entire radio transmission system was so primitive

that such disappointing results were hardly surprising. The manager of the station, Mr J.W. Robinson, later stated that the difficulties had been brought about through hasty organisation and primitive equipment. In a letter written to Mrs R. Watson, a woman who had attempted to listen to that first programme and had been disappointed with the results, Robinson stated in August that year:

When we started operations two weeks ago our transmission was not too good, but we did not worry very much about that. We were satisfied to have got the station 'in the air' in so short a time, and we know that good transmission could come only with a few days' experience in handling the new gear. We really should have waited a couple of weeks and tested thoroughly before we started, but the public was clamouring for radio, and as we had said we would be going in a month, we decided to keep our word.

Perhaps if I tell you a little about our fight to get the station going you will realise how we stood. The Government decided on June 29 to establish the station and gave me a free hand to go ahead. I set to work as quickly as possible and on July 27 (less than a month later) was on the air. Those who criticised our first few nights surely did not realise what a heart-breaking task we set ourselves when we said we would start a service in four weeks. We had absolutely nothing when we started, and I can assure you that it required some effort to build even a temporary show.

We first of all found temporary office accommodation for my staff, and then set to work to turn the big office I occupied into a studio. We cleared it out, draped the ceilings and walls and padded the floor. Then we installed the necessary studio equipment. We then erected a shed in the courtyard for a station and placed two poles in position on the roof and across them hung our aerial. These poles are not high but they were the best we could do. As a matter of fact the whole relative positions of the offices, studios, station, aerial and ground systems made it difficult to work efficiently, but we have kept solidly at it, and are now giving, I think, a good service ... We toiled all the Saturday preceding the opening Monday, all Sunday and right through until three o'clock on Monday morning. Then we went home for a wash and a shave, and were back at daylight. We didn't even have spare valves in the place when we started off, and if we had blown one we would have had to close down. We worked with our hearts in our mouths.

On top of all this the programmes had to be organised, and drafted. They are not of the best I know, but when I think of the work we had to do and the little time to do it in, I wonder how we have any programmes at all.

When we started we were poor — very poor — I frankly admit that. But I didn't worry. It took 2FC, 2BL, and 3LD weeks and weeks to become right. Surely to goodness one couldn't expect us to be up to their standard at once (and without tests too)! We knew that a few days would soon enable us to right things, so we made no explanations and no excuses. We just worked on, and in about ten days were quite good. The Wednesday night on which you reported good reception was our turning point. We managed to secure some badly needed gear that day and were able not only to right the trouble, but also to push up our power. Since then we have been making improvements, and I think we are quite good now. A few more days should see an even bigger improvement.⁴

By 1927 only two broadcasting licences had been issued in Queensland, the first to 4QR in Brisbane, and a B Class licence to a station in Toowoomba. This could be heard every Wednesday and Sunday nights but few people on the South Burnett could receive its signal.⁵

The first radio station on the South Burnett appears to have been the brain-child of that indefatigable Murgon radio enthusiast Archie Caswell. In 1935 Caswell was broadcasting from a small experimental radio station with its call-sign VK-4CB, his studio, if it could be described as such, was situated in a small building that had been especially constructed for the purpose adjacent to his father's residence in Fryar Street Murgon. In September 1935 the *Nanango News* published:

Nanango radio listeners are finding that experimental station 4CB Murgon comes over with strength and tone and provides excellent entertainment on Sunday mornings.

The Murgon experimental radio station VK-4CB, known to experimenters on the short wave bands for some time now, is heard on the regular broadcast band every Sunday morning between 9 and 10.30 o'clock, and the quality of the transmission, together with the powerful signal strength, is greatly appreciated by listeners throughout the South Burnett

as well as much further afield as reports to hand indicate. The station is owned and operated by Mr A.H. Caswell, a young local resident, who has carried out all his studies and experimental work in the town. The transmission on the broadcast band takes place on a wavelength of 220.6 metres and a frequency of 1360 kilocycles ... The station is completely A.C. operated — no batteries being used. When only two transmissions had taken place on the broadcast band hundreds of reports were received from listeners — some from as far distant as Bundaberg, Caboolture and Brisbane...

Mr F.W. Caswell, who is chairman of the Murgon Shire Council, also takes a keen interest in his son's experimental work.⁶

Proposals for the establishment of Radio 4SB in Kingaroy were first put forward in 1936. In September that year meetings were held at Kingaroy, Murgon and Wondai in order to gauge public support for such a proposal, and Mr F. Mitchell, general manager of J.B. Chandler and Company, addressed those present on the subject of 'Wireless Broadcasting in the South Burnett.' Following the Kingaroy meeting the press enthused: 'Kingaroy found this subject vivid and enthralling ... The proposal itself is important and, if successful, will make another step forward of the South Burnett.'⁷

The subsequent meeting held at Wondai was also particularly well attended. Mitchell pointed out that the growth of radio broadcasting over the previous eleven years had been dramatic. He quoted figures that showed increases in personal radio receiving licences had risen from 2500 in 1925 to 852,000 by 1936 and that by the end of the year the Postmaster General's Department was expecting to issue its millionth licence. He explained that his company, Chandlers, had extensive interests in radio broadcasting licences and, in fact, owned four of them, the maximum then allowed by a single company under state law. An application by the company to provide broadcasting services to the South Burnett had been refused by the P.M.G. in 1935, and therefore Mitchell was proposing that a station be set up in the region with local investors and that his company would have only '... a minor interest'.⁸

A similar meeting held at Murgon soon afterwards was also well attended. Presided over by Archie Caswell the audience asked Mitchell many searching questions regarding the costs involved, possible sources of advertising revenue and the likely return to shareholders. Mitchell replied that the revenue would largely come from city advertisers and that as radio stations were known to be particularly profitable, the returns to shareholders would be significant.⁹

On 18 July, 1936, the provisional directors issued a prospectus and the company's memorandum of association. According to this document there were 15,000 shares at £1 each, provisional directors were John Beals Chandler and Vernon Fancourt Mitchell with a board of five directors to be elected once the company had been formed. The company secretary *pro tem* was H.C. Muston. According to the prospectus, J.B. Chandler owned five hundred ordinary shares, V.F. Mitchell also owned five hundred ordinary shares, and other shareholders each with one preference share were Ronald Leonard Wetzig, a law clerk of Brisbane, Thomas Stuart Sawers, law clerk of Brisbane, Timothy Joseph Ahern, law clerk of Brisbane, Owen Maynard Fletcher, a solicitor of Brisbane and Geoffrey Albert Goldsmid, also a solicitor of Brisbane.¹⁰

Plans came to fruition in November 1936 with the registration of the company, the press reporting:

With the registration today of the South Burnett Broadcasting Company Ltd., plans are in progress for the erection shortly of a new, modern and powerful broadcasting station to service one of our most densely settled farming districts.

The company, of which Messrs J.B. Chandler and V.F. Mitchell are the first directors, will equip the new station with an aerial power of 2000 watts, the greatest power authorised up to the present for use by commercial broadcasting stations. The transmitter, the site of which has not been decided upon at present, will be the most modern in the State, it is claimed — slightly more powerful than the national station 4QG, and about as powerful as 4RK Rockhampton.

The transmitter will be located close to Kingaroy, Wondai and Murgon, and within easy radio distance of Goomeri and Nanango. One studio will definitely be located at Kingaroy, while another will be situated in Brisbane. A certain part of the programmes will be supplied

by way of relay from station 4BC, which will enable that station's service to be given to the South Burnett areas in good form. The studio in the city will also enable the supply of special presentations designed for the country areas.

'Country listeners will consequently have their own programmes as well as the pick of 4BC's', said Mr Chandler, who supplied the information about the new station.

The preparatory work will take some time to complete in the matter of the erection of the transmitter, which has to be built, while exhaustive tests for the most suitable site will be undertaken. The most up-to-date type of aerial equipment will, it is hoped, provide much better radiation than is being obtained at the moment by any commercial station.¹¹

Shortly afterwards the Radio Listeners' League was formed at Murgon. The object of this league was to combat the radio interference that everyone in the town and district was periodically experiencing. The interference came from a number of sources, electrical cabling, motors, domestic appliances, one was so bad that it was being widely referred to as Public Enemy Number One. Executive members of the league included, of course, Archie Caswell, the treasurer and secretary was Dr P.M. Davidson, and J.S. Mills was its president. A small membership fee was levied in order to raise funds to fight the menace of interference and a detailed report was planned for presentation to a visiting investigation expert from the P.M.G. who was due to arrive at the township soon afterwards. Hostility towards the interference had been heightened, no doubt, following the intermittent blacking out of the recent test match broadcasts which the press described as being a 'nuisance,' and 'particularly severe.'¹²

In April 1937 a meeting of 4SB shareholders was held at the company's registered office and J.B. Chandler, F. Mitchell, H.C. Muston, C.F. Adermann and S.G. Darow were elected directors.¹³

By May 1937 a suitable site for the construction of the new South Burnett radio station had been acquired at Wooroolin, the land belonged to Mr C.J. Turner, and tests carried out at the site had shown it to be perfectly suitable for radio broadcasting. The tests were carried out by Mr E.C. Littler of Chandlers and negotiations were underway with the local authority to provide electricity to the site, this extension of power would ultimately provide electricity not only to the radio station, but also to the small communities at Wooroolin, Memerambi and Crawford.¹⁴

The site had been chosen after exhaustive investigations in the region, the primary consideration being the reception of a strong radio signal in Kingaroy, Wondai and Murgon with the Nanango, Kumbia, Preston and Goomeri districts considered as being of only secondary importance. In addition to Turner's site at Wooroolin there were four other sites considered as being reasonably suitable, one was also at Wooroolin, another at Tingoorra, one at Home Creek and the last at Booie.¹⁵

Over the following months work on the station proceeded on schedule, the main office of the station was situated at Kingaroy with the broadcasting studio and other equipment being located at Wooroolin. The station was designed by Amalgamated Wireless (Australia) and was preparing to operate on 2000 watts, making it one of the most powerful radio stations in the Commonwealth. By comparison, the state's main station in Brisbane was then operating on 1000 watts, Toowoomba was broadcasting on 500 watts and Maryborough on just 100 watts.¹⁶

By February 1938 the masts had been erected and a brief announcement was heard on air as a technician stated: '4SB South Burnett, testing, on the occasion of a visit by the directors of the company.' The press subsequently enthused:

A group of people who had been invited on an inspection by Mr Mitchell (managing director) were greatly interested in the apparatus. The station (near Wooroolin) is equipped with the most modern plant installed in Australia at the moment. Rapid strides are being made in broadcasting, and in this, being the latest erection, many new ideas are incorporated...

Its masts are 220 feet high. In the ground work there are 102 lines radiating from the centre of the aerial to 25 feet, making 7½ miles of wires in the ground network. The station is a dear job, indicating the acknowledged importance of the South Burnett and its environs. While it operated on Sunday for a few minutes, the aerial was not then connected ... The equipment was explained by Mr Mitchell and his engineers during the inspection on Sunday,

but without going into details (which are mostly technical) it is sufficient to say that the place is well equipped with broadcasting apparatus of which earlier constructed stations would be envious.¹⁷

The Wooroolin site was officially opened by Mr J.A.J. Hunter, M.H.R. on Friday 11 March, 1938.¹⁸ The press enthusiastically reporting: "The transmitter house and grounds were gaily decorated with coloured lights and bunting, and, as the station is situated in a commanding position on a hill about a mile outside Wooroolin, the illuminations were visible for miles around."¹⁹



The studios of 4SB at Kingaroy, opened in June 1938.

Source — Radio 1071 archives.

The Kingaroy studio was opened on Friday 10 June by Senator H.S. Foll speaking on a land-line direct from Canberra. As the studio was not large enough to accommodate all those who had been invited to the ceremony, the opening actually took place at the Olympia Theatre. The evening saw a number of first events, the station was linked with the Commonwealth network for the first time and the first relay from Brisbane was the first 1938 cricket test. The evening's broadcasting concluded with community singing.²⁰

The station's manager in 1938 was Peter Le Brun.²¹ He was succeeded during the early 1940s by George Parker.

There were just three staff working at the station when it first opened. The first technician at the Kingaroy station was Norman Cruickshank.²² Another man who guided the fortunes of the radio station for approximately ten years was its chief technician Charles Tie. Tie was an ardent worker for charitable organisations and a dedicated radio worker, so dedicated, in fact, that he sometimes slept at the station's transmitter at Wooroolin. He was found dead in his narrow cot in the radio room at the station's transmitter in February 1958, he had previously been undergoing medical treatment for a heart condition.²³

The Kingaroy studios were extensively re-designed and extended in 1969, the remodelled studios being officially opened by the postmaster-general, Mr A.S. Hulme. Other official guests at the opening included chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, Mr Myles F.E. Wright, and the premier, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen.²⁴ By this time the original staff of three at the station had increased to thirteen including three announcers and three technicians.²⁵

In 1971 long serving station general manager George Parker resigned due to health reasons, Parker had worked for the station since the early 1940s, he was replaced by Ben Whitnall, the

announcement of Whitnall's promotion being made by the station's chairman, Charles Adermann. Whitnall had served in the Australian Navy's radio and electronics section from 1940 to 1953 and later worked as a technician with 4GR in Toowoomba. He joined 4SB as a technician in 1959, was appointed its chief technician in 1964 and studio manager in 1968.²⁶

Whitnall remained as manager of the station for only four years, resigning in April 1975 to take up the position of manager with the Christian Broadcasting Association in Sydney.²⁷

Clem Fechner took control of the station from Ben Whitnall in 1975 and served until the early 1980s, he had previously worked at various positions in the radio industry, and had started his career as an announcer at 4SB when George Parker was the station manager. When he resigned from the manager's position he purchased a business in Kingaroy, Terry Muston then took over as manager.

In January 1988 Marc Peters took over as manager. Prior to beginning his career in the radio industry Marc Peters served in the Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm, joining the navy when he was fifteen years of age. Following the completion of a course in radio announcing Marc Peters began his career in broadcasting with Radio 4VL in Charleville, later moving to Radio 4AK in Toowoomba where he spent ten years working as an announcer, sales-person and programme director. Following an appointment with the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education as a publicity officer, Marc Peters moved to Radio 4ZR at Roma as station manager before taking up his appointment at 4SB at Kingaroy.²⁸

The Roma station was owned by the Maranoa Broadcasting Company which was interested in purchasing the station at Kingaroy, as was the *South Burnett Times* which eventually became the major shareholder in the company.²⁹

A new transmitting tower was installed at Wooroolin in February 1988, effectively doubling the transmission strength of the station's signal. The new tower was a omni-directional tower, whereas the old tower had been only partially directional and was in a poor state of repair.³⁰

Under the direction of manager Marc Peters the station underwent considerable policy and programme changes. In March 1988 it released its new logo, 'All Time Hits, 1071 AM.' Another improvement in the service came with the introduction of satellite networking, taking overnight programmes from ten o'clock in the evening until six o'clock the following morning — the programmes being broadcast from Sydney. Australian Provincial Newspapers acquired the *South Burnett Times* in 1994 and at the same time became the major shareholders in Radio 1071. Future plans for the station include a transformation to FM operation, this will incorporate the provision of new transmitters, a new transmitter site, new studios, production facilities and microwave links.³¹

Television

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the introduction of television was seen as a considerable technological achievement. Experiments in television broadcasting had been delayed due to the outbreak of war in 1939, however, after the war there was a resurgence of interest and investment especially in the United States and Britain.

Yet by the mid 1950s Australia remained without any kind of television service, although there were plans for its introduction.

The first experimental television broadcast in Australia was transmitted from that relic of colonialism, the convict windmill on Wickham Terrace, Brisbane. (The windmill had once been used as a gallows. Two aboriginal men were hanged there during the colony's formative years when Brisbane was still a penal settlement).

The historic television transmission from the windmill took place in 1934, yet it was to be many years before television came of age in Australia. In February 1954 came the first televised event in Australia's history, the landing at Farm Cove of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, which was internally televised to children at the Mossman Spastic Centre.³²

With the introduction of television broadcasting from capital city stations the government was left with something of a dilemma. Evidently the public would want a television service as quickly

as possible. The government's options were either to boost capital station signals or to allow regional television licences. The debate went before federal cabinet in March 1959.³³

In May that year the government announced that it would call for applications for television licences to serve the Darling Downs, Rockhampton and Townsville areas. No mention was made of the South Burnett, although the government had decided that further licences would later be granted to a variety of regional centres, preference being given to independent groups not associated with the metropolitan stations.³⁴ The government also stated that it would build a national television service (the Australian Broadcasting Commission) that would function alongside commercial networks.³⁵

On Sunday 16 August, 1959, Brisbane station QTC Channel 9 commenced broadcasting, however, it is unlikely if anyone in the South Burnett had the necessary equipment to receive the weak signal.³⁶ By November that year two more television stations were operating from Brisbane, including the A.B.C.

Yet reception, for those few who actually owned television sets, was not particularly good, and at the annual general meeting of the South Burnett Associated Chamber of Commerce, held at Murgon in November 1959, members carried a motion that a claim should be made for the establishment of a television transmitting station on the Bunya Mountains, this move, chamber members believed, would enhance television reception into the region from both Brisbane and any future television station that might be established at Toowoomba. Johannes Bjelke Petersen, who was present at the meeting, described the idea as, 'a good one.'³⁷

The successful applicant for the granting of a television licence on the Darling Downs was Darling Downs Television Ltd., although the company secretary, Mr K. Fowler, stated in January 1961 that there would be financial difficulties in establishing a transmitter at Mount Mowbullin in the Bunya Mountains.³⁸

Despite this early scepticism, by February the following year the decision to establish transmitting facilities on top of the Bunya Mountains had been made and the construction of two towers and their associated buildings for Channels Ten, the commercial station, and Three, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, was moving rapidly ahead.³⁹

A.B.Q. Channel 2 began telecasting in November 1959, the press reporting: 'Test patterns were clearly received from this station within a wide radius this week ... Most distant reception was reported from Maryborough ... Yesterday we viewed very clear reception on sets in Mr Lou Thiemann's Kingaroy Street shop, shortly after mid-day.'⁴⁰

The station was officially opened by C.W. Davidson, O.B.E. on Monday 2 November with its studios on Coronation Drive Toowong which fed programmes to its transmitter tower at Mount Cootha. News editor of A.B.Q. 2 was Don Speedy, a former staff member of the *Kingaroy Herald*. With the exception of a period serving as an air force liaison officer in Canada, Speedy worked with the newspaper from 1938 to 1948, he had previously worked on the *Kingaroy Guardian* and transferred to the *Herald* when the *Herald* had taken over the *Guardian* in 1938.⁴¹

At a meeting of the directors of Darling Downs Television Ltd. held in Toowoomba in December 1961 the tender of builder A. Hodge and Son Ltd. was accepted for the construction of the office and studio at Toowoomba. At that time company executives expected the television service to commence in June 1962.⁴²

Executive officers of Darling Downs Television included its general manager, Mr D. Nicholson and managing director, Walter Bruce. In a press release given in June 1962, Bruce stated that the station would be officially opened by the postmaster-general on the 29th of that month. Italian riggers were then placing the final touches to the masts they had constructed at the Bunya Mountains and technicians and their families were moving into the accommodation provided there for them.⁴³ Commercial broadcasting began on 13 July, 1962.⁴⁴

There has never been a commercial television station on the South Burnett, although the commercial stations were later aggregated under government regulations so that residents of regional centres such as those living on the South Burnett could receive the transmissions of other competitive commercial channels including SEQ Television (Sunshine Television) at Maryborough.

Notes and Sources
Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-five
The Broadcast Media

1. M/C. 15 April, 1924, p 4.
2. M/C. 19 May, 1925, p 2.
3. M/C. 28 July, 1925, p 4.
4. M/C. 15 August, 1925, p 12.
5. SBT. 7 January, 1927, p 1.
6. N/N. 19 September, 1935, p 2.
7. SBT. 11 September, 1936, p 7.
8. SBT. 18 September, 1936, p 7.
9. SBT. 25 September, 1936, p 6.
10. Company prospectus, Radio 1071 archives. The prospectus may also be found in K/G. 7 August, 1936.
11. *Telegraph*. 18 November, 1936 reproduced in SBT. 27 November, 1936, p 2. See also: K/H. 20 November, 1936, p 2.
12. SBT. 18 December, 1936, p 3.
13. K/H. 9 April, 1937, p 6.
14. SBT. 28 May, 1937, p 6.
15. For a report of these test sites see: letter dated 20 February, 1937, from Chandlers and Co. to the South Burnett Broadcasting Company, Radio 1071 archives.
16. SBT. 20 August, 1937, p 1.
17. SBT. 25 February, 1938, p 7.
18. SBT. 18 March, 1938, p 5.
19. For comprehensive details on the opening ceremony see: K/G. 18 March, 1938, p 1.
20. K/H. 9 June, 1938, p 5 and SBT. 17 June, 1938, p 5.
21. Le Brun to Murgon Shire Council, letter dated 8 December, 1938, file S, 1938, Murgon Shire Council archives.
22. SBT. 26 February, 1969, p 1.
23. SBT. 20 February, 1958, p 1.
24. SBT. 26 February, 1969, p 1.
25. SBT. 12 March, 1969, p 26.
26. SBT. 7 April, 1971, and 14 April, 1971, p 3.
27. SBT. 23 April, 1975, p 28.
28. SBT. 20 January, 1988, and author interview with Marc Peters recorded 9 September, 1996.
29. Author interview with Marc Peters, recorded 9 September, 1996.
30. SBT. 3 February, 1988, p 3.
31. SBT. 30 March, 1988, p 16 and author interview with Marc Peters, recorded 9 September, 1996.
32. M/C. 5 February, 1954, p 1.
33. M/C. 11 March, 1959, p 2.
34. M/C. 1 May, 1959, p 1.
35. M/C. 5 May, 1959, p 1.
36. M/C. 17 August, 1959, p 2.
37. SBT. 12 November, 1959, p 1.
38. SBT. 26 January, 1961, p 5.
39. SBT. 15 February, 1962, p 16.
40. K/H. 29 October, 1959, p 1.
41. K/H. 5 November, 1959, p 1.
42. K/H. 14 December, 1961, p 1.
43. SBT. 7 June, 1962, p 1.
44. N/A. 12 July, 1962, p 1.

The Railways in Decline

The railway links to the South Burnett, as we have seen, were to bring great prosperity to the region but time has altered policies and changed political, social and economic directions. Over the years the need for such a rail system has dramatically declined until the services enjoyed by those early settlers of the South Burnett are no longer required nor would they today be regarded as economically practicable. Throughout the South Burnett the direction of agriculture has dramatically changed, gone are the dairy farms, the butter factories, the enormous timber industry. Trains are no longer needed to freight cans of cream to the factories, cartons of butter to the cities, tons of logs to the mills. With the rise in the number of passenger vehicles on the roads and the introduction of comprehensive and inexpensive coach services and methods of air travel, gone too is the need for passenger trains, once a lucrative form of business for the Queensland Railways. Year by year the rail services have dwindled, tracks that once took years of agitation and hundreds of thousands of pounds to complete have now been abandoned and, in many places pulled up.

Among the first rail reductions was that of Taabinga Village. The station was inspected by the railways commissioner in October 1931 and it was evident that the operations of the station would have to be rationalised. Numbers of passengers using the line had dropped by half from 1924 to 1931. Due to this decline Miss Wirth, the station-mistress, was transferred to Crawford and the facility was allowed to continue operating merely as an unattended station.¹

Another instance of reduction in rail services came in 1955 when the Railways Department announced that the station-master at Tingoorra was to be replaced by the appointment of a gatekeeper, the decision meant, as the press stated, that: '... the station, as an outlet for the district's produce, and as a receiving centre for Tingoorra people, will be reduced to almost negligible standing.' It was difficult to understand the department's decision to so severely downgrade the station, the figures for the station were excellent. In August 1953, for example, only £462 worth of goods had passed through the station, while in March 1955 that figure had risen to £1517 for the month.²

In June 1961 the state government announced that the Kingaroy to Tarong line would be closed, and prolonged efforts to save the line failed. In January 1963 the state government announced that the line would be dismantled at a cost of £30,000, the Barlil to Windaera line was also marked for destruction. The news of the impending destruction of these lines created considerable public agitation but the Transport Department would not be moved on the issue.³

The Kingaroy to Nanango line, the same line that was created through the agitation and dogged perseverance of the people of that town, was finally closed on 29 June, 1964, the last train leaving Nanango for Kingaroy on that date, although the official closure took place on 1 July, 1964. Many Nanango people took advantage of travelling aboard that last nostalgic train to Kingaroy.⁴

The historic Nanango railway station building, the establishment of which created so much controversy during the formation years of the rail system, was eventually removed from its site in central Nanango and taken to the new race-course where it was refurbished to provide offices and jockey rooms.⁵

The Kingaroy Show Society later carried out a fund-raising drive to raise sufficient money to have the Coolabunia railway station and its station-master's house — also redundant as a result of the Nanango line closure — moved to the show-grounds as a caretaker's residence and committee rooms.⁶

One by one 'rationalisations' took place during which services were curtailed or withdrawn and many of the smaller stations were closed. In September 1988, following news of further closures,

the financial positions of several stations were released, including Kilkivan, Proston, Wooroolin and Wondai and those figures were not promising. For that financial year Kilkivan costs were \$39,853, while revenue was just \$17,343. At Proston the situation was similar, costs were \$22,595 while revenue was almost half that amount at \$11,660. The situation was repeated at Wooroolin, costs \$34,678, revenue \$14,571 and at Wondai the costs were \$89,314 while revenue reached just \$65,207.⁷

The Yarraman branch line celebrated its 75th anniversary in April 1988 but soon afterwards the news was released that the line was to be closed. This event coincided with the news that rationalisations would take place at several other stations and there were rumours that even some major stations such as Kingaroy would be closed.⁸ In October that year, as the cutbacks continued, the Kilkivan Shire Council stated that they would protest against the closure of the Goomeri station.⁹

Indeed the closures and announcements of imminent closures created a storm of protest throughout the South Burnett as the Labor government of Wayne Goss pushed for further closures, announcing that all the lines in the South Burnett would be closed. Local politicians in most of the South Burnett regional authorities pointed out that such a move would be a retrogressive step, claiming that while the lines were not showing a profit they were still needed by the people of the South Burnett, many of whom, especially businessmen and cooperatives, had invested large amounts of money in ventures knowing that the rail system was in place to handle the transportation of their products. Peanut transportation was one of the major concerns as was the fledgling kaolin (white clay for pottery and paper production) industry. Additionally, there were many agricultural interests, fruit and vegetables had to be transported to the markets in the cities and the meatworks at Murgon required transport for its products. Editorials in the local press called for common sense to prevail, stating that rather than closing lines such as Yarraman and Proston, the line should be electrified and new passenger services installed.¹⁰ Curiously, many of the arguments put forward to save the rail services were exactly the same arguments used by the early residents of the region when they too had petitioned and lobbied the government to have the rail lines laid.

Representations to the state government from the local government authorities and other organisations were successful in swinging the decision in favour of retaining the major functions of the service and in November 1993 the *South Burnett Times* headlined: 'Railway Reprieve'.¹¹

Yet, as we now know, there has been no real reprieve for the rail system of the South Burnett, the lines that were laid at such financial and personal cost have now been made largely redundant and in many cases torn up. There remains a tenuous rail link running weekly to Kingaroy, but there appears to be no bright future for rail transportation in the South Burnett.

Notes and Sources

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-six

The Railways in Decline

1. K/G. 4 March, 1932.
2. K/H. 28 April, 1955, p 7.
3. For further details on the destruction of these lines see: K/H. 8 June, 1961 p 1 and 17 January, 1963, p 1.
4. SBT. 3 September, 1964.
5. SBT. 24 January, 1968, p 25.
6. SBT. 3 September, 1964, p 1.
7. SBT. 28 September, 1988, p 1.
8. *Ibid.*, p 5.
9. SBT. 2 November, 1988, p 3.
10. SBT. 30 July, 1993, p 2.
11. SBT. 16 November, 1993, p 1.

Conclusion

It is a customary for Australians to have strong opinions concerning their history, and the people of the South Burnett are no exception to this tradition. Looking back over the years since white man first settled in the region we now know as the South Burnett, it is relatively easy to deliberate on the social pattern of settlement and to wonder how much of this settlement was pre-ordained and whether fate took an active hand. Was there a distinctive pattern of settlement, was that pattern following an ordered rule and were there carefully orchestrated plans and phases to which the settlers strictly adhered?

From an aboriginal perspective the colonisation of the region was clearly unwanted and unwarranted. The coming of the white colonists, particularly the wealthy squattocracy, their workers, shepherds, stockmen and servants, forged the first iron-fisted transgression into sacred aboriginal lands. We have seen, earlier in this history, how that invasion transformed the landscape, decimated the aboriginal nations and created the genesis of closer settlement that was later established and upon which the contemporary wealth of the region was founded.

If the history has been a difficult one for the indigenous people, it has also been difficult for many of the white settlers. They came from the cotton mills, the farms, factories, mines, docks and retail establishments of places such as England and Germany, hoping that they would find more freedom, better living and working conditions and an easier lifestyle in their adopted country. All too often this was not the case. Newly arriving immigrants at ports such as Maryborough and Brisbane were faced with ponderous difficulties; they had to fend for themselves and their families until they could find work, they frequently had to journey long distances into the interior in order to find that work, and once there they discovered that conditions were often harsher than those they had left behind, that wages were modest, the rations mundane and the isolation absolute. Once on their land or working for their employers, they were faced with the difficulties of building a home for themselves with only the materials on hand, bush timbers, local stone and little else. Most of these settlers soon realised that life in the Australian bush could be primitive indeed.

The coming of the rail line, as we have already seen, changed forever the economic and social face of the South Burnett. If there was ordered progression of settlement, it came about because of the laying of those rail lines. The lines brought the wealth upon which the region would grow and prosper. Now, however, we have gone full circle and the rail lines are being destroyed. Today the person on the land is continually struggling to make his or her farm pay under the most difficult of circumstances. It is true that we are embracing new rural industries, that country people are experiencing another agrarian reform, like the settlers who came here at the turn of the century, we are again facing a future that is hopeful and bright, but tinged with the knowledge that at any moment the weather, political strategies or economic conditions could dramatically impact upon that future. In this event at least, things have not really altered so dramatically since those first bullock wagons came rumbling through the South Burnett during the early 1840s.

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Murgon News

Murgon & District News

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Nanango News

Nanango Sentinel

Nashville Times

Queensland Country Life

Queensland Times

South Burnett Beacon

South Burnett Times

Sunday Mail

Tarong Mail

Tarong Contractor

Wondai Times

Index

Volume 2

- A**
A. Hodge and Son Ltd. 1037
A.C.T.U. 978
A.N.Z. Bank 531
A.R.P. (air raid precaution)
wards 999, 1004
A.V. and C. Boisen 509-510,
512-514
A.V. Boisen's Store 530
Abbott, E. 920
Abe, Bill 638
Abeshouse, August 641
Aboud, J.C. 610
Abraham, Gilbert 641
Abrahamson, William (Bill)
638
ACA Mineral Products Pty.
Ltd. 695
Acme Bar Company 543
Adair, Ronald 890, 893, 899
Adam, Colin 1022
Adam, Godfrey John 1022
Adams, Alice Lefroy 1022,
1024
Adams, James Leslie
1022-1024
Adams, Vern 906
Adams, W. 645
Adams, W.E. 852
Adams, W.J. 648
Adamson, John 550
Adermann, Charles F. 683,
686, 690, 906, 918, 921,
924, 926-929, 1034, 1036
Advax Tyre Company
619-620
Agricultural Bank 791, 845
Ahearn, Bertha May 643
Ahearn, Premier Mike 687
Ahern, Timothy Joseph 1033
Ailsa Private Hospital 866
Air Queensland 908
Aircrafts Pty. Ltd. 890, 893,
897, 899-902, 906
Akesson, Herman 626
Akesson, Karna 626
Akesson, Ola 626, 628, 901
Albion, Bertha 630
Alcock, Ann 674
Alcock, Beatrice 674
Alcock, Florence Gertrude 822
Alcock, Henry Catch 674
Alcock, Joseph N. 822
Alcorn, A.C. 867
Alcorn, Ann Gunn 667
Alcorn, I. 867
Alexander, J.F. 521
Alexander, Robert 490-491,
498-499
Alexander, T. 660
Alford, Richard Symes (Dick)
586
Alford, Thomas 586, 588
All Saints Church, Brisbane
589
Allan and Chambers (Dalby)
933
Allan 'Snow' Huston Memorial
Park 580
Allen and Company 729
Allen, Dinah 642-643
Allen, George 641
Allen, Jack 729
Allen, Janet 642
Allen, Martha 643
Alton, L. 871
Amalgamated Metal Workers'
Foundries and Shipwrights'
Union 987
Amalgamated Wireless
(Australia) 1034
Amalgamation of South Burnett
butter factories 793
Amies, Nell 807
Andersen, A. 641
Andersen, Anne 604
Andersen, Christian 672-673
Andersen, Lars 734-735
Anderson, A. 970
Anderson, Albert Robert 730
Anderson, Alf 653
Anderson, Charles 815
Anderson, D.G. 555
Anderson, J.M. 511
Anderson, K. 807
Anderson, Mabel Mary 814
Anderson, Mal 906
Anderson, T. 629
Anderson, W.J. 543
Anderson, W.S. 684
Angel, Martha 831, 891-892
Angel's Paddock 906
Anger, A. 971
Anglican Church 647
Anglican Church (Kingaroy)
690
Angove, A.V. 684, 690-691
Angove, James 690
Angove, Marian 690
Annand and Robinson
932-933
Anson, Alice Ellena 543
Anson, George Frederick
William 543
Anthony, Doug 928
Anzac cottages 844
Appel, B. 610
Appel, Fred 708
Archibald Blue Memorial
Clock 623
Archie Muir Centre 809
Argent, C.G. 578, 791
Armstrong, H.J. 818
Armstrong, Robert 975
Armstrong, W.G. 521, 533
Arnold, Professor Nell 582
Arthur, Albert 602
Arthur, Elizabeth Jane 602
Arts Development Fund
Committee 692
Assad, Elizabeth 599
Assad, Peter 599, 727
Atherton, A.E. 809
Atherton, Matron 881
Atkinson, P.E.H. 769
Attwood, James W. 641
Augenson, V.H. 890
Aussie Air 908
Austa Electric 992-993
Austral Motors 928
Australian Army Medical
Corps Reserve 868-869
Australian Broadcasting
Commission 1037
Australian Broadcasting
Control Board 1035
Australian Butter Pool 783
Australian Canners'
Association 932
Australian Coal Association
580
Australian Comforts Fund
511, 806, 809-810, 812,
814-815, 818, 999, 1003
Australian Conservation
Foundation 696

- Australian Cotton Growing Association 575–576
 Australian Country Party 880
 Australian National University 994
 Australian Patriotic Fund 818
 Australian Patriotic funds 825
 Australian Provincial Newspapers 1024–1025, 1036
 Australian United Press 1024
 Australian Women's Land Army 999
 Aviation 888–911
 Axon, A.E. 963–964, 966–967
- B**
- Bacon, Francis Cedric 899
 Badcock, O.G. 962
 Badlor, R. 846
 Baird, W. 920
 Baker, Eva 685
 Baker, M. 681, 683, 690, 769, 862
 Baker, Mantle 685, 913
 Baker, Mary 685
 Baldwin, C.E. 729
 Balfour, Sergeant 942
 Ball, Emily 491
 Ball, Isabella 491
 Bambling, William 564
 Bandidt, Group Captain Alan 904–905
 Bandit, W. 801
 Banff, Matron Helen 868
 Bank of Australasia 612
 Bank of New South Wales 612, 933, 1023
 Bank of Queensland 645
 Banks, Mary Macleod 496
 Baptist Church Speedwell 561
 Baptist Church Wondai 828
 Baramba Divisional Board 520
 Barambah station 486, 584, 587, 634–636, 825, 848–849, 942
 Barbeler, Hilda Caroline Edverdinah 609
 Barbeler, John William 609
 Barbeler, Private Bernie 999
 Barbeler, W.J. 999
 Barclay, Dr 875
 Barden, Kevin 993
 Barker Creek sawmill 733
 Barker, Bryce T. 585
 Barker, Ken 904
 Barkle, Bill 653
 Barkle, J. 610
 Barley Marketing Board 934
 Barlow, G.W. 895
 Barnes, Mary 495
 Barnes, Roy 564
 Barnes, Sergeant H. 503
 Barnes, William 494–495
- Barr, Edwin William Donald (Eddie) 565–566
 Barr, Ethel 566
 Barr, Reverend Isaac M. 557
 Barrett, John 525
 Barrett, Nora 525
 Barrie, Douglas Ernest 937
 Barron, John 734
 Barsby, Mrs L. 873
 Bartholomew, J. 701
 Bartlett, A.H. 850
 Barton, C.H. 700
 Barton, R. (junior) 658
 Batts, S.E. 813
 Bauer, Christian Frederick 952
 Bauer, George 596–597
 Bauer, Sapper Eddie 1011
 Bauer, Walter George 951
 Bauer, William 952
 Baumgardt, T.F. 543
 Baxter and Hargreaves 524
 Baxter, B.J. 623
 Beale, Victor 555
 Bean Growers Australia 936–937
 Bean Growers' Co-operative Association Ltd. 931, 934, 936
 Beasley, Burt 993
 Beasley, Donna 993
 Beasley, Irene 993
 Beasley, John 993
 Becker, A. 761
 Beer, T.W. 612
 Beerwah sawmill 736
 Behm, Allan Max 535, 578
 Behrend, Matron 874–875
 Beil, A. 810
 Beil, J.W. 652
 Bell, A. 607, 619
 Bell, J.T. 521
 Bell, William Grey 882
 Benarkin sawmill 736
 Bennett and Francis 690
 Bennetts, G.G. 572
 Berghofer, George 1026
 Berghofer, Greg 1025–1026
 Berghofer, Kathleen 1026
 Bergin, Rev. Father 853
 Berlin, Ernie 654
 Berlin, William 654
 Bernier, A.M. 723
 Berry, A.M. 807
 Bethany 629, 686
 Bethany Lutheran Church 629
 Bett, Mary Irving 645
 Beyer, H. 610
 Biddles, P. 765
 Bielke, W. 507
 Billett, John George 539
 Billington, William 657
 Binzer, Caroline 605
 Binzer, Heinrich Carl 605
- Birch, Arthur 634
 Birch, Charles 828
 Birch, David 632, 828
 Birch, Elizabeth 632
 Birch, Fred 632, 761, 828
 Birch, Harry 828
 Birch, James 632, 761
 Birch, Tina 632
 Bird, Harry 936
 Birt, A.E. 662
 Bishop, Eileen 954
 Bishop, R.J. 770
 Bjelke-Petersen Dam 568
 Bjelke-Petersen Enterprises Pty. Ltd. 695
 Bjelke-Petersen, Carl George 629
 Bjelke-Petersen, Christian 629
 Bjelke-Petersen, Lady Florence 686–687, 811, 813, 866
 Bjelke-Petersen, Maren 629
 Bjelke-Petersen, Sir Johannes 580, 629, 678, 686–687, 694–696, 733, 770, 804, 810, 880, 884–885, 902, 904, 908, 928, 978, 986, 988, 1035, 1037
 Black Snake (gold field) 568
 Black, Alfred Henry Ebenezer 646
 Black, Emily 646
 Black, Maurice Hume 757
 Black, Raymond Edgar 695–696
 Black, Ruth Elaine 695
 Black, T.A.E. (Arthur) 677
 Black, W.R.K. 612
 Blackmore, Edward Richard Webster 1004
 Blair and Cunningham (builders) 865
 Blair, J.W. 515
 Blair, S.A. 816
 Blanch, Hazel 561, 568
 Bland, Dr William 888
 Blue Bird Cafe (Wondai) 543
 Blue Nurses 816
 Blue Sky Gallery 692
 Blue, Alice Isabella 1017–1018
 Blue, Archibald (senior) 620, 622, 639, 658, 689, 827, 836, 1017–1019
 Blue, Archibald George 1019–1020
 Blue, Isabella Menzies 1017
 Blue, Jessie May 1019
 Blue, John 1017
 Blue, Mary Jane 1017
 Blue, Robert Alfred 1017
 Blythe, Billy 494
 Blythman, C.R. 1010
 Blythman, Harry 652

- Blythman, Sergeant Henry
 James 1010
 Board of Advice on Prickly
 Pear 751
 Boer War 821-823
 Boge, Anthilde Marie
 Christine 626
 Boge, Marcus 626
 Boggo Road gaol 950
 Boisen, Alfred Victor 511-514
 Boisen, Anna Dorothea 510
 Boisen, Arthur 510-511
 Boisen, Charles 511-514
 Boisen, Maggie Raine 511
 Boisen, Martha 512
 Boisen, Mick 511, 514
 Boisen, Niels Peter 510-512
 Boisen, Nurse 885
 Boisen, Peter 510
 Boisen, Susan Tasmania 510
 Boisen, William 511
 Boisen's Hill 511
 Boldery, A. 610, 706, 708, 711
 Bolin, Miss Ella 852
 Bond and Postle Motors 928
 Bond, Alice 688
 Bond, Frank Clarence 545
 Bond, John A. 928-929
 Bond, Judith 545
 Bond, Oliver Stuart 570, 574,
 622, 683-684, 687, 690, 862,
 864, 1004
 Bond, Robert Stuart 570
 Bonding, Jacob 862, 960-961
 Bonney, H.B. (Lore) 900
 Booie Hall 727
 Booie Progress Association 634
 Boonara Co-operative Cheese
 Co. Ltd. 771
 Boonara Hall 811
 Boonara Land Sale 771
 Boonara station 825, 849, 939
 Boondooma Cattleman's
 Protection Association 574
 Boondooma Co-operative
 Society 574
 Boondooma Dam 568, 573,
 984, 987, 990, 994
 Boondooma Dam Fish
 Stocking Committee 533
 Boondooma Grain Pool 574
 Boondooma homestead 581
 Boondooma Private Hospital
 561, 885
 Boondooma sawmill 730
 Boondooma station 486,
 490-501, 504, 571-573, 576,
 581, 594
 Booth, N.H. 649
 Booth, Sister 879
 Boobyjan station 487, 811
 Borchardt, Fred 952
 Borchardt, Jack 625
 Borthwick, J.J.M. 585
 Borton, Frederick (senior) 594
 Borton, George Keppel 594
 Borton, Gerald Archibald 594
 Borton, Mark William 594
 Borton, Roderick Frederick
 594
 Botteral, Dr 747
 Bourke, J. 662
 Bourne, G. 1027
 Bow, Violet M. 538
 Bowd, A.H. 730
 Bowen, Sir George Ferguson
 623
 Bowler, F. 609, 1016
 Bowler, Thomas 622
 Bowman, F. 709, 762
 Box, Chris 928
 Box, G. 537
 Boynton, Bert 555
 Boynton, G.T.M. (Tim) 551
 Boynton, Tim 555
 Bracken, R.W. 555
 Bradfield, J. 541
 Brady, J. 619
 Brady, James 908
 Brady, M.J. 607
 Brain, Captain L.J. 889, 899
 Braithwaite, E.C. 770-789
 Branch Creek cheese factory
 789
 Brand, Stacey 507
 Brandt, Albert 600-601
 Brandt, C.W.J.F. (Carl) 600
 Brandt, Charles 600-601
 Brandt, Richard 600
 Brandt, William 601
 Braun, Eva 1011
 Brazier, Charlie 570
 Brazier, R. 493
 Brazil, J.J. 813
 Brennan, Constable Dan 645
 Brennan, Greg 1028
 Brenton, Harry 721
 Brett and Boldery 809
 Brett and Company 727, 736
 Brett, R.C. 892
 Brewer, Andrew 635
 Brewer, Ellen 635
 Brewer, Michael 936
 Brewer, Thomas 936
 Brewster and Trebeck
 (auctioneers) 500
 Bridger, T.W. 962
 Bridges, Sam 527
 Bridgen Brothers builders 807
 Bright, A.J. Mrs 818
 Bright, Arthur John William
 1017, 1026, 1028
 Bright, Harry 1017
 Bright, John 587, 1017, 1028
 Bright, Mary 1028
 Brill, Catharina 492
 Brill, Theresa 492
 Brill, Wilhelm 492
 Brims and Sons 721
 Brims Mill (Gallangowan) 733
 Brisbane Chamber of
 Commerce 750
 Brisbane City Council 979
 Brisbane City Mission 810
 Brisbane Electric Construction
 Company 967
 Brisbane Line (of defence) 1002
 Brisbane Rowing Club 490
 Brisbane Timber Merchants'
 Association 717
 British Butter and Margarine
 Act (1907) 774
 Broadbent, John 486-487
 Broadcast media 1031-1038
 Broadway Hotel 620, 629,
 899-900
 Brodie, Mary 490
 Brodie, Peter 490
 Brooklands cheese factories
 789
 Brooklands station 587
 Broom, Dr 850
 Broome, Cyril 890, 894,
 898-899
 Brown, A. 643
 Brown, Archibald 646
 Brown, Billy 953-954
 Brown, Ellen Elizabeth 686
 Brown, John 867
 Brown, Michael 908
 Brown, Patricia 813
 Brown, Robert Stephen 623,
 653, 683, 690
 Brown, Robert Stephen 685
 Brown, Thomas 653
 Brown, W.D. 899
 Brown, Wayne 1023-1024
 Browne, Ray 730
 Brownlee, J.K. 533, 578
 Bruce, Burnett 663
 Bruce, Walter 1037
 Brunckhurst, J. 892
 Bryce, David 696
 Buchhester, James 589
 Buck, Clarris 809
 Buckley, I. 814
 Budgen, C.W. 974
 Bugno, Oscar 937
 Bulcock, Frank William 524,
 683, 724-725
 Bulimba power station 974, 993
 Bull, J.R. 555
 Bull, Trooper J.E.N. 822
 Bull's Head Inn Drayton 591
 Bundesen, Alan 570
 Bundesen, Peter John 570
 Bunya Mountain Road Club
 648
 Bunya Mountains 568,
 584-585, 647-648, 652, 664,
 696, 720, 728, 733, 735,
 806, 1037

- Bunya Mountains National Park 992
 Burdekin Dam 687
 Bureau of Census and Statistics 735
 Bureau of Science and Industry 750
 Burey, Jean 868
 Burgess, A.H. 761
 Burke, Constable 939
 Burke, Patrick 943
 Burnett Air Navigation Company 892, 899
 Burnett Inn 585, 587
 Burnett Newspaper Co. Pty. Ltd. 1017-1019
 Burnett Race Club 585
 Burnett Rural 936
 Burnett Valley Ltd. 804
 Burney, Robert Payne 493, 495
 Burns, Arthur Benjamin 956
 Burns, Bill 1002
 Burns, Dorothea 525
 Burns, Margaret 525
 Burns, Patrick James 521, 525, 533, 576, 881
 Burns, R.L. 521, 533, 1002
 Burns, Robert 507
 Burns, S. 578
 Burns, Thomas 525
 Burns, Trooper George 1002-1003
 Burns, William Michael 525
 Burrandowan Carrying Service 571
 Burrandowan soldiers' settlement 806
Burrandowan station 486, 568, 584, 589, 591-595, 637, 641, 653, 655-656, 658, 689, 844, 849
 Burrows, R.N. 884-885
 Burt, E.C.N. 937
 Burton, C. 817
 Burton, Emma Elizabeth 636
 Burton, George Bernard 659
 Burton, John Delaney 636
 Burton, W.T. 758
 Burton, Walter 633, 636, 663
 Bush Nursing Association (Burrandowan) 867
 Bush Nursing Association 663
 Bush Nursing Centre Chahpingah 659
 Bushnell, Joseph James 486-488, 502
 Bushnell, Richard 488
 Buss, C. 807
 Buss, Horace 922
 Bussell, M.N. 813
 Butcher, Lily 652
 Butcher, Silas 652
 Butler, E.M. 854
 Butt Brothers 602, 1016
 Butt, C. 599-600
 Butter Factory Investigation Committee 801
 Butter Pool Committee 777
 Buttersfield, James 506
 Button, Phillip 585
 Buttsworth, Henry 677
 Buttsworth, John 677
 Buttsworth, Leslie 829
 Buttsworth, Mary Cave 677
C
 C. Itoh and Co. (Australia) Ltd. 979-980
 C. Rose and Sons 734
 C.B.A. Banks 564
 C.G. Baldwin and Sons 561
 Caboolture sawmill 736
 Cactoblastis 754-755
 Caffery, P. 762
 Cahill, James 954-955
 Cahill, Walter Domerick 954-955
 Cairncross, Matron 854
 Callan, John 607
 Callide B power station 993
 Calvert, John Edward 936-937
 Cameron, A. 899
 Cameron, C.E. 578
 Cameron, D. 899
 Cameron, Evelyn 1025
 Cameron, Harry 658
 Cameron, Hector 1025
 Cameron, James 656
 Cameron, Jim 538
 Cameron, John 1025-1026
 Cameron, R.W. 515
 Cameron, R.W. 653
 Camfield, H.G. 966
 Camm, R.E. 568, 974
 Campbell, Alexander 594
 Campbell, Johnny 940-941
 Campbell, Keith 936-937
 Campbell, Robert 593
 Campbell, T.E. 521
 Campbell, W.P. 533
 Campbell, Willie 940
 Campbell's Soups Pty. Ltd. 932-933
 Canard, John Henry 907
 Canberra Cafe, (Kingaroy) 620
 Cardwell Shire Council 691
 Carew, Bridget 654
 Carew, Michael 654
 Carew, Thomas 605, 615
 Carew, William 605
 Carl, Marie 599-600
 Carl, Martin Fred 600
 Carmichael and Co. 1017
 Carr, Agnes 651
 Carr, Benjamin 652
 Carr, Robert 651
 Carr, Thomas 651
 Carricks Ltd. 723
 Carrodus, C. 1020
 Carroll, B. 1026
 Carroll, Bridget 603-604, 862
 Carroll, C.J. 798
 Carroll, Dan 603-606, 610, 612, 615, 862, 864
 Carroll, Daniel Noel 604
 Carroll, E. 1026
 Carroll, John Anthony 604, 649, 683, 690
 Carroll, Mary 603
 Carroll, R.J. 1026
 Carroll, Timothy 603
 Carrollee Hall, Kingaroy 787, 792
 Carrollee Hotel, (Kingaroy) 603-606, 612, 614, 681
 Carruthers, Don 983
 Carruthers, Ron 546
 Carter, John 1023
 Carter, W. 762
 Carvosso's store 512
 Caselberg, Dr Alex L. 864-865, 867
 Casey, D. 966
 Casino Co-operative Dairy Company 822
 Cass, John 543
 Casten, Arthur 578
 Castledine, H.V. 659
 Caswell, Alf 838
 Caswell, Archie 688, 1003, 1032-1034
 Caswell, F.W. 730, 1033
 Caswell, Mary Ann 838
 Caswell, Oliver Percival 730
 Caswell, William 838
 Cathcart, C.H. 684
 Catholic Church (Kingaroy) 612, 616
 Caufield, James 940
 Cavanagh, Barney 570
 Cawtell, Fred 628
 Cecil Hotel (Wondai) 518, 541-542, 889
Cecil Plains station 591
 Central Boarding House (Kingaroy) 607
 Central Cafe (Kingaroy) 622
 Central Saw and Planing Mills 716
 Central Sawmill 704
 Chadwick, David 696
 Chalk, Gordon William Wesley 687, 733
 Challenge Air Services Pty. Ltd. 908
 Challenge Aviation 908
 Chamberlain, Neville 998
 Champney, Esther 673
 Champney, George Alfred 673

- Chandler, John Beals
1033-1034
- Channel Ten 1037
- Chaseling, G. 762, 783
- Chaseling, Jim 898
- Cheers, Florence Margaret
Mary 802
- Cheers, H.W. 802
- Chelmsford, Lord Frederic
John Napier Thesiger 538
- Cherbourg 828, 838, 872,
951-953, 958, 966, 971,
1007
- Cherry, Errol 878
- Cherry, John 491
- Chester, E.J. 612
- Chesterton, A. 555, 559
- Chifley, Joseph Benedict (Ben)
1011
- Chinese Chamber of
Commerce 921
- Christensen, Tom 610
- Christenson, Godfrey 641
- Christesen, H. 671
- Christian Broadcasting
Association 1036
- Christiansen, Agnes W. 922
- Christiansen, Jack 547
- Christiansen, Norman James
922, 929
- Christie, Mary J. 623-624
- Christie, Robert George 623
- Christie, Sergeant 953-954
- Church of Christ at Kingaroy
638
- Church of England 628, 664,
685, 925
- Church of England Proston
561
- Ciasom Pty. Ltd. 695
- Cichero, Trevor 875
- Cinnabar Hall 974
- Circuit Court (Kingaroy) 954
- Circuit Court Maryborough
947, 955
- Citizens' Electoral Council 689
- Citizens' Militia 838
- Citra Constructions 884-885
- City Electric Light Company
in Brisbane 966
- Civil Aviation Board 901
- Civil Aviation Department
895, 900
- Civil Construction Corps 691
- Clancy, J.L. 537
- Clanricarde, Lord 584
- Clapperton, George 585, 593
- Clapperton, T.A. 895
- Clapperton, Thomas A. 566,
572, 734-735, 855
- Clare, Constable J. 503
- Clark, Miss A. 827
- Clark, A.S. 921
- Clark, Alice Beatrice Colvin
639
- Clark, J.C. 731
- Clark, Peter 953-954
- Clarke, Gold Commissioner
939-940
- Clarke, Matron Amy M. 856
- Clarke, Narelle 1028
- Clarke, T. 1027
- Clarke, Temple 744, 750,
752-754
- Clayton, Ernest Henry Collet
846
- Cleary, E.W. 1004
- Cleary, T. 864
- Cleary, Thomas 867
- Cleary, Tom 614
- Closer Settlement Act 594
- Clough Engineering Group
984
- Club Hotel (Kingaroy)
607-609, 619, 626, 682, 920,
965
- Clydebank Private Hospital
627, 671, 810, 867
- Co-operative Dairy
Companies' Association 783
- Co-operative Federation Ltd.
770
- Cobassi, Enrico 937
- Cobb and Co. 941
- Cobb, Andrew 724
- Cobb's sawmill 723, 730
- Cochran, S.F. 971, 973
- Cockerill, Frederick Henry
657
- Cockerill, Gladys 657
- Cockerill, Jessie 657
- Cockerill, Mark 657
- Cockerill, W.J. 571
- Cocking, T.A. 550
- Codd & Freney's garage 578
- Coe, Ella Doris 663
- Coe, Jack 491, 572
- Coe, John 570, 663-664
- Coen, Dr K. 856
- Coe's Park 574
- Coleman, Irene 723
- Coleman, Ronald 905
- Coleman, W.S. 542
- Colinton station 849
- Collier, A. 810
- Collier, George 641
- Collier, Rhoda 642, 644
- Collins, Michael Jeremiah
603, 645, 702, 761, 1016
- Collins, S. 809
- Collyer, Douglas 1024
- Collyer, Helen 1024
- Comerford, Martin 555
- Commercial Bank of Australia
551, 559, 594, 612, 619, 964
- Commercial Hotel (Kingaroy)
606, 612, 615, 619
- Commercial Hotel (Nanango)
857, 780, 1016
- Commercial Travellers'
Association of Queensland.
608
- Commonwealth Bank 612,
664, 809
- Commonwealth Council of
Scientific and Industrial
Research 725
- Commonwealth Department of
Industrial Science and
Tourism 582
- Commonwealth Experimental
Station 750
- Commonwealth Salvage
Commission 1006
- Compagnoni, George 506
- Compagnoni, George Edward
523
- Compagnoni, Harry 506, 512,
517
- Compagnoni, Harry Jasper
521-523, 533
- Compagnoni, Mrs M. 884
- Compagnoni, W. 898
- Condren, Victor 552
- Condren, William 551-552
- Conzinc Riotinto (Australia)
(CRA) 976, 979
- Coochin Coochin* station 586
- Cook, Bon 570
- Cook, Win 570
- Cooke, G. 658
- Cooley, James 625, 850
- Coonan, Mrs Pat 669
- Cooper, Annie 529
- Cooper, Chief Justice Sir Pope
947
- Cooper, Eleanor 529
- Cooper, Fanny 529
- Cooper, John Rouse 529
- Cooper, Mary Ann 529
- Cooper, Nellie 529
- Cooper, Russell 908
- Cooper, Sidney 529
- Cooyar* station 849
- Corbett, D. 1016
- Corbett, Henry 945-946
- Cordwell, Miss R. 663
- Coring, Reverend John 635
- Corkill, R.D. 533
- Cornell, Sister E.A. 864
- Cornish, T. 622
- Cornish, T.H. 766, 802
- Cornish, Tom 926
- Corser, B.H. 750, 752-754,
843, 920
- Corser, Cyril 675
- Cosier, Alan B. 1027-1028
- Cossart, Matron M.C. 857
- Cotton industry 575-577
- Coulsen, Arthur 506
- Coulsen, George 506

- Coulsen, William 506
 Coulson, H.W. 561
 Coulson, William 652
 Council of Agriculture 916
 Counsell, W.G. 966
 Courtney, Miss Kathleen 723
 Cowan, B. 517
 Cowan, L.J.F. (solicitor) 620
 Cowen, R.P. 1020
 Cowlshaw, Dr F.H. 883, 885
 Cox, Ray 868
 Coyne, J.H. 714
 Coyne, James 621
 Coyne, John Henry 713, 843
 Coyne, Joseph 621
 CQ Tec-Services 696
 CRA 977, 981, 993
 Craig, Miss V. 864
 Cranitch, Sergeant M. 503
 Crawford, Annie Addison 652
 Crawford, Clarice 688
 Crawford, George Leslie 688, 690
 Crawford, H.R. 666
 Crawford, Joseph Henry 645
 Crawford, Mary Evelyn 645
 Crawford, Robert John (Jack) 652
 Crawford, S.T. 799
 Cressbrook station 496, 648
 Crewed, Thomas 852
 Crick, H. 555
 Cridland, E.J. 555, 559
 Cripps, Arthur 828
 Crittenden, E. 610
 Croft, Roland 547
 Crombie, J.D. 533
 Crompton Electrical Company 962
 Cronin, Constable P. 606
 Cross, Bob (Robert) 658
 Cross, Eric Harold 937
 Cross, Harold 652
 Cross, John 614
 Cross, Minnie Amelia 651
 Cross, Roland 651
 Crown Lands Act (1884) 490
 Crown Lands Act 589
 Crown Lands Office 593
 Crowther, W.H. 899
 Cruickshank, Norman 1035
 Cubitt, Lloyd 950-951
 Cullen, Ann 609-610
 Cullen, David Moore 609
 Cullen, Reg 735
 Cumming, Mick 976
 Cummings, Alexander 742
 Cunningham, I. 810
 Curran, Lil 571
 Curran, Stan 571
 Currie Hotel, (Gympie) 940
 Curtis, Beatrice 651
 Curtis, W.H. 548
 Cutelli, John Francis 984
- D**
 D. & W. Murrays 697
 D.C. McConnel and Sons 496
 Dahms, A. 599
 Dairy industry 757-804
 Dakin, Nurse E. 881
 Dale, Mrs R.G. 882
 Dale, Richard 882
 Dales, W. 1016
 Dalton, Daniel Richard 671
 Dalton, E.E. 862
 Dalton, John 663
 Dalton, Lily 671
 Damro, Carl Frederick 643
 Dangerfield, A. 645
 Daniels, A.B. 846
 Daniels, Ethel 846
 Danish Lutheran Church (Edenvale) 604
 Dare, J.C. 795
 Darley, J. 761, 850
 Darley, J.R. 852
 Darley, John 606, 1016-1017
 Darling Downs and Western Land Company 734
 Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education 993, 1025-1026, 1036
 Darling Downs Television Ltd. 1037
 Darow, S.G. 1034
 Darrow, George 664
 Dascombe, A. 645
 Dascombe, Alfred 641-642
 Davey, H.A. 521
 Davey, W. 521
 David Jones (Company) 601
 Davidson, A.W. 634
 Davidson, C.W. 1037
 Davidson, Dr P.M. 878, 1034
 Davidson, John 836
 Davidson, W.D. 903
 Davies, A.W. 789
 Davies, Arthur 641
 Davies, E. 809
 Davies, Matron 877
 Davies, Nurse Elizabeth 878
 Davis, C.W. 612
 Davis, Dr N.E. 864-865
 Davis, H.W. 817
 Davis, James 591
 Davis, Joe 671
 Davis, T.W. 803
 Dawson, Owen 928
 Dawson, Robert 1028
 de Mattos, Reginald 589
 de Mouton, Frank 697
 Deacon, William Arthur 720, 845
 Dean, John Edward 765, 777, 783, 785
 Deeth, Jack 564
 Defence Department (Military Intelligence Branch) 1005
 Defence League 998
 Deighton, Percy 837
 Delbin, Billy 953-954
 Dellavedova, Dr James 908
 Dempsey, Michael 802
 Denham, Premier Digby Frank 517
 Denis, Henry 591
 Denning, J.J. 710
 Denning, W. 710
 Denning's sawmill, Tarong 793
 Denny, F.W. 762
 Denyer, Hector 730
 Department of Administrative Services 878
 Department of Agriculture 747, 770, 914-915, 918
 Department of Agriculture and Stock 931
 Department of Aviation 891
 Department of Civil Aviation 889, 897, 901-903, 906
 Department of Commerce 725
 Department of Commerce and Agriculture 931
 Department of Defence 890, 892, 899
 Department of Education 601, 616, 653, 809, 844
 Department of Education 615
 Department of Forestry 513
 Department of Health 880, 884
 Department of Health and Home Affairs 578, 873
 Department of Primary Industries 928, 935
 Department of Public Instruction 539, 546, 550, 554, 556, 564, 615-616, 639, 643-644, 659, 663, 666-667
 Department of Public Lands 897
 Department of Public Works 644, 862, 962, 964
 Desjardins, August 644
 Desmarchelier, Marc F. 928
 Devereux, J. 538
 Devries, G.H. 974
 Diamantina Receiving Depot 958
 Dickenson, Ellen 647
 Dickenson, Graeme Dudley 937
 Dickenson, Jim 647
 Dickie, William 663
 Dickson, W. 954
 Diggers' Memorial Hall Blackbutt 809
 Dimmock, A.E. 702
 Dingo Creek Bicentennial Park 580
 Dionysius, Henrich Moritz Theodore 562

- Discharged Soldier Settlers' Act 845
 Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act 842
 Divisional Boards Act (1879) 520
 Dobson, E. 610
 Doctor Botteral's Prickly Pear Gas 747
 Dods, Robin 500, 857
 Doig, Matron V. 857
 Donald, L. 818
 Done, Cecil George Audley 683-684, 690-691
 Donkersley, J.B. 555
 Donn, Tommy 942
 Donoghue, J.P. 864
 Donovan, John 892
 Doo, Johnny 947, 949-950
Dorrigo Relief Fund 812
 Dorsey, Dr William 848-849
 Dossel, Jacob 665
 Douglas, Harold Edward 561
 Douglas, M. 878
 Douglass, Bailey 833
 Dowell, E. 555
 Dower, Patrick Joseph 947-948
 Dower, Sergeant 947
 Dowling, Matron M. 862-863, 865
 Downes, Florence 689
 Downes, Hugh 688-689, 831
 Downes, John F. 658, 688-689, 831, 859
 Downes, R.J. (Bob) 655, 657, 659, 688-690, 730, 831, 859
 Downing, D. 1016
 Downing, Robert 849
 Doyle, Kathleen 829
 Doyle, Les 829
 Draney, Walter 761
 Drinkwater, Matron Mary Frances 881-882
 Drumanon (Drumannon) Hotel 666, 675
 Drummond, Archie 554
 Dudley Private Hospital 877
 Duff, Ann 571
 Duff, Dorothy Ruth 571
 Duff, John Patrick 571
 Duff, Louis 571, 672
 Duffey, Alfred Henry 559
 Dugdell, Charles 975
 Duhig, Archbishop 616
 Dunant, Henri 818
 Dunkley, A.W. 920
 Dunn, Miss S. 678
 Dunne, Agnes 548
 Dunstan, Thomas 845
 Durong Cooperative Dip Association 574
 Durong Hall 572, 815
 Durong-Burrandowan Cream Carrying Service 572
 Dwyer, Chris 844
- E**
 E.P. and A.I. Trewern, (architects) 867
 Eastaway, Alice Emily Francis 1017
 Eastaway, Charles Edward 1017
 Eastcourt Ltd. 736
 Eastick, Arthur 608
 Eaton, Daniel 723
 Eaton, John 487
 Eckart, Jim 926
 Edenvale Church 708
 Edwards, Bisset and Partners 884
 Edwards, J.B. 969
 Edwards, James Braidwood 527, 572, 638, 652, 681-682, 802, 808, 862, 898-899, 915, 962, 965, 968
 Edwards, M.E. 682
 Egan, M. 798
 Eisenmenger, Sergeant William Lewis 1007
 Eisenmenger, W. George 1007
 Eisentrager, Bill 614
 Eisentrager, C. 811
 Elcoate, Dr R.L.G. 561, 885-886, 1007
 Elcoate, Flying Officer Robert Terrance 886, 1007
 Electric Construction Company 961, 965
 Electric Light and Power Act (1896) 967
 Electric Light and Power Act 964
 Electric Power Transmission 986
 Electricity generation 960-996
 Elgin Vale Hall 817
 Elgin Vale sawmill 721-723
Elgin Vale station 722, 817
 Elliot, Marie 813
 Elliot, S.J. 806
 Elliott, S.J. 610
 Ellwood, J.D. 658
 Ellwood, Robert 653, 824
 Empire Theatre (Proston) 564
 Endress, K. 884
 Engel, Bertha 652
 Engel, Carl Edward 652
 Engineering Supply Company of Australia 965
 Erickson, Carson 641
 Erickson, Eric 641
 Ernst, Dr Gustavus 848
 Euler, A.F. 813
 Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mondure 1007
- Evans Deakin Industries 981, 983
 Evans, C.E. 658
 Evans, E. 974
 Evans, J. 818
 Evans, T.W. 658, 810
 Evans, Thomas 487, 658
 Evans, Thomas Henry 612
 Evans' Hall (Kingaroy) 608
 Ewart, J.S. 638, 727
 Exchange Stores 541
 Export Control Board (butter) 787
- F**
 Fallon, Constable James Francis 956
 Falt, P.P. 507, 539
 Farley, Cecil Lyle 507
 Farley, Fred 506
 Farley, John W. 507
 Farley, Samuel 506-507
 Farmers' Union 1021
 Farr, Ben (Percival Proctor) 633
 Farr, Frances Alice 633
 Farr, Matron Alma E. 678, 865-866
 Fat Hen Creek (gold field) 568, 939
 Feather, J.H. 688
 Fechner, Clem 1036
 Fechner, Wilhelm 636
 Federal Hall (Kilkivan) 824
 Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association 986
 Fees, A. 946
 Fellows, William 672
 Fenwick, Florence Louise 550, 559
 Fenwick, S.S. 521, 533, 546, 559
 Ferguson, E.N. 638, 727
 Ferguson, J. 615, 862
 Ferguson, J.C.N. 612
 Ferguson, Jack 802
 Ferguson, Robert 659
 Ferrier, David Charles 908
 Ferris, Albert James 508
 Ferris, Bert 508
 Ferris, Regatha Maud 508
 Fick's Crossing 580, 877
 Fick's Crossing Camp 580
 Fiedler, Fred 672
 Findlay, Doug 803
 Findlay, Ronald Norman 646-647
 Finger, Hurta 1010
 Finney Isles and Coy. 615
 First Australian Armoured Division 882
 First Offenders' Probation Act 837
 Fischer, Roy 975

- Fisher, Andrew 488, 608, 663
 Fitzgerald, Effie 940
 Fitzgerald, Geraldine 539
 Fitzpatrick, E. 616
 Fitzpatrick, Hugh 636
 Fleischfresser, Carl (junior) 835
 Fleischfresser, Carl (senior) 835
 Fleischfresser, Carl 644
 Fleischfresser, Gladys 835
 Fleischfresser, Lyle 835
 Fleischfresser, Matron G. 866
 Fleischfresser, O. 644
 Fletcher, E. 701–702
 Fletcher, J. 920
 Fletcher, Owen Maynard 1033
 Flynn, John 556
 Flynn, John Henry (Harry) 555–556
 Flynn, Marjory 556
 Foley, J.A. 694
 Foley, Matron M.R. 857
 Foll, Senator H.S. 1035
 Food for Britain Appeal 815
 Foot, John 774
 Forbes, J. 768
 Forbes, W.D. 761
 Ford, H. 614
 Ford, H.H. 648
 Foreign Investment Review Board 695
 Forestry Department 703, 714–716, 720–721, 724, 726, 734–735
 Forgan Smith, Premier William 787, 789
 Forsby Pty. Ltd. 1024
 Forsyth, James 838
 Forsyth, Thomas Simpson McIntosh (Scottie) 541
 Fortune, James 621
 Fortune, Louisa Mary 621
 Fouchault, Luis 506
 Four Mile Gully Progress Association 651
 Fowell, Joseph 561
 Fowell, McConnel and Mansfield 561
 Fowler, K. 1037
 Fox, Constable 503
 Fox, Inspector Clement L. 539, 556
 Fox, J.H. 501
 Frame, D. 658
 Francis, Alma Amelia 647
 Francis, Alwyn 936
 Francis, Carol 807
 Francis, Charles 647
 Francis, Elsie Rose 647
 Francis, Ethel May 648
 Francis, Frank 648
 Francis, George 647
 Francis, Harriet May 647
 Francis, James 648
 Francis, Millie 647
 Francis, Rayham 908
 Francis, William Joseph (Bill) 645, 647
 Franey, Ted 976
 Franklin, Annie 633
 Franklin, Harry 829
 Franklin, Hilary 857–858
 Franklin, Joseph 829
 Franklin, William 633
 Franklin, Winifred 829
 Franklyn, William 636
 Fraser Coast, South Burnett Regional Tourism Board 688
 Fraser, Harold Eustace 906
 Frederick, B. 810
 Freeman, Doris 811
 Freeman, Harry 956
 Freeman, L.G. 817
 Freeman, L.N. 614, 865
 French Resistance 1008
 French, Jim 551–552
 Freshwater, Arthur 610, 652
 Freshwater, H. 625
 Freshwater, Harry 663
 Freshwater, Henry 633
 Freshwater, J. 625
 Freshwater, John 652
 Freshwater, M. 660
 Freshwater, Private A. 838
 Friell, Philip 592–593
 Friendly Society Hospital Committee 875
 Friesian Cattle Club of Australia 507
 Fritz, Edith Agnes 652
 Fritz, Paul Carl 652
 Fuller, Charles 969
 Fuller, S.T. (baker) 564
 Fuller, W.C. 518, 533, 968
- G**
- Gadd, Harry 646
 Gall, Sergeant R.T.J. 904
 Gallagher, D. 683, 920
 Gallagher, Dan 728
 Gallangowan forestry reserve 733
 Galloway, Mrs R. 813
 Garde, Dr Lee 836
 Gardner, Bill 976
 Garland, T.C. 612
 Garrad, Private George 1003
 Garvey, William 548
 Gataker, Reginald 671, 673
 Gatton Agricultural College 771, 789
 Gatton killings (1898) 943
 Gayndah Shire Council 691
 Geale, Mary 671
 Geale, Robert Charles 671
 Gehrmen, Charles G. 892
 General Electric 986
 General Foods 928
 Gentry, Fred 723
 Geraghty, Colleen 1023
 Geritz, August 625
 Geritz, Fred 625
 Gerrard, William Maurice (Bill) 907
 Gersekowski, Matron Gladys Annie 885–886
 Gessling, John 572
 Gessling, Walter 572
 Gibbs, Ivan 908, 990
 Gibbs, J. 656
 Gibson, A.B. 837
 Gibson, A.E. 915
 Gibson, J. 809
 Gibson, Johanna E. 645
 Gigoongan station 487
 Gilchrist Watt and Co. 490–492
 Gilchrist, E. 768
 Gilchrist, William Oswald 490, 496, 498–499
 Gilday, Constable 606, 948
 Giles, Allan 733
 Gill, C. 807
 Gillespie, Joseph 945–946
 Gillies, J.W. 610
 Gillies, Marian Edith 537
 Gillies, William Neal 1031
 Gilmore, Matron Emma 858
 Gladstone power station 978–979
 Glanville, R.W. 555
 Glasgow, Major-General Sir T.W. 780
 Gleeson, James 610
 Glennie, Constable 947–948
 Glenrowan Private Hospital 858
 Glover, W.H. 591–592
 Glydeaway Skating Rink 852
 Goessling, J.F. 669
 Goessling, Gertrude Anna 867–868
 Gold Coast City Council 691
 Golden City Publications 1028
 Golden King mine 632, 703
 Golden, H. 515, 1020
 Goldsmid, Geoffrey Albert 1033
 Gollin and Company 1023
 Goodard, Dr 883
 Goodchild, E.H. 846
 Goodchild, Essie 811
 Goode, Jacob 1017
 Gooderham, G. 660
 Gooderham, H.C. (Harry) 658
 Gooderham, Maud 659
 Goode's Inn 848, 1017
 Goodger School of Arts 678
 Goodger, Albert 677
 Goodger, Elizabeth 677–678

- Goodger, Ellen 677
 Goodger, Emily 677
 Goodger, George 829
 Goodger, H.A. 681
 Goodger, Herbert 677
 Goodger, Howard 677-678, 686
 Goodger, J.E. 761
 Goodger, James 686
 Goodger, James Elliott 677
 Goodger, Janet 677
 Goodger, Mainard 829
 Goodger, Walter 677, 686
 Goodger, William 677
 Goodwin, Lady 517
 Goodwin, Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Herbert John Chapman 517
 Goodwin, W. 610
 Gould-Adams, Sir Hamilton John 864, 881
 Goomeri and District Hospital Friendly Society 874-875
 Goomeri Chamber of Commerce 801, 1027
 Goomeri Church of England 1003
 Goomeri Co-operative Cheese Company 771
 Goomeri District Hospital Friendly Society 830
 Goomeri Hospital Committee 875
 Goomeri Hospital Fund 873
 Goomeri Land Company 771
 Goomeri Memorial Hall 801
 Goomeri Memorial Hospital 723
 Goomeri Show Society 830
 Gordon McKell Park 527
 Gordon, C.G. 761, 852, 859
 Gordonbrook Dam 694
 Gosper, Anne 652
 Gosper, Arthur 652, 728
 Goss, Wayne 1040
 Gossow, H. 660
 Gould, George Walter 537
 Gould, Mrs Lilian 546
 Government Peace Preservation Act 604
 Governor, Jimmy 872
 Grace, Bill 557
 Grace, J. 555
 Grace, W. 828
 Gradwell, Leonard 625, 627
 Graf, Carrie 975
 Graf, Harry 975-976
 Graham Hostel 877
 Graham Private Hospital 877, 879
 Graham, Archibald 497
 Graham, Corporal W. 1011
 Graham, Dr 872
 Graham, Dugald 500
 Graham, Florence 827, 857
 Graham, H.M. 816
 Graham, James 872
 Graham, James William Davies 857
 Graham, N. 816
 Graham, R. 852
 Graham, Sam 544
 Graham, William 544
 Grainco 688
 Grand Hotel (Blackbutt) 809
 Grand Hotel (Taabinga) 628
 Grant, Charles 663
 Grant, Fred 663
 Grant, M. 809
 Grant, Mary 643
 Grant, Robert 643
 Gray, C. 610
 Gray, George 541
 Gray, John 636
 Gray, Robert Nigel 831
 Gray, W.R. (Bob) 831
 Grayson, Thomas 936
 Great Bunya Sawmill 734
 Great Depression 504, 686, 721-722, 730, 734-735, 798, 810, 922, 954, 997, 1022
 Green, Claude 731
 Green, J. 667
 Green, J. 761
 Green, Jim 632
 Green, Miss M.F.E. 537
 Green, Peter 539
 Greenslade, Emily Mary 622
 Greenslade, Francis James 622
 Greentree, George 1023
 Greenup, Alfred 655-657
 Greenup, Harold 657
 Greenup, Marion 657
 Greenup, Mary 657
 Greenup, Richard (junior) 657
 Greenup, Richard 655-656
 Greenup, Ruby 657
 Greenup, Victor 657
 Greenwood, C.D. 877
 Greer Brothers butchery 612
 Greer, Thomas 607, 612
 Greer, William 607
 Greer, William 612
 Gregory, J. 751
 Grey, Alvan 812
 Grey, Bob 907
 Grey, C. 761
 Grey, Captain Charles Albert 812
 Grier, J.J. 963
 Grieve, Harry 554
 Griffiths, G.D. 968
 Griffiths, John Thomas 652
 Griffiths, N.S. 964
 Grimes, Alister Bailey 572
 Grimes, Gerald 572
 Grimes, Gwenda 573
 Grimes, Margery 572
 Grimshaw, Matron 875
 Gripp, W. 615
 Groth, Nurse A. 881
 Groth, Nurse B. 881
 Grouder, Bill 975
 Gullet, H.S. 920
 Gunn, W.A.M. (Bill) 977-978
 Guppy, G.J. 566
 Gurskie, O. 840
 Gutzke, Charles 735
 Gwynn-Jones, Terry 900
 Gympie City Council 690-691
 Gympie District Court 943
 Gympie Electric Light Company 968
 Gympie Hospital 727
- H**
 H. Jones and Co. 933
 H.J. Heinz and Co. 932
 Hack, S. 706
 Hafner, Celia Iris 885
 Hall of Memory (Goomeri) 872, 971
 Hall of Memory 812
 Hall, C. 610
 Hall, L. 811
 Hall, L.R. 612
 Haly, Charles Robert 584-586
 Haly, William O'Grady 584-585
 Hamilton, Dr 491
 Hamilton, J 855
 Hamilton, J.O. 966
 Hamilton, O. 852
 Hamilton, W. 852, 1016
 Hammelswang, Hans 636
 Hammett, Anthony William 908
 Hammett, E.P. 813
 Hampshire, G.W. 769
 Hampshire, T. 554
 Hampshire, T.W. 517
 Hampson, F.A. 854
 Hampson, James 836
 Hams, A.G. 762
 Hancock and Gore 717, 721, 735-736
 Hancock, Les 803
 Hancock, Niven Vaughan 937
 Hancock, Roy 718
 Hancock, Sarah 647
 Hancock, Thomas James 647
 Hanlon Hall 810
 Hanlon, E.M. 865
 Hannay, J. 732-733
 Hannibal (drag-line at Meandu coal mine) 986
 Hansen, Andrew Christian 507-508
 Hansen, Asmus 506-508
 Hansen, C. 885
 Hansen, D.F. 604

- Hansen, Doras 508
 Hansen, Emma 508
 Hansen, Fred 506–508
 Hansen, Hans Peter 603–604, 610
 Hansen, Inger Marie 604
 Hansen, Marcus 605
 Hansen, Neil 694–695
 Hansen, P. 507
 Hansen, P.O. 638
 Hansen, Peter 508
 Hansen, Rasmus Jorgen 508, 604
 Hansen, Sinnet Christine 508, 604
 Hansen, Soren 605, 652, 798
 Hansford, Miss E. 607
 Harcourt, Dr 861
 Harding Frew, A.E. 963–964, 966, 968
 Hardy Brothers 607
 Hargreaves, R. 578
 Harper, A.G. 555, 559
 Harper, Charles 555, 559, 833
 Harper, Ellenor 833
 Harper, Sister E. 881
 Harris, Billy 599
 Harris, Charles 628
 Harris, J. 610
 Harris, James 605, 764
 Harrison, G. 706
 Hart, J. 610
 Hartley, W.S. 789
 Harvey, W.C. 612
 Hatch, Bob 506
 Hatchett, George T. 555
 Hatrick, Robert 658
 Hauritz, Jack 515
 Hawkins, Bette 809
 Hawkins, Col. 736
 Hawkins, E.B. 585
 Hawley, Alfred 645
 Hay, Beverly 866
 Hay, John 594
 Hay, V. 818
 Hayden Shire and Co. 659, 729–730
 Hayden, Alfred 636–637
 Hayden, Arthur James 637
 Hayden, Eli 637
 Hayden, Ethel M. 637
 Hayden, Frederick 637
 Hayden, H. 645
 Hayden, Harry 641
 Hayden, Henry 648
 Hayden, Henry Hyland 645
 Hayden, James 636–637, 735
 Hayden, Jane 636
 Hayden, Jim 730
 Hayden, Leslie John 637
 Haydon, Michael 625
 Hayes, Mary 537
 Head, Julie 1028
 Heading, J.A. 616, 770, 789, 801
 Heading, J.A. 964
 Healey, William 546
 Health Department 854
 Healy and Son 610
 Healy, Frank 1016
 Healy, T. 1016
 Heaslop, J.W. Dr 861–863
 Heaslop, James Hardaker 863
 Heath, Dorothy Hilda May 954–955
 Heath, G. 882
 Heath, Sue 815
 Heathwood, W. 846
 Hector, Nurse K. 881
 Heers, E.R. 612
 Heineger, Bill 1023
 Heiner, Catherine 701
 Heiner, Emma (Amelia) 701
 Heiner, John (junior) 701
 Heiner, John (senior) 701, 850, 1016
 Heiner, Mrs H. 710
 Heiner, Pastor E. 508
 Heinz Foods 917, 936
 Hendersen, Matron 871
 Henderson, James 586
 Henry Simon (Australia) Ltd. 920
 Henry, Peter 555
 Henschen, Herb 659
 Henschen, William Thomas 659
 Herbert, Neville Charles 663
 Herberton Shire Council 691
 Hernon, C. 615
 Herold, J. 546
 Herrod, J.B. 615
 Hess, C. 761
 Hess, Charles 503, 537, 731, 758–759, 761
 Hess, F.W. 548
 Hess, Jones and Richardson 731
 Hester, F.G. 607
 Hester's booksellers 612
 Hetherington, David 535
 Hetherington, John 507, 509
 Hickey, M.J. 952
 Higgins, M. 521, 574
 Higgins, N.F. 521
 Higgins, Oscar 927
 High Court 830, 950
 Higman, Bessie 885
 Higman, Matron 885
 Higman, Naomi 885
 Hill, C. 612
 Hill, H.G. 895
 Hillcrest Private Hospital 871
 Hinchliff, A.L. 555, 559
 Hine, H. 846
 Hird, E. 555
 Hitachi Ltd. 979
 Hitler, Adolf 1011
 Hives, Dorothea 565
 Hives, Edwina 565
 Hives, G. 559
 Hives, G.H. 521
 Hives, George 499, 563, 565
 Hives, Georgina 565
 Hives, Gwendoline 564–565, 807–808
 Hives, Mary 565
 Hivesville Hall 563
 Hivesville Hotel 564
 Hobbs, Bob 571, 573
 Hodge, Cyril 810
 Hodge, Fin 555, 559
 Hodge, J.H. 622, 683, 690, 920
 Hodge, James 612, 626
 Hodge, Joseph Arnold 621
 Hodge, Joseph Henry 685
 Hodge, Robert 780
 Hodge, Robert Samuel 536
 Hodge, William 610
 Hodge's Hall (Wondai) 521
 Hoesman, Andre 659
 Hoey, Colin George 937
 Hoffman, Adolf 836
 Hoffman, Charles Vernon 539
 Hoffman, W.A. 862
 Hogg, Alex 671
 Hogg, Victor 662
 Hohnke, Adolph 539
 Holdsworth, H. 559
 Holdsworth, Harry 556
 Holdsworth, Henry 555
 Holdsworth, Minnie 557
 Holmes, Charles 633, 637
 Holmes, Constance 633
 Holmes, David 658, 672
 Holmsen, Ferdinand 608–609
 Home Creek Farmers' Progress Association 538, 546
 Home Creek Hotel 548
 Home Creek Methodist Church 548
 Honor, William 664
 Hood, Alice 606
 Hood, Bill 976
 Hood, J. 863
 Hood, Steven 633
 Hood, William George 606
 Hooper, Brian 907
 Hooper, C. 642
 Hooper, Christopher Henry 622
 Hooper, Louisa Matilda 622
 Hope, Captain Louis 641
 Hope, Victor William 866
 Horan, Joseph 674
 Horan, Matthew (junior) 674
 Horan, Matthew (senior) 674
 Horan, Winifred Jane 675
 Horn, Fred 506
 Horn, Harry 506
 Horn, William 506

- Horne, Andrew R.W. 637
Horne, Fred 599–600
Horne, H. 815
Horne, Harry 573
Horne, Herbert 637
Horne, John 785
Hornet Bank 638
Horsfall, W. 710, 727
Horsfall, William 1014, 1016
Horton Group 641–642, 645
Horton, Frank 641
Horton, R.E. 862
Horton, Robert E. 641
Horton, Robert Frank 645
Hosier, W. 633
Hoskins, Fred 727
Hospitals 848–887
Houston, Jessie 536
Houston, Jim 536
Howard power station 973
Howden, Wing-Commander G. 1008
Howell, Frank 628
Howie, F.A. 1010
Howie, Flying Officer Gordon 1010
Howitt, W. 506, 521
Howlett Motors 532
Howse, E.T. 664
Hu-Metals 877
Huber Corporation 695
Hudson, Alexander Henry 594
Hughes, Arthur 841
Hughes, Billy 839
Hughes, Dr Kent 806
Hughes, Prime Minister Billy 777, 825, 832
Hull, H.A. 690
Hull, Henry Ainsley 683
Hulme, A.S. 1035
Humpfreys, Fred 488
Hunter, H. 716
Hunter, J.A.J. 1035
Hurrin, Don 697
Huston, Allan 535, 580, 906
Huston, Bob 580
Huston, Jean 580
Huston, Jean B. 535
Huston, Mark 535, 580
Huston, Purdie and Son 535
Huston, Robert 535
Huston, Robert James 535
Huston's garage 515
Hutton, G.C. 789
Hyne and Son 730, 735
- I**
Illidge, F.G. 866
International Prisoners of War agency 818
Inverlaw Hall 652
Inverlaw School Committee 652, 683
Ironpot Hall 659
- Irrigation and Water Supply Commission 978
Iszlaub, Alison 531
Iszlaub, Conrad Frederick 531
Iszlaub, Edith Emily 531
Iszlaub, Frederick Maxmillian 531
Iszlaub, Martha 531
Iszlaub, Mary Elizabeth 536
Iszlaub, Percy Harold 526, 530–533, 536, 578, 884, 889
Iszlaub, Percy Harold (senior) 530–531
Iszlaub, William Maxmillian 531
- J**
J.B. Chandler and Company 1033
J.P. Duff & Company 493
Jack, W. 596
Jackson, G. 659
Jackson, Thomas Hilton 663
Jacob, Goode 585
Jacobson, J.G. 678
Jahnke, Constable 953
James, Reverend Stuart 909
Janetzki, H. 648
Janetzki, Herb 641
Janetzki, R. 951
Janetzki, William Richard 952
Jarail Creek Parents' and Citizens' Association 660
Jarrah Milling Company 598–599, 610, 703, 707
Jeffery, W.H. 965
Jeffrey, James 615
Jemmy, (aboriginal guide) 591
Jenkins, G.P. 765
Jenkins, John 727
Jenkins, K. 727
Jenkins, Stanley 727
Jenkins, W. 644
Jenks, Allan 828
Jenks, Harry 828
Jenner Private Hospital 878
Jensen, Andrew 605
Jensen, Annie 669
Jensen, Christopher 669
Jensen, E. 605
Jensen, E.H. 578
Jensen, Elizabeth 653
Jensen, J. 669
Jensen, Niels (senior) 605
Jensen, Niels 653
Jeppersen, Val 950
Jeppessen, H. 625
Jeppessen, J. 625
Jerome, Jerry 828
Jerrard, Cyril 573
Jerrard, Stanley 573
Jersey Cattle Society of Queensland 688
Jesberg, G. 733
- Jesberg, M.A. 663
Jessen, A. 671
Jessen, A.F. 673
Jessen, Christy 599
Jessen, Fred 599
Jessen, J.K. 548
Jessen, John 672
Jessen, Keith 599
Jetair 907
Jimbour station 494, 591
Jingeri station 486, 555
Johannessen, B. 506
Johansen, J. 913
Johansen, Jack 913
Johansen, Jensine 621
Johansen, Niels 621–622
John Bourke Line 812
Johnson, A.A. 559
Johnson, Arthur (senior) 564
Johnson, Arthur Frederick 1017, 1019
Johnson, Charles 626
Johnson, Charles H. 1018–1019
Johnson, F.H. 666
Johnson, Kate 626
Johnson, P.A. 984
Johnson, Sam 701
Johnson's Pictures (Proston) 564
Johnston, Able Seaman Don 999
Johnston, Bruce 929
Johnston, Frances Margaret 673
Johnston, J. 610
Johnston, J.W. 673, 1007
Johnston, John 609
Johnston, Pilot Officer Stanley Maxwell 1007
Johnston, R.A. 642–643
Johnston, Thomas 673
Johnston, W.S. 610
Johnston, William 673
Johnstone, Captain 603
Johnstone, Professor Thomas Harvey 742, 750
Johnstone, T. 606
Joinery Works 733
Jolliffe, W.K. 591
Jones, A. 610, 615
Jones, A.E. 811
Jones, Alfred James 605, 706
Jones, Arthur 879
Jones, Aubrey 594
Jones, Baron 757
Jones, C.C. 730
Jones, Charles (alias George Hillier) 491
Jones, E.F. 733, 968
Jones, F.H. 968–969
Jones, Florence Elizabeth Rose 946

- Jones, Francis Harry 514, 731–732
 Jones, J. Mander 872
 Jones, L.M. 811
 Jones, Oliver 625
 Jones, Private Stan 1008
 Jones, Richard 486
 Jones, Wilhelmina 732–733
 Jones' Sawmill (Wondai) 731, 971
 Jonson, Ted 514
 Jonsson, S. 625
 Jorgensen, A. 610, 673
 Jorgensen, C. 639
 Jorgensen, Chris 654
 Jorgensen, Ivy 654
 Jorgensen, N. 671
 Jorgensen, Peter 633
 Joseph, Alf 574
 Joyce, Lieutenant-commander A.A. 968
 Junk, Dr David 543, 883, 1020
 Junk, Katie 883
 Just, J. 966
 Justice Department 1010
- K**
 K.D. Morris Pty. Ltd. 733
 Kabi 940
 Kachel, Jack 566
 Kahler, Sid 1027
 Kaolin 694–696, 1040
 Kathleen Oakes Memorial Home 806
 Katter, C.R. 543
 Kearney, Ann 621
 Kearney, P. 1002
 Kearney, Patrick 621
 Keates, A.W. 533
 Keates, Alan 532–533, 580, 582, 904
 Keates, Brian 532
 Keates, Catherine Jesse 532
 Keates, Daisy 532
 Keates, Phillip Morris 532
 Keates, William 532
 Keefe, Detective George 955
 Keeley, Michael Anthony 907
 Keen, Elizabeth Louise 1003
 Kefford, Annie 641
 Kefford, Constable Robert 641–642
 Kefford, Joseph Leslie 641
 Kelleher, Nancy 564
 Kelly, Matron 858
 Kemp, F. 578
 Kendall, Robert 596
 Kendall's mill 701
 Kennaugh, Matron J. 868
 Kennedy, Charlie 599
 Kenny, Bill 675
 Kenway, T. 645
 Kenyon, R.H. 771
 Keogh, John 979
 Kerkow, G. 816
 Kerle, Anna Friedricka Karoline 566
 Kerle, Oskar Gustav 566
 Kerr, P. 808
 Kersnovske, Keith 802
 Keys, Cowan 506, 508, 517, 791, 796
 Keys, David 909
 Keys, Eric 554
 Keys, W. 645
 Keys, W.G. 770
 Kia-Ora Nursing Home 858–859
 Kidd, J. 762
 Kidd, Matron 531
 Kidd, Mrs W. 554
 Kidd, Sister 885
 Kilcoy Shire Council 690
 Kilkivan Electricity Authority 971
 Kilkivan Hall 871
 Kilkivan Mercantile Store 954
 Kilkivan Shire Council 525, 547, 723, 829–830, 872, 875, 905, 971, 1010, 1021, 1040
 Kilkivan station 603, 825, 939–940
 Kilpatrick Green Pty. Ltd. 984
 Kinbombi plymill 721
 Kinbombi Plywood Coy. Ltd. 716
 King, Eden 906
 King, Reginald Macdonnell 965–966
 King, W.J. 747
 Kingaroy Aero Club 907
 Kingaroy Aerodrome 697
 Kingaroy butter factory 607, 614, 623, 637, 691, 694, 764, 766–777, 786, 788, 792–794, 798, 802–803, 1010
 Kingaroy Chamber of Commerce 604, 612, 680, 685, 688, 861
 Kingaroy Electric Authority 963
 Kingaroy fire Brigade 604, 666, 694, 925
 Kingaroy Fire Brigade Board 688, 692
 Kingaroy Historical Society 604, 979
 Kingaroy Hospital 508, 588, 599, 601, 606, 625, 637, 646, 657, 663, 666, 672, 674, 678, 683, 685, 694, 828, 983, 1024
 Kingaroy Hospital Board 673, 685
 Kingaroy Hospital Committee 683, 685
 Kingaroy Hotel 605, 612, 622, 626, 643
 Kingaroy Hotel Hall 643
 Kingaroy industrial estate 694, 696
 Kingaroy Jockey Club 685
 Kingaroy Methodist Church 528
 Kingaroy Paddock 587–588, 603
 Kingaroy Progress Association 680, 688, 861
 Kingaroy Rotary Club 622
 Kingaroy sawmill 611
 Kingaroy School of Arts 588, 623, 626, 685, 786, 861
 Kingaroy School of Arts Committee 688
 Kingaroy Shire Art Gallery 696
 Kingaroy Shire Council 589, 602, 604–605, 607–608, 623, 627, 634, 644–646, 648–649, 652, 657, 664, 673, 678, 680–693 727, 806, 835, 859, 866–867, 899–900, 906, 920, 928, 933, 961–962
 Kingaroy Shire Hall 684
 Kingaroy Show Society 548, 622, 653, 682, 685, 688, 1039
 Kingaroy State School Committee 688
 Kingaroy Town Hall 866
 Kingsbury, J.J. 947
 Kingston, T.J. 663
 Kinleymore School Committee 554
 Kinnear, Jack 554
 Kirchner and Co. 491
 Kirkrouse, William 939
 Kirwan, Michael Joseph 762, 788, 844, 862
 Kitchen and Co. 917
 Knipe, Jim 723
 Knipe, John 662
 Knipe, Sister J. 864
 Knopke, August 654
 Knopke, Frank 691
 Knopke, Johann Ludwig 691
 Knopke, Mary 654
 Knopke, Matron Hazel 866
 Knopke, Ron 685, 691
 Knopke, Ruby Emily 691
 Knopke, Theodore 691
 Knowles, C.W. 886
 Knowles, Charles 599, 638
 Knowles, John 599
 Knowles, Les 638
 Knox, Andrew 677
 Knox, Edward William 496
 Knudsen, Aub 1024
 Knudsen, Christopher 625
 Knudsen, Elizabeth Mary 652

- Knudsen, Paul 652
 Knyvett, P.G. 853
 Knyvett, P.M. 761
 Kopp and Toop
 Koppe, Gertrude May 570
 Kowitz's sawmill (Darr Creek) 572
 Koy, Joyce 568
 Koy, Les 568
 Kraft 928
 Kratzmann, H.W. 551
 Kratzmann, Keith 1023
 Krebs, Ernest 615
 Krebs, Jack 816
 Kreis, Vera 809
 Kruger, George 641-642
 Kucks, L. 867
 Kucks, Teena Maree 867
 Kuhn, Jim 658
 Kumbia and District Patriotic Committee 645
 Kumbia Cafe 810
 Kumbia Hotel 648
 Kumbia School of Arts Memorial Hall 649
 Kumbia School of Arts 646
 Kunioon Methodist Church 677
 Kunst, Hans 658
 Kurrajong Cricket Club 644
 Kyle, Miss G.M. 537
- L**
- La Barte, Blanche Ethel Maud 667
 Lacey, R. 506
 Lacey, W. 506
 Ladies Auxiliary 881
 Lafferty, Michael 948
 Laheys Ltd. 731-732
 Lahz, Dr 872
 Lake Wivenhoe 990
 Lakin, R.C. 559
 Lambert, Norman 892
 Lamperd, Bert 574, 664
 Lamy, Henry 555
 Land Act (1868) 587
 Land Act 742, 811
 Land and Income Tax Office 798
 Land Court (Wondai) 504
 Land Court 641
 Lands Court, Nanango 642
 Lands Department 555, 579, 631, 641, 645, 658, 666, 706, 713, 749-750, 752, 811, 964
 Landy, J.E. Police Magistrate 955
 Lane, R. 817-818
 Lane, William 1015
 Lang, W.J. 684, 690
 Langan, H. 761
 Larkin, R.C. 555
 Larsen, Christen 602, 669
 Larsen, Christine Sophia Caroline 614
 Larsen, Clara 602
 Larsen, H. 605
 Larsen, Hans 602, 677
 Larsen, Lars 614
 Larsen, P. 506, 606
 Larsen, Peter 602
 Larsen, Sylvia Amelia Sophia 669
 Latham, Harold 1010
 Latham, Kathleen 1011
 Latham, W. 840
 Laurels Retirement Village 532, 580
 Laverty, Frances 639
 Lavery, Dr 877
 Lawless, Ellen 487
 Lawless, Mrs J.P. 811
 Lawless, Mrs W.B. 811
 Lawlor, Paddy 658
 Lawrence and Hanson 965
 Lawrence, Ian Oliver 666
 Lawrence, J.T. 767
 Lawson, Alexander 490-493
 Lawson, Alexander Robertson 498-499
 Lawson, Brother Placid 491-492, 495
 Lawson, Robert 490-492, 496, 498-499
 Lawson, Robert Hazelwood 490
 Le Brun, Peter 1035
 Leamy, Eleanor 630
 Lear, Bruce 907
 Lederhose, F. (senior) 643
 Lederhose, Frederick 643
 Lee, Archibald 622, 706
 Lee, F.W. 620
 Lee, G.S. 813
 Lee, George 638
 Lee, J.A. 759, 761
 Lee, J.D. 622
 Lee, Joseph Deuchar 622
 Lee, Leo 721
 Lee, Miss Pearl 827
 Lee, Stanley 759
 Leitch, Reverend Thomas 732
 Lenegan, Charlie 993-994
 Leonard, Eleanor Mary 537
 Leslie, Patrick 647
 Leslie, Stan 646
 Leu, Chris 696
 Leu, Gwenyth 587, 590
 Leu, Jenny 696
 Leura-joy gemfield 581
 Lever Brothers 917
 Levick, Harry 638
 Levinge, George 852-853
 Levinge, George Edward 645
 Levitt and Smith, (butcher) 564
 Lewis, Anne Jane 651
 Lewis, George 594
 Lewis, Herb 976
 Lewis, Mavis 678
 Lewis, Sydney Alfred 1006
 Lewis, W. 710
 Lewis, W.A. 761
 Ley, Andrew 554, 564
 Ley, Archie 554
 Ley, T.J. 754
 Leyden, T. 703
 Liefgase, Ernest Wilhelm 956
 Liesegang, Bertha Amelia 667
 Liesegang, Con. 666
 Liesegang, Ernest Herman (Bill) 667
 Liesegang, Mrs E. 604
 Lifeline 858
 Lilley, Chief Justice 941
 Lillis, Billy 942
 Lincoln, Frank 727
 Lind, Johanna 654
 Lind, Robert 654
 Lindley, Amy Grace 890
 Lindley, G. 610
 Lindley, H.W. 551
 Lindley, Ivan B. 890
 Lip, Dr. P. 884-885
 Lipscombe, B. 953
 Lipsett, R. 767
 Liquid Fuel Board 1006
 Lister, John Wesley 979
 Lister, Stella Victoria 979
 Lister, Stuart 979-980, 987, 990
 Littlejohn, Thomas 586
 Littleproud, Brian 1025
 Littler, E.C. 1034
 Living, Captain G.C.N. 592
 Livingstone, Angie 829
 Livingstone, H. 614
 Livingstone, John 867
 Livingstone, Mabel 829
 Local Authorities Act (1902) 520
 Local Government at Kingaroy 680-693
 Local Government at Wondai 520-534
 Local Government Clerks' Board 691
 Loch, Constable G. 606
 Logan, James 671
 Lomas, Neil 1028
 London House (Kingaroy) 611
 Lonergan, Thomas 599
 Long Bridy and Litton Cheney Women's Institute, England 811
 Long, John 662
 Long, Ruth 548
 Long, Samuel 506, 548, 913
 Lonsdale, Doris E. 563

- Loosemore, Francis Albert 761
 Loosemore, H. 561
 Lord, C.V. 874
 Lota home 812
 Loth, P. 623
 Love, Eileen 669
 Love, Percy 669
 Lovell, L.E. 814
 Loving, Carl 654
 Loving, Lydia 654
 Lubke, Arthur 730
 Lucas and Cummings (architects) 524
 Lucas, James 623
 Ludeman, Catherine Mary 537
 Lukin, Justice George Lionel 947, 954
 Lutheran Church Proston 561–562
 Lutheran Church, (Fairney View) 508
 Lynch sisters 632
 Lyons, Anora 627
 Lyons, Austin (junior) 627
 Lyons, Austin 627
 Lyons, Catherine 627
 Lyons, James 627, 701, 709
 Lyons, John 627
 L'Estrange, P.A. 762
- M**
 M.J. Huston and Sons 535
 M.M. Anderson Library 814
 Macalister, Jane 941
 MacDiarmid, Matron Norma 863–865
 MacDonald, J.E. 553
 Macfarlane and Cowens (auctioneers) 543
 Macfarlane, Ian 515, 517, 791
 Macfarlane, J. 787
 Macfarlane, L. 1020
 Macfie, D. 537
 Mackay, Dr 865
 Mackay, Matron Edith Ann 871
 Mackrell, F.L.B. 813
 Macnamara, Isabella Phoebe 1015–1016
 Macnamara, May Phoebe 1015
 Macnamara, Patrick Joseph 702, 761, 788, 1014–1016
 Macnamara, Patrick (senior) 1015
 Macnamara, Sophie 1015
 MacPherson, Ernest Alfred 795, 799
 Macrossan, Justice 957
 Mactaggart, J.D. 939–940
 Maddison, W.J. 506
 Maddison, W.T. 758–759
 Madsen, Caroline Maria 625
 Madsen, Charles Christian 625
 Madsen, O.O. 578
 Magee, Bridget 652
 Magee, Joseph 652
 Magnussen, R.E. 928–929
 Maguire, Frank 664
 Maguire, Ray 803
 Mahoney, J. 765
 Mahoney, James Richard Denis 615–616
 Mahoney, Professor James Charles 616
 Main Roads Department 904, 984
 Malynn, Olivia 678
 Mangan and Heiner 710
 Mannuem Maize Company 649
 Mant, George Senr. 487
 Manton, F.O.H. 658
 Manumbar plywood mill 726–727
 Manumbar Progress Association 725
 Manumbar sawmill 725, 735
 Manumbar station 722, 733, 817, 849, 940
 Manumbar Timber Company 716, 721
 Maranoa Broadcasting Company 1036
 Markwell, Adelaide 587
 Markwell, Aubrey 587
 Markwell, Charles 587
 Markwell, Isaac 587
 Markwell, Isaac Beecham 587
 Markwell, James 587
 Markwell, James Isaac 657, 761
 Markwell, Reginald 587
 Markwell, Walter 587
 Maroske, K. 559
 Marquardt, August 538
 Marquardt, Gertrude Catherine 530
 Marquardt, H. 507
 Marquardt, Herman Ferdinand Julius 530
 Marquis-Kyle, S. 684
 Marrisonville Margarine Company 915
 Marrisonville, F. 809
 Marriott, T.E. 555
 Marsden, Lindsay 1028
 Marshall, Archie 838
 Marshall, F. 671
 Marshall, Peter 993
 Marshlands station 486, 499–500, 518
 Marston station 486
 Martin, A. 645
 Martin, Florence 600
 Maryborough Co-operative Dairy Association 528, 535, 764, 767, 777–778, 780, 782–783, 785–788, 792, 794, 796, 798–799, 803–804, 968
 Maryborough Hospital 645, 836
 Maryborough Mercantile Co-operative 506, 512
 Mason, Dr 939
 Mason, Ted 736
 Masonic Lodge 686, 831
 Masters, Vanessa 1028
 Maternal and Child Welfare Centre 648
 Matheson, Jim 928
 Matthews, Tony 1024
 Maudsley, G. 907
 May, Albert 944–945
 May, Bertha 944–945
 May, Carl 945
 May, Christina 945
 May, Ellen 945
 May, Hermina Wilhelmina 605
 May, Hugo Julius 605
 May, J. 671
 May, Julius 944
 May, Lizzie 945
 Mayne, Frank 845
 Mayne, J.C. 845
 Mayne, W. 845
 McAllister, Doris 572
 McAllister, Mrs A. 572
 McAllister, N.J. 578, 929, 1000
 McAllister, Norman 571–572, 927
 McAlpine, J.D. 651
 McAuliffe, Harry 638
 McAuliffe, Jack 638
 McAuliffe, Sister G. 864
 McBride, Neill 663
 McCafferty's (coaches) 981
 McCallum, C.A. 494
 McCallum, Malcolm Johnston 1010
 McCallum, Malcolm Mclean 1010
 McCallum, Reg 857, 990
 McCarthy, Tom 884
 McCauley, D. 976
 McCauley, David 1008
 McCauley, Di 580
 McCauley, Eleanor 1008
 McCauley, Gordon John 1008
 McCauley, Ian 580
 McClymont, Charles Stewart 818, 967, 1000
 McClymont, Mrs C.S. 818
 McCombe, J.W. 612
 McConnel, D.J. 499
 McConnel, David Canon 496
 McConnel, David Rose 496
 McConnel, E.J. 490, 518, 538–539

- McConnell, Edward John 496, 499–500
 McConnell, Eric Walter 496
 McConnell, James Henry 496
 McConnell, Marjorie 500
 McCormack, Sergeant Patrick 624
 McCormack, William 713
 McCormack, William 714–715, 728
 McCrow, Stanley Eric 956
 McDermott, J.T. 845
 McDonald, M.L. 771
 McDowell, R. 641
 McErlean, James 644
 McErlean, Rachael Margaret 644
 McEuen and Green 486
 McEvoy, Matron Muriel 858
 McEwen, John 901–902
 McGill, William Abraham 621
 McGinley, H. 1016
 McGovern, Martin 555
 McGovern, Owen 558
 McGrath, W.J. 947
 McGuigan, Ron 993
 McIlhatton, M. 807
 McIntosh, Amelia 815
 McIntosh, R. 846
 McIver, K.H. 761
 McKay, Angus 628
 McKay, Charlie Clark 953
 McKay, Fred 979
 McKechnie, H.A. 977
 McKee, Norah 653
 McKell, G. 578
 McKell, Gordon 527, 927
 McKenna, Constable John 955
 McKenna, J.B. 965
 McKenzie, James 538, 546, 663
 McKenzie, John 585
 McLaren, Reverend W. 827
 McLaughlin, Jane 867
 McLaughlin, John M. 867
 Mclean, Peter 757
 McLennan, Alexander 634–635
 McLeod, Colin 955
 McLeod, Colin Clive 954
 McLeod, Ronald Roderick 954–955
 McLoughlin, Constable 943
 McLucas, A. 518, 533, 538
 McLucas, Andrew (junior) 526
 McLucas, Andrew 509, 517, 526–527, 531, 881
 McLucas, Ann 526
 McLucas, J. 521
 McLucas, John (junior) 526
 McLucas, John (senior) 526
 McLucas, Joseph 526, 769
 McLucas, Manthilda Augusta Amanda 526–527
 McLucas, Robert 526
 McLucas, Sara Ann 526
 McLucas, William 526
 McMeekin, S.R. 970
 McMicken, G. 533
 McMillan, Bernice Christina 673
 McMullen, Dr 848
 McNamara, T.G. 761
 McNicol, Hilda Alice 549
 McNicol, J.A. 634
 McNicol, Mary Jane 634
 McNicoll, George 663
 McNicoll, James 663
 McNicoll, Nicol 662
 McQueen, Dr 881
 McReddie, Dr 709, 723, 855–856
 McRobert, James 785–787, 792–793, 796
 McSweeney, E.F. 1020
 Meade, Dr F.G. 863–864, 951–952
 Meandu coal mine 983, 986, 988, 990, 992, 994
 Mearns, B.J. 984
 Mears, Harold 587, 593, 648–649
 Meddleton, Matron 879
 Meddleton, Nurse Annie 877
 Medical care 848–887
 Medieke, Dorothea 644
 Meehan, Anastasia 662
 Meehan, John 661–662
 Meehan, Paddy 628
 Meiers, J. 806
 Meiers, John 621
 Meiers, William 621
 Meiklejohn, John 1023
 Melrose station 486
 Memerambi co-operative cheese factory 664
 Memerambi Farmers' Hall 917–918
 Memerambi Hotel 662
 Memerambi Water Supply Scheme 683
 Memorial Hall (Wondai) 968–969
 Menzies, Robert 1011
 Mercantile Bank of Sydney 594
 Metal Trades and the Electrical Trades Unions 986
 Methodist Church 644, 652, 664, 667, 867–877
 Methodist Church Proston 561
 Methodist Garden Settlement 822
 Meyers Bros., (plumbers) 620
 Meyers, Virgil Oscar 620
 Michel, John 1017
 Mickan, Henrietta 621
 Mickan, John Samuel 621, 783
 Micklethwait, B. 811
 Milham's Drapery 552
 Miller, Alex 615
 Miller, Anne 1025–1026
 Miller, Cecily Marie 1025
 Miller, Clarrie 689
 Miller, H. 507
 Miller, Matron Kathleen 878
 Miller, Mrs E.F. 603
 Miller, Reginald Bernard 1025
 Miller's Corner 682
 Miller's Hall 680, 683
 Millewski, Ada 948
 Millewski, Alex 948–949
 Millewski, Alice 947–948, 950
 Millewski, August 946–950
 Millewski, Emily 947–948, 950
 Millis, C. 760
 Millis, J. 761
 Millis, James (senior) 851
 Millis, James 701, 706, 849
 Mills, Hilda 865
 Mills, J.S. 1034
 Mills, Phoebe 644
 Mills, Reverend A.A. 644, 861
 Mills, T. 964–965
 Milne, J.W. 899
 Ministry for Air 1007
 Missingham, J. 645
 Mitchell, F. 1034–1035
 Mitchell, Vernon Fancourt 1033
 Mitchell, W. 765
 Mobbs, Brian 804
 Mocatta, G. 500
 Model Store 510, 512–513
 Moffat, W. 612
 Molen, S. 833
 Molineaux, Boulton 586
 Mollenhauer, Desmond 568
 Mollenhauer, Joyce 568
 Möller, Friedrich 494
 Moloney, Dan 658
 Monaghan, A. 639
 Mondure Hotel 506, 536, 542
 Mondure Lutheran Church 531
 Mondure station 486–489, 499, 504–506, 563, 849
 Monteith, Ernest 506
 Moore, J.A. 937
 Moore, Jim 907
 Moore, John 550
 Moore, John Alexander 673
 Moore, Mabel Faith 543
 Moore, Miss Fanny 673
 Moore, Paul 673
 Moore, Raymond Paul 937
 Moreland, C.A. 813
 Moreton and Gordon 947
 Moreton Bay penal settlement 584, 757
 Morey, Don 554

- Morgan, David 612
 Morgensen, Henry 802
 Morris, Bob 1005
 Morris, Col. 580
 Morris, Dr 850–851, 861
 Morris, Dr Luther 955
 Morris, G.C. 533, 903
 Morris, George Colin (Col.) 532, 581
 Morris, Nurse Enid 864
 Morris, Peter 735
 Morrison, Ann 507
 Morrison, Nurse Inez 859
 Mortimer-Evans, Horace 626
 Mortimer-Evans, Ruth 626
 Mortimer, John 940
 Mount Coora 940
 Mount Mowbrall 1037
 Mouritz, John 643
 Mudra, M. 818
 Muhling, M. 761
 Muir, W. 667
 Muir, William 914, 916, 921
 Mulcahy, J. 788
 Mulcahy, J.T. 762
 Muller, A.G. 596
 Muller, G. 610
 Muller, George 630, 701, 1016
 Müller, Herman 493
 Muller, J.J. 761
 Muller, Miss M. 762
 Munro, A. 710, 734
 Munro, D. 710, 734
 Munro, David Cook 531
 Munro, Duncan 858
 Munro, George 490, 495
 Munro, Hector 490, 849–851
 Munro, Mrs G. 493
 Munro, Peter 490
 Munro, Susan Marie 858
 Murgatroyd, E. 555
 Murgon and District Development Board 770
 Murgon and District Development Bureau 1028
 Murgon Apex Club 906
 Murgon butter factory 768–769, 786, 789, 802, 804, 1021
 Murgon Hospital 528
 Murgon Newspaper Company 1027
 Murgon Sawmilling Company 734
 Murgon School of Arts 794–795, 810, 966, 1021
 Murgon Shire Council 688, 734, 811, 838, 873, 878–880, 890–893, 903–904, 963, 971, 1021, 1027, 1033
 Murgon Show Society 831
 Murgon Town Band 789, 971
 Murgon Town Hall 893
 Murphy, Aloysius Ballan 956
 Murphy, Clarice 955–957
 Murphy, Daniel 663
 Murphy, Ellen 943
 Murphy, F. 574
 Murphy, G.K.D. 616
 Murphy, J.E. 592, 634, 701, 849, 940
 Murphy, Michael 943
 Murphy, Norah 943
 Murphy, Violet 663
 Murphy, W.G. 574
 Murray-Prior, T. 491–492
 Murray, E.D. 978
 Murray, James Macintosh 1017
 Murray, Professor J.K. 789
 Mussolini, Benito 1004
 Muston, H.C. 793, 1033–1034
 Muston, Terry 1036
- N**
- Nabby, William 947–950
 Nairn, Bert 557
 Nairne, H.S. 555
 Nanango butter factory 632, 760, 786, 788, 803–804, 966–967
 Nanango Chamber of Commerce 721, 856, 894, 966
 Nanango Co-operative Dairy Association 760–761, 763–764, 782, 788, 803
 Nanango Co-operative Trading Society 1008
 Nanango District Hospital Board 897
 Nanango Divisional Board 946
 Nanango fire brigade 925, 993
 Nanango goldfields reserve 706
 Nanango Hospital 721, 780, 892, 897, 907, 983, 1008, 1016
 Nanango Hospital Committee 850
 Nanango Light Horse Troop 1010
 Nanango Mining Warden's Court 695
 Nanango Police Court 761
 Nanango Presbyterian Church 721
 Nanango Shire Council 547, 549, 630, 677, 685, 706, 710, 723, 809, 814, 818, 854, 856, 858, 861, 895–896, 966–967, 975, 977, 990, 1000, 1016, 1028
 Nanango Shire Historical Society 858
 Nanango station 584, 596, 598, 625, 634, 848–849, 942
- Nanango Town and District Band 897
 Narin, Bert 555
 Nash, Dr Reginald James 872, 883, 885
 Nash, J. 620
 Nash, James 939
 National Bank 612, 645
 National Estate Grant System 582
 National Security Act 931
 National Trust 655
 Navy Bean Industry 931–938
 Navy Bean Marketing Board 688, 691, 921, 931–932, 934–937
 Nebe, John 961
 Needham, R.F.I. 495
 Neil, J.P. 818
 Neilsen and Petersen (builders) 606–607
 Neilsen, A.V. 609
 Neilsen, Neil 575–577, 614
 Neilsen, P. 610
 Neilsen, T.C. 669
 Neilsen's Bakery 552
 Neilson, H. 524
 Neilson, Norman 921
 Neilson, Oscar 975
 Neilson, Sue 1028
 Nelson, Otto 634
 Nesbitt, Ian 547
 Nesbitt, John Sommerville (Jock) 921, 924–925, 927, 933–934, 937
 Nestlé Company 804
 Neungna/Tarong coalfields 975
 New Cash Store 663
 New South Wales Aero Club 899
 New South Wales Lancers 822
 New South Wales Navy Bean Marketing Board 933
 Newmetal Mining Company 695
 Newspapers 1014–1030
 Newton, G. 762
 Newton, Kenneth Gerrard 908
 Nichols, Hec. 1008
 Nicholson, D. 1037
 Nicholson, Tom 905
 Nicklin, Premier George Francis Reuben 684, 687
 Nielsen, C.J. 978
 Nielsen, Louise 677
 Nielsen, M.P. 507
 Nielsen, Oscar 605
 Nielsen, Soren 677
 Nielson, B. 817
 Nielson, Thomas 600
 Nimmo, Dr 883, 885
 Noakes, G.R. 785
 Noakes, J.E. 765

- Noakes, Michael 993
 Noble, J.L. 735
 Nolan, J. 662
 Nolan, J.P. 735
 Nolan, Joe 664
 Nolan, Vincent James 735
 Noller, Colin Aubrey 937
 Noon, Jack 666
 Noon, John Wyatt 956-957
 Nord, John Peter 677
 Nord, Oscar 678
 Nord, Thelma 678
 Norman Bell Coy. Ltd. 962
 Norman, G. 610
 North Coast sawmills (Cooroy) 729
 North Holdens 729
 Northcott, Bill 658, 730
 Northcott, Nancy 659
 Northern Electric Authority of Queensland 979
 Nosworthy, S. 543
 Nosworthy's Emporium 514
 Nugent, E.F. 654
 Nugent, Owen 946
 Nugent, William Percy 654
 Nundah German settlement 757
 Nunn, Julie 690
 Nunn, K.R. 690
 Nunn, M. 810
 Nunn, Roger 689
 Nunn, W.E. 658
 Nutting, R.B. 721
 Nyora Co. Pty. Ltd. 695
 Nystrom, John August 633
- O**
- Oakes, Kathleen 805-807, 810-813
 Oakholme home 806, 812, 814-815
 Oakview forestry reserve 733
 Oakview mill 729
 Oates, Titus 906
 Oberle, Charles 644
 Obst, F.C. 733
 Ockelford, W.H. 612, 619
 Ockelford's Pharmacy 609
 Oddfellows' Hall (Wondai) 578, 968
 Offer, Charles 976
 Ogden, James Edmund 957-958
 Ogilvie, Andrew 940
 Ogilvie, George 658-659
 Okeden, D. Parry 495
 Olsen, August B. 641-642
 Olsen, F. 645
 Olsen, Julius 609
 Olsen, Olive 609
 Olsen, Peter 506
 Olsson, Elfriede Ethel 654
 Olsson, H. 901
 Olsson, Herman 654
 Olsson, Percy 898
 Olympia Hall 827
 Olympia Theatre 863, 1035
 Olzard, Audrey 736
 Onions, Constance Maud 507
 Onslow, Major Macarthur 1003
 Ontario Nursing Home (Kingaroy) 667
 Ontario Private Hospital 867
 Orton, William 591
 Osborne, Evelyn 1022
 Osborne, N. 817
 Osborne, N.F. 521
 Osborne, Norman Foster 1021
 Osborne, Rev. Theodore 1021
 Osborne, W. 817
 Osborne, Wilfred Lacey 1021-1022
 Osbourne, Norman E. 837
 Oscargarde, Martin 944
 Ott, J.A. 807
 Otto, Emilie 600
 Otto, Fred 600
 Otto, Hermann 652
 Otto, Martha 652
 Outridge, Percival Harold 528, 533, 791, 796, 889-890, 968-969
 Overseas Settlement Group 555
 Oxley, O.G. 855
 O'Brien, Maida 735
 O'Brien, Michael 671
 O'Brien, Peter 504
 O'Brien, Phillip 953
 O'Connell, Captain Maurice 585
 O'Connell, Captain William 486
 O'Connor, 'Doctor' 848
 O'Donahue, Mary 537
 O'Farrell, E.J. 817
 O'Farrell, V. 817
 O'Hanly, James 584
 O'Neill Brothers 607, 615
 O'Neill Square 681
 O'Neill, D.S. 658
 O'Neill, Daniel 607, 658
 O'Neill, John 607
 O'Neill, Katie 811
 O'Neill, Miss H. 806
 O'Neill, T. 806
 O'Neill, T.J. 684-685, 690-691
 O'Neill, Thomas William 607, 680-681, 683, 690, 827, 833, 862, 864
 O'Rourke, F. 955
 O'Rourke, M.W. 653
 O'Shanesy, Frances 657
 O'Shanesy, Gordon 657
 O'Shanesy, Joan 657
 O'Shanesy, John 657
 O'Shea, V. 967
 O'Sullivan, J.G. 848-849
- P**
- Pacey, Elizabeth Ida 550
 Pacific Coal 986, 990, 992, 994
 Pacific Coal Pty. Ltd. 981, 983
 Pack, J.M. 862
 Paine, G. 961
 Palace Hotel (Nanango) 761, 1016, 1026
 Palace Theatre (Nanango) 1016
 Palethorpe, F.G. 641, 862, 865
 Palethorpe, Frederick 497
 Palethorpe, Frederick Gordon 641-642
 Palethorpe, Harry P. 641-642
 Panitz, Wing-Commander Gordon (Peter) 1008
 Parke and Co. 551
 Parke, Hilda Elizabeth 545
 Parke, William Thomas 545
 Parker, David Shannon 641
 Parker, George 1035-1036
 Parker, Private Jack 999
 Parker, T.W. 728
 Parker, Thomas 641
 Parker, W.J. 648
 Parnell, G. 544
 Parsons, Benjamin 709, 712
 Parsons, E. 709
 Parsons, Harry 712
 Parsons, Henry (senior) 709
 Parsons, Henry 708, 712
 Patterson, Colonel E.E. 998
 Patterson, H. 614-615
 Patterson, Olive Kathleen 615
 Patterson, Sister 886
 Pattersen, Thomas 677
 Payne, J.H. 920
 Payne, W. 752
 Peanut Industry 912-930
 Peanut Marketing Board 663, 913, 916-918, 921, 924-925, 927-928, 933
 Peanut Products (Sydney) 914
 Pearse, F.J. 607, 658
 Pearse, R.A. 685, 827
 Pearson, Alfred 730
 Pearson, Emma Augusta 828
 Pearson, Frank Thomas 828
 Peary, J. 596
 Pease, P. 726
 Pedersen, G.M. 789, 922, 929
 Pedersen, Margaret 922
 Peel Island Leper colony 816
 Pember's fruit shop 642
 Penfold, Kenneth Noel 695
 Penman, Dick 559
 Penman, Joyce 559
 Penman, Richard 555
 Penning, J.R. 653
 Perkins, Charles 555, 558-559

- Perkins, Eddie 555
 Perkins, Frederick 558, 561
 Perkins, George 555
 Perkins, Henry 555–556
 Perkins, Horace 555, 557
 Perkins, L. 660
 Perkins, Miss L.M. 561
 Perkins, Sarah Ellen 558
 Perkins, W.H. 555
 Perkins, William 514
 Perren and Day 559, 561
 Perrett, Alben (senior) 637–638
 Perrett, Alben 634
 Perrett, John (junior) 599
 Perrett, John (senior) 599, 638
 Perrett, M.J. 638
 Perrett, Maud Evelyn 830
 Perrett, Percival Marmaduke 829–830, 1010
 Perrett, Sealy 633
 Perrett, Trevor 580, 689, 1025
 Perroux, H. 639
 Perry, J. 596
 Peters, Ivan 937
 Peters, K.T. 690
 Peters, Marc 1036
 Petersen, C. 929
 Petersen, F.C. 605, 615–616, 669, 682, 764, 766, 862
 Petersen, Harry 764
 Petersen, J. 917
 Petersen, S.O. 926
 Peterson, F.E. 921
 Peterson, James 791
 Peterson, Sven 625
 Petrie, W.R. 713
 Petty, Cyril Stephen 629
 Phillips, Frederick Christopher 571
 Phillips, P. 884
 Phillips, R.H. 818
 Philips, Agnes 528
 Philips, Arthur Cloude 528, 533, 791, 796
 Pickels, A. 506–507, 517
 Pickels, Ben 598–599
 Pickels, Edith 599
 Pickels, Hector 599
 Pickels, James 599
 Pickels, Kate Ellen 599
 Pickford, William 589
 Pigott, P. 500
 Pike, Dr 875
 Pike, L. 724
 Pike, Wyndham 890
 Pioneer Store (Memerambi) 663
 Piper, H.A. 840
 Pixie Rose Cafe (Murgon) 1004
 Pizzey, Jack 687
 Plackett, Lewis 658–659
 Plunkett, T. Flood 787
 Poacher, Dan 506
 Podger, R.L. 817
 Pohlmann Pear Spray Company 754
 Pohlmann, J.W. 754
 Pointon, Abel 653
 Pointon, Albert Leonard 653
 Pointon, Alice 653
 Pointon, Charles 653
 Police Court (Kilkivan) 955
 Police Court (Nanango) 945
 Police Court (Wondai) 672
 Pontello Queensland Ltd. 981
 Ponting, George 506
 Pook, R. 708
 Pook, Richard 574, 610–611
 Pope, G.L. 612
 Pope, Miss Daisy 672
 Port, Bert 697
 Porter, Daniel 647
 Porter, Elgin 614
 Porter, M.H. 533
 Porter, S. 555
 Post Office Hotel (Nanango) 828
 Post Office Hotel 702
 Postle, Arthur B. (senior) 664, 681
 Postle, Arthur Benjamin (champion runner) 664
 Postle, Edgar 665
 Postle, Frances 664
 Postle, Frank 664
 Postle, Hilda 665
 Postle, Percival Alfred 664
 Postlethwaite, J.S. 554
 Postmaster General's Department 651
 Potter, Ada 555
 Potter, Aubrey William 554–555
 Potter, Robert William 555, 560
 Potter, Vincent 554–555
 Poulsen, Agnete 629–630
 Poulsen, Hans 621, 625, 629–630
 Poultry Farmers' Co-operative Society (Kingaroy) 932
 Power, F.D. 752, 754
 Power, George 554
 Power, Katie 537–538
 Power, W. 973
 Praske, Bert 658
 Praske, O.J. 856
 Pratt, Flying-Officer Donald 1008
 Pratt, Tony 907
 Premier's Award for Environmental Excellence 992
 Presbyterian Church (Kingaroy) 612
 Presbyterian Church 667
 Preston, T. 708
 Preston, Thomas 610–611
 Price, Sergeant F. 951–952
 Prickly pear 522, 570, 573, 689, 741–756, 842
 Prickly Pear Land Commission 745, 752–755,
 Prickly Pear Poisons Ltd. 754
 Primary Producers' Co-operative Association Act 934
 Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act 916
 Primary Producers' Union 1021
 Primary Products Pool Acts 916
 Primary Products Pools Act (1922–1923) 787
 Proctor, Harry 677
 Proston Anglican Church 528
 Proston butter factory 553, 803
 Proston Cash and Carry 561
 Proston Chamber of Commerce 733
 Proston Electric Light Company 561
 Proston Hotel 564
 Proston Methodist Church 822
 Proston Progress Association 556, 559, 801
 Proston School of Arts 801
 Proston station 486, 491, 495–496, 849
 Prothero, B. 645
 Prothero, B.S. 862
 Provisional Bean Association 933–934
 Public Library of Queensland 593
 Public Works Commission 682
 Pullen's Patent Pear Pulper 742
 Purcell, J. 787
 Purcell, William 752
 Purdie, Bob 535
 Purdie, Ray 535
 Purser, L.T. 533
- ## Q
- Q.D.P.I. 935
 Qantas 889, 899
 QTC Channel 9 1037
 Quatermass, J. 884
 Queensland Aero Club 892, 899, 1008
 Queensland Agricultural College 604
 Queensland Air Navigation Ltd. 890–891
 Queensland Airlines Ltd. 904, 906
 Queensland Ambulance 735

- Queensland Ambulance,
Gympie 814
- Queensland Ambulance,
Kingaroy 623, 897
- Queensland Ambulance,
Murgon 727, 814
- Queensland Art Gallery 696
- Queensland Butter Board 787
- Queensland Clay Supplies 695
- Queensland Collieries Ltd. 970
- Queensland Country Women's
Association 548, 559, 563,
574, 589, 638, 645, 648,
667, 697, 805-820, 824, 846,
872, 998-999
- Queensland Dairy Museum at
Murgon 804
- Queensland Dairyman's
Organisation 558, 663, 574,
803, 1021
- Queensland Educational
Committee of the
Repatriation Commission
616
- Queensland Electricity
Generating Board 979-981,
983, 988
- Queensland Farmers' Union
508, 550, 782
- Queensland Generation
Corporation
Implementation Project 993
- Queensland Graingrowers'
Association 531, 578, 688
- Queensland Legislative
Assembly 585, 750, 753,
755, 799, 845
- Queensland Machinery
Company 962
- Queensland National Bank
515-516, 548, 553, 564, 612
- Queensland Parliament House
845
- Queensland Peanut Growers'
Co-operative Association
Ltd. 916, 928
- Queensland Railways 612,
662-663, 733, 1039
- Queensland Society of
Prevention of Cruelty to
Animals 573
- Queensland Survey Office 490
- Queensland Teachers'
Federation 616
- Queensland Treasury 897,
961-963
- Queensland Water Resources
Commission 984
- Quest Group 1026
- Quinlan, J.J. 1020
- Quinlan, Jack 830
- Quinn, Daniel Stephen 503
- Quirk, Patrick Thomas 645
- Quodling, Henry 751
- R**
- R.A.C.Q. 620
- R.S.L. 581, 824, 831, 833,
873-875
- R.S.L. Hall (Blackbutt) 809
- R.S.S.A.I.L.A. 727, 999, 1001,
1011
- Raabe, Charles 568
- Raabe, Joan 568
- Raabe, Nora 600
- Rackemann, Jeff 928-929
- Radford, Robert W. 537
- Radio 1071 1024, 1036
- Radio 2BL 1032
- Radio 2FC 1032
- Radio 3AR 1031
- Radio 3LD 1032
- Radio 4AK 1036
- Radio 4BC 1034
- Radio 4CB 1032
- Radio 4GR 1036
- Radio 4GY 1028
- Radio 4QG 547, 1031, 1033
- Radio 4QR 1032
- Radio 4RK 1033
- Radio 4SB 683, 1024,
1033-1034, 1036
- Radio 4VL 1036
- Radio 4ZR 1036
- Radio Listeners' League
(Murgon) 1034
- Radio VK-4CB 1032
- Rae, E. 951
- Raffin, James Christian 610,
625-626
- Railways Department 664
- Rainey, D. 671
- Randall, Captain 898
- Randall, Henry 1017-1018
- Randall, W.H.N. 877
- Randell, E. 610
- Randell, Fred 596, 599-600
- Randell, T. 610
- Rankin, C.D.W. 970
- Rankin, Eugenne Emma 566
- Rankin, George 551-552, 566
- Rankin, Gordon Stanley 566
- Rankin, Samuel 566
- Raper, James 942
- Raspus and Coop 729
- Raverty, D. 704, 716
- Rawlings, Reverend Father J.
616
- Ray, Annie Jane 943
- Raynor, Frank Edmund 548
- Rea, D.W. 688
- Rechabite Lodge 785
- Red Cross Society 511, 522,
818, 824, 826-827, 831, 863,
925, 998-999, 1003
- Reddan, S.V. 815
- Reddan, W. 815
- Redman, Isabella 667
- Redman, Malcolm 666-667,
675, 913-914, 920
- Redman, Miss G. V. 913
- Redman, Pearl 666
- Redman, Vera 666
- Redmond, W. 623
- Reece, Lieutenant J. 897
- Reed, Agnes 652
- Reed, Bella 651
- Reed, George 651-652
- Reed, Morris 652
- Reedy and Mannuem Creek
Progress Association 645
- Reedy Creek Tennis Club 644
- Reen, D. 605
- Reen, T. 610
- Reen, Tom 766
- Reen's Hall 622
- Rees, Crawford 555
- Rees, Flight Sergeant Alan
1010
- Reeves, E.L. 666
- Regional Electric Authorities
Act (1945) 973
- Reid, Dave 506
- Reid, Dr N. 858
- Reilly, Luke 681
- Reilly, Miss M.A. 681
- Reilly's Hall (Murgon) 769
- Reinke, A.A. 539
- Rendle, Dr 861
- Rendle, Dr Richard 610
- Returned Sailors' and Soldiers'
Imperial League 843
- Returned Soldiers' League 671
- Reuther, Pastor A.E. 562
- Richard, Dr R.V. 866-867
- Richard, S. 548
- Richards, D. 599
- Richards, Des 599
- Richards, James L. 574
- Richardson, C.J. 976
- Richardson, Wal 975
- Richmond, A.C. 1027
- Richmond, John Miller 1027
- Rickard, Dr R.V. 858, 865
- Rickards, Lorna 882
- Rickertt, Matron F. 856, 858
- Rideout, Mary 906
- Ridley, M.A. 918
- Ringsfield Maternity Hospital
857-858
- Rio Tinto 993
- Riordan, E.J. 974
- Rivett, Dr 725
- Rixon, Matron C.A. 810, 867
- Roach, M. 762
- Roach, M.J. 813
- Robert Bryce and Co. 965
- Roberts, Captain Frank 898
- Roberts, E.C. 893
- Roberts, G.I. 573
- Roberts, G.W. 880
- Roberts, J. 709, 954

- Roberts, Oliver Cromwell
743-744, 746, 748-749, 751,
753-754
- Roberts, Sister Margaret 858
- Robertson, Ann Crawford 1017
- Robertson, C. 642
- Robertson, David 884
- Robertson, John Crawford
1017-1018
- Robinson, B. 539
- Robinson, Claude 652
- Robinson, Dorothy 543
- Robinson, Ernest 644
- Robinson, Florence Maud 543
- Robinson, J.W. 1032
- Robinson, Mrs H. 901
- Robinson, Reuben 652
- Robinson, William 543
- Roche Brothers 984
- Roche, Michael Patrick 936
- Roebig, E. 727
- Rogash, J. 828
- Rogash, J.H. 817
- Rogash, Lillian 828
- Rogers, William 1004
- Rohlf, Colin 976
- Rohlf, Ronald Christian 983
- Rolfe, C.S. 892
- Roman Catholic Church
Proston 561
- Rook, Trevor Fredrick 937
- Roosevelt, President Franklin
997
- Rose, Athol 734
- Rose, Beryl 813
- Rose, C. 539
- Rose, Charles 734
- Rose, Edwin 734
- Roseby, Charles 506
- Roseby, George 506
- Rosenberg, Dr David 859
- Rosenblatt, Fred 1007
- Rosenblatt, Ruby Violet 1007
- Rosentreter, Carl Otto 643
- Ross and Company 711, 716,
721, 817
- Ross, Inspector 538
- Ross, Jim 638
- Ross, Jock 638
- Ross, W. 708
- Rossov, Bertha Christina
885-886
- Rossov, Leonard William 886
- Row and Neilsen Bakers 614
- Row, Dr E.R. 851-852
- Row, Frank 614
- Rowlinson, Ralph 921
- Rowell, Dr 875
- Royal Aero Club 897-898
- Royal Australasian College of
Surgeons 869
- Royal Bank of Queensland
612, 645
- Royal Queensland Yacht
Squadron 490
- Royal Studio Murgon 838
- Royle, Arnold 601
- Royle, Hilda 659
- Royle, Mavis 601
- Rozelle, Elizabeth Mary 956
- Rudder, C.L. 612
- Ruge, Albert Henry Arthur
539
- Rundle, Dr 885
- Russell-Clarke, Peter 804
- Russell, H. (silk merchant)
620
- Russell, Henry Stuart 486,
591-593, 655
- Russell, Sydenham 591-592
- Russell, W.A. 806
- Ruston and Hornsby Ltd. 962,
965
- Ruthenberg, E. 564
- Ryan Brothers (butchers) 545,
903
- S**
- Sadler, Brian John 937
- Saffron, Neville 1028
- Sager, C. 610
- Salisbury, E.L. 657
- Salkeld, W.L. 954
- Salmon, Arthur George 605
- Salvation Army 709, 785, 925
- Salvation Army Band 873,
1000
- Sampson, Christina 539
- Sandeman, Gordon 593
- Sanders, Lloyd 976
- Sanderson, H.W. 683, 690
- Sanderson, W.D. 776
- Sardi, Antonio 949
- Save Our Soil Prickly Pear
Poison 754
- Sawers, Thomas Stuart 1033
- Sawtell, Ambrose 626
- Sawtell, Walter 596
- Saxton, Dr William John
867-869
- Scab and Catarrh Act (1846)
491
- Schaefer, Eileen 643
- Scheitl, Joe 563
- Schilling, Peter 621
- Schollick, F.S. 767
- School Building Committee
667
- School of Arts Kilkivan 813
- School of Arts Kingaroy 622
- Schultz, Annie 683
- Schultz, Carl August 681, 683
- Schultz, Elizabeth 683
- Schultz, Miss A. 564
- Schultz, Myrtle 882
- Schultz, W.A. 792-793,
798-799
- Schultz, William Otto 723
- Schumann, Anna Katrina 508
- Schumann, Joachim 508
- Schwarz, P. 770
- Schwenke, William 641
- Scott, C. 762
- Scudamore-Smith, Stephen
654
- Scudamore-Smith, William
654
- Seabrook, J.C. 927
- Second World War 824,
829-830, 997, 1003, 1008,
1010-1011
- Sedgemann, Charles Henry
957-958
- Seed Graders Pty. Ltd. 932
- Seed Growers Pty. Ltd. 933
- Seeley, Bert 976
- Seiler, Allan 549
- Seiler, Arthur 549, 638
- Seiler, Edward 549
- Selby, William 599, 759-761,
1017
- Seng, Agnes 678
- Seng, Ferdinand 678
- Seng, H. 609
- Seng, Henry 659-660
- Seng, Hieronymus (Ronnie)
652
- Seng, John 633
- Sengstock, Ida 852
- SEQ Television (Sunshine
Television) 1037
- Seven Mile Creek (gold field)
568
- Seventh Day Adventist
Church 898
- Sexton, Bob 628
- Sexton, Dr J. 1000
- Sexton, R. 610
- Seymour, G. 559
- Seymour, George William
563-564
- Shadforth, H.F. 811
- Shailer, Annie 663
- Shailer, J.E. 661
- Shailer, W. 671
- Shailer, William 661
- Sharp, Dr 871
- Sharp, Helen 1028
- Sharp, I. 1027
- Shaw Printing Company Ltd.
1014
- Shaw, Anne 868
- Shaw, Dr Hugh 868, 883, 885
- Shaw, Dr Keith 868, 883
- Shaw, H.J. 1014
- Shaw, Helen C. 883
- Shaw, Sydney 555-557
- Shaw, W. 899
- Shell Minerals 993
- Shelton, H. 770, 789
- Shelton, Shirley 564

- Sheridan, Elizabeth 723
 Shire, Julius William 731, 735
 Shoecraft, John 610
 Short, H. 671, 681
 Short, Henry 521
 Shrapnel, Winifred 623
 Sidecup Castle 561, 568
 Sigley, J.H. 607, 619, 658, 681, 761, 792, 916
 Silvester, Dorothy Margaret 570
 Simon, Paul 672
 Simpson, Don 660
 Simpson, G.H. 621
 Simpson, Jack 658
 Simpson, Joe 658
 Simpson, John 658
 Simpson, Tom 566, 1026-1027
 Simpson, Vera 663
 Sisters of Charity 616
 Sisters of the Good Samaritan 616
 Skene, L. 811
 Skerman, L. 660
 Skinner, Dr 857
 Skuse, Charles 761
 Skyring, H.A. 711
 Slade, H.M. 791
 Slade, Harry 515
 Slade's Corner (Wondai) 527
 Slater Brothers 541
 Slater, Elizabeth 570
 Slater, James Alexander 506, 509, 511-512, 517, 521, 525, 533, 541, 576, 881, 889
 Slater, R. 541
 Slater, Robert 570
 Slater's Paddock 889
 Slattery, Dell 810
 Slaughter, Margie 500
 Slaughter, Rob 500
 Slinger, John 555, 559
 Slinger, Percy 555, 559
 Small, Amelia 697
 Small, Cecil Robert 696-697
 Small, Evaline Maude 697
 Small, Mary 696-697
 Small, Robert 696
 Smallbone, Christina Jan 667
 Smallbone, David 667
 Smart, David 908
 Smillie, W.T. 862
 Smith & Duffey 559
 Smith, Agnes 559
 Smith, Amy Violet (Vi) 528-530
 Smith, Archibald Farquharson Nicol 555, 558
 Smith, Archie 559
 Smith, Beryl 529
 Smith, Bill 658
 Smith, Dorothy, 653-654
 Smith, Doug 552
 Smith, Dr W. 884
 Smith, Fanny 731
 Smith, George 528
 Smith, Gil 529
 Smith, Hubert 653-654
 Smith, James 558-559, 564
 Smith, James Ernest 565
 Smith, Jane, 558
 Smith, Janet 558-559
 Smith, Joan 529
 Smith, John Alfred (Nobby) 976, 990
 Smith, John William Burgurst 956-957
 Smith, John, 558
 Smith, Lesleigh George Windmill 524, 528, 530-531, 533, 538, 561, 733, 807, 884, 903
 Smith, Lorraine 736
 Smith, N. 973
 Smith, Sir Charles Kingsford 902, 906
 Smith, Sister S. 881
 Smith, Violet 828
 Smith, W.H. 659
 Smith, William Anderson 659, 730-731
 Smithers, B.F. 533
 Smyth, C.E. Owen 712
 Smythe, G.N. 897
 Smythe, George 554
 Snare, Robert 677
 Soderholm, W. 564
 Softwood Holdings Ltd. 736
 Soldier Settlement Scheme 653
 Soldier settlements 842-847
 Soldiers' Land Settlement Committee 843
 Solomon, S.E. 735
 Somers, Henry Valentine 646
 Somerset, Henry Plantagenet 706, 761
 Somerville, W.H. 545
 Sorensen, Carl 654
 Sorensen, Lance Corporal Alf 1010
 Sorensen, Peter 654
 South Burnett (Hospital) Board 879
 South Burnett Associated Chamber of Commerce 1037
 South Burnett Aviation 908
 South Burnett Broadcasting Company Ltd. 1033
 South Burnett Co-operative Dairy Association Ltd. 553, 559, 769-770, 782, 801-804, 936, 1007
 South Burnett Co-operative Meat Works Association 532
 South Burnett Dairymen's Organisation 803
 South Burnett District Council 916
 South Burnett District Council of the Farmers' Union 682
 South Burnett Electricity Board 979
 South Burnett Hospitals Board 604, 856, 858, 873, 880, 884
 South Burnett Importing Company 612
 South Burnett Local Government Association 691
 South Burnett Ministries 559
 South Burnett Newspaper Company 1021
 South Burnett Regional Electricity Board 683-684, 973, 976
 South Burnett Timber-getters' Union 708
 South Burnett Timber Workers' Union 706
 South Burnett Times Pty. Ltd. 1025
 Southern Cross Machinery 1026
 Southern Newspapers Ltd. 1024
 Southport Divisional Board 1015
 Spann, Annie Caroline 681
 Spann, F. 644
 Spann, H.C.G. 681
 Spann, Heinrich 644
 Spann, Stephen George 681
 Sparkes, Mel 654
 Speedy, Don 1026, 1037
 Spence, Mary Catherine 539
 Spencer, Ethel 723
 Spencer, George 729
 Spencer, Harriett Maria 722
 Spencer, John Williamson 722
 Spencer, Thomas Herbert 722-723, 729, 801, 817, 872, 974
 Spencer, Thomas Herbert 971
 Spencer, William 729
 Spooner, John 596
 Sprath, Gwendoline 654
 Sprenger, Friedrich Wilhelm (Bill) 605, 681
 Sprenger, Hannah 605
 Spring, Charles A. 611
 Springate, N.J. 975
 St Aubyn's Private Hospital Kingaroy 637, 647, 667, 677, 689, 815, 829, 866-868
 St Clare Nursing Home 858
 St Faith's Church Mondure 500
 St Helena Island 696

- St Mary's Catholic Church (Kingaroy) 604
 St Mary's Catholic Church 627
 St Michael and All Angels Church of England 620
 St Ronan's General Private Hospital 878
 St Stephen's Private Hospital 868
 St. John Wood, Henry 502
 Staines, Joseph 667
 Staines, Sam 653
 Staines, Sarah 667
 Stanfield, G. 559
 Stanfield, George 555
 Stanke, Herman 641
 Stanley, G. 968
 Star Hotel (Nanango) 702, 1016
 State Electricity Commission 978
 State Government Insurance Office 559, 883
 State Library of Queensland 1014
 State Produce Agency Pty. Ltd. 932
 State Recruitment Committee 832
 State Works Department 1026
 Stebbens, Miss E. 827
 Steele, Joseph 652
 Steele, Leopold Sherlock Boninson 663
 Steele, Professor 751
 Steele, Rachel 652
 Steffensen, Anton 601
 Steffensen, Edward (Ted) 937
 Steffensen, Lillie 601
 Stehbens Brothers 530
 Stehbens, Amy Matilda 612, 614
 Stehbens, L.R. 610
 Stehbens, Ludwig Rudolph 612, 614
 Steinhardt, Amelia 539
 Stephen, A.T. 1009
 Stephen, Miss M. 1009
 Stephen, Wally 1009
 Sterling Private Hospital 871
 Stevenson, Les 884-885
 Stewart, J. 761
 Stewart, James 852
 Stewart, William 491
 Stibbe, Bertha Wilhemina 654
 Stibbe, Wilhelm Frederick 654
 Stidolph, R.F. 1016
 Stirling, A.J. 607
 Stirling, Allan 735
 Stirling's Auction Mart 611
 Stobo, Jean 868
 Stock, C.A. 648
 Stockill, Jane Anne 497
 Stocks, Sydney 1029
 Stolzenberg Engineering Works 615
 Stolzenberg, Harry 926
 Stone House Moore 606
 Stone, Victor 852
 Stopford, James 967
 Story, J.D. 616
 Stradbroke Gardens Air Charter 907
 Strenzel, A. 1031
 Stringer, Percy 538
 Strohmeyer, A. 598, 600
 Strohmeyer, George 600
 Stuart, Alexander 594
 Stuckey and Co. 543
 Stuckey, T.T. 543
 Stümer, Adolf Albert 548
 Stumer, Emily Elizabeth 548
 Stumm, R.P. 816
 Sullivan, Alice 678
 Sullivan, F. 813
 Sullivan, Florence 858
 Sullivan, Frank 857
 Sullivan, T.J. (junior) 678
 Sullivan, Timothy (senior) 678
 Summers and Zwisler 723
 Sunday Creek station 486, 499, 563-566, 807-808
 Sunderland, S. 555
 Sundstrup Park 1000
 Sundstrup, Dr H.A. 552, 881, 885
 Sunstate Resources Ltd. 723, 736
 Supreme Court 830, 837, 946, 949
 Suszbier, Carl 641
 Sutherland, Sara 677
 Svanson, J. 864
 Svendsen, John 625
 Svendsen, L. 669
 Svendsen, Niels Peter 625
 Swain, E.H.F. 713
 Swain, Miss G.E. 864
 Swan, James 507
 Swanbank power station 993
 Sweet, W. 573
 Swindall, John (architect) 884
 Swords, Sergeant 942
 Sykes and Sykes 688
 Symes and Sons 1008
 Symes, L.H. 818
- T**
 T.A.F.E. college 627, 694
 T.B. Soldiers' Association 814
 T.F.D. Joinery 1026
 Taabinga Hotel 628-629
 Taabinga Resumption Progress Assn. 644
 Taabinga station 584-590, 594, 621-623, 625, 634, 641-644, 648, 653, 696, 806, 835, 848-849
 Tagg, W. 890
 Tancred, E.M. 572
 Tancred, Edward 594
 Tancred, George 594
 Tancred, R. 806
 Tancred, Richard Fairfax 594, 867
 Tansey Hall 816
 Tara's Hall 897, 967, 1000
 Tariff Board 932-934
 Tarleton, Dr John W. 610, 710, 852, 861, 948
 Tarleton, John 853
 Taromeo mill 716
 Taromeo station 849
 Tarong Energy 992-993
 Tarong Energy Corporation Ltd. 992
 Tarong National Park 992
 Tarong power station 691, 975-996
 Tarong sawmill 710
 Tarong station 566, 587, 589, 734, 848-849, 895, 987
 Tarong/Neumgna coalfields 976
 Taylor, A. 555
 Taylor, Daniel 537
 Taylor, Dr 854
 Taylor, E.B. 659
 Taylor, H. 789
 Taylor, Kate 654
 Taylor, Percy 654
 Taylor, Reverend E.J. 822
 Te Kuti cheese, (Memerambi) 664
 Teebar station 487
 Tegge, Frederick Henrick Wilhelm 641, 643
 Television broadcasting 1036-1037
 Templeton, G.D. 639
 Tennyson power station 974
 Terkelsen, Harry 599, 602
 Termius Hotel (Proston) 551
 Tessmann, Arnold 599
 Tessmann, Charles 598-599
 Thallon, Robert Forsyth 608
 The Plains station 500
 Theodore, Edward Granville 843
 Thiemann, Lou 1037
 Thomas, J.C. 644
 Thompson Brothers 731
 Thompson, A. 1021
 Thompson, Dr John (Jack) Cyril 854, 868, 958
 Thompson, Edward 634
 Thompson, G.L. 731
 Thompson, Gayle Michelle 983
 Thompson, Heather 868
 Thompson, J. 818
 Thompson, J.C. 731, 1020-1021

- Thompson, Jack 1021
 Thompson, Sister Florence 859
 Thomsett, H. 721
 Thomson, Buddy 495
 Thomson, Edward (junior) 497
 Thomson, Edward (senior) 497
 Thomson, Edward 581
 Thorne & Walker (grocery store) 551, 559, 561, 564
 Tiaro butter factory 759
 Tiaro Co-operative 767-768
 Tickle, Alma A. 811
 Tie, Charles 1035
 Timber Advisory Committee 726
 Timber Corporation 632, 703-704, 710, 712, 716-717, 720-721, 736, 1000
 Timber industry 699-740
 Timber Merchants' Association of Queensland 724
 Timber-getters' Association 726
 Tingoora Farmers' Progress Association 511, 547
 Tingoora Hall 548, 815, 1011
 Tingoora Hotel 548
 Tingoora Methodist Church 548
 Tingoora Progress Association 546
 Tolmie, James 743
 Tomassetti, Vincenzo 986
 Tomkins, Ken 984
 Toohey, Inspector 836
 Toomey, J. 644-645, 681-862
 Toop, Florence Olive 549
 Toop, Henry 549
 Towney, A.G. 903
 Towns, Robert 594
 Townson and Heaslip Pty. Ltd. 619, 928
 Townson, G.C. 615
 Townson, Jack 951
 Townson, Thomas 688
 Townsville Regional Electricity Board 979
 Tracey, Captain J. 891, 894-895
 Trahy, M. 671
 Transfield (Qld) Pty. Ltd. 981
 Treeby, Matron L.M. 857
 Trevor, Mrs Margaret 958
 Trude and Webster (architects) 874
 Truss, Errol Clifford 688, 931, 935-937
 Truss, F. 648
 Truss, Lynn 688
 Truss, Warren E. 688-690
 Tryon, Henry 742
 Tuite, John 648
 Tuite, Patrick 641
 Tuite, Tom 867
 Turner, Barbara 692
 Turner, C.J. 1034
 Turner, Dr. Gary J. 1028
 Turner, L.T. 578
 Turner, Madaleine 1028
 Turner, Ronald Harry 691-692
 Turner, T. 648
 Tweed, Sister P. 864
 Tweedy, David George 550
 Tyrell, J.L. 931
 Tyrrell, James Leslie 936
 Tyson, George 953-954
- U**
 Underwood, Dr Cecil Thomas 872
 Underwood John 872
 Union Bank 531, 612, 615
 United Graziers' Association 574
 Universal Motors 928
 Universal Providers 515
 University of Queensland 572, 616, 742, 750-751, 979, 993
 University of Southern Queensland 993, 1026
 Unwin, Matron E.A. 857
- V**
 Vacuum Oil Company 564, 623
 Venman, G.S. 681, 683, 690, 862, 961
 Vernon, Mr (representative of the Australian Cotton Growing Association) 575
 Viberg, O. 554, 559
 Vickery, Mrs E.S. 511
 Victor Leggo and Company 753
 Vidler, Harold (Harry) Leonard 641, 645
 Vidler, Oliver 645
 Vidler, Sophia 645
 Vinning, G.S. 932, 934
 Viola sisters 888
 Vitch, Walter 552
 Voll, J. 641
 Volunteer Defence Corps 673, 927, 1001, 1007, 1010-1011
 Von Stein, 'Dr' 849
- W**
 W. Gillmeister and Son 803
 W. Selby and Co. 1016
 W.J. Lang & Son 620
 Wade, Guy 1024
 Wadell, Hartley Brian 681
 Wagner, H.J. 688, 1004
 Wagner, Ronald Arthur 937
 Wain, A.E. 645
 Walcott, Eira 1028
 Waldoock and Godfrey, (carriers) 493
 Waldoock and Zerner 900
 Waldoock, Tiny 658
 Walker, Dr E. Lorimer 856
 Walker, Harry Frederick 794, 796
 Walkers Limited (Maryborough) 711, 766
 Wall Street Crash 997
 Wall, Dr A. 875
 Wallader, Bill 736
 Wallison, Jack 976
 Walpole, Matron F. 855
 Walsh, Andrew (senior) 999
 Walsh, Edward Andrew 999
 Walsh, Tom 976
 Walters and Michel and Co. 1008
 Walters, Amos 587
 Walters, David Frank 1017
 Walters, Johannah 587
 Walters, John W. 587
 Walters, Robert 723
 Walters, Roy 803
 Walthardt, Dr 849
 Walton, John 555
 War Precautions Act 777
 Ward, Frank 888
 Ward, George 515, 537
 Ward, Richard John 566
 Ward, William 672-673
 Wardell, Aussie 556
 Wardell, Charles 555, 557
 Wardill, J.O.N. 555, 559
 Ware, A.W. 544-545
 Ware, G. 628
 Ware, Tom 544
 Warnick, C.H. 763
 Warren Brothers 628
 Warren, Alf. C. 493
 Warren, Charles 493
 Warren, E.R. 666
 Warren, Ellen Edith 628
 Warren, George 541, 626, 628
 Warren, Henry 607
 Warren, Private G.H. 832
 Warren, William 672
 Warren's Buildings 622
 Waters Trading Co. 932
 Waters, William 555
 Watson, H.G. 1018-1019
 Watson, R. 1032
 Watson, Richard 645
 Watson, Walter 658
 Watt, Dennis 1023
 Watt, Ernest Alexander Stuart 496
 Watt, George (junior) 721
 Watt, George (senior) 703-704, 710, 717, 720-721, 1000
 Watt, J.B. 490
 Watt, John Brown 496, 498-499
 Watt, Muller & Co. 717, 731
 Watt, Walter Cumming 496
 Watt, William Holden 496

- Waugh and Josephson Ltd.
 730, 761, 769, 771, 780,
 795, 798-799
 Weaver and Glasson (agents)
 486
 Weaver, James 1029
 Weavers' Group 881
 Webb, J. 564
 Webster, Dr 552
 Webster, Eaton 657
 Webster, Tom 657
 Webster, William 657
 Weick, Bill 664
 Weick, Hugo 663
 Weick, Otto 663
 Weick, William 663
 Weicke, Otto 882
 Weir, Peter 908
 Welch, H. (Hugh) 551, 553
 Welch, H. 559
 Welch, M. 553
 Welch, Wilfred Keith 830-831
 Welch, Wilfrid 555
 Weller, Ted 664
 Wellington, A. 818
 Wench, Maurice Andrew
 Francis 539
 Wenck, C.R.D. 610
 Wengenville sawmill 734
 Wenzel, Edward William 836
 West, Thomas 550, 671
 Westpac Banking Corporation
 1025
 Wetzig, Ronald Leonard 1033
 Wheatley, W.M. 916, 929
 Wheeler, J. 660
 Wheeler, Maud 701
 Wheller, Christy 493
 Wheller, Ethel 493
 White Bros. 628
 White Industries 984
 White-Hainey Dr Jean
 746-749
 White, A. 813
 White, J. 812
 White, John 768-769
 White, John A. 658
 White, Joseph 653
 White, Kath 1025
 White, Ken 1025
 White, Kerry 1025
 White, Mary Ann 653
 White, Matron J. 857
 White, R.D. 940
 Whitehead, L.K. 867
 Whitehead, R.W. 866
 Whiteside, Andrew 554, 822
 Whiteside, Hector, 822
 Whitfield, John 568
 Whitfield, Ruth Judith 568
 Whiting, A.G. 921
 Whitnall, Ben 1035-1036
 Wickham, R.H. 612
 Wide Bay-Burnett Regional
 Electricity Board 551, 559,
 686, 978
 Wide Bay and Burnett
 Pastoral and Agricultural
 Society 764, 785
 Wide Bay and Burnett railway
 reserve 586
 Wide Bay Co-operative Dairy
 770
 Wide Bay Regiment 998
 Wide Bay Regional Electricity
 Board 973-974
 Widgee Shire Council 690
 Widgee station 487, 825, 940
 Wieden, Daisy 622
 Wieden, Rudolph 622
 Wieland, D. 1027
 Wieland, Olive 796
 Wienholt Hospital Board
 528-529, 830, 872-873, 878,
 886, 969
 Wienholt Nursing Care Unit
 884-885
 Wienholt Shire Council, see
 Wondai Shire Council
 Wienholt, Arnold 486-487
 Wigton station 486, 495-496,
 500, 555, 558
 Wilco Timber Production Pty.
 Ltd. 736
 Wildridge and Sinclair Ltd.
 966-967
 Wiley W. 725
 Wiley, W.J. 615
 Wilga Private Hospital 835,
 866, 868
 Wilkes, William Richard 548
 Wilkinson Timber Industries
 736
 Willes, J.W. 593
 Willesden, Frederick Reginald
 539
 Willey, George 765-766
 William Adams and Co. 965
 Williams, Adela 861
 Williams, C.E.C. 543
 Williams, D 505
 Williams, Emma 493
 Williams, J.H.W. 791
 Williams, T. (Thomas Lewis)
 537
 Williams, Yankee 940
 Willmer, Helen Maud 652
 Willmer, Henry 635
 Willmer, John Oliver 652
 Wilson Hart and Co. 543, 610,
 721-723, 729
 Wilson, Alexander Nesbitt 564
 Wilson, E.M.K. (Dr Ellen
 Kent-Hughes) 683
 Wilson, G. 942
 Wilson, James 771
 Wilson, John (commission
 agent) 620
 Wilson, Lady W. 999
 Wilson, R.D. 1020
 Windera Progress Association
 522
 Wine industry 696
 Winning, Arch 929
 Winter, A. 648
 Winter, Oscar 648
 Wise, Terry 872, 1000
 Witt, Sergeant Edward Walter
 958
 Wittkopp, C. 610
 Wittmann, George 599
 Wittmann, J.G. 596-597,
 599-600, 639
 Witton, E.W. 769, 789, 794
 Wivenhoe Dam 687, 978, 986,
 993
 Wockner, Edith 570, 660
 Wockner, Gilbert 570
 Wolski, George 858
 Woltman, S.F. 663
 Woltmann, W. 653
 Women's Christian
 Temperance Union 638
 Wondai Aerodrome 579
 Wondai Bicentennial
 Committee 533
 Wondai Bowls Club 533
 Wondai butter factory 527,
 531, 548, 791, 801-804
 Wondai Chamber of Commerce
 512, 522, 528-529, 575-576,
 791, 968-969
 Wondai Choral Society 733
 Wondai Co-operative Dairy
 Association Ltd. 791-797
 Wondai District Cotton
 Growers' Association 576
 Wondai District Homes for the
 Aged Committee 533, 580
 Wondai Farmers' Progress
 Association 520-521
 Wondai fire brigade 578, 732,
 925
 Wondai Fire Brigade Board
 529, 559
 Wondai Furnishing Mart 543
 Wondai Golf Club 533
 Wondai Hospital 488, 500,
 507-508, 522, 527, 543-545,
 552, 558, 561-562, 663, 733,
 791, 831, 1007
 Wondai Hotel 506, 544, 556,
 614
 Wondai Jockey Club 522
 Wondai Memorial Hall 517,
 791
 Wondai Museum 547, 572
 Wondai New Shire Committee
 522

- Wondai Newspaper Company 1021
 Wondai police station 503
 Wondai racecourse 533
 Wondai Recreations Limited 904
 Wondai Rifle Club 580
 Wondai sawmill 731
 Wondai Sawmill and Joinery Works 969
 Wondai School of Arts 516–517, 522
 Wondai School of Arts Committee 528
 Wondai Shire Council 497, 508, 520–534, 549, 552–553, 555, 558–559, 564, 574, 579–582, 610, 733, 822, 890, 902–905, 927, 969–970, 984
 Wondai Show-grounds 533
 Wondai Show Society 512, 515, 529, 759, 791, 969
 Wondai Town Band 512, 528, 759, 796, 968
 Wondai Town Hall 523–524, 528, 968
 Wondai/Proston Railway League 522
 Wondai's Mate 581
 Wood, George (builder) 607, 610, 689, 766, 768–769, 964–965
 Wood, James B. 1010
 Wood, James F. 765
 Woodgate, Neil 510–512
 Woodgate, Sybil 512
 Woods, D. 1007
 Woods, Dr Ellen 872, 877
 Woods, Flight Sergeant Robert Donald 1007
 Woods, John 648
 Woods, John Evan 652
 Woods, Nell 1007
 Woolley, Rebecca Jane 538
 Woolooga station 943
 Wooroolin cafe 536
 Wooroolin fire brigade 925
 Wooroolin Hotel 662, 672, 882
 Wooroolin Lagoon School Committee 673
 Wooroolin Memorial Hall 675
 Wooroolin Memorial School of Arts 814
 Wooroolin Patriotic League 675
 Wooroolin post office 536
 Works Department 678, 884
 Works Department of the South Australian government 712
 World War One 823–841
 Wright, A.E. 875
 Wright, James 645
 Wright, Myles F.E. 1035
 Wright, Orville 888
 Wright, Wilbur 888
 Wylarah station. 655–657, 730
 Wyvill, Charles Frederick 762
 Wyvill, James 762
- Y**
 Y.M.C.A. 824
 Yappa, Gervyn 614
 Yarraman District Queensland Ambulance Service 809
 Yarraman fire brigade 925
 Yarrow, Bob 652
 Yarrow, Linda 652
 Yarrow, Richard 652
 Yarrow, Susan 652
 Yeste-Sanchez, José 983
 York, Ezekiel 555
 Young, Ben 913
 Young, D. 793
 Young, E.B. 965
 Young, Harry 913
 Young, John 490, 498–499
 Young, Pilot T. 891
 Younger Citizens League Nanango 895
 Youngman, Arthur 587–590, 606, 609, 615, 622, 641, 806, 862
 Youngman, Daphne Griffiths 589–590, 806
 Youngman, E.F. 765
- Z**
 Zackreson, Henry 531
 Zahnleiter, Henry Rockemer 954
 Zillmann, Carl 539
- 29th Battalion Volunteer Defence Corps 830
 31st Battalion, 8th Brigade, 5th Division A.I.F. 831
 42nd Battalion 833
 5th Australian Light Horse 830
 5th Queensland Infantry Battalion 822
 9th Battalion 833, 1011
 9th Battalion 13th Reinforcement 838

