

RIVER OF DREAMS

A History of Maryborough and District
by Tony Matthews

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RIVER OF DREAMS

A History of Maryborough and District

by

Tony Matthews

Volume 1



CITY OF MARYBOROUGH, QUEENSLAND

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RIVER OF DREAMS

A History of Maryborough and District
by
Tony Matthews

Volume 1



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A Maryborough City Council publication

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Volume One.

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*'The principal office of history I take to be this:
to prevent actions from being forgotten,
and that evil words and deeds should fear an infamous
reputation with posterity.'*

Cornelius Tacitus, ca. 55-120 AD.



Councillors of the Maryborough City Council.

Top left to right: Cr. L.J. York, Cr. A.H. Robertson, Cr. A.D. Miller, Cr. C.J. Comber, Cr. A.J. Arthur, Cr E.C. Weber.

Bottom left to right: Cr. B. Carruthers-Turner, Cr. A.J. Brown (mayor) and Cr. A.I. Tudman, (deputy mayor).

For biographical details on present councillors see Appendix One.



*Alan Brown, Mayor of Maryborough.
Courtesy Maryborough City Council.*

**Foreword
By
His Worship the
Mayor of Maryborough,
Councillor
Alan Brown.**

My grandparents emigrated from Hibelstow in Lincolnshire on the sailing ship *Oriana* and settled at Tiaro in 1887. From an early age I was intrigued by the stories of their experiences as they settled and developed an area of land and raised a family of ten children. I consider it an honour to be asked to write the foreword of this book.

When we were elected to Council in 1991 we recognised the importance of documenting for posterity the history of Maryborough. The fledgling port of Maryborough, formerly Wide Bay village, was one of the first areas to be populated outside of the penal settlement in Brisbane.

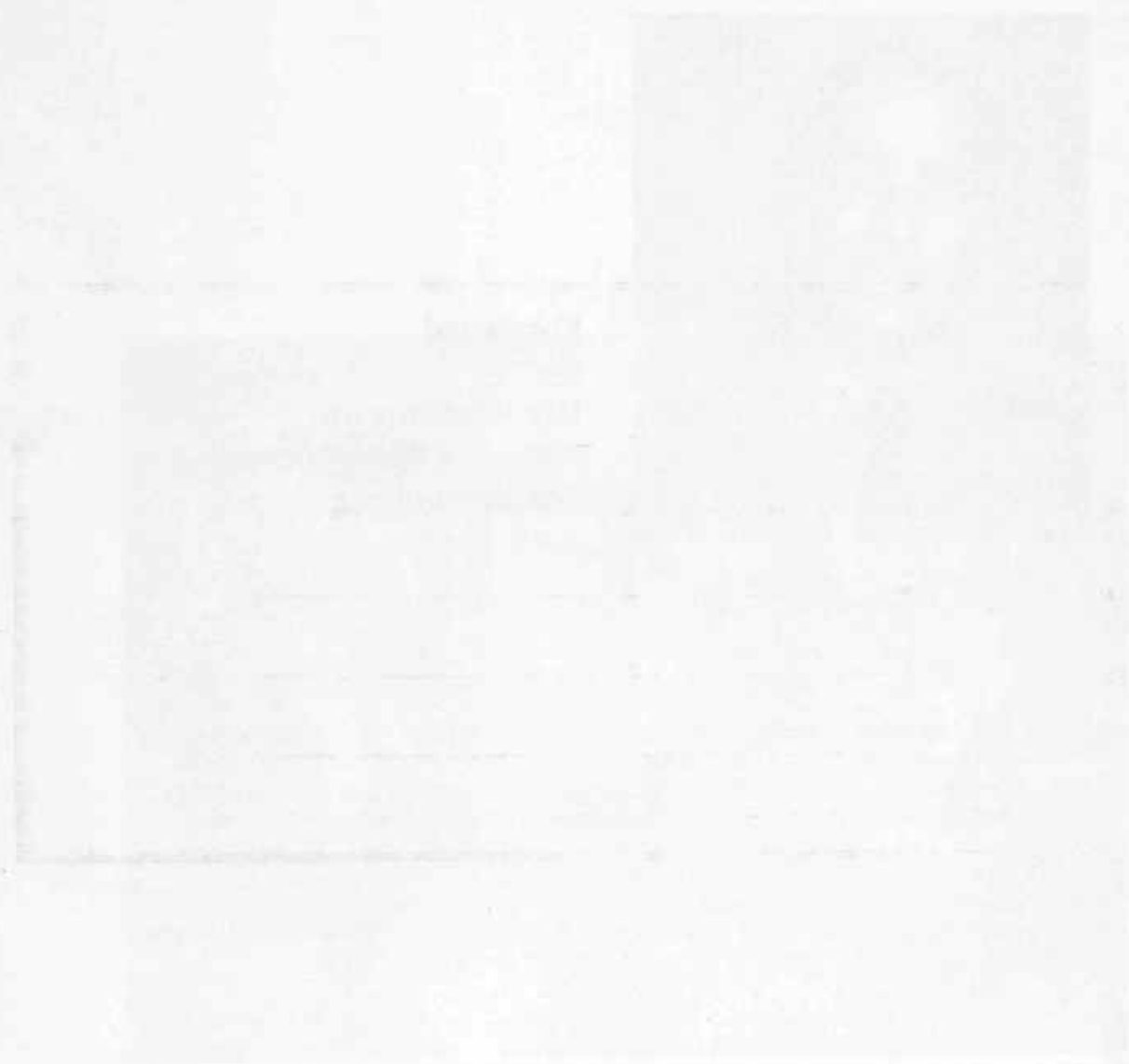
The port of Maryborough played a significant role in the development of Queensland. Over a period of fifty years more than twenty-two thousand immigrants from the British Isles and Europe began a new life by entry to Australia through the port.

It is most appropriate that this book will be published in time for the 150th anniversary of settlement by George Furber in 1847. He was followed in 1848 by E.T. Aldridge, Enoch Rudder and the Palmer brothers.

We owe much to those who have contributed to this history and to Tony Matthews for the professional manner in which he has researched information and records to provide an accurate history of Maryborough over those 150 years.

Now that the first 150 years of Maryborough has been recorded, I trust that future generations will ensure that the future of Maryborough, Queensland's heritage city, is also recorded in a similar manner.

Councillor Alan Brown
Mayor of Maryborough.



Dedication

This book is dedicated to the pioneers of Maryborough

Signed to: The Maryborough City Library.

With best wishes

Tony Matthews.

Other books by Tony Matthews:

Non Fiction:

This Dawning Land A history of oppression in south-east Queensland.
(Boolarong Publications, Brisbane).

Crosses Australian soldiers in the Great War.
(Boolarong Publications, Brisbane).

Beyond the Crossing A history of Dalby and district.
(Dalby Town Council).

Shadows Dancing A history of Japanese espionage against the West, 1939-45.
(Robert Hale, London and St Martin's Press, New York).

Fiction:

Cry of the Stormbird (Elephas Press, Carlisle, W.A.).



Author Tony Matthews.

About the Author.

Tony Matthews was born in Swansea, South Wales, in 1949. He was educated at Clevedon College, Swansea, and matriculated externally through London University. He arrived in Australia in 1972 after which he quickly became involved in researching Australian history.

Working in television for eight years, he wrote and produced a number of highly acclaimed television documentaries - all of a historical nature. In 1985 Mr Matthews took up writing as a full-time profession. In addition to these two volumes on the history of Maryborough, he is the author of five other books on a wide variety of historical subjects, ten major television documentaries and approximately four hundred radio programmes which he wrote and narrated for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

His books and feature articles for many newspapers and magazines have been published in Australia, England, the United States and New Zealand and his television documentaries are distributed educationally world-wide. Mr Matthews is a former lecturer of the Hervey Bay campus of the University of Southern Queensland, he has an honours degree majoring in history and is currently completing his Ph.D. Tony Matthews is married and lives with his wife, Lensie, in Warwick, Queensland.

Acknowledgements.

The writing of this book has been a very considerable task taking more than two years of my life. During the research stages I have been indebted to many people and organizations, including all the councillors and administrative staff of the Maryborough City Council, the Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, the Maryborough Family History Society, the Maryborough Family Heritage Institute, the Maryborough Hospital Museum, the Gympie Historical Society, the Queensland State Archives, the Mitchell Library, the Queensland Premier's Department, the *Maryborough Chronicle*, the Public Record Office, London, and the John Oxley Library.

I am indebted to the following individuals: the mayor of Maryborough, Councillor Alan Brown, Councillors Leslie York and Anne Miller, Robyn Dowling, Carrie Ann Harmer, Karen Lynch, Fiona Gibson, Jacqueline Roberts and Gayle Minniccon of the Maryborough library, Dick Buckley of the Family History Society, Bill Hewitt and Karl Henne of the Maryborough Family Heritage Institute, Ann Smith, Helen Butler and the staff of the Warwick library, Peg Lewis, former nursing director of the Maryborough hospital, Bond Store Museum director Susan Rogers, Noel Gorrie, Russell Faulkner, Doug Lupton, Tom Ryan, Ron Hyland, Juanita Harte, Toni Souvlis, Maree Wilson and all the staff of the Corporate Services Division of the Maryborough City Council, Frank Grant of the Artificial Reef Committee, Elizabeth Vines of McDougall and Vines, architectural and heritage consultants, Adriana Hurst of St Stephen's private hospital, Douglas Porter of the University of Queensland, Roger Dale of the Wide Bay Regiment, former manager of ABC Radio at Maryborough, Hugh Peddie, Lex Frank of Tarrants, Terry Lynch of Sunshine Television, Nancy Bates, editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle*, Sue Paxton, also of the *Chronicle*, Greig Bolderrow of Radio 4MB and Bob Beatson formerly of Radio 4MB, Tony Preen of the Department of Environmental Studies, James Cook University, Mr R. Hardy, general manager of Walkers Ltd., David Braddock assistant general manager of the Maryborough Sugar Factory Ltd., management and staff of the Lands Department Maryborough, Professor Reşat Genç, president of the Atatürk Supreme Council for Culture, Language and History in Ankara, Oguz Ates, charge d'affaires, Embassy of the Turkish Republic, Canberra, Dr Peter Stanley, historical research department of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Jacqui Hayes, National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, former mayor of Maryborough John (Jock) Anderson, Donna Suter, Raymond Evans and Jan Walker, Peter E. Newell, Richard Youden, Daphne Goss and Vera Green, Alison Green, Graeme Garde and his wife, Jenny, Nena Howard, Jean Emery, Joff Case, Edna MacPherson Sabato, Margaret Sutton, Zillah Christmas, Nick Schultz, Fay Lusk, Joyce Allomes, Mick Greaves, George Sheppard, Arthur Ferguson, Neil Simpson, Craigie and Jean Ruhle, Max Aberdeen, Moya Adams, Moreen Trethewey, Bert Beddows, Nancy McLean, Sister Nessie Wilson, Dorothy (Dot) McDowell, Mrs J. Wallace, Delores MacDonald, Majella Titmarsh, Bernadette Moran, John and Betty Coburn, Gordon Ammenhauser, Sister Germaine Greathead, Jim and Lynn Ussher, Winifred Reid, Ray Gietzelt, Norma Taylor, Amy Ripon, Brian and Diane Hunter, Alwyn Grout, Mavis Wiles, Peter Olds, Frank Holland, J.S. Harricks, Douglas Mactaggart, G.M. Hausknecht and the researchers of the Maryborough Family Heritage Institute who compiled the list of Maryborough's aldermen and councillors for inclusion in the appendices.

I am particularly indebted to various members of the Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society who have aided or in other ways supported this project, including Kay Gassan, Marie Walker, Jean Hunter, John Andrews and Catherine (Kit) Mackay. Marie Walker's and Kit Mackay's work has been of great value, they have read the entire manuscript and made many editorial and historical recommendations.

When researching and writing of aboriginal history, the aboriginal community strongly recommend that all such work be checked by a competent aboriginal historian. During the two years it has taken to research and write this book, the sections dealing with the traditional, spatial and temporal aspects of aboriginal history in the Maryborough region have been checked, authenticated and, in places, corrected by aboriginal author and historian Olga Miller. The author would like to gratefully acknowledge Olga Miller's input into the aboriginal aspect of this historical work.

I would like to especially thank my wife Lensie, who, as always, has worked diligently throughout the years, assisting with my research, typing, correlating photographic resources and checking the various drafts.

Volume One

Introduction.

The site where Maryborough now stands has been a place of dreaming since the first aboriginal people migrated south to the region more than forty thousand years ago.

From aboriginal antiquity, the period which has since become generally known as the 'Dreamtime', came the wonderful stories of legendary creatures, great hunters and despairing lovers. These narratives of an ancient people have now taken on mythical proportions. To those early residents this was a part of a greater paradise, fish jumped in the river, game was plentiful, life and death were intertwined in the known and recognized cycle from one paradise here on earth to the next, somewhere within that 'Dreamtime'.

When British colonists came to the region it was, to them, also a place of dreams. The river which wound tortuously to the sea was to be the lifeblood of a fledgling settlement we now know as Maryborough. To those early settlers the river was indeed a river of dreams, upon it they based all their hopes and dreams for the future. It brought vital supplies to the settlement, it carried timber for the mills, it took out the produce; wool, tallow, hides and timber, it provided water and food, it was the vein of life which kept those colonists alive. Upon the river was based the entire future of these people, their lifelong dreams were founded upon its continued fruitful abundance, without it, trade would have dwindled to a trickle and died and few immigrants would have arrived at the embryonic township, immigrants who were desperately needed to improve business, to swell the region's economy, to build houses, raise families and to carry out the work necessary to transform the virgin bush into the modern city of today. The river was omnipotent yet its vagaries were legendary. When in flood it washed away timber mills, houses, factories and much more, all of which had been the result of years of work and completed at great cost in terms of money and physical labour. The river was dangerous, it took many lives, crocodiles and sharks cruised its turgid waters, ships foundered in it, mud banks formed where they were not supposed to form and navigation became a nightmare for those early sailing ships, the barques and schooners which drifted over its limpid surface. This was the river which would give life and then take it away. It was loathed by some, revered by many, but to all, it provided the accomplishment of their dreams. The immigrants came with dreams, to escape from often harsh and difficult homelands to a place where they could be free and prosper. The timber-getters dreamt of tall stands of trees, cedar, pine and ironbark. The cattle-men dreamt of vast herds, gold miners came dreaming of enormous wealth, colliers, businessmen, engineers, scholars, paupers, fish-wives, sailors, hunters, labourers, shoe-makers, lawyers, doctors and many more came drifting up-river on the various ships, the early paddle steamers with whistles blowing, the tiny cutters tacking under a sluggish jib or the somewhat more compelling sight of the larger sailing ships such as the brigantines and sloops with impressive figureheads at their bows, all bringing their hopeful cargoes of men and women who dreamt of a better future. To them all, the Mary River was indeed the 'River of Dreams'.

In this book I have attempted to record all of the most important aspects of general history concerning the growth of Maryborough, the tiny, ramshackle wooden village on the banks of the river which grew ponderously over the following one hundred and fifty years to become the city we see today. This is a detailed history, half a million words in length, which investigates in depth many aspects of the city and the people who lived here in earlier years. For this publication I have attempted to record not only the history of Maryborough itself, but also those regions of the Wide Bay and the Burnett which played significant roles in the development of Maryborough. For example, I have covered the discovery of gold at Gympie, a vital aspect of Maryborough's history, as without that discovery Maryborough itself may well have withered and become virtually a ghost town such as Musket Flat or Dundathu. Other areas which strongly influenced the growth of Maryborough include the Burrum coalfields and the discoveries of gold and other minerals on the Burnett. In writing of these occurrences I have attempted to concentrate more on the human and social events rather than the technical, architectural, political or religious developments, and so, in this respect, *River of Dreams* is rather more of a human and a social history, especially so when seen in the broader context of world events - at least those which were of interest to and which affected the people of Maryborough. I have deliberately excluded many of the more mundane aspects of the region's history such as politics - except where it has been of benefit to the book to include them. I have also excluded the growth and development of items such as individual businesses, associations, clubs and societies - again, with the exception of those businesses such as Walkers and the timber industry which have played such an important role in the overall social and economic development of the region. It would be wrong to claim that the various associations, clubs and societies have been insignificant to the region's social development, clearly this is not the case. Many such organizations have been important to the growth and social fabric of the community. The various bands, for example, especially the Excelsior, Caledonian and Walker's bands, have long and detailed histories dating back to the early pioneering years and

their activities have been closely allied to the city's progress. The wide divergence of cultural activities, eisteddfods, the arts, shows and displays have all impacted strongly on the social progression of the region. For example, the Show Society is a powerful example of the importance of such community endeavour, the society's work in promoting the rural economic prosperity of the Wide Bay also dates back to the early pioneering years, the widespread promotion engendered from its activities - and the highly successful shows - displays of rural progression - have done much to promote the region Australia-wide.

In these volumes I have attempted not to duplicate what has already been written concerning the history of Maryborough. For example, the erection of many public and religious buildings and business premises. Although most of these have already been recorded in previous publications, I have included an encapsulated history of the most important structures in the appendices.

I have also included important aspects of the sugar industry, although this has already been recorded in greater detail in John Kerr's book, *Sugar at Maryborough*. However, the author of that publication omitted to deal in depth with the South Sea Islander question - closely allied to the sugar industry - and so that aspect of the region's history is extensively covered in this publication.

For the sake of clarity, as well as historical accuracy, I have referred to Maryborough under its original name of Wide Bay village, up until January 1849, after which date the name of Maryborough was officially proclaimed. Over the years there has been considerable confusion regarding several precise dates which were important to the establishment of Maryborough. These are investigated in more detail within the text of this publication, but for ease of reference I shall list them here.

7 September, 1847: the governor, Sir Charles Fitzroy, (Fitz Roy) issued a proclamation naming the Mary River.

7 November, 1848: Sir Charles Fitzroy proclaimed the districts of Wide Bay, Burnett and Maranoa.

23 January, 1849: The postmaster-general declared that a post office was to be established at the settlement on the Mary River, '...to which the name of Maryborough was given.'

2 February, 1851: Maryborough declared a township.

23 March, 1861: Maryborough declared a municipality.

5 January, 1905: Maryborough declared a city.

Maryborough's history is compelling and colourful, it is one of the most interesting and diversified histories in all Queensland. As a result this publication is equally diversified and covers many aspects; aboriginal history, sugar, criminality and the law, the exploitation of coal, immigration, gold discoveries, the various military conflicts in which Maryborough people were involved and which affected the people of the region, the development of Maryborough's aviation and electricity, timber, industry, the Chinese, shipping, the Native Police, even some murders and mysteries, and much more, right up to the present developments in heritage planning and promotion, but through all these events is interwoven the details of the lives of the people who were involved, who forged the history, who made it all happen - the people of Maryborough.

*Tony Matthews.
September, 1995.*

Part One

From Antiquity to Early Settlement.

Chapter One.

First Residents.

The first dwellers to live in the region of what is now Maryborough were, of course, the aboriginal people, and any history of Maryborough has to begin with this race. However, the early history of the aboriginal people in the region, especially that part of the history prior to British colonization, is one which remains extremely difficult to fully research. Previous histories of the Maryborough district have been unable to accurately trace the aboriginal history. Loyau's history,¹ published in 1897 and written by one of the early colonists to the region, gives us remarkably colourful descriptions of the indigenous people - albeit in the condescending prose of the day - but without many of the factual aspects of every-day aboriginal history. Hewitt, Flynn and Strong's brief history,² published in 1964, pays only scant attention to aboriginal history. Lennon's publication,³ published in 1924, gives no recognition at all to this most complex and elusive subject.

The most recent history of Maryborough,⁴ published in 1976, acknowledges the fact that the aboriginal history is a difficult one to accurately research, and the then president of the Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, Norman Buettel, himself an accomplished author, admitted that the small amount of aboriginal history which was included in the book was largely drawn from the research of Jan Walker who had completed a thesis on the subject the previous year.⁵ Walker's findings certainly seem to be based upon the most thorough research carried out to that date, but many writings on aboriginal history continue to be in dispute. As Buettel stated:

Researchers into aboriginal history over past years have become 'authorities' who do not agree on their findings. Thus one authority states only one aboriginal tribe lived in this district, the *Burchalla*. Another states there were two tribes, of which the *Budjilla* was one. Others claim four tribes occupied this country.⁶



A Fraser Island aboriginal.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 4679.

Fred Williams's history of Fraser Island,⁷ offers us another possibility. Williams claims there were three main aboriginal nations living on Fraser Island, with the *Badjala* (sic) extending their territory to the mainland at Tinana.⁸

As we shall see later in this chapter, there is a mass of confusion over the details of aboriginal history. The aboriginal people had no written form of expression, other than their artwork, and history was usually passed verbally from one generation to another, so it was almost inevitable that with such a crude method of record keeping, and with the almost total destruction of the aboriginal clans, over the years many historical inaccuracies have certainly occurred.

Interaction between white colonists and the indigenous people of the Wide Bay region began with the sighting of Cook's ship *Endeavour* in 1770. On 19 May that year Cook sailed the *Endeavour* along the outer coastline of Great Sandy Island - later to be renamed Fraser Island - and at ten p.m. on 20 May, at a distance of approximately four miles from the shore and in seventeen fathoms of water, the ship passed a large rock formation which Cook described as being a black bluff head upon which a large number of aboriginal people had assembled. Cook, carefully scanning the area through a telescope, named the point Indian Head.

Many published reports since that time have recorded that members of the *Badjala* (*Butchulla*) nation at first thought the ship was a huge pelican floating on the water. Over the years these published sources have claimed that as the ship moved closer they saw there were men on the back of the 'pelican' and that one of them seemed able to control the beast by turning a large circular object, the ship's wheel. The local people assumed that the person at the helm of the ship must be the chief of these strange people, and with unbounded curiosity, they began to follow the passage of the ship as it sailed slowly northwards.⁹

However, this statement is disputed by historian and senior aboriginal elder, Olga Miller, who claims that the aborigines gathered together on Indian Head at that time would have had no knowledge of a ship's wheel, and it is doubtful if the aboriginal people would have been able to see the wheel from such a distance.¹⁰

Exactly what the indigenous people thought of this strange phenomenon is difficult to imagine, and the subject of the sighting has been widely discussed in many authoritative journals, books and academic papers since that time. Cook and his crew had experienced numerous sightings of 'Indians' during their slow journey northwards, and the sighting of aboriginal people at Indian Head was not an occasion of undue concern or interest.

According to J.G. Steele,¹¹ the aboriginal people Cook and his crew sighted that day were members of three distinct nations, all of whom spoke the *Kabi* dialect (also known as the *Cabee-Cabee* language). Steele claims that the *Badjala* of central Fraser Island owned territory from Woongoolbver (Wongoolba) Creek to Yidney Creek near Moon Point. They also controlled some of the mainland from Kauri Creek to Hervey Bay and as far inland as Mount Bauple near the present site of Tiaro. The *Dulingbara* of southern Fraser Island owned land from Hook Point to Woongoolbver Creek, they also owned a large part of what is now the Cooloola region. The *Ngulungbara* of north Fraser Island controlled the remaining territory as far as Sandy Cape.

Aboriginal historians now dispute this claim, stating that there was only one nation of aboriginal people on Fraser Island, the *Butchulla*. Olga Miller, who is the *caboonya* - the official historian and record-keeper - of the *Butchulla*, claims that this nation was separated into six clans, each of which controlled a section of the island.¹²

Further confusion has been caused from the use of two different spellings for this nation. *Butchulla* being the male gender and *Badjala* being the female gender for the nation. Traditionally the male form, *Butchulla*, is more generally used,¹³ although in his book, *The Badjala People*, Shawn Foley, uses the feminine form of the noun.

Historian Jules L. Tardent claimed in a paper delivered to the Royal Geographical Society of Australia in May 1948 that when Flinders anchored off Sandy Cape on 30 July, 1802, later landing on the island, he learned that the aborigines were of the *Doondura* nation, and that their name for several parts of the island were Moonbi, Talboor and Caree, all three of which are today perpetuated as parish names on state maps.¹⁴

Reverend Edward Fuller who established a mission station on the island in 1870 later recorded that there were nineteen distinct 'tribes' among the remaining Fraser Island aborigines.¹⁵

To make matters even more confusing, journalist and author George Loyau, writing at the turn of the century, stated that the Fraser Island nation was named *Doondooras*, and the Mary River nation was called *Mangeburra*. He claimed that they both had, 'an evil reputation.'¹⁶

Loyau, however, contradicts himself when later in his book he states:

Generally speaking, our Maryborough and Wide Bay tribes were very quiet and harmless, quite the reverse of the cannibals on the coast. They were quick learners of all they saw done by the whitefellow ... Some of them were excellent fellows too, with fewer vices than virtues, healthy and of splendid physique. I remember one aboriginal who stood fully 6ft high, and weighed sixteen stone.¹⁷

Aboriginal historian Olga Miller states her case forcefully, and points out that the only people who can really know aboriginal history are the aborigines. She claims that anthropologists in general have made some serious errors, adding:

There was only one nation here. In his *Occasional Papers in Anthropology*, No 8, Dr Lauer records the population of Fraser Island as being the *Ngulungbara* (burra) in the north, the *Dulungbara* (burra) in the south, with the *Budjilla* in the centre of the island. Unfortunately it was not known then to Dr Lauer that the two words for the north and southern end of the island were merely directions for the two moieties (extended families) of the *Bujilla* (sic) people.¹⁸

In a paper delivered to the Maryborough, Wide Bay And Burnett Historical Society in 1963, Mrs Miller stated:

It would be understood that although these people (the clans) were neighbours and might look alike, they nonetheless were ... very separate peoples ... with their own lands, laws, dialects and customs. There were no kings of the tribe. The governing power was the head of the family unit. Because a family unit could be extended as to include a man's in-laws, cousins, uncles etc., it could and often was quite a large group of people. In such cases the wisdom of the oldest men of the family unit became the governing influence and any matters needing discussion were done at night, generally with the older members passing judgement and making decisions.¹⁹

Shawn Foley, of the Thoorgine Educational and Culture Centre Aboriginal Corporation, also backs the claim that there was only one nation in the region. In his booklet, *The Badjala People*, he maps out the boundaries of the indigenous people, north to the Burrum River, all of Fraser Island, south to Double Island Point and west to Bauple Mountain. He asserts that there was only one nation within that entire region.²⁰

Archibald Meston, the protector of aborigines, writing of the Fraser Island aborigines in 1905 stated:

The food supplies from the ocean and Straits was unlimited. The big scrub supplied most of the vegetable diet. There were three dialects spoken, the negatives being *wahr*, *wacca* and *cabee*, and the various tribes fought occasionally with each other and finished with a corroboree. Cannibalism was common, as it was - with very rare exceptions - over the whole of Australia.²¹

What the indigenous people could never hope to comprehend, of course, was that the sighting of Cook's ship heralded the end of aboriginal society and civilization as they had come to know it. Thousands of years of aboriginal civilization and culture was about to be terminated. Members of the aboriginal community who made the first sighting near the southern end of the island at Hook Point, followed the course of the ship, meeting up with members of the other clans near Indian Head. The sighting was an occurrence of great significance to those people who wove the event into a corroboree, and allegedly passed details down over the generations from father to son.

In 1923, in response to a request from the former governor, Sir Matthew Nathan, to attempt to preserve whatever aboriginal history and folklore there still remained, a Maryborough resident who was later named in the *Maryborough Chronicle* only as 'Old Citizen',²² brought an aboriginal man named Willy Watts from the government aboriginal station at Barambah to obtain from him the legendary aboriginal 'Death Wail' a chant which was sung over the bodies of the recently dead. Willy Watts was enticed to chant the wail into an Edison cylinder and a primitive recording was made of the song. The 'Old Citizen' was in fact Edward Armitage, the former manager of the Mary River sawmill, then owned by the Ramsay brothers. Armitage was responsible for the recording of a large vocabulary of aboriginal words from the local aboriginal clans, and he did much to record early aboriginal history in the region. According to the *Maryborough Chronicle*, Armitage is reported to have stated:

Willy was so pleased and surprised to hear his own voice coming back out of the machine that he asked me if I would like the Captain Cook corroboree. I had never heard of it before and supposed it to be something they had made up from what the white people had told them about Captain Cook. I could hardly believe that they had preserved the story of it for six generations, over one

hundred and fifty years, from their own ancestors who had actually seen it and composed the corroboree; but Willy satisfied me on that point, he had been taught it by his own grandparents, and they in turn had learned it from theirs ... Moreover, their account of the close touch at Indian Head agrees exactly with Captain Cook's ship log.²³

The translated words of the corroboree recorded by Armitage are haunting and moody, but it is doubtful if they are an accurate translation of the original:

These strangers where are they going?

Where are they trying to steer?

They must be in that place *Thoorvour*,²⁴ it is true.

See the smoke coming from the sea.

These men must be burying themselves like the sand crabs.

They disappeared like the smoke.²⁵

Historian Olga Miller claims that the wording of this so-called corroboree is inaccurate. She states that during the 1940s the corroboree was sung to her by two members of the *Woka Woka* people, an old man and an old woman, at Urangan, Hervey Bay, and that the wording was an on-going chant lifting and lowering in pitch and tone which stated simply: 'What is it, what is it, what is this big bird.'

Yet, as Raymond Evans and Jan Walker point out, there were significant connotations with Cook and his crew disappearing over the horizon - burying themselves in the sand - for the aboriginal people at that time were accustomed to flaying and scorching the bodies of their dead before burying the remains in the sand. This flaying of the dark skin revealed the whiter flesh beneath.²⁶ After the elaborate funeral rites the soul of the deceased was said to have departed the body before it was interred in the sand. The aboriginal people believed that the ghosts of the dead would return the following day, their flayed bodies pale, like the white man. Thus the sight of white sailors was somehow symbolic of death and embodied much of aboriginal superstition and folklore. Later, after the Moreton Bay penal settlement had been established at the present site of Brisbane, escapees from the settlement were often thought to be the ghosts of dead tribesmen.

Reverend Edward Fuller who ran a Methodist mission on Fraser Island from 1870 to 1873, recorded:

They are firm believers in ghosts and they assured me that there are plenty in this island, and that they can be seen at certain times. As a rule, they are frightened to go down to the creek at night time. They believe that there is a devil, but they have no idea of a God.²⁷

There also seems to be some concern as to the accuracy of the origin of the recordings made by Armitage. Armitage recorded the aboriginal legend that a landing of white men had taken place at Wathumba Creek and that the local people had watched as the strange beings came ashore, filled casks with fresh water, shot several birds and then departed. It was Armitage's original belief that this legend recorded the event of the landing of Matthew Flinders in 1799. That year Governor John Hunter had dispatched Lieutenant Matthew Flinders north aboard the *Norfolk* on an expeditionary journey to discover useful harbours and rivers. According to the aboriginal story, Flinders landed from his ship but his men were wary, having experienced hostility a few days previously from a group of aborigines at Point Skirmish, on present day Bribie Island. One of Flinders' men fired a few warning shots which scattered the aborigines and sent them racing for cover. Facts have been distorted over the passage of years, Armitage himself originally believed that the song told of the Flinders landing, but later amending his thinking and stated that it was the sighting of Cook's *Endeavour*.

This early sighting of pale white ghosts who rode on a vast bird-like craft with creamy sails was indeed a portent of doom for the aboriginal people of the Wide Bay region. It heralded the impending invasion of white colonists and the almost total destruction of the various aboriginal nations.

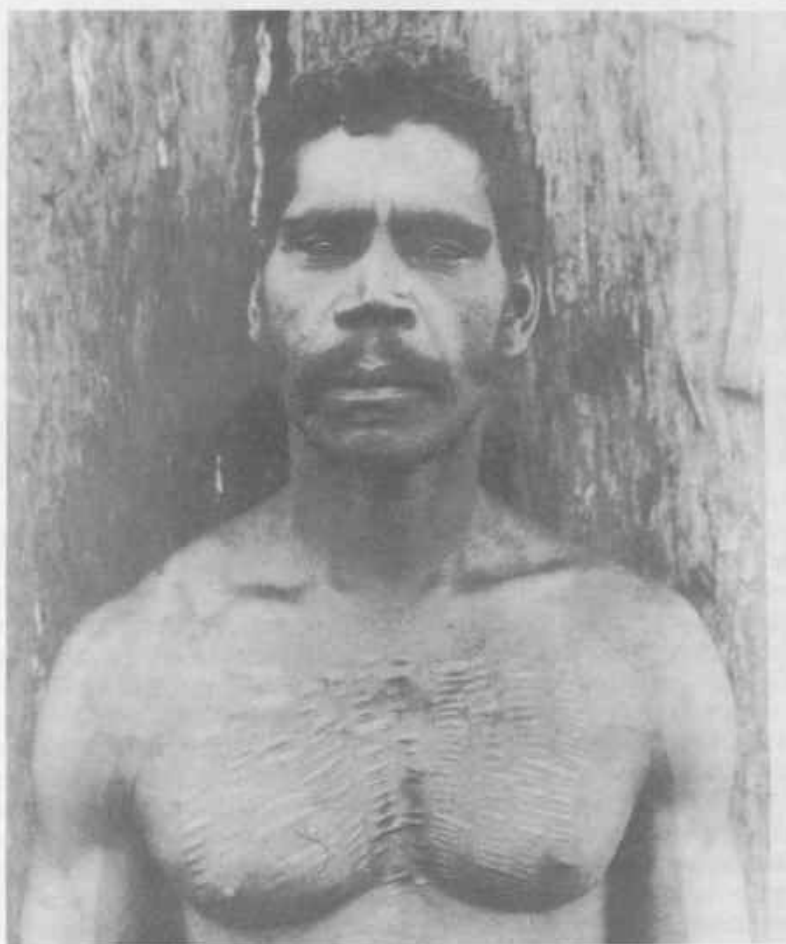
But what kind of civilization existed before the coming of the white colonists? Who were the people that lived in the region, what were their laws and customs, how did they function as a society and what ultimately became of that ancient civilization?

Olga Miller states that the aboriginal people were careful conservationists and that they were ruled by three basic laws. Firstly, whatever was good for the land was of the utmost importance, the land was their mother and was never to be harmed in any way. Secondly, physically touching items belonging to another person or stealing was strictly forbidden.

The worst crime imaginable to the *Butchulla* was rape and the punishment for this crime was severe. The woman who had suffered the rape was immediately put to death, so too was the perpetrator of the crime - if he could be caught. The bodies of both would be quickly burnt. Olga Miller states:

They (the aboriginal people) believed so much in spirits, good and bad spirits, and they believed that the girl would be filled with evil spirits. The law was the law. There were no amendments to the law over thousands of years, there was no such thing as extenuating circumstances or provocation.²⁸

Initiation ceremonies into manhood were lengthy and complicated, and were attended only by warriors who had proven themselves. Women were completely forbidden. The penalty for transgressing this law was death. These ceremonies took place at two distinct bora rings which can still be seen today, the main one in what is now Cooloolo National Park, Tin Can Bay, and the other, somewhat smaller, also in Tin Can Bay. Initiation rites on Fraser Island began in what was known as the men's area (see map) and were later continued at the bora rings in Tin Can Bay. These ceremonies included circumcision and the cutting of cicatrices.



Fraser Island's aborigines were renowned for their physical prowess.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 9979.

Despite photographs taken of these people during the latter half of the 19th century - photographs which depicted the women in grass skirts and the men with modest coverings - the aboriginal people usually went completely naked. They sometimes wore necklaces of kangaroo teeth and adorned their hair with feathers. During the winter months they covered themselves with animal pelts. Young girls wore a pelt girdle around their hips until they were married, after which the girdle was abandoned. After European colonization the aboriginal people naturally began wearing a semblance of modest clothing. In 1865, one 'Wide Bay bush-man' wrote:

...the costume of both male and female in the bush is decidedly primitive in its simplicity, being absolutely nature adorned. The gins, when in the vicinity of white people, don a shirt, if they are fortunate enough to be the possessor of such an article, but their drapery is, at times, like the Highlandman's kilt, shockingly short.²⁹

According to J.G. Steele,³⁰ the aboriginal people who controlled the central part of Fraser Island were the *Badjala*, and it was these people who also controlled the region where Maryborough now stands. Steele writes that their territory extended to the eastern side of Mount Bauple and all the land on the eastern side of the Mary River came under their control. On the western side of the river as far as Yengarie, Steele claims that the land was owned by the *Dowarbara* people. Farther north and west he says the land was controlled by the *Dundubara* nation. However, aboriginal historian Olga Miller disputes these claims and states that there was certainly only one nation on the island and within the territory where Maryborough now stands, but that many nations over thousands of years had become used to travelling to the island, especially during times when food was in abundance - when the taylor fish were running or during the mullet season - and that this interaction of nations had often led to confusion among white historians. Mrs Miller claims that in return for fishing rights on the island the *Butchulla* people would be invited into other aboriginal lands to hunt or forage for food, especially during the triennial bunya nut harvest. This harvest resulted in a huge gathering of aboriginal people from many nations who would walk to the region to feast and fatten themselves before winter. The nations would be invited to the harvest by the *Kabi Kabi* people, and for two months thousands of people walked distances of up to two hundred and fifty miles to attend the vast meeting.

Mrs Miller states:

People think that all the women and children went up into the Bunya mountains but they didn't, just the young warriors from each tribe would be invited because they had to walk, and from here they would take dried fish, shells, in return for the nuts, so there was a method of barter going on.³¹

Yet most European historians agree that both male and female members of the nations visited the region, women, children and the aged - those who could walk the distance. Author Fred Williams claims that during these times strict aboriginal laws were relaxed to such an extent that no serious fighting took place and that young women were allowed to mingle with women from other nations.³²

R. Bushnell of Iderway, an early pioneer to the Wide Bay region, later wrote his recollections of the aborigines travelling to the bunya nut harvest. In 1930, almost seventy years after the events he had witnessed as a boy, Bushnell claimed that he had seen the aborigines:

...travelling in big mobs, stopping two or three days at times in one camp, especially at a station, and they always had a new corroboree and gave it full swing at night; they could be heard two miles off easily. Then the hunt by day for tucker. They would go out, two to three hundred of them, and surround a large area of country and drive towards their camp, and when nearing the camp would yell and shout, baffling the kangaroos as they were hemmed in and a number would be killed. The food having been supplied, on again their tracks towards the bunya, and when they returned again it was hard to get them to part up with a few banyas.³³

Mount Bauple (also variously named as Boopal, Bahpol, Baphal, Boppil) is the south-western extremity of the area controlled by the *Butchulla* people. They moved freely between the mainland and Fraser Island and would spend much of the winter on the island during the mullet season. In summer they usually moved to the mainland where their diet then changed from fish and crabs to meat, usually lizards, kangaroo or emu. These people were expert managers of the land and would control grasses with fire in order to promote regenerative growth thus attracting the herbivorous feeding animals such as the kangaroo and wallaby. The animals could then be hunted with spears or nets. They were a proud race, fierce, independent and aggressive when the need arose, but generally they were a gentle, very clannish and intelligent race who did much to protect their family values, their way of life and their laws. They have been described in many contemporary reports as being an attractive race of people, the men broad-chested and strong, the women well shaped and with a natural beauty and elegance. Being coastal dwellers they fared better than their country cousins. Inland, the aboriginal people tended to be smaller and thinner, but the coastal people were considerably healthier, having the advantage of a broader cross-section of foods, especially seafoods. Their migrations from the area where Maryborough now stands to the island followed a well beaten track to Urangan, and the crossing from Urangan to somewhere north of Moon Point would be made by canoe.³⁴ Landing in the region of Coongul, the people would travel northwards, primarily close to the beaches. The interior of the northern end of the island, those areas which contain the Manoolcoong lakes, Lake Yeenan, Urow-Wa lakes, and the various lagoons were forbidden to the aboriginal people as they were sacred.

Farther south lay the men's area, but this too had its sacred forbidden regions within the interior. Members of the Cooloola nation were welcomed to the island by the *Butchulla*, but traditionally they remained on or near the beaches, and were allowed only to cut through the island from Wathumba Creek to Orchid Beach. Crossings

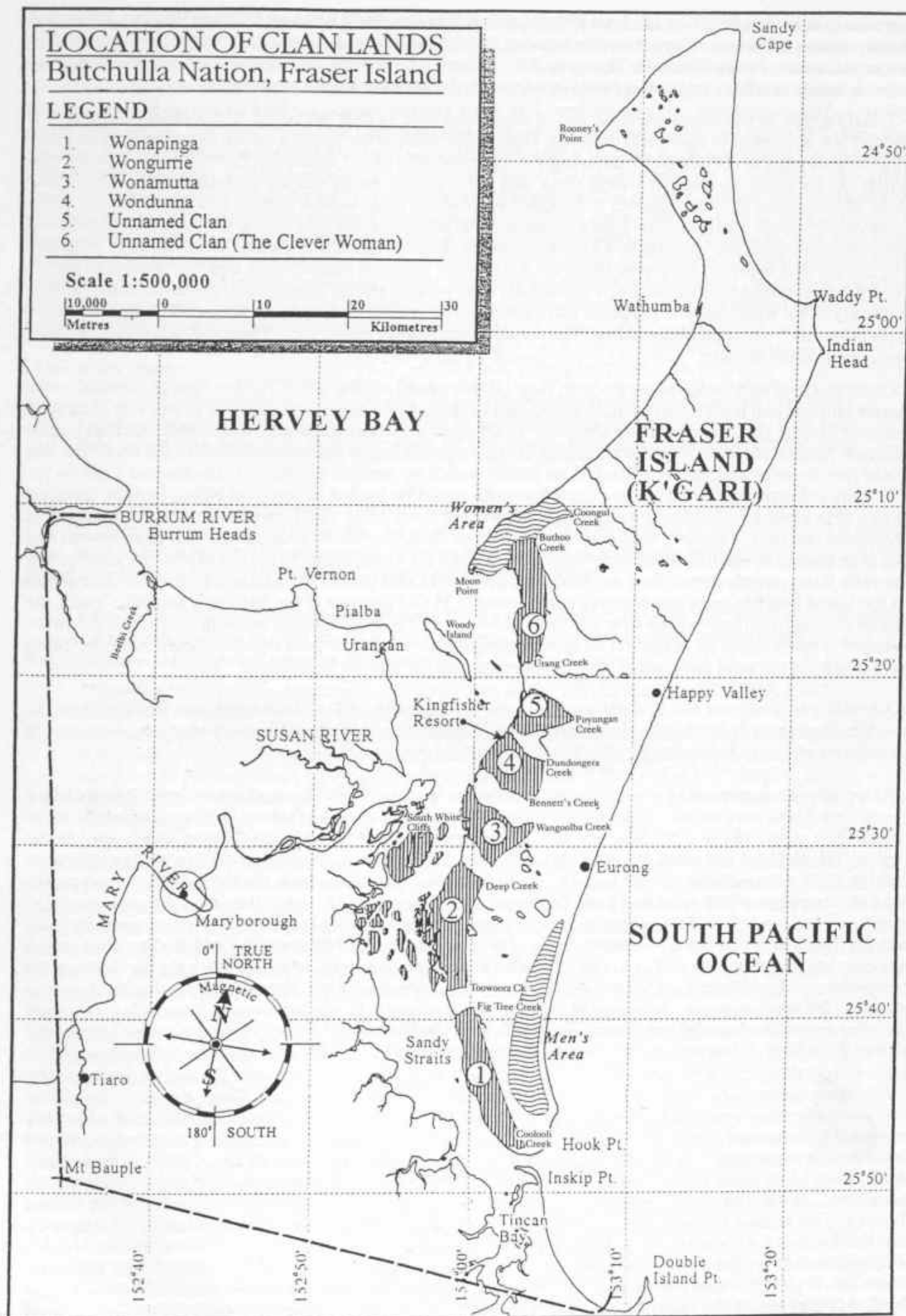
from the mainland were also made from River Heads to Ungowa, and a pathway led from Ungowa to Eurong. Eurong means rain forest. There is no rain forest at Eurong but the clans passed through the dense vegetation at Central Station during this walk. The clans did not live on the eastern side of the island and would only go there to fish or to collect clams. Generally they lived on the western side of the island.³⁵

Tribal visitors to the island were warned of aboriginal laws as they pertained to the island. Fishing was allowed but, according to aboriginal *caboonya*, Olga Miller, none of the animals on the island were to be killed with the exception of certain birds, including the lorikeets. Mrs Miller states that the reason for this law was simple. As an island its resources were finite, and over-hunting would quickly decimate the wildlife. Some birds, although not all, were allowed to be killed for food, as their numbers could be replenished by those flying over from the mainland. The killing of swans could take place, but only during the moulting season, and only one swan was allowed per family. Yet these claims are disputed by other historians, including Fred Williams, who argues that many animals were killed for food on the island. Williams states that the aboriginal people 'read' the forest signs to tell them when the animals were best for killing, for example, the carpet snake was fat and ready to eat when the wild passion-fruit ripened, or that possums were ready for the kill when the native apple flowered.³⁶ Yet Olga Miller states: 'The carpet snake was the totem of the *Butchulla* people, (they were) never, ever, killed or eaten.'³⁷

Dugongs could only be killed once a year, their oil was valued medicinally.³⁸ Turtles, though plentiful, were strictly rationed and permission from the elders had to be obtained before one could be killed. The method of catching turtles, particularly among the older generation of aboriginal people, was simple but thoroughly effective. A turtle shell would be towed behind the canoe until a limpet fish attached itself to the shell. The fish would then be detached, tied to a line and set free to search for another turtle shell, this time on a live turtle. When the fish had attached itself to a shell the turtle would be hauled aboard and killed. Female breeding turtles were never killed and only a percentage of their eggs was taken. The islanders also ate a wide variety of vegetables and nuts. Favourite among these was the nut from the *macrozamia* palm which is poisonous and had to be soaked in running water for several days to leach the toxins from the kernel. When this process was complete it was pounded into a flour and made into a coarse kind of bread.³⁹ Whales which stranded themselves on the island beaches were considered a great bonus.⁴⁰ Mullet was one of the islanders' favourite foods, the fish were caught in large scoop nets and cooked whole in the sand beneath wood fires. Excess fish were wrapped in grass and dried in the sun for preservation. Another favourite food was the eugarie mollusc. These were dug from the sand and roasted alive in hot coals until their shells burst open.

According to Reverend E.R.B. Gribble, who spent seventy years of his life studying and writing about the aboriginal people of Australia, the aborigines of Fraser Island were, '...a peaceful race, being fishermen as well as hunters, and were fun-loving.'⁴¹

As we have seen, according to Olga Miller, the *Butchulla* of the Wide Bay region were split into six major clans, these clans were known as burras and they lived on narrow stretches of land on the western side of the island. (See map). The first of these was the *Wonapinga*, the hunting clan, members of which lived in the region of Hook Point and extended up to about Fig Tree Lake. Their speciality was the knowledge of weapon making and the manufacture of paddles. The second clan, the *Wongurrie*, were the fishing clan. These people lived in a territory which extended from Toowoora Creek up to Deep Creek. They were the canoe makers, they made and tended the fishing nets and traps. The third clan was ruled by a patriarch whose aboriginal title was the *Wonamutta*. The literal translation for this title, according to Mrs Miller, is 'Clever Man'. The *Wonamutta*'s territory extended to Wangoolba Creek. The *Wonamutta* was a person of much influence throughout the entire nation. Mrs Miller refers to him as a kind of doctor, surgeon, chief adviser and psychologist. He was in charge of the single men and boys prior to initiation into adulthood. This initiation usually took place at around the ages of seventeen or eighteen years. The fourth clan, the *Wondunna* was ruled over by an elder known only as the 'Wise Man'. His aboriginal title is sacred and - according to Mrs Miller - cannot be revealed to a white man. His territory extended from Bennett's Creek to Dundongera Creek. It was the responsibility of this patriarch to maintain the record of laws and all other records of the entire nation. These records were passed down verbally from generation to generation, from the patriarch to a selected son. The fifth clan's territory extended to Poyungan (Bouyungan) Creek. Their responsibility was to teach the children all the songs, dances and aboriginal markings. They were responsible for the arts, painting etc., and for all the paintings which would have taken place during initiation ceremonies. Mrs Miller claims that almost the entire clan was later massacred, (q.v.). The sixth and last clan was ruled by a person Olga Miller refers to only as the 'Clever Woman'. This woman's aboriginal title also remains sacred and the name cannot be revealed to a white man. It was this matriarch's responsibility to tend to any nursing and childbirths within the entire community. She was also responsible for the single women and girls. The clan's territory extended from Urang Creek to Buthoo Point. North of this, up to Coongul Creek, was the general women's area where women often went to give birth. Most of the births occurred in the creeks. Men were forbidden to enter this territory under pain of death. Young boys were trained largely under the guidance of the *Wonamutta*. Young girls trained under the



Aboriginal clan lands locations on Fraser Island. Reproduced with permission of Mrs Olga Miller.

guidance of the matriarch. The men's area was a section of the southern interior which stretched roughly from Station Lagoons south to around the Jabiru Swamp.⁴²

Of these six clans only two remain today, natural deaths, deaths caused by the abuse of alcohol or opium, influenza, T.B., poisonings, and deaths due to the aboriginal/European conflict have decimated the clans' ranks. Mrs Miller admits that some infanticide almost certainly took place as the clan of the matriarch seemed to produce only female children, while the clan of the Wonamutta produced only males. If this is so - if selective killing of male and female children did take place - then it would certainly have been a major factor in lowering the clans' natural growth rates.

The practice of infanticide was also reported extensively in the *Moreton Bay Courier* of 4 December, 1847. Quoting from *Simpson's Colonial Magazine*, the *Courier* claimed that infanticide among aboriginal people was widespread at the time and that half-caste children were regularly killed and eaten. There is little doubt that infanticide was practiced under different aboriginal laws in many parts of Australia and that in some regions the practice was 'very common'. Some contemporary claims were made that as the aboriginal people after white settlement had no country, then the killing of their children was the only sensible thing to do as they had no land to pass onto the future aboriginal generations.⁴³

In his address given in August 1865, Gideon S. Lang, an expert on aboriginal life and culture, also claimed that the nations were indeed separated into several clans, stating: 'Irrespective of their tribal organisation, all the blacks on the continent are divided into families or clans.'⁴⁴

The role of the matriarchs and patriarchs within these clans is interesting. Aboriginal patriarchal order was, of course, observed by many European colonists after white settlement, they also noted that these 'medicine men' were capable of and often practiced a form of black magic or trickery during their rituals. Mrs Miller herself writes and speaks of such events and in 1894, almost half a century after the first white men roamed into the Maryborough region, Peter O'Kelly, then a successful sugar-cane planter, wrote a detailed report describing his experiences with such a person.

A poor old toothless creature, who not long since held office for what may be entitled medicine man for the remnant of this once powerful tribe ... happened to be sent for to cure another, but much younger black, who had been stung by a stingaree, or something of the kind, whilst I was present in their camp. The lad was apparently in great pain when the old doctor set to work by groping and fumbling near the wounded part and muttering and crooning all the time whilst so occupied. In from five to seven minutes from the commencement of this procedure he, the doctor, brought ... (out a stone), and this he triumphantly held up for inspection, remarking in emphatic tones, 'Me findem this fellow devil-devil alonga leg, he been make 'm sick all a time,' and adding, 'Pain he go away now, that fellow boy all right directly.' On hearing this announcement, the immediate relatives of the lad ordered him to desist from complaining, remarking in their peculiar patois he was now cured, the doctor had made him all right ... It was evident, however, that the bystanders had more faith in the medicine man than the party most concerned ... The whole object of the doctor's manoeuvres was to engender the belief that he had extracted the mutlap (stone) from the wounded leg, but of course he had the stone secreted either in his mouth or somewhere else, and possibly in the sleeve of an old shirt he wore on this occasion. In either case, he could easily have made it appear that it had suddenly been derived from the body of his patient.⁴⁵

A young crippled aboriginal man named Lenny, who was to aid the first mission to Fraser Island in 1871, also claimed that the patriarchs were capable of magic and trickery. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

Some of the natives have very curious notions. The black who is at the mission now asserts that his uncle, who is a doctor among the natives, cannot be killed, he says he will never die and that he can fly like a bird or dive underground and come out at some considerable distance. He also has a theory about the existence of numerous ghosts on the island and has promised to shew (sic) them to Mr Fuller (the missionary, q.v.), some night, when he can get another black to accompany him.⁴⁶

Aboriginal people were, of course, quite capable of treating their own illnesses with natural remedies, as pioneer Maryborough businessman John Purser later recorded:

I have seen on the ground between Ululah Creek and the old township, probably 500 (aborigines) at one time. The district blacks having come in for a tribal fight, lots of people used to go and see the fighting. There were a few wounded but I never knew of any being killed. I remember on one

occasion two blacks having a fight. They fought with knife blades, the handles being broken off. One of them had a dreadful wound by an undercut which nearly took off the arm. Dr (Edward Fielding) Palmer heard of it and dressed the wound and saw the wounded man placed in the paddle-box of the steamer, expecting never to see him again. The blacks did away with the doctor's dressing and filled the wound with earth - their usual treatment. Not long after, the blackfellow was back in Maryborough with scarcely any trace of his injury.⁴⁷

Historian G.R. Noakes, himself an early resident of the region, also recalled that the aboriginal people were very capable in treating their illnesses and wounds. In 1949 he wrote:

As far as I can remember there were three well established black camps in the area, one on the Scarness side of Tuan Creek, one on the old golf links at Point Vernon (this area was scrub-covered in those days), and the third was at Urangan.

Fights between the various tribes took place on the recognised fighting ground ... on the old race-course reserve at Pt. Vernon. Blacks from Fraser Island, Howard, Childers and Maryborough also participated. Although the fights were carried on to the accompaniment of noises and threats worse than bedlam let loose, casualties were surprisingly few, mainly due to the uncanny skill of the combatants in dodging spears or turning them aside with their shields which were frequently made from the hard tough currajong wood. The unearthly yelling of the combatants could be heard afar off by the few whites living nearby, some of whom secured grandstand views of the fighting, others, the less venturesome, kept at a respectable distance. Despite the frequency of these tribal fights and also domestic quarrels, fatalities from the resultant injuries were few indeed. This was partly due to the surprising knowledge the aborigines had of the medicinal values of certain trees, plants etc. Eucalypt leaves were used as a disinfectant. Goannas and emus were hunted to provide the fats used in the treatment of sprains, bruises and the like. Much use was made of certain muds.

The *cungevoi* served as a poultice while dysentery and diarrhoea were treated by using the gum that exudes from bloodwood trees. Let me tell you of one black I knew. He had been speared through the thigh. Making a fire, his friends put spotted gum leaves on it and held the wounded man over the fire so that the smoke could penetrate the wound thus disinfecting it. Then a certain type of mud was packed over the wound and in a remarkably short time he was fit and well. Some of our pioneers did not hesitate to make use of such knowledge gained from the blacks.⁴⁸

One highly controversial event in the history of the *Butchulla* people concerned the alleged extinction of the fifth clan, the clan of artists, many of whom were reportedly massacred at the Susan River. Aboriginal historian Olga Miller relates these events:

It was in 1865. Because of the encroaching white civilization, on the island, grandfather (later to become the *caboonya*) hadn't been initiated, and he was getting older, and it was decided to have one last initiation ceremony. One boy was to be initiated from the *Woka Woka*, and another two boys from a community at Rannes up near Rockhampton. All the clans had different social commitments to their different families and relatives. The clan that was massacred was away at the time up in the Boyne valley, but intended to come back to the island in time for the initiation. By this time there was a hotel called the Halfway Hotel (built in 1860) at Takura. Takura used to be an aboriginal gateway, a pathway, but the elders had advised the people to stay away from the place because all the young bloods (of Maryborough) used to go down there on horseback during the weekends, and they'd drink, play cards, and go out on shooting parties, hunting animals and aboriginal people. The pathway led down over the Susan River, over to the South Head and across to the island. But anyway they (the clan) must have forgotten about these people at the hotel and the hunters took after them. Almost the whole clan was massacred, seventy of them, women and children as well. The old people were killed first, then the little ones. The young men tried to defend them and they did rescue some of the children, but the young women and the young men were the strongest, they were the last to die. The initiation ceremony went ahead without them and runners were sent to look for the missing clan, and then they found the bodies. My grandfather said the other clans never knew anything about the killings until after the initiation ceremony was over. When they went back to the mainland they found that the bodies were strewn from the present site of the Susan River homestead all the way down to the mouth of the Susan River. The hunters just kept on going until they had killed them all. It was sport. They were all local men from Maryborough, people who worked at normal jobs and who could afford a weekend's drinking and hunting.⁴⁹

Mrs Miller adds to this statement in her written account of the massacre, claiming that according to her grandfather, the women had been raped, and that the older people and children had been clubbed to death.⁵⁰

However, there is no mention of this massacre in the *Maryborough Chronicle* during 1865, or during any other year, which is strange, as the *Chronicle* - proudly independent and the strident contemporary voice of propriety - often castigated the white colonists for the depredations which were being made against the aboriginal people. It seems clear that under normal circumstances a massacre on such a scale, so close to Maryborough, could not have been kept secret for very long, and once knowledge of the killings began to circulate, surely the editor of the *Chronicle* would have felt obliged to publish details and to call for the punishment of those men who had carried out the crime.

Yet historian Olga Miller claims that no such reports were made because the men involved in the massacre were the sons of highly placed and very prominent Maryborough people and the entire episode was kept secret.⁵¹

The Halfway House hotel mentioned by Mrs Miller was built by a man named Christie Homilgard. He also erected a large shed where travellers could rest their horses. Prior to the erection of this hotel travellers would call upon a selector named Harry Sinfield who served milk and hot scones at a cost of sixpence. If this was considered expensive, few travellers complained as Sinfield was reported to have always left a bottle of rum on the table. He did not, of course, have a licence to sell spirituous liquors.⁵²

Another hotel on the track to Hervey Bay was known as the Sawyers' Arms Hotel. This was situated approximately five miles from Maryborough. It was later believed that the name originated because of the large number of sawyers' pits in its vicinity. The hotel was built by William Nash, brother of James Nash, the discoverer of gold at Gympie. One of Maryborough's first settlers later recalled that aborigines often camped near the hotel. He stated:

...it was their custom to pour hot water in the empty rum casks and drink the resulting mixture. One aborigine suffered from the D.T.s after having imbibed freely of the liquid, and jumped into the (Saltwater) creek. He swam up the creek with one tide and down the creek to the hotel with the ebb tide.⁵³

The Sawyers' Arms was later demolished and another public house, the Saltwater Creek Hotel was erected in 1913. It operated until 1939.⁵⁴

Despite the claims of massacre in the region, aboriginal historian Olga Miller also states that, contrary to popular belief, the aboriginal people of Wide Bay assimilated themselves into the white community with relative ease. She claims that the younger generation especially, those who were children when the first squatters arrived in the area, grew up for most of their lives with a white influence in their community, and that these young people, boys and girls, became stock-riders and station hands or domestics in the employ of the stations, and that they actually enjoyed these kinds of work.

They had developed into expert horsemen and enjoyed working with cattle. The young women too had become involved in helping the 'white missus' up at the homesteads. They had learned to wash the strange garments worn by the family, they were wearing these garments themselves. They scrubbed the floors and did the general chores connected with the running of the homestead. But most importantly, the young men and women working for the bosses of the cattle and sheep stations were able to keep their immediate family circle and friends in food.⁵⁵

Prior to 1788, the aboriginal population of Australia is estimated to have been around three hundred thousand, and about a third to one half of this population lived in what is now Queensland.⁵⁶ Exact numbers living in the Wide Bay region are not known, and even estimates vary greatly. Protector of aborigines, Archibald Meston, claimed there were around two thousand aboriginal people living in the region, but David Bracewell, the escaped convict who lived on Fraser Island with the aborigines for twelve months, said there were many more, and that he had seen the beaches of Fraser Island covered for a length of four miles with aboriginal people. Olga Miller refutes these claims stating that there were only about seventy people to each of the six clans, making a total of little more than four hundred members of the *Butchulla* nation. She states that additional numbers counted by Meston and Bracewell were the result of many visiting aboriginal people coming to the region for the mullet and taylor fish feasts.⁵⁷

Subsequent census counts were almost useless as many of the clans were on walkabout when the censuses were taken. For such large numbers to survive, however, it was necessary for the people to have a sound understanding of the land and its capabilities. Their skills in land and fauna management had been developed

over centuries to carefully harvest their food without irreparably damaging the environment. During the rainy season, from December to March, the aboriginal people clustered around the coastal regions where they feasted on dugong, mullet and shellfish. The mangroves were carefully harvested of crabs and edible mangrove pods. They hunted turtles, easy prey when the animals came ashore to lay their eggs. Later, from March to about July, the people roamed in search of vegetables. When the vegetables became scarce during the dry season the aborigines burnt grass to facilitate better hunting. They raided bee hives, hunted possums, snakes, lizards and birds, and the women foraged for berries.

After the landing of Matthew Flinders at Wathumba Creek in August 1799, the aboriginal people of the Wide Bay region remained undisturbed for a further three years, but their idyllic peace could not last forever. On 31 July, 1802, Flinders returned aboard the *Investigator* and landed with a large party of men at Bool Creek near Sandy Cape. For the first time in the history of the region, the aboriginal people came face to face with all their fears, the ghosts of those whom they believed long dead.

The meeting was one filled with fear and apprehension on both sides. Flinders split his group into three parties, one was to collect flora specimens, a second was to collect wood and water and the third, headed by Flinders himself, was to make communication with the aboriginal people and hopefully to do some trading. It was a tense and strained meeting. The aboriginal people held back, filled with fear, although many were waving green branches to indicate that they had no warlike intentions. Flinders arranged to have his boats anchored just off-shore, the boats were carrying several sailors armed with muskets.

Yet contact was made and Flinders traded several objects, some tomahawks and porpoise blubber, in exchange for scoop nets. The meeting was a successful one, the local people offered Flinders no aggression and Flinders later sailed away leaving a mystified aboriginal people to ponder on the coming of these strange white ghosts.

After the establishment of the Moreton Bay penal settlement by John Oxley in 1824, aboriginal contact with white people became much more common. These contacts were made principally with escapees from the penal colony, although little is known of most of these events. Hundreds of convicts are known to have fled into the wild scrub, especially during the terms in office of two especially brutal commandants, Captain Patrick Logan and Captain James Clunie, who used extraordinary punishments for even the most insignificant of offences. These escapees would certainly have met with local aboriginal nations but few returned to tell of their experiences. Many would have been speared on sight, although some were taken in by the aboriginal people - 'recognized' as being the reincarnated forms of those long dead - and given a privileged place within the aboriginal communities.

Significant among these was the Irish convict John Graham who escaped in July 1827 and who was later instrumental in the rescue of Eliza Fraser after the shipwreck of the *Stirling Castle* on Fraser Island in May 1836. The details of the *Stirling Castle* have been well documented and it is not proposed to examine the events in this publication. However, it is worth noting that according to aboriginal oral history, as passed down to aboriginal historian Olga Miller by her forebears, the woman who claimed to have been Mrs Eliza Fraser may well have been an impostor - another woman, possibly a companion to Mrs Fraser. The story was told to Olga Miller's maternal grandmother, Mrs Mary Gribble, the wife of the Church of England missionary at Bogimbah, (q.v.). During the time of the wrecking of the vessel Mrs Fraser had been pregnant and had reportedly lost her child in the ship's lifeboat. Yet Olga Miller claimed in 1970 that the woman rescued by the aboriginal people on Fraser Island had shown no signs of pregnancy, she had been severely sunburned and oil and soot had been rubbed on her skin, not to forcibly initiate her into the clan - as was later commonly believed - but to sooth the pain of her sunburn. Mrs Miller claimed that contrary to the woman's later testimony, she had not been raped by the aboriginal men, but had been treated well. Mrs Miller claimed that when one man had beaten her because she would not do any work, that man had been killed for breaking a clan taboo.⁵⁸

Samual Derrington was another convict who roamed the country prior to white settlement. He escaped in December 1827 and lived with aboriginal people in the Burnett and Wide Bay regions. David Bracewell escaped several times and each time was recaptured until he finally made his last escape in February 1831 and lived with the aboriginal people, including the clans of Fraser Island. Shipwrecked timber-getters Thomas Pamphlett, Richard Parsons and John Finnegan lived and roamed with the aboriginal people of the Brisbane region for months before their rescue by explorer John Oxley in October 1823. Even as late as 1851, long after white settlement, white men were allegedly still living within the various aboriginal communities. In October 1851, the *Moreton Bay Courier* reported that a white man was living with the aborigines in the Bunya district. Quoting a traveller who had recently taken an expedition to the region, the paper claimed that a number of aboriginal people had informed the aborigines attached to the traveller's party that:

...the (white) man had been in company with another man and a woman, and that they were coming overland with a dray from Wide Bay to Brisbane when the man alluded to, killed his companions and also the horses and burnt the dray, after which he joined the blacks, and he had remained with them ever since ... in order to ingratiate himself with the tribe he manufactured some baskets for them.⁵⁹

However, the man who was to play one of the most important roles in the early history of the Wide Bay region was undoubtedly the escaped convict named James Davis.

Davis was the wild, red-haired and freckled son of a poor Scottish blacksmith. In 1824 he was caught stealing half-a-crown from a church plate in Surrey and sentenced at the Surrey Quarter Sessions to transportation for seven years. A few years later he was again caught stealing and was sent - as a doubly convicted criminal - to the infamous penal settlement at Moreton Bay. At the time Moreton Bay was under the command of Captain Patrick Logan, a professional army officer and strict martinet who detested the stigma and restrictions of being a gaoler to people such as Davis, and he eased his frustrations with the liberal use of the lash. Punishments were so severe and conditions so poor that several prisoners killed fellow inmates, reportedly in order to be hanged for the offence - preferring to die rather than live under such harsh tyranny.



James Davis.

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Davis, however, decided that nothing was going to hold him in such a terrible place. On 29 March, 1829, heedless of the reports of wild aborigines and the fear of starvation, he and another convict named John Downie slipped quietly into the surrounding bush. They travelled north and came into contact with an aboriginal elder named Pamby Pamby, who 'recognized' Davis as being one of their recently dead - now reincarnated warriors - and immediately named him Duramboi. Both convicts were welcomed into the aboriginal community and given food and shelter. Yet Downie's happiness at having escaped from Logan's lash was short lived. According to statements later made by Davis, one morning he and Downie were engaged in collecting oysters and other small shell-fish along the shores when Downie took a weathered dilly bag from the branches of a nearby tree, intending to use it for his catch. He found the bag filled with bits of bones, and, without thinking, he tipped the pieces onto the sand, not realizing that these were the bones of a warrior. The aborigines considered that Downie's thoughtless act was a great sacrilege and he was quickly speared and killed.

Davis, however, became much loved by the aboriginal people and proved to them that he was cunning and courageous. He could run quickly, climb trees with remarkable agility and was ready to stand and fight at any time. He learned how to throw a spear and boomerang and became an expert hunter. He even underwent the secret and painful initiation ceremonies and bore the cicatrices upon his chest for the remainder of his life. He eventually took an aboriginal wife who bore him a son. For the following fourteen years he lived with the aborigines, fearing the terrible retribution which awaited him should he return to the penal settlement at Moreton Bay. He learned to speak various aboriginal dialects and almost forgot how to speak English. Davis had no way of knowing at this time that the penal settlement at Moreton Bay had been closed and that the rich grazing lands west and north of the settlement were being opened up to white colonization. However, with the advent of the first organized excursion of Europeans travelling north from Moreton Bay to the Wide Bay River, Davis's life in the wilderness was soon to be terminated.

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22. M/C. 1 February, 1926.
23. M/C. *ibid*.
24. *Thoorvour* is supposed to mean a dangerous shoal, yet Olga Miller claims that it is a disparaging name which bears no relation whatever to the real corroboree.

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27. *Brisbane Courier*, 3 October, 1872.
28. Miller, *ibid*.
29. M/C. 31 July, 1867.
30. Steele, *ibid*.
31. Miller, *ibid*.
32. Williams, *ibid*, p 10.
33. M/C. 4 July, 1930, p 3.
34. Moon Point, aboriginal word Moonen Point, Moonen meaning 'women only', Miller, *ibid*.
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44. M/C. 9 August, 1865.
45. M/C. 31 January, 1894.
46. M/C. 21 March, 1871.
47. M/C. 27 September, 1905.
48. M/C. 25 October, 1949, p 2.
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Chapter Two.

First Exploration.

The years during which the Moreton Bay penal colony operated, up until 1839, were bloody and terrible and its establishment did little to further the understanding of aboriginal people or the country which was soon to be taken from them.

In 1837, two years prior to the closure of the prison settlement, Andrew Petrie arrived in the colony as superintendent of works. Petrie was to have a profound affect on the exploration and settlement of what was later to become south-east Queensland.

Petrie and his family arrived in Brisbane aboard the steamer *James Watt*.¹ An adventurer, courageous, and filled with a burning desire to learn more about the country west and north of Brisbane, he was instrumental in breaking down the invisible barriers and striking deeply into the heart of aboriginal lands. About twelve months after his arrival, accompanied by his eldest son John, he forged north to the Maroochy River. Petrie also took with him two convicts and a pack bullock, and it was during this journey that he discovered specimens of the bunya pine, recognizing its importance as an aboriginal food. When Petrie reported the details of his expeditions to Governor Gipps, especially the discovery of the vast bunya pine forests and their importance to the aboriginal people, Gipps immediately proclaimed that no licences would be granted for the occupation of lands within the bunya pine district, and that no timber cutting would be allowed. This proclamation - never very effective - was supposed to protect these vital resources in a vast area north of several established stations, Kilcoy and Durundur, (also known as Durandur) up to the Maroochy River and west to the D'Aguiar Range.

The news of the rescue of Eliza Fraser from the northern regions whetted Andrew Petrie's appetite for further exploration north of Brisbane, and he quickly planned an even greater journey, this time aboard a modest captain's gig.

Petrie set out on his historic mission on 4 May, 1842. He was accompanied by Henry Stuart Russell, (whose grandfather and father were both reported as having fought with Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar,²), Walter Wrottesley, Midshipman W.K. Jolliffe, five prisoners who were to act as boat's crew, and two aborigines who were employed as guides and interpreters. Much has been written about this expedition, including a very comprehensive account in *Genesis of Queensland* by Henry Stuart Russell, and so it would seem irrelevant to dwell on the details of the voyage. Yet it was this one journey during which, with the help of escaped convicts David Bracewell and James Davis, the Wide Bay River was discovered and the future of Maryborough was assured. With the help of David Bracewell, Petrie and his party navigated up the river to the present site of Tiaro, noting as they did so that the river was deep and afforded good anchorage for large ships, and that the country was excellent for pastoral development.

It was during this historic expedition that Petrie and his group first came into contact with the runaway convict James Davis. According to Henry Stuart Russell, Davis was in the act of skinning a kangaroo when the party came across a group of aboriginal people on the banks of the Wide Bay River.

At first Davis thought that the white men were special constables recruited to take him back to the penal settlement, and his reaction was one of fury. Russell later claimed that he flew into a rage, tearing and clawing the ground with his fingers, howling at them and alternatively whispering for mercy. Russell thought he was mad.

The diary of Andrew Petrie gives us some graphic details of this historic expedition:

On Thursday 12th (May, 1842), about 9.30 a.m. got about four miles higher up the river when navigation was stopped with rocks and shingle beds. Landed on Friday, despatched Bracewell and Alloppa to procure a blackfellow, they did not succeed, blacks were afraid; went in among the scrubs and procured some specimens of timber. Alloppa speared a fine fresh water mullet, about 2 ½ pounds, flat mouth red eye. I heard the blacks about a mile off. Sent Bracewell off again in pursuit of one of the natives. Alloppa and Bracewell went off and returned in about an hour and a half and reported he was afraid to go into the camp as the blacks were so numerous, he was sure there were some hundreds, he told me he would require two more men with firearms. I ordered Joseph Russell and George Clark asked me to let him go. I wished to go myself, but Bracewell said it would be better for me to remain at the camp, and they would manage to get Davis, the white man that was with the blacks. They went off at 4.30 and returned about sundown with Davis. Bracewell behaved manfully in this affair, he sneaked upon them without being observed,

he ordered Russell and Clark to stop at a distance. The moment the blacks saw them they manned their spears and waddies and as some of them were going towards Russell and Clark, Bracewell stopped them. At this time Bracewell was recognised by a great many of the blacks. They mentioned to him that the whitefellows had poisoned a member of their tribe. He explained to them that we knew nothing of it whatever and that we only came to explore the river and country, and that we would not interfere with the blacks provided they did not meddle with the white men, and if they did, there were a great many white men and firearms, and they would shoot them immediately. I had written a note to Davis, informing him that nothing would be done to him, providing he would come with us to the settlement...³

Davis was finally made to understand that the penal settlement was no longer in operation. He warned Petrie that if he divided his party they would be surrounded and killed by the hundreds of aborigines who had gathered at the scene. He finally consented to return with the explorers - although somewhat reluctantly.

Davis was eventually manumitted and gave the government excellent service as a translator - especially in the courts when aboriginal people were on trial - and also as a guide to the early explorers. However, his later life also makes interesting reading.

Davis's age when he was convicted has been variously given as nineteen or twenty, however, his death certificate gives his age as seventy-eight years at the time of his death, therefore he must have been born in 1811, and have been thirteen years of age when he was convicted.

As H.R. Watson states in his paper, it seems likely that Davis was born out of wedlock as his father is not named on his death certificate, yet his mother, Ada Phillips is mentioned, which, Watson reasons, indicates that Davis had not known his father. Watson wrote:

It seems strange that Davis should remember the name of his mother and not that of his father, and it points to the probability of his being born out of wedlock and to his having been left solely to the care of his mother after birth.⁴

Watson also theorises that it was strange for Davis to have left his birthplace of Glasgow and to have travelled south - being convicted of his crime in Surrey. It was certainly unusual for working class people to move around England at that time, travelling was expensive and the roads were poor. Most of the working classes generally remained in the vicinities of where they were born. Watson claimed that this leads to the supposition that Ada Phillips may have left Glasgow after giving birth to Davis - possibly in an effort to escape the stigma attached to having an illegitimate child - and travelled to London where she could lose herself in the anonymity of a large city.⁵ However, there are two major flaws in this reasoning. Firstly, if Davis was illegitimate, then it seems likely that he would have taken his mother's maiden name of Phillips. If so, then where did Davis's surname come from? Secondly, after his return to Brisbane he married a woman named Ann Shaw and worked as a blacksmith at Kangaroo Point. This too is interesting, as on Davis's death certificate his father's occupation is given as blacksmith, and so it seems likely that Davis may have learned the trade from his father.

Davis's blacksmith's business flourished in Brisbane and he left Kangaroo Point to operate from George Street where he continued with his blacksmith's trade. He purchased property in Burnett Lane where he lived with his wife, and later purchased another property in Adelaide Street. The George Street premises were finally expanded to include a crockery and glassware shop which was primarily operated by his wife up until the time of her death.⁶ He later married Bridget Duffy, but it was not a marriage of great happiness and they fought bitterly. Davis died at the age of seventy-eight years on 7 May, 1889.⁷ Yet his final months and weeks were strained. Bridget Duffy was later charged with having killed Davis, a charge of which she was subsequently acquitted. However, the trial resulted in some interesting information being made public about Davis's last days. A witness at the trial stated that he had seen Bridget thumping Davis's head against the floor. Davis was allegedly calling loudly: 'For God's sake carry me out. I am afraid she will kill me.' One witness, Potter Batson, a beneficiary of Davis's estate, had rescued Davis from Bridget and carried him to a neighbour's house where the old man was put to bed. Bridget was reported to have been drunk at the time of the attack and later claimed that the fight had been about money, adding that Davis never gave her enough for housekeeping expenses. Another witness stated that Davis was weak and emaciated at the time of the attack, too weak to have defended himself. Bridget had had to be restrained so that Davis could be taken from the house. At the time he was suffering from the combined illnesses of pneumonia and heart disease. Two weeks later his condition became much worse and he began coughing blood. His death came on 7 May. The two doctors who attended, Furley and Bindon, stated on his death certificate that death was caused from, 'chronic pneumonia of both lungs, aortic and mitral valvular disease of heart.'

Davis's last will and testament is interesting for it clearly displays the animosity between himself and his second wife, Bridget. Valued at approximately £12,000 at the time of his death, Davis had originally intended to leave Bridget the proceeds of the rents and other incomes generated from his properties for the remainder of her life, not a substantial sum, but one which would have allowed the widow to live in modest comfort. However, in a codicil to the will dated 8 April, 1889, just one month before his death, Davis stated:

...And whereas differences have arisen between myself and my said wife since the date of my said will, and we are now living separately and apart, now by this codicil do I revoke all gifts and bequests to my said wife ... and do wholly withdraw her name from my said will and wish it to be construed as if her name had never been therein mentioned.

Davis had signed the codicil with his mark of X.⁸

To this day no-one really knows why Davis would rarely speak about the years he spent with the aboriginal people. Yet some clues may be taken from a report written in 1905 by noted Queensland historian and protector of aborigines, Archibald Meston. Meston claimed:

Twenty-five years ago (1880) two old Maryborough blacks assured me that Davis had become savage, even to the inclusion of cannibalism. One had a very bitter memory of Davis, whom he accused of having eaten his sister.

Sources and Notes for Chapter Two.

1. Petrie had come to Australia aboard the ill-fated vessel *Stirling Castle* the previous year.
2. M/C. 15 January, 1897.
3. Diary of Andrew Petrie, supplied by his son, John Petrie, and published in the *Maryborough Chronicle* 16 May, 1888. Andrew Petrie later suffered from ophthalmia, an eye disease which was probably brought about by sawdust. In an attempt to remedy the illness an undiluted caustic solution was used to wash his eyes. Within three days this solution had caused one eyeball to rupture and had badly burned the other. Petrie remained blind for the rest of his life. See: *Medicine in Queensland* by Sir Raphael Cilento, published by the Council of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland in 1961.
4. Watson, H.R. *James Davis - Durrumbi*, Maryborough, Wide Bay And Burnett Historical Society archive, file D.11, p 1.
5. Watson, *ibid*, p 2.
6. Watson, *ibid*, p 4.
7. Extract from death certificate.
8. Extract from will, Supreme Court Registry Office Brisbane.

Chapter Three.

Settlement and Aggression.

The Petrie expedition of 1842 was, in effect, the catalyst of settlement in the Wide Bay region and for Maryborough in particular. With the advent of colonial occupation of what was to become Queensland, squatters were actively seeking new lands on which to depasture thousands of sheep. Wool was of primary importance but it had to be exported before a profit could be made. At this time the only northern port from which wool could be exported was Brisbane, a long and arduous journey overland from many of the far distant stations which were starting to become established throughout the colony. Quite clearly the establishment of a second port, a port with deep-water anchorages and closer than Brisbane, was an attractive proposition.

But at this time too, important events were unravelling farther south in the bunya pine region. Following the killing of fifty or sixty aboriginal people by poisoning at the newly formed station of Kilcoy, a vast gathering of elders took place and some momentous decisions were taken. One of these was that the aboriginal people would begin widespread armed attack on the slowly encroaching white community, a decision which steeped the region in bloodshed for almost two decades. The second decision was equally as tragic. According to aboriginal historian Olga Miller, the elders also decided that from that time onwards the legends and histories of the aboriginal people would no longer be passed down from generation to generation and that nothing of aboriginal lore, law or history was to be passed onto the colonists. Mrs Miller claims that the reason why the laws and history were not be passed onto the children was because the elders feared that the younger members of the clans would eventually become friendly with the colonists and wittingly or unwittingly give them information which could then be used against the aboriginal nations. This important decision meant that it would be impossible for there to be any conciliation between the two races, and only deceit and mistrust could follow. Fortunately not all of the clans obeyed this directive and in the case of Mrs Miller's clan, the history at least was continued down through the generations.¹ Olga Miller also states that after the directive, and as colonial incursion began, the aboriginal people immediately began to leave their ancestral homes and to travel north and west away from the squatters and their vast holdings. It was for this reason that there was much confusion in later years over the original boundaries of aboriginal territories. With members of dozens of different nations living within the boundaries of other nations and clans. Mrs Miller claims that this intermingling of nations caused great mental anguish among the aboriginal community. She states:

Because of this displacement we had a lot of people from various areas all thrust together against their will, knowing that they were on someone else's land, and knowing that the gods of this particular land were not their gods, so superstition played havoc with their health, physically and mentally. Also, there was the confusion of so many different beliefs and languages, so when European writers and historians questioned the people, they (the aborigines) were telling stories of hundreds of miles away which caused confusion. And the decision of the elders not to tell the truth created more confusion because as the years passed from that meeting in 1842 up until Furber, Palmer and Aldridge came (to Wide Bay), the young people who had been told nothing of their history and law, knew nothing.²

Loyau added his own recriminations concerning the reluctance of aboriginal people to discuss their history. He wrote:

Rapid decrease of the aboriginal inhabitants of any country taken possession of by Europeans is the usual experience, and although in this respect there is nothing out of the ordinary in respect of the steady disappearance of the original inhabitants of Queensland, comparatively few pure-blooded blacks left in each colony is sufficient to warrant the adoption of extraordinary efforts to preserve the relics of a fast disappearing race ... Collectively, the Wide Bay aborigines are a mild, inoffensive race ... the aborigines themselves have nought to tell of their distant past, and the patriarchs of the tribes shake their heads and evade the white's man's queries as to their origin or meaning of their mystic rites and barbarous ceremonies ... of which the Europeans assume to know all, yet really have no knowledge of.³

The confusion caused by having so many different aboriginal nations living within the Wide Bay region is clearly demonstrated by the following example.⁴

The *Butchulla* - the Maryborough and Fraser Island people - referred to the region where Maryborough now stands as Moonaboola. The *Mooloola* people from the Gympie region, many of whom had fled north after the establishment of the squatters' runs in their homelands, referred to the same Maryborough site as Mooraboocoola. The *Woka Woka* people from the Woolooga, Kilkivan, Goomeri, Cherbourg region called the

site Numbulla, and the *Kabi Kabi* people from the Caboolture, Kilcoy, region (where the 1842 meeting of elders had taken place) named it Booie. It is little wonder that the early white settlers, not understanding that they were obtaining information from many different nations with different languages, were confronted with a confusing array of scrambled replies from a wide diversity of peoples, and added to this confusion was the fact that many of the aboriginal people, following the 1842 directive of elders, were deliberately misleading the whites with lies and deceit.⁵

Movements throughout the various aboriginal communities were made via communal pathways, referred to as 'free-ways'.⁶ Mrs Miller claims:

When they were on these free-ways, it was like a holiday time, because they were not bound by their strict totemic laws. For example, if a person's totem was the wild duck, under aboriginal law that person could not kill and eat any wild ducks within his own tribal area, because the duck is that person's other form. But once on the free-ways on walkabout, it was permissible to eat wild duck despite the totem. It was forbidden to linger on the free-ways in order to eat the totems. Totems were (and still are) awarded to the children by their grandfathers.⁷

After Petrie's expedition there were several initiatives to establish colonial settlement in the Wide Bay region. The first of these was made by Midshipman W.K. Jolliffe who was acting on behalf of a wealthy squatter from Liverpool Plains named John Eales. Jolliffe overlanded approximately twenty thousand sheep to the region which would later become known as Tiaro, supplies were brought to the station aboard the ship *Edward*. It seems likely that Eales's wool was also taken out aboard this ship.

The aboriginal people of the region were not taking this incursion into their territory lightly. Some months previously several aboriginal people had been killed on Sir Evan MacKenzie's station at Kilcoy and news of these atrocities had been carried far and wide. Thus, when Jolliffe arrived with his vast flocks of sheep, he was loathed and feared by the local people and war was soon declared.

Apart from modest cottages, Jolliffe also had his men construct a rough wool-shed. A correspondent writing to the press eighty years later recorded that on one occasion a grey bullock rampaged around the wool-shed - an extremely dangerous and unexpected event as no cattle had then been brought to the district. The correspondent wrote:

Whilst busily engaged the big brute rushed into the midst, horning the sheep. The men climbed to the tie-beams, and the infuriated animal was determined to take possession, but one of the men managed to reach a musket and he was shot from the roof. Sleek, glossy, coal-black and unbranded, yet he was a bullock. He may have been wrecked as a calf on the coast and roamed alone over his realm of Wide Bay. Davis and Bracewell - the two white men rescued from the blacks there before Eales had arrived - had both spoken in the boat about two beasts - bullocks or bulls - in this district, which had been a terror to the natives who would shake with fright at the sound of their bellowing, and climb to the highest trees to get a sight of the 'big dogs with trees in their heads.' This was, I suppose, one of them. Mr Last described the animal as being, 'as sleek as a greyhound.' When cut up he was found to be immensely fat through his whole carcase and yet had not the appearance of the well-fed pride of the market.⁸

The next expedition into this vast uncharted country was made by Doctor Stephen Simpson, the newly appointed commissioner for crown lands for the Moreton district. Simpson was an interesting man, he served with the British Army in Ireland and later studied for his medical degree in Edinburgh. After graduating he worked for several members of the Russian nobility and studied homoeopathy, a newly developing and profoundly controversial science at which he was reported to have been very successful. He later wrote a book on the subject but the publication was derided by mainstream English doctors who succeeded in persecuting Simpson to such an extent that he left the country and travelled to Australia. Shortly after arriving in Sydney he managed to have himself appointed to the Moreton Bay penal settlement and was subsequently given the position of commissioner for crown lands. It was Simpson's intention to establish a site for several German missionaries from Nundah, and also to investigate the rumours of poisonings of aboriginal people.⁹

On 10 March, 1843, Simpson set out from the Woogaroo police station on the Brisbane River. He was accompanied by Reverend Eiper, four mounted policemen, six prisoners, a dray and ten oxen, they carried rations sufficient to last until 15 April. They travelled to Limestone (Ipswich), crossed the Bremer River, up through Durundur station and north to the head-waters of the Wide Bay River. The journey took twenty-one days. Simpson described the surrounding country and his arrival at the station in his log:

March 30. Started at 10 a.m., having lost the oxen. After crossing a bad creek and sundry barren ridges we came to a fine grassy but swampy flat which led us to Mr Eales's head station, situated on the side of a hill overlooking some fine lagoons - Mount Boopal or Double Mountain lying about four miles S.S.W. of the station and the river a mile to the N. - Here we learned that the schooner *Edward* was lying at anchor in Banco or Jolliffe's Creek (later known as Tinana Creek) about 28 miles from the station.¹⁰

Simpson's investigation of the poisonings of aboriginal people was conducted partially from the supply ship *Edward* and partially during his discussions with several aboriginal people he met during the journey. Simpson was unable to come to any definite conclusion regarding the poisonings, and later reported:

I have the honour to report for the information of his Excellency that during my excursion into the Bunya country I have taken every opportunity of instituting enquiries as to the truth of the alleged poisonings of the Aborigines at a sheep station in the North of this district - A report of the kind certainly exists among the two tribes I met with - the *Dallamburah* and *Coccombarah* - but as neither of them was present at the time they could give me no circumstantial information on the subject - the *Giggarbarah* Tribe, the one said to have suffered, I was not able to meet with. Upon enquiry at the stations north of this district I could learn nothing further than that they had been using arsenic very extensively for the cure of Scab; in which operation sheep are occasionally destroyed by some of the fluid getting down their throats, and as the carcasses are frequently left unburied, it is very possible that the Aborigines may have eaten of them, particularly the entrails which they are very fond of.¹¹

The commissioner reported that Eales's station was 219 square miles in size, one of the largest then established. There were several out-stations situated along the banks of the Wide Bay River.¹² On 2 April, having spent the night on board the schooner *Edward*, the party returned to Eales's head station, and the following day one of Simpson's men, a man named John Rice, died unexpectedly after suffering a heart attack. He was buried the next day.¹³ Simpson's journal entries for these few days are sparse:

April 2. Having slept on board the schooner we returned to the head station, the schooner's boat being unfortunately absent, so going further was out of the question - miles 26.

April 3. Halted at head station, frequent showers during the day - John Rice died suddenly of angina pectoris.

April 4. Buried Rice and afterwards set out at 10 a.m. and reached the second sheep station on a creek and encamped for the night. Dist. 14 miles.¹⁴

Simpson and his party returned to Brisbane after a difficult and arduous journey. Travelling south, they were exhausted, their food supplies low, much of their flour being ruined by water, although they were fortunate enough to shoot a kangaroo for fresh meat. At one time they were in danger of attack from aboriginal warriors and had to stand watches through the night. They rested for three days at Durundur and arrived at Woogaroo on 27 April.

Simpson later returned to England, he died on 11 March, 1869, at his home in Brayaston Street Portman Square London.¹⁵

Another well known pioneer to visit Eales's station at Tiaro was the ill-fated explorer Ludwig Leichhart. Leichhart was visiting Durundur, the Archer brothers' station on Archer Creek, (Stanley River) near the site of present day Woodford in July 1843 when he decided that he would travel farther north to Eales's lonely outpost. It was during this visit to the station that Leichhart climbed Mount Bauple and is reputed to have been the first scientist to describe the Bauple nut.¹⁶ Leichhart, as has been well documented, went missing during his historic journey to northern Australia in 1848, his fate has never been discovered.

The aggression against Eales's station was allegedly formulated primarily because of the destruction of the region's trees. Trees were sacred to the aboriginal people, they were a form of life and sustenance and their destruction was seen as a great affront. The station was reputed to have been situated at Swamp Creek, approximately one mile south of the present site of Tiaro.¹⁷ It was attacked several times, shepherds were speared, flocks run off and butchered. Coupled with these persistent and successful attacks, Jolliffe was faced with disease in the flocks, the difficulties of supply, and financial problems. These hardships finally forced him to abandon the Tiaro head-station and return defeated to Moreton Bay in 1845. The remnants of Eales's flocks were removed to Kilcoy for non-payment of dues.¹⁸

Details of the savage fighting which took place at Tiaro were not recorded by Jolliffe, although Loyau claims that the first fatal attacks by aboriginal warriors resulted in the deaths of three shepherds. 'None lamented them, and their names are unknown,' Loyau stated.¹⁹

The exact sequence of events surrounding the disaster of Eales's station is difficult to ascertain, but the memoirs of one early pioneer to the district, George Oakes Beardmore, give some indication of the troubles. Beardmore, who took up a lease in partnership with his brother Samuel, himself admitted that his writings were based primarily upon the memories of long past events and that errors in memory may have occurred. Beardmore does not give the date of his arrival in the Tiaro region, but it was clearly long after Eales had abandoned the run. Even so, Beardmore stated:

Tiara was first taken up by Mr Eames (sic). He did not live there himself, but had seven men, a hut-keeper, rouseabout and five shepherds who always carried guns for protection from the wild blacks. One day the hut-keeper and rouseabout had to go some distance together to cut timber, leaving the hut unprotected, the other hands being all away. On returning in the evening the two timber-getters discovered a nude blackfellow making off with half a bag of flour on his back. They did not have to pause to consider, but poured a couple of charges of buck-shot into him. He promptly dropped the flour but kept on running until he disappeared into the scrub.

It was never known whether the nigger died, but the chances are that he did not, as the wounds could only have been in the fleshy parts on account of the protection afforded by the half bag of flour.

This shooting incident, however, proved to be a misguided and much too hasty act for the sake of a bit of flour. In those days the blacks never forgave an injury from a white man. The station hands, after the occurrence, were exceedingly vigilant for a time, and this the blacks must have surmised, as no move was made until their guard was relaxed, then the bolt fell. It happened a couple of months after the attempted flour stealing and in the earliest dawn of day (the favourite time in that district for a black's attack), the hut was stealthily surrounded. Every man was sound asleep in his bunk. Silently the blackfellows took up positions by the bunks with raised tomahawks. At this moment, from some cause, the rouseabout opened his eyes and took in the situation in a flash, but was too paralysed with fear to call out. An instant later began the murderous work, but he had the presence of mind to slip off his bunk in the confusion and crouch behind a couple of meat casks.

All the others were killed and mutilated and the hut looted of all rations, blankets and clothes. There being no meat in the cask saved the life of the rouseabout as the blacks could see they were empty and therefore did not disturb them.

In departing the murderers let go all the sheep which scattered all over the run and were at the mercy then of the native dogs as well as any marauding niggers who felt inclined to help themselves to prime mutton.

When the sun rose high the rouseabout crept cautiously out of the blood-stained hut and made his way to the next station, a distance of about 20 miles, and reported the affair.²⁰

Another early pioneer writing of these events eighty years later stated that all the men at the station had been killed and that the two-wheeled bullock dray had been pushed by the aborigines into Tiara Lagoon. The writer claimed that the dray remained in the lagoon until the drought of 1883 when a passing timber hauler (this was probably Charles Drain q.v.) saw the guard irons of the dray standing above the surface of the water. He allegedly hooked his bullock team to the irons and dragged the dray onto the bank of the lagoon. It was claimed that the dray was in surprisingly good condition.²¹ The dray was later reported to have been taken to Teebar.²²

The names of those known to have been killed at the station were M. Noonan, J. Cummins and G. McKin, while another man named J. Sussex was wounded in the attack.²³

The Chinese shepherds who had died at the station were allegedly buried close to what later became the Tiara cricket ground.²⁴

George Beardmore managed to win the respect of the aboriginal people in the Tiara region by making them believe that he was one of their long dead relatives recently reincarnated. He allowed the aborigines to camp

near his homestead site and, for building purposes, used the men to help strip bark from the trees. Beardmore stated however, that the local aboriginal people were friendly and that they themselves went in fear of a 'Frazer Island black named Minnie.' Beardmore claimed that his bark-strippers eventually caught and killed Minnie, and, '...feasted on his fat carcass for three days making the night hideous with howling corroborees.'²⁵ Beardmore added that only the old and fighting men were allowed to eat the meat and that the women were made to retire upwind as they were not allowed to even smell the cooking. Beardmore added:

I was informed by one of our blacks that the flesh of white man was not so much in favour because, as he said: 'Too much salt, like it macon (bacon).'26

The war against white incursion throughout the whole of south-east Queensland was quickly escalating. Head-stations were being built like fortresses with slits in the stout wooden walls to facilitate musket fire. Flocks of sheep and other livestock were being speared with monotonous regularity.

Sources and Notes for Chapter Three.

1. Miller, *ibid*.
2. Miller, *ibid*.
3. Loyau, *ibid*, pp 224-225.
4. The region referred to encompasses the current site of Maryborough from Copenhagen Bend to the Devil's Elbow, including the city, Tinana, Granville and St Helens. Moonaboola is the aboriginal word for 'loops and bends'.
5. Miller, *ibid*.
6. Miller, *ibid*.
7. Miller, *ibid*.
8. M/C. 11 May, 1922.
9. Sheehan, Colin. *The Wide Bay District, Beyond the Limits*, undated paper.
10. Simpson's journal, p 8, John Oxley Library, hereinafter referred to as OL.
11. Simpson's journal, page 11, OL.
12. Sheehan, *ibid*, p 2.
13. Simpson's journal, p 9, OL.
14. Simpson's journal, p 9, OL.
15. M/C. 9 August, 1937, p 8.
16. Leichhart - *The Dauntless Explorer*, Angus and Robertson, 1988, pp 209-210.
See also the *Courier Mail*, 15 September, 1994, p 28.
17. M/C. 5 March, 1955, p 2.
18. Sheehan, *ibid*, p 2.
19. Loyau, *ibid*, p 66.
20. Beardmore, G.O. *Glimpses of Early Australia*. 1836-1919, p. 8.
21. M/C. 25 January, 1922, p 3.
22. M/C. 5 March, 1955, p 2.
23. Cultural Historical Records of Queensland, Number 1, *The Simpson Letterbook*, transcribed by Gerry Langebad, pp 16-17.
24. M/C. 5 March, 1955, p 2.
25. Beardmore, *ibid*, p 10.
26. Beardmore, *ibid*, p 10.

Chapter Four. The Furber Years.

Following a brief exploratory trip up the Wide Bay River by Government Surveyor J.C. Burnett in 1846, and an even briefer visit by Lieutenant Joseph Dayman from *H.M.S. Rattlesnake* aboard the tiny pinnace *Asp* the following year, the first permanent white resident to the general region where Maryborough now stands was certainly George Furber, whose rather unique history has already been extensively recorded.¹

Maryborough, of course, did not exist at that time, and the river was only generally known as the Wide Bay River. Burnett's survey resulted in the districts of Wide Bay, Burnett and Maranoa being proclaimed by Sir Charles Fitzroy on 7 November, 1848.²

Over the years there has been some historical confusion concerning the exact time when the river was named the Mary, and why. But it is clear that the Mary was officially named by Governor Fitzroy on 7 September, 1847, in honour, not in memory - as is popularly believed - of his wife, Lady Mary Fitzroy. It has long been a prevailing myth that the naming of the river was in memory of his wife, but Lady Mary was still very much alive when Fitzroy issued his historic proclamation on 7 September, 1847.³

Lady Mary was killed in a carriage accident in Sydney on 7 December, 1847, three months after the official proclamation. Lady Mary's friend and confidant, Annabelle Boswell, later wrote in her journal:

The family had all been staying at Government House Parramatta and were going to Sydney to spend Christmas. Lady Mary entered the carriage, a heavy travelling chariot, it had been sometime at the door and the horses were restless. Sir Charles, who was to drive, was seated on the box, with Mr Chester Master, his A.D.C. beside him, a servant sat behind. Scarcely had the grooms released their hold upon their horses when the leaders made a bound forward and set off at full speed down the hill to the entrance gate. Had the road been straight possibly the accident might not have happened, but unhappily at the gate there is a sharp turning, and there the carriage, which had been swaying from side to side all the way down the hill, upset heavily, throwing all in it out with great violence. Mr Fitzroy who had watched them from the house, rushed down followed by all who were near, but alas, before he arrived, life had fled and the fond mother who had but a few short minutes before gaily bade him goodbye, now lay a bleeding mangled corpse, blood flowing from her mouth and ears and her chest crushed in by part of the carriage which had fallen upon her. Who can describe the horror of such a moment.⁴

Annabelle Boswell's account of the tragedy also stated that Sir Charles was badly hurt but had been saved from death by holding onto the reins as the carriage tipped over. His A.D.C., Chester Master, was seriously injured and died soon afterwards. The servant received only minor injuries.⁵

George Furber's actions in forging north to the Wide Bay River in 1847 were certainly the catalyst to white settlement. Furber was a powerful character, athletic, resourceful and aggressive, he was charged with a burning desire to succeed in the face of all obstacles and danger. Much has been written about his career since his subsequent death in 1855, some historians have labelled him a brutal killer who deserved to be struck down by revengeful aborigines, while others have reported him as a kind man who loved his family, was devoted to his friends and who was killed without provocation. Tragedy seems to have haunted Furber. Both his wives died at very young ages, one of his children, his only son, died in infancy, the man who pioneered the Wide Bay region with him was reportedly killed by aborigines, so too was his son-in-law.⁶

Yet even before his death, charges were being made that he was perhaps too aggressive, too ambitious, and that he was allegedly guilty of killing many aboriginal people after he arrived in the Wide Bay region in 1847.

George Furber was born on 18 December, 1810 in Parramatta. His father, William - a former convict who came to Australia aboard the ship *Neptune* in the Second Fleet - died the following year and his mother remarried a former Yorkshireman named John Smith. Shortly afterwards the family moved to Maitland. George Furber married Mary Ann Muir in Newcastle in 1832 and the couple had three children, one of whom died in infancy. Furber was an inn-keeper in Maitland, but the desire to travel farther north into the 'frontier' areas surrounding Moreton Bay must have been a powerful influence in his life. His first wife died in April 1837 at the age of twenty-three, and shortly afterwards he married Honaria Curtain who gave him three more children. In about 1844 he moved the family to Ipswich where he was reported to have built an inn called the Golden Fleece. Precise details of this business are sketchy, however, according to the *Moreton Bay Courier* of 1 July, 1846, the Golden Fleece was, in fact, formerly owned by a man named R.E. Dix, who had been a skipper of the ship

Experiment and who had once been the licensee of other hotels including the Bush Inn at Fassifern and the Sovereign in Queen Street Brisbane.⁷ He was a former mate on the ill-fated ship *Shamrock* but had not been serving aboard that vessel when it was wrecked in 1847.⁸ Later reports claim that Furber transferred the lease to Michael Sheehan.⁹

At the time Furber was operating the Golden Fleece he was also receiving intelligence from a wide variety of sources which indicated to him that a great deal of business was to be had in the Wide Bay region. Squatters who had moved north and west with thousands of sheep were keen to have a reception centre for their wool and other products established on what was then still known as the Wide Bay River. Accordingly, in June 1847, Furber placed an advertisement in the *Moreton Bay Courier* stating that he was about to set up business in the Wide Bay region. As historian Marie Walker states:

He already knew by 1847 that some of the larger stockholders were prepared to patronise him. He in return had given an assurance of providing his part of the deal with only modest charges, and to give attention generally to his employers and provide a store ... He also realised the need to have a competent wool sorter for services.¹⁰

Writing in 1947, one hundred years later, historian Isobel Hannah claimed:

Mr Furber was requested by the squatters of Wide Bay to proceed there and open a store at the head of navigation on the river for the purpose of receiving their wool and other products awaiting shipment.¹¹

Accompanied by a wool-sorter and general labourer named Barren, and almost certainly by several other men, Furber headed north for the Wide Bay during the middle of June 1847, arriving there probably around August or September that year.

When these men arrived on the banks of the Wide Bay River they quickly set to work establishing the outpost. Furber selected a large flat on the southern river bank slightly upstream from what was later known as Baddow Island (no island had then formed, there being, it seems, only a shoal at the site in 1847) where he could commence building the all-important wharf and reception centre for the storage of wool. Undoubtedly, the aboriginal people were watching Furber's and his men's movements from the scrub with a certain degree of curiosity and apprehension. That apprehension would have mounted when they realized that Furber was about to commence his building operations on the banks of the river, right in the heart of some of their favourite fishing territory and near their traditional water supply. This place was used to catch the mullet as they came up river during the winter months. At low tide the aboriginal people could also cross the river by wading to the shoal, later formed and named Baddow Island, and then onto the opposite bank. Without realizing it Furber had selected the one place which would cause the highest possible aboriginal animosity.

What really happened during the weeks after Furber first arrived at the river is difficult to ascertain. According to legendary accounts, mostly unsourced and over-embellished, Furber treated the aboriginal people harshly, and even shot some of them, presumably for stealing. Yet there must have been some form of reasonable communication because by October that year there were several aboriginal people working for Furber.

European attitudes to the aboriginal people and the lack of understanding between the two races can be clearly demonstrated with an account of the following events which was recorded by James Lennon in 1924. Lennon wrote:

One day - October 13th, 1847, to be absolutely correct (the *Moreton Bay Courier* later gave the date as 20 October and this substantiated by the official documents relating to the case) - Furber and his mate were fencing, assisted by two dusky sons of the soil, who were digging post holes. Apparently the niggers were not doing their work in orthodox fashion so Furber took the spade from one (Bingalee, also known as Bungalee) and thoughtlessly handed him the squaring axe. As Furber stooped to his work, the abo. clave his skull down to the neck and the other abo. dropped Barren with a morticing axe. The niggers then cleared taking the guns, tools and food.¹²

Henry Palmer, an early Wide Bay settler who became a good friend of Furber's - when writing of the event years later - stated: 'The blow however, did not penetrate his skull but slid down the back of his head carrying the skin like a sheet of notepaper.'¹³

What happened next is still something of a mystery. The aboriginal attackers quickly disappeared into the surrounding scrub. Furber himself left only few details of the events which immediately followed. After his wound had been roughly dressed - probably by one of his workmen - he climbed onto his horse and set off for the nearest doctor at Ipswich. Historian Marie Walker states:

With extraordinary fortitude he undertook to ride by horse to Ipswich, some 150 miles distant. His journey took three days before arriving at the home of Dr William McTaggart Dorsey, in a state of stupor and a seriously infected wound.¹⁴

Another version of the attack was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* shortly afterwards. The report is interesting for it confirms that Furber was assisted by at least two other men and indicates that at least one other man - possibly the wounded servant who may have survived the attack - accompanied Furber to Ipswich - calling at Marodian station on the way. The report claimed:

This district has again been visited by a most unprovoked attack upon the persons of the white inhabitants by the black sons of the soil, attended with considerable loss of property and *nearly the loss of two lives*, (author's italics) the facts are as follows: Mr George Furber, who a short time since went to the neighbourhood of the Wide Bay for the purpose of erecting a store on the banks of the river Mary, for the accommodation of the settlers in the adjacent country, was interrupted in his operations by an attack of the blacks, who, up to the moment of the outbreaks, had been rendering him every assistance in fencing his enclosures, and at the time of the attack Mr F. and his men were in the act of fixing a post in a hole dug for its reception, when an axe was thrown at him, inflicting a severe wound on the back of his head, the man (the servant) also receiving a tremendous blow on the head from a waddy - fortunately the scoundrels failed in their diabolical intentions, Mr Furber being sufficiently sensible after receiving the blow to lay hold of a double barrelled fowling-piece lying within reach, which frightened the cowardly vagabonds so much as to cause them to decamp. Mr F. finding from their subsequent movements that they were bent on further mischief, wisely decamped with his two men, to the adjoining station of Mr A. Scott, (Marodian) where every assistance was rendered to them, but the nature of the injuries sustained were such as to render it absolutely necessary for them to obtain instant medical assistance. Mr Furber reached Ipswich on the 26th ult, and is now under the hands of a medical practitioner, and suffers severely from the hurts received; on their way in, they were twice attacked by the blacks but without sustaining any further injury ... the late outrage upon Mr Furber ought to be a caution to all parties visiting that district to be upon their guard as respects the blacks, as from their late proceedings it is very evident conciliatory measures are entirely thrown away, and therefore the less intercourse kept up between them the better; no kindness can purchase their forbearance, it will be recollected that some four years ago when the Wide Bay country was taken up by Mr John Eales, four of that gentleman's shepherds were savagely murdered in cold blood by these ruthless villains, although every attempt was made to keep upon good terms with them - the armed hand is the only introduction to their forbearance - the less dependence placed in them the better.¹⁵

Shortly after the attack the *Moreton Bay Courier* published its account of the event, taking information supplied by Furber himself. The *Courier* claimed:

Mr George Furber returned from Wide Bay a few days ago in consequence of having been attacked by the natives there in a very treacherous manner and having received a most fearful wound from a broad axe on the back of the head and neck, which, for some time, endangered his life; he is still, in fact, labouring under very severe disposition from the effects of it. The circumstances, as gleaned from a statement of facts sworn to today in Court by Mr F., are these. About noon on Wednesday the 13 ult., (sic) being at work with one of his men named Barren and two natives named Charley and Bungalee, five other blacks came up, two of whom are named Wanamanga and Perika, and while in the act of stooping to the work upon which they were engaged, they were violently struck ... Immediately after committing the assault they decamped, taking with them two double-barrelled guns which were lying near Furber, and nearly all the tools with which they had been working ... there was no apparent cause for the attack which could only proceed from their innate thirst for blood. Mr F. is of the opinion that they were urged on to commit these depredations by three white men who were among them.¹⁶

This statement is an interesting one for, in the mass of information since published concerning the attack on Furber and his servant, there is no record of there having been any white men among the attacking aboriginal people. Who were these white men? Were they early squatters or workers holding a grudge against Furber, or were they perhaps escaped convicts still living with the local indigenous people? If they were escaped convicts there seems to be no record of them, although many dozens of convicts certainly escaped from the Moreton

Bay penal settlement prior to 1839 and most of these have never been accounted for. Furber himself gave no further information which might have led to the identities of these men, and they were not mentioned in the deposition later made by Furber.

However, shortly afterwards it was widely, and inaccurately, rumoured that all of Furber's men working in the Wide Bay had been attacked and killed by the aborigines. Furber too believed in the report and may have considered at this time not returning to the Wide Bay at all.¹⁷

In December a correspondent named J.B. Bertelson wrote a lengthy report for the *Moreton Bay Courier* concerning some of the details of the attack. The correspondent claimed that after the attack on Furber the aborigines became 'very quiet,' and had not attacked anybody. He went on to claim that the reasons why Furber was attacked included the fact that Furber had promised a certain amount of flour to the aboriginal men but he had tried to cheat them by spreading the flour thinly over a large surface making it seem that the amount promised had been provided. Bertelson also made the claim that: '...Mr Furber also imprudently provided them with spirits, which excited them to such a degree as to induce them to believe it was his intention to poison them all.'¹⁸

The writer further claimed that one of Furber's men had shot a kangaroo for meat, but had refused to give the aboriginal workers a portion of the kill, thus heightening the hostility of the aborigines.¹⁹

Furber strongly disagreed with these comments and wrote a letter of complaint to the editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier* in which he claimed:

In the *Moreton Bay Courier* of the 4th of December, 1847, appeared a letter headed Wide Bay, and signed J.B. Bertelson, which set forth that the writer sends you a truthful account of what has occurred in the above district, I now extract from this publication such parts as I conceive to be prejudicial to my character, as follows:

'Since Mr Furber's departure for Limestone the natives have been very quiet, and have not molested anybody. With regard to the late outrage committed upon him, Mr Furber's own men state the reason why the blacks attacked him was because he failed to provide them with sufficient rations according to promise, for stripping bark and doing other work for him; that in serving out the flour to them it was spread over a large surface to make it appear a greater quantity than there was in reality; at which the blacks were greatly dissatisfied, and which, no doubt, was the reason for their seeking revenge for what they conceived to be an injury. I have heard also that Mr Furber imprudently supplied them with spirits, which excited them to such a degree as to induce them to believe it was his intention to poison them all. Now if these statements, made by Mr Furber's own men are correct, it can hardly be wondered at that the blacks should have committed the outrage, particularly when the other wounded man, who was working with his master, had refused them a small portion of kangaroo, which he had killed only a short time before. From my own experience, nothing seems to annoy them more than for white men to promise and then to shirk performance. This is not the way to deal with the natives; and I would advise no one to attempt evasion after promising them anything for work that has been cheerfully done.'

In justice to myself, I declare the whole of the above statement to be false, as Mr Bertelson (who admits he wrote the article in question) stated to me, both before and since the publication alluded to, that he had never seen or spoke to any servant in my employment.

I refrain from further comment, as necessity obliges me to clear my character by hereafter proving the falsehoods and slander contained in the letter signed J.B. Bertelson.²⁰

Furber evidently recovered quickly from his wound, although his friend Henry Palmer later claimed that he carried a twist in his neck for the remainder of his life and could never again look around.²¹

Furber made immediate preparations to return to his store, he engaged the services of a man named W.C. Clements, to proceed to the Wide Bay in the ketch *Aurora*, taking supplies with him. However, the engagement was not to last and quickly ended in the courts. Furber had instructed Clements to purchase a quantity of food and other stores, including flour, tea, beef and gunpowder, and he provided Clements with the sum of £10/10- for the purpose. Furber later claimed that Clements had cheated him of £1/7/6d, and charged him with embezzlement. The charges were heard in late November 1847 but Clements was quickly discharged, there having been no real case against him.²²

Some time later Furber returned to his store. He had made promises to the various squatters and he was determined to have his wool reception centre ready for the first clip by the end of the year. In December, three months after the attack, a small ketch, *The Sisters*, slid quietly up the newly named Mary River and moored at Furber's wharf. It shipped out a total of sixty-five bales of wool.²³

At around this time too, several other early pioneers of the region arrived at the river, these were Henry Palmer, his brother Richard E. Palmer, and Edgar T. Aldridge. The Palmer brothers were travelling with their flocks via the embryonic settlement at the later site of Nanango when they met Aldridge at Marodian station, several miles south-east of Gigoomgan, where he was resting his sheep.



Henry Palmer.

Source - Maryborough Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

Henry Palmer, who in later years was to be described as the Father of Maryborough, had come to Australia in 1840 when he was just nineteen years of age. He went firstly to Victoria and was engaged in pastoral enterprises which led him to journey to the upper Burnett district in 1846.

In June 1848 Aldridge and the Palmer brothers travelled north-east along a tree-line which Richard Palmer had previously marked out. Aldridge's party consisted of Enoch Rudder (junior), John Meyers, William Fitzgerald and an aboriginal guide from Gigoomgan. This aboriginal was generally known as Tommy.²⁴ However, he was also widely known as One-Toe Tommy, and, as Palmer later stated, '...was credited as being the most blood-thirsty of the Wide Bay tribe.'²⁵

Enoch Rudder (senior) had arrived from Birmingham with his family in 1834. He travelled to the Macleay River district the following year, primarily to take advantage of the cedar trade. His wife and nine children followed him there in 1837, and over the following eight years a further six children were born in a house Rudder had built there. Edgar Aldridge owned a station in the region, a run named Scotchtown. He ran the Bush Inn at Kempsey where he was also the first postmaster.²⁶

We may obtain a fairly clear picture of the squatting country north of Brisbane at this time from the reminiscences of Henry Palmer, a remarkable document written more than half a century later. Palmer gives a clear description of the stations then under occupation. He wrote:

My first acquaintances with the Burnett district dates from the year 1846. There were then very few stations formed on its waters and these were situated on the head-branches of its tributaries, such as Barambah, occupied by Ferriter and Uhr, Burrandowan on the Boyne head-waters, by Messrs Glover and Russell, then being transferred to new proprietors; Boondooma, lower down by Messrs A. and R. Lawson, and the Auburn head-waters by Messrs A. and B. Farquharson. These I think formed the whole of the squattages at the time referred to in the upper Burnett waters, and all with sheep stock.

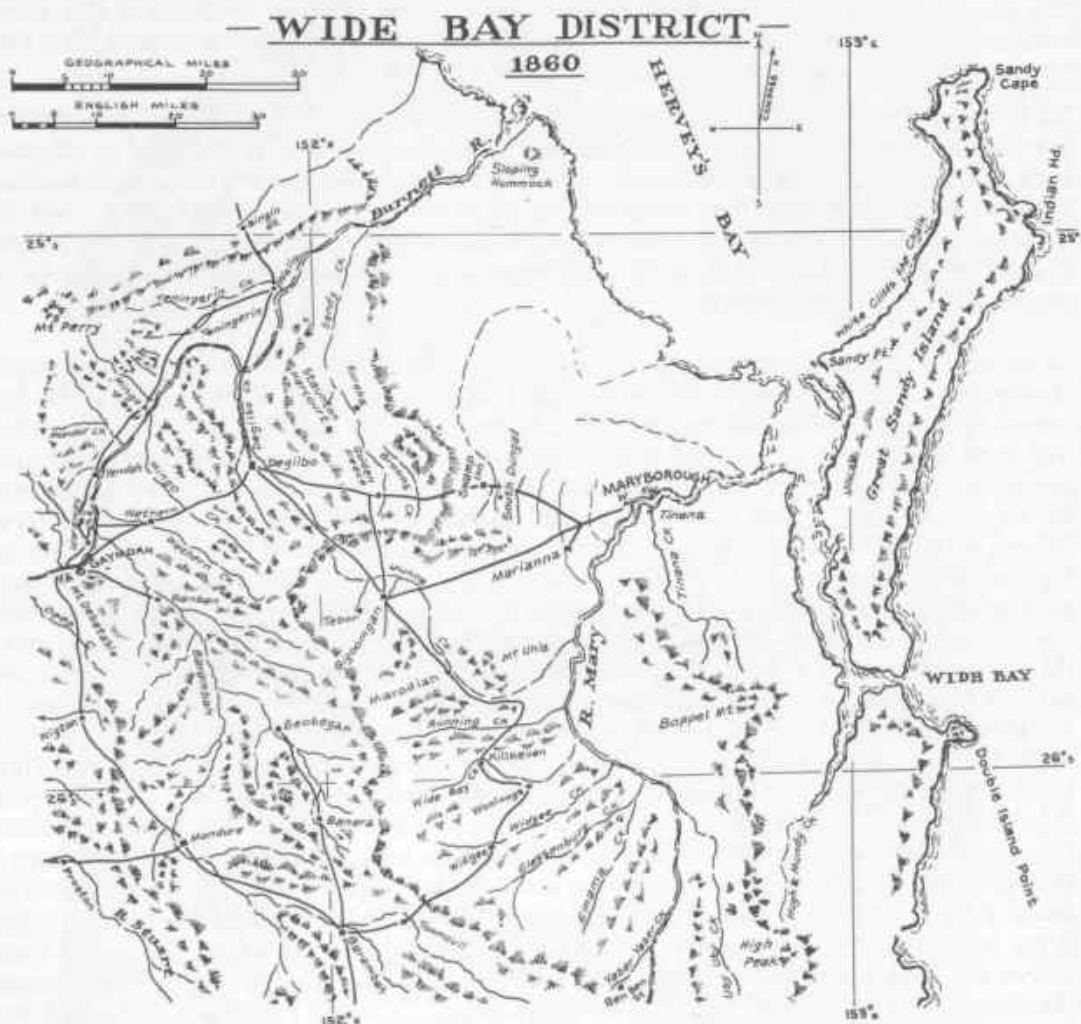
In the latter end of 1846 and throughout the year 1847, a great and continuous migration of stock, chiefly sheep, onto the mid-waters of Barambah and Burnett took place. Amongst the hardy active pioneers of the time, men capable of doing anything from driving their own teams, laden with wool, which some of them had to do, to the port, to taking active part in the administration of the affairs of the country, may be mentioned: E. Hawkins of Boonara; C. and P. Lawless of Boobyjan; H. and T. Herbert of Ban Ban; W. Humphries of Wetheron; J. B. Reid of Iderway; Robert Wilkin of Yenda; and the Archer brothers of Coonambulah and Eidsvold - all sheep men - together with numbers of other squatters, settled and unsettled, the latter on the look-out for suitable country, and pushing out still further north ... These squatters settled on the upper Burnett waters used Brisbane as their port, distant from 200 to 280 miles, a long and tedious journey through bush country and unmade roads; and in the event of a wet season, two or three months delay of teams was no unusual occurrence. Although the Mary River at the time mentioned was not altogether unknown to the Burnett squatters, it was then known as the Wide Bay River, and on its banks were known to be depasturing considerable flocks, Mr John Eales of the Hunter River New South Wales having moved thereto a large number of sheep a year or two earlier than the occupation of the lower Burnett. Still the waters of the Mary were void as far as traffic was concerned, nor had a single settler occupied its northern bank from Yengarie to its entrance into the bay in the early part of the year 1848. On the opposite or southern side a faint effort had been made at the erection of buildings for shipping and inn-keeping purposes, the locality selected being immediately opposite the old township. The chief inducement for this hazardous venture was no doubt the business expected to arise from the Eales' large sheep establishment, formed in the vicinity, and upwards to Tiara; but the Eales' speculation after a brief period through heavy losses both in sheep and shepherds from Blacks and other causes had to be abandoned.²⁷

Aldridge settled on land on the north side of the river, almost opposite Furber's store, a site which later became known as Baddow.²⁸

After the arrival of these early pioneers at Wide Bay, the Palmer brothers overlanded to Marodian to collect their rested flocks and returned to the Mary River where they settled at the site of what became known as the old township, a little downstream from Copenhagen Bend, where they were soon erecting small huts of pit-sawn timber or slabs with shingle roofs. At this time Furber was also operating a small grog-shanty on the north side of the river. Furber's wife was believed to have helped him with the running of this small business. She died on 4 August, 1850, leaving three children.

Wide Bay village was capably described by historian George R. Noakes, who often submitted newspaper articles under the *nom de plume* 'Old Timer'. Noakes wrote:

The old township consisted of one hotel, the Bush Inn, owned by E.T. Aldridge, a large store, a wharf, several humpies and a four-roomed cottage built of mortar which was made from coral brought by rowing boats from the Mary River heads ... There were also two cottages owned by a man named (William) Hope on top of the hill on Gayndah Road ... one of which was used as a store and the opposite side as a dwelling. Hope also had a large shed on the opposite side of the Gayndah Road in which he had a rope works and did a big business with the teamsters and carriers, supplying them with rope halters, head and leg ropes etc. He would make them to any size and length and it was wonderful the orders he got from Gayndah, Dawson and the Taroom stations.²⁹



Original map of the Wide Bay district, 1860. Note incorrect spellings of several station names.

Source - Department of Lands, Maryborough.

William Hope arrived in Maryborough in 1862 and later became a soap maker of some renown, winning several prizes for his products in Sydney. He died of cancer in 1880.³⁰

River traffic on the Mary now became a regular sight with the ketch *Aurora* bringing in supplies every fortnight and taking out wool, skins and tallow. This ketch was the early lifeline for the fledgling colony and its passengers and crew also experienced some difficult times with the local indigenous people. For example, in December 1847 the vessel was detained inside the bar at Wide Bay waiting for a fair wind on her return to Brisbane. Supplies ran short and the master decided to land on Fraser Island for the purpose of obtaining wood for fuel. One of the passengers on board was Alexander Scott, a resident of the old township. Scott landed on the island accompanied by several other men with the intention of shooting some wild fowl. They had not been long on the island when a small group of aboriginal men approached them, one of whom was carrying a large

whale's bone which he stuck upright into the sand. Thinking that the bone was a piece of coral, Scott offered a shirt in exchange. However, the meeting soon turned violent. One of the aboriginal men took an oar from the party's rowing boat and struck Scott on the hand and the head. A scuffle quickly followed and the white men were stripped of all their clothing. Yet they managed to get away from their attackers and swam to the ketch which was anchored a few hundred yards from shore. Once safely on board they could only watch helplessly as the aboriginal men donned the stolen clothing and danced on the beach, taunting the whites to once again land.³¹

Furber's wife, the first white woman in the Wide Bay village region, probably arrived on the *Aurora* during such a visit to the region. In fact, an original Wide Bay village resident later recorded that this was the case, stating:

The sixteen ton cutter (or ketch) *Aurora* (Captain Richards), arrived in the Wide Bay River on 5 September, 1848. Passengers George Furber, his wife and three children, and five steerage passengers. Fancy, 'steerage' in a sixteen ton ketch!³²



Edgar Thomas and Maria Sarah Aldridge.
Source - Tom Ryan, (Aldridge collection).

The biography of one of the leading figures of this embryonic township, Edgar Aldridge is an interesting one. According to an unpublished paper written by Ada G. Bryant, grand-daughter of the pioneer, which is now in the files of the Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, E.T. Aldridge was one of a family of twelve. According to Ada Bryant:

Shortly after his arrival at what came to be known for some time as the Wide Bay village, Mr Aldridge opened a store and also started the first hotel with supplies brought from Sydney to the settlement in a small vessel commanded by Captain Cooper. A letter of great historic importance was written by Mr Aldridge to the Colonial Secretary at Sydney under date August 1st, 1848 from 'River Mary, Wide Bay', which read:



*The original home of Edgar and Maria Aldridge at Baddow.
Source - Tom Ryan (Aldridge Collection).*

'Sir, I have the honour of addressing you upon a subject which interests myself and from 40 to 50 sheep farmers in this district. From personal observations and information given me by several squatters, I have learned that upon a reasonable calculation there will be 800 to 1000 bales of wool grown in this district in the ensuing season, all of which will be shipped from this river, it being the nearest port. Every year there will be considerable increase in the quantities grown. Having received extensive promises of support from the growers of the wool, and finding no one making any preparation for the storing and shipping of it, I have been induced to find a road to the head of navigation on the north-west bank of this river and, having succeeded in finding the road, I have commenced erecting a building requisite to transact the business required ... As this district is fast improving I further wish to ascertain whether upon my erecting a suitable dwelling and procuring a reputable man and wife as servants, if you will grant me a victualler licence for the same in order that accommodation may be afforded to those who may transact their business at this place. Should you grant me the licence I require, the name of the station I propose to be Victoria and the hotel the same.'³³

The licence was, of course, granted, but the hotel was never called Victoria, instead Aldridge named it rather more prosaically the Bush Inn, the same name he had used for his hotel at Kempsey. An indication of the need for these inns is clearly demonstrated by the fact that by 1850 there were four inns operating at the old township, Furber's, Aldridge's, Ricketts' and Palmer's, all of which served the requirements of the increasing number of timber-getters and teamsters.

On 29 June, 1849, Edgar Aldridge married Maria Slater in Sydney. Aldridge was deeply in love with Maria and he remained devoted to her for the rest of his life. She died on 17 March, 1886.

Aldridge's life in the fledgling settlement was one in which he took an active role in public affairs and he was himself a very public figure. His relationships with the aboriginal people were cautious, yet he seems to have treated them with some deference despite the hostile aboriginal raids which were being carried out against white settlement.

And depredations were many. For example, in January 1861 the aborigines attacked a small farm belonging to a bricklayer named Smith. The farm was situated in a remote paddock about one mile from what by then had become known as Maryborough. Smith had been harassed by the aborigines on several previous occasions but had always managed to keep them at bay by threatening them with his musket or allowing his dogs to bark ferociously at them. However, the harassment was continued, the aborigines throwing stones at the tiny farmhouse and allegedly making indecent threats towards Smith's wife. When the aborigines suddenly launched a full scale attack against the small holding, sometime during the second week of January 1861, Smith, after a two hours' battle, managed to fight them off. Some time afterwards another attack was made and during the course of this action Fred Slater (reported in the press as Fred Aldridge) came riding by.³⁴ Seeing the predicament of the two settlers young Slater galloped up and started laying about the aborigines with his stock-whip. The aboriginal men retreated with Slater riding after them. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

The cowards immediately decamped and were pursued by Mr Aldridge who had the satisfaction of exercising his stock-whip on the body of one of the sable youths connected with the besieging party. The offenders are not likely to be discovered, which is to be regretted. Mr and Mrs Smith have since removed into the town...³⁵

These times were difficult and harsh, and there seems little reason to doubt that the entire settlement of the region was one based upon hatred and bloodshed, as Loyau rather colourfully described:

The old township (Wide Bay village) commenced amidst barbarism and savagery, when aborigines were plentiful and hostilities frequent. Many a murder was done and never discovered, and many a poor shepherd and hut-keeper fell beneath the spears and tomahawks of blacks ... it was imperative for the settler, however humble, to carry firearms and be on his guard against treacherous foes, and I believe I am not wrong in stating that every acre of land in these districts was won from aborigines by bloodshed and warfare, whilst in some instances poison played an important part.³⁶

There was little or no understanding of the aboriginal community at this time, the indigenous people were regarded as savages and blood-thirsty heathens who, many believed, should be shot on sight. Few white colonists took the trouble to form an understanding with the aboriginal community and the general consensus of opinion was that the aboriginal people were untrustworthy, lazy, cunning, lewd, and dangerous, as Loyau wrote:

To the casual observer they were a singularly uninteresting people ... Their polygamous instincts and lax ideas as to the status of woman - her value as a wife being merely estimated by her ability to carry a heavy load of chattels and effects for her lord and master - to be a submissive slave to his whims and caprices, and to permit herself to be sold for purposes of lust nightly to the highest bidder. Coin of any kind and even worthless tokens was sufficient to secure any aboriginal female however virtuous or apparently immaculate if bartered by her sable partner. Doubtless the system of concubinage in which many squatters and their men indulged, and the feeling of jealousy induced in the savage mind, may account for the numerous murders and outrages which sullied the records of the first founding of these districts, and the grafting of civilization on the tree of barbarism. But the blacks, whilst faithful to fault, were mischievous and treacherous, and even sacrificed their dearest friends for revenge. No white man was safe without his rifle or colt at hand. The jungle on the banks of the Mary enabled them to move through the country without being seen, and now and then the settler discovered their presence in his vicinity by a dead bullock or two with spears in the carcass, or in a report from the out-stations of some unfortunate shepherd or hut-keeper having got a ... nulla or tomahawk. They cleverly mark their tracks to water and then perch on branches of trees overhead ... and they had the smart knack of approaching outstations apparently unarmed, but really dragging spears between their toes.³⁷

According to Henry Palmer, shortly after Furber returned to the Wide Bay region following the attack on him and his servant, he took the law into his own hands. He had been issued with a warrant for the arrest of Bingalee, one of the men who had attempted to kill him, and one day he saw the man at Palmer's store. Palmer, who witnessed the entire event later recorded:

After this event (the attack on Furber and his servant), Furber never went about without a loaded pistol, and the opportunity of revenge did not take long, for a short time after, whilst unloading wool at the Palmer's stores, where a number of blacks were employed, Furber was seen coming from the opposite side in great haste. He came up to the store, and fixing on a certain black, drew a pistol out of his breast pocket and shot him dead, saying, 'That is the man that tried to kill me.' The commissioner for the time being was within a few yards, but he retired into his camp,

apparently taking no notice of the tragic scene. Furber said nothing more than, '...that is the black that tried to kill me.' He was known to have a warrant for the apprehension of the man, but had it not with him at the time. He rushed across in great haste in the boat to his camp on the other side, (of the river) and got the warrant, returning to the store and into the commissioner's camp, saying, 'Here is the warrant for the apprehension of the man who tried to kill me. I now give myself up.' The commissioner held a temporary inquiry; he did not order the constables to take charge of Furber, but took the depositions, merely saying he would have to abide by the consequences on his sending the depositions to the headquarters at Brisbane. The result was, no action was taken by the authorities, so that Furber had his revenge.³⁸

It seems fairly evident that Furber, in any case, held little respect for the law, or more especially those people whose task it was to uphold the law. Evidence of this may be seen in the case of Furber versus Constable Higgings, a case which had taken place in September 1846 before his arrival at Wide Bay. Details of the case are sketchy but it seems that Higgings had been drunk on Tuesday 1 September that year and had 'assaulted' Furber's wife. Furber brought charges against the constable who was later fined £2 and dismissed from the force. Thereafter it seems that Furber held only contempt for the police and was likely to take the law into his own hands when he felt that justice was necessary.³⁹

Following the shooting of Bingalee, Henry Palmer claimed that the aboriginal people quickly carried the body away. Palmer later wrote:

A great uproar took place amongst the blacks present at the shooting incident. They conveyed the body about half a mile away from the stores, and as it became known that they were going to have a feast that night on the body, the writer, accompanied by the late Dr H.H. Brown and others, hearing the noise of the blacks at the camp, went up to see what was going on. They found a considerable number of the adult aboriginals (sic) around the fire and the body of the slain black laid out and being cut up into pieces and cooked on the embers, giving a most fragrant odour. We were not permitted to come within a certain distance, but were sufficiently near to see what was going on. The flesh, being partly roasted, was given to the men surrounding the fire, and each seemed to enjoy the feast; no females or children were admitted near, but pieces were put in reserve in dilly bags and other receptacles. This is the first and only cannibal feast the writer ever had an opportunity of witnessing, and Dr Brown said it was worth his while coming out from England to see the savage feast.⁴⁰

Another early resident to the area, writing his own version of the same events in 1922, recorded that Palmer had told him:

One day we had about a dozen blackfellows unloading bales of wool from a bullock dray at our store. I saw Mr Furber come across the river in his boat. He walked straight up to one of the blacks, pulled out a big horse-pistol, and shot him dead. I said to him, 'Mr Furber, why have you done this?' He replied, 'Mr Palmer, that is the man who tried to murder me and very nearly succeeded.' Soon afterwards I saw ... (Commissioner Bidwill), and asked him what action he proposed to take in the matter. He said, 'I don't intend to take any action Mr Palmer. We are here a mere handful of white men surrounded by thousands of black savages who understand no law but the law of self-defence ... Furber has removed a murderer in the only way the blacks understand, and our own lives will be all the safer for it. I shall leave it at that.'⁴¹

The court case concerning the attack on George Furber did not take place until May 1852 when two aborigines who had allegedly been at the site that day were arraigned before the Circuit Court at Moreton Bay. Warrants had been sworn out in Maryborough and the two accused men, Hurryguree (also known as Durruggaree, Dunrobberee and Billy Dorobbery) and Perika, (also known as Periha and Fuckemall), had been arrested on Fraser Island by police and special constables under the command of Frederick Walker, the commandant of the Native Mounted Police.

Furber, of course, had already shot and killed Bingaree, one of the aborigines who had allegedly been responsible for the attack. The charges only covered the attack on Furber and no charges were brought for the attack on Furber's servant. At the time Furber was suffering from a fever and, according to a deposition signed by Doctor Edward Palmer, was too ill to attend the court. Furber's absence was to have a remarkable effect on the outcome of the trial. The case against the two defendants was extremely flimsy. It was basically the word of one white man against the testimony of two aboriginal men who both swore - evidently with some conviction - that they had not been anywhere near the scene of the attack on Furber and his servant, and indeed had been

young boys at the time. The chief justice hearing the evidence commented on the vagueness and insufficiency of Furber's deposition and then left the case to the members of the jury who quickly passed a 'not guilty' verdict.⁴² It was generally felt that Furber's absence from the court, the lack of his important first-hand evidence which would have been a powerful tool for the prosecution, was the primary reason why the two aborigines were acquitted.⁴³

The *Moreton Bay Courier* reported:

Perriha and Durrugguree, aboriginal natives, were indicted for unlawfully wounding one George Furber, at the Mary River, on the 20th of Oct, 1847, with intent to do him some grievous bodily harm. James Davis was sworn as interpreter.

In this case the Attorney-General stated that there were no witnesses present. Mr Furber, the chief witness in the case, was ill, and medical testimony could be brought forward which would justify the reception of his deposition before the magistrates, as evidence; but the deposition was very insufficient, and he had no further evidence to offer against the prisoner. Under all the circumstances he would bring the case to trial, and take the verdict of a jury.

Edward Palmer, surgeon, deposed that Mr George Furber was lying ill of fever and ague, and unable to attend. His deposition was then put in and read, his signature thereto, and that of Mr Hay, one of the magistrates, having been duly identified on oath. The statement was made on oath at Maryborough, on the 5th January last, and went on to say that on the 20th October, 1847, deponent had employed the two prisoners in putting up fencing, and was himself at work, when Durrugguree took up an axe, and felt the edge. Deponent took it away, and soon afterwards received a heavy blow on the back of the neck, which inflicted a severe wound, the mark of which was still visible. Just before he had seen Perriha sitting down near, like a tailor, with the fencing rammer on his lap. Deponent ran away, and as he was escaping, saw a man (the servant) lying in a hole where he had been digging. He was bleeding and apparently dying. Deponent was quite sure of the identity of the prisoners. In defence, the latter, through the interpreter, stated their innocence. They had heard of the attack but were boys at the time.⁴⁴

After the trial a great corroboree took place in Brisbane to celebrate the release of the defendants, the *Moreton Bay Courier* reporting: '(When) the two aborigines who were charged with attempting to murder Mr Furber were released from Brisbane gaol, they were carried off in triumph to the camp near Breakfast Creek by the blacks in the neighbourhood of Brisbane and drunken orgies were held in the evening at which threats and defiance towards the whites were fiercely circulated.'⁴⁵ What became of Furber's servant is not known. The man, reported as being the wool-sorter Barren, is generally believed to have died during or shortly after the attack, and while this may certainly have been the case, there seems to be no clear evidence of his death. As we have seen, the *Sydney Morning Herald* report dated 8 November, 1847, seems to indicate that Furber and his servant travelled together to Ipswich to receive medical treatment, and no mention was made in the court case of any such killing. If indeed the servant had been killed then the two aborigines who were charged with attacking Furber would certainly have been charged with killing Furber's servant. On the other hand, had the servant still been alive at the time of the court case, it is likely he would have been called to give evidence against the two accused men. It is also interesting to note that both aboriginal men were suspected of having perpetrated, '...several murders and robberies'.

Furber certainly made no mention of the death of Barren in his official statement which was taken before Frederick Walker, Richard Purvis Marshall and James Leith Hay in January 1852. The sworn statement reads:

Police Office Maryborough.

January 5th 1852.

Present:

Frederick Walker Esq. J.P.

Richard Purvis Marshall Esq. J.P.

James Leith Hay Esq. J.P.

Durruggaree commonly called Billy Durobberee and Perrika alias Fuckemall aboriginal Natives captured by the Native Police at the great Sandy Island or Frasers Island supposed to be concerned in various murders and robberies.

George Furber late of Maryborough now residing in the Wide Bay District Colony of New South Wales on oath states on the 20th of October 1847 last past. I was residing at the other side of the Mary River from Maryborough the two Natives now before the Court were employed by me to fall some scrub, at about Eleven O'clock they came to where I was at putting up the garden fence,

they brought the Tommahawks (sic) I had furnished them with, making motions that their hands were sore and that they wanted Flour, by Signs I told them when I had put up the pannel (sic) more of fence I would give them some flour, whilst they were waiting Durruggaree picked up the broad axe, and felt the edge of it, I had to take it from him several times, the black Perrika took the rammer, out of my hands to work, he sat like a Tailor and put the rammer across his legs. Immediately after this, I stooped to adze a rail, when I received a blow of an axe on the back part of my head which blow cut me very deep, the mark of which I now bear, the blow knocked me to the ground and partially stunned me. I got up without the least delay under the circumstances and rushed towards my Gun, when I saw a black over me with an axe in his hand, I could not recognize the black at the time, the blacks all ran away. I then saw a man who was at work with me lying in the hole he had been digging 'bleeding', (Furber's emphasis). I have since seen Durruggaree alias Billy Durobberree once and tried to take him but he escaped from me, the other Black Perrika I have never seen until now that he has been captured.⁴⁶

The charge against the two men was not specific, they were charged only with 'felony', which could have included a multitude of sins. The committal document reads:

The Condition of the within written Recognizance is such, That whereas one Duruggaree alias Durobberee and Perika alias Fuckemall was this day charged before us Frederick Walker, Richard Purvis Marshall and James Leith Hay Esquires, three Justices of the Peace within mentioned, for that Two aboriginal Natives have been this day committed by us to take their trials at the ensuing Circuit Court to be holden at Brisbane on Monday the 17th day of May 1852 for Felony.

If therefore you the said George Furber of Wide Bay shall appear at the next Circuit Court to be holden at Brisbane in and for the Colony of New South Wales, on Monday the Seventeenth day of May 1852 and there give such evidence as you knoweth upon an Information to be then and there preferred against the said Durruggaree alias Billy Durrobberee and Perika alias Fuckemall for the offence aforesaid, to the Jurors who shall pass upon the trial of the said Durruggaree alias Billy Durrobberee and Perika alias Fuckemall for Felony then the said Recognizance to be void, or else to stand in full force and virtue.⁴⁷

In none of the extant court documents is there any mention of Furber's shooting of Bingaree or of the supposed death of Barren. Although it is possible that both incidents were mentioned in the court case, no evidence of this exists as no transcripts of trials were recorded at that time.

Sources and Notes for Chapter Four.

1. *George Furber, First Trader on the Mary River*. Walker, Marie, Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, 1987.
2. M/C. 1 July, 1947, p 2.
3. *NSW Government Gazette*, 8 September, 1847, OL.
4. M/C. 7 December, 1967, p 23.
5. M/C. *ibid*.
6. Walker, *ibid*, p 24.
7. Reproduced in the M/C. 1 April, 1924, p 7.
8. M/C. 1 July, 1947, p 2.
9. *Ipswich Municipal Centenary Book*, March, 1960, p 45.
10. Walker, *ibid*, p 12.
11. M/C. 1 July, 1947, p 2.
12. Lennon, *ibid*, p 18.
13. Palmer, Henry, *Reminiscences of the Wide Bay and Burnett District*, Queensland Geographical Society Vol. 18 1902-03, p 91 and reproduced in M/C. 15 April, 1903.
14. Walker, *ibid*, p 14.
15. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November, 1847.
16. MBC. 6 November, 1847.
17. MBC. 4 December, 1847.
18. MBC. *ibid*.
19. MBC. *ibid*.

20. New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings. Vol. 1 1855, p 817 OL. See also: Clerk of the Peace Depositions, Brisbane Circuit Court, 22 May, 1852. R. v Duryguree (sic) and Perika. Archives Office of New South Wales (AONSW) 9/6373. The warrant was signed by Edmund Uhr, J.P. See also MBC. 11 December, 1847.
21. Palmer, *ibid*, p 91.
22. MBC. 4 December, 1847.
23. Lennon, *ibid*, p 11, and *Sydney Morning Herald* 24 May, 1848. *The Sisters*, under the command of Captain Pragnell, experienced severe gales during a journey from Newcastle to Sydney in July 1860. The heavy seas carried away some of the bulwarks and at about seven in the evening it was discovered that the ship had sprung a leak. The cargo of coal was soon submerged and the captain ordered the crew to abandon ship. Several minutes later, as the crew, in a small rowing boat, pulled away from the stricken vessel, *The Sisters* sank. The ship was insured for the sum of £400. See, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 July, 1860, p 5.
24. Loyau, *ibid*, p 21.
25. Palmer, *ibid*, p 93.
26. *Valley of the Macleay*, Wentworth Books Sydney, 1972, reprint 1981, pp 22 and 36.
27. Palmer, *ibid*, also reproduced (inaccurately) in M/C. 15 April, 1903.
28. M/C. 23 April, 1940, p 6 and M/C. 8 March, 1972, p 14.
29. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society archives, file H 12.
30. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society archive, file H 17.
31. MBC. 25 December, 1847.
32. M/C. 3 July, 1924, p 8.
33. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society file A 4.
34. Nineteen years' old Fred Slater was Maria Slater's eldest son by her first marriage.
35. M/C. 23 January, 1861, p 2. Fred Slater died at Maryborough on 5 December, 1876.
36. Loyau, *ibid*, pp 2-3.
37. Loyau, *ibid*, pp 8-9.
38. Palmer, Henry, *Reminiscences of the Wide Bay and Burnett District*, Queensland Geographical Journal Vol. 18 1902-03, p 91, also reproduced in M/C. 15 April, 1903. The only warrant this author has been able to find concerning the attack against Furber was taken out before Edmund Uhr J.P. on 6 December, 1851. No name is mentioned on the warrant but this may have been Bingaree, who was described as, '... a black, he has small whiskers under his chin and is about twenty five years of age, about five feet six inches high.' As there is no name on the warrant and the description of the alleged offender is far from substantial, the wanted man was to be, '...pointed out by Trooper Edward Wilson.' See, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings. Vol. 1, 1855, p 817 OL. See also: Clerk of the Peace Depositions, Brisbane Circuit Court, 22 May, 1852. R. v Duryguree (sic) and Perika. AONSW 9/6373.
39. MBC. 12 September, 1846.
40. Palmer, *ibid*, p 91-92, and reproduced in M/C. 15 April, 1903.
41. M/C. 31 January, 1922, p 3.
42. MBC. 29 May, 1852.
43. New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings. Vol. 1 1855, p 817 OL. See also: Clerk of the Peace Depositions, Brisbane Circuit Court, 22 May, 1852. R. v Duryguree (sic) and Perika. AONSW 9/6373, judge's notebook, AONSW 2/7076 pp 19-21. No trial transcripts are held of this period.
44. MBC. 29 May, 1852.
45. MBC. 5 June, 1852.
46. New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings. Vol. 1 1855, p 817 OL. See also: Clerk of the Peace Depositions, Brisbane Circuit Court, 22 May, 1852. R. v Duryguree (sic) and Perika. AONSW 9/6373.
47. *Ibid*.

Chapter Five.

John Carne Bidwill.

The first commissioner for crown lands appointed to the Wide Bay region was John Carne Bidwill. Bidwill played an important role in the early years of the establishment of Wide Bay village. As crown lands commissioner his duties included the administration of the licences issued for crown lands, but he was also the police magistrate, the harbour master, and it was among his many duties to record births and deaths, to perform marriages and to hold courts of enquiry.

Bidwill was an Englishman, born at Exeter in February 1815, who sailed from London with his sister, Elizabeth, aboard the ship *Arachne* on 13 April, 1837. The ship arrived at Sydney in August or September that year. (Elizabeth married Thomas Miller in 1840 and a second sister, Mary, who accompanied Bidwill to Australia after he made a return trip to England in 1843, married William MacDonell in 1846).¹

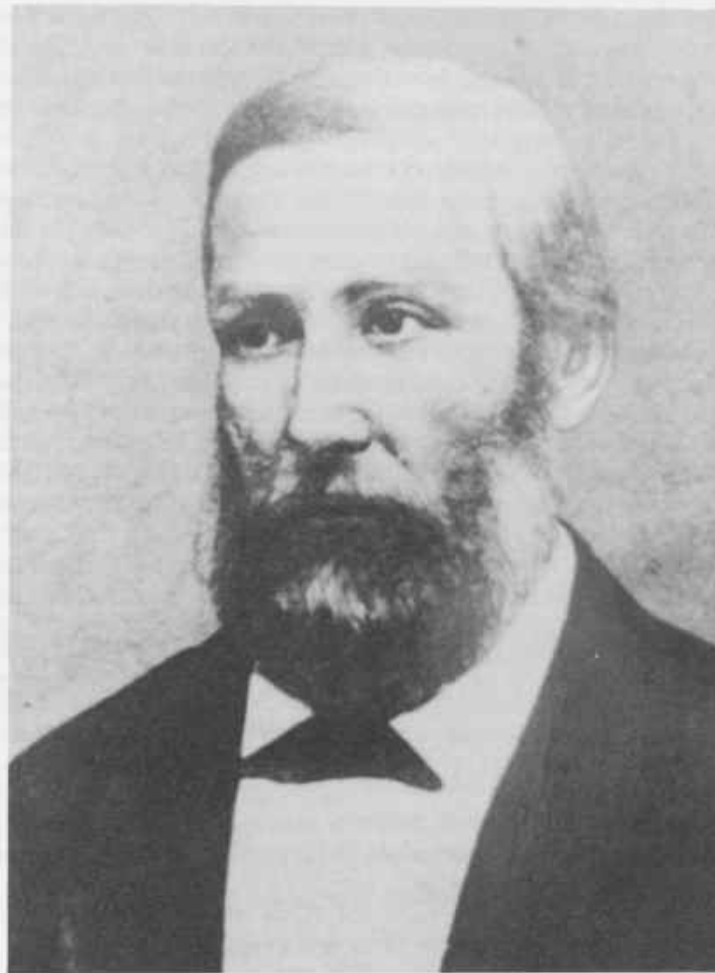
Bidwill's arrival in the colony coincided with the general expansionist events which were then taking place in Australia. The squatters were moving north and west in their hundreds, forming colonies which would soon have a need for law, order and justice. Like many of his contemporaries, Bidwill was seized by the excitement of a raw new country, and the following year he applied for about two thousand acres of land at five shillings an acre. However, the price was later raised to twelve shillings, and, despite a promise from the governor that all previously surveyed land would be available at the original cost, Bidwill waited in vain for the price to drop. He eventually abandoned his application and travelled to New Zealand sometime early in 1839. Because of his training in botany he took a keen interest in the botanical specimens of New Zealand, an interest which led to his writing a book entitled *Rambles in New Zealand* which was published in London in 1841. Leaving New Zealand Bidwill travelled to Tahiti, furthering his interest in botany, and then back to Sydney where he found that he still could not obtain property for five shillings per acre. In 1847 he was appointed as the first director of the Sydney Botanical Gardens, but because of bureaucratic confusion it was an appointment he never took up. The position had already been given to another man by the secretary of state in London. Bidwill took his problem to the governor and requested that should a vacancy for a commissionership come available somewhere in the north, he would be interested. He was fortunate that just such a position was soon being created.

Bidwill was appointed commissioner for crown lands in the Moreton Bay colony on 7 November, 1848, and arrived at Brisbane from Sydney aboard the steamer *Tamar* on 26 November. He arrived at the Wide Bay village the following month.² Upon his arrival he immediately set up his camp on the banks of Tinana Creek where he believed the soil was perfect for his botanical research. He had his men erect a barracks, stables and a modest cottage for himself, his salary was £365 per year.

The straggling community on the banks of the Mary River at that time was very much in a state of flux. It had not even been named Maryborough and was still generally known as Wide Bay village. It was an isolated village struggling to survive in a dangerous and difficult atmosphere of extremely harsh colonialism. Services were few and contact with the outside world was rare, there was not even a postal service. The lack of such a basic service caused vigorous action by the station owners who complained that they were being greatly inconvenienced. Letters from England and elsewhere often arrived at Brisbane where they remained until they were collected by their addressees. However, the colonists travelled to Brisbane on only rare occasions and it often occurred that letters not collected were returned to Sydney.

On 23 January, 1849, James Raymond, the postmaster-general of New South Wales, proclaimed the establishment of a post office on the Mary River, '...to which the name of Maryborough was given.' Henry Palmer was the first postmaster, the price of postage for a letter to Brisbane was a somewhat expensive fourpence.³ The *Moreton Bay Courier* reported: 'Official communication has been made to the postmaster at Brisbane that a post office has been established at Maryborough, which we presume is to be the name of the new township at the Mary River. Mail will now be regularly despatched to Wide Bay by sailing vessel, and from that port to Brisbane by the same means.'⁴ The settlement was officially declared a township on 2 February, 1851.

In May 1850 J.C. Bidwill was involved in a court case in Brisbane over allegations he had made concerning another early pioneer whom he had accused of selling illegal spirits. The man in question was John Daniel Mactaggart, pioneer of Kilkivan station.⁵ During a dinner conversation held at Bidwill's house, Bidwill mentioned that he believed Mactaggart was selling sly grog to Bidwill's men. Present at the dinner table was a man named P. Piggot, a close friend of Mactaggart, who promptly reported the comment to Mactaggart. J.D. Mactaggart, believing that his honour was at stake, immediately sent another friend carrying a note to Bidwill's house. The note challenged Bidwill to a duel, a challenge which Bidwill refused.



*J.D. Mactaggart. Pioneer of Kilkivan station.
Tom Ryan Collection.*

On 12 July, 1849, Mactaggart approached Bidwill as the magistrate stood with a group of friends near the river. Bidwill reportedly said to his friends: 'That man is coming to commit an assault on me - prevent him.'

However, Mactaggart managed to push through the men and, using a whip, he struck Bidwill a blow on his shoulder, shouting as he did so: 'You refuse me satisfaction.' Bidwill later stated that had he carried a pistol with him that day he would have shot Mactaggart. Mactaggart was found guilty of the assault at the Brisbane Circuit Court. He was sentenced to imprisonment for one week and fined twenty pounds.⁶ The *Moreton Bay Courier* published a synopsis of the court case, reporting:

John Daniel Mactaggart was indicted for having, on the 12th July last, at Wide Bay, in the colony of New South Wales, committed an assault upon the person of John Carne Bidwill, by striking him with a horse-whip.

Defendant pleaded not guilty, and was allowed a seat beside Mr Little, his attorney, who was permitted by the Court - in the absence of any barristers - to conduct Mr Mactaggart's defence.

John Carne Bidwill sworn:- (That he) was Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Wide Bay district, and a magistrate of the territory; remembered the 12th July last; was standing not far from his own house, near the wharf at Maryborough, with Mr Corfield, Mr Majoribanks, and another person; had received a letter from the defendant previously; saw defendant coming over the brow of a hill near, with a heavy whip on his shoulder; said to the persons near, 'that man is coming to commit an assault on me - prevent him'; the bystanders did not at first interfere, and defendant struck witness a violent blow across the right shoulder, with the doubled thong of the whip, saying 'you refused me an explanation' or 'satisfaction,' witness was not sure which of the two words had been used; Mr Majoribanks, who was a tall man, stepped forward, and, with considerable difficulty, prevented a repetition of the blow; witness made no blow at defendant in

return, nor any resistance; Majoribanks said to defendant, 'If you want the satisfaction of a gentleman, you have done enough'; defendant then said he was quite cool. The whip was a hunting whip. Witness felt so much pain from the blow that ... he thought the skin was raised; on examination he found that this was not the case; but a red mark had been left on his back by the whip.

Henry Cox Corfield, (testified): - (that he) was standing talking with Mr Bidwill and others, at Wide Bay, on the 12th July last, on the bank of the river, when Mr Mactaggart came up. Mr Bidwill said, 'This man is coming to assault me - prevent him,' or words to that effect. Witness had not time to prevent the assault when defendant struck Mr Bidwill on the shoulder with the doubled thong of a hunting-whip. The end of the thong was held in defendant's hand with the handle of the whip. Bidwill tried to ward off the blow with his umbrella ... Mr Bidwill made no attempt to strike defendant before he was assaulted. Defendant said to Mr Bidwill, 'You refused my friend Mr Murray an explanation, or an apology.' ... Mr Bidwill said he did not choose to give an explanation to every d—d rascal who chose to ask him, or to annoy him. This was after the blow was struck. Mr Bidwill said: 'Had I anticipated this, Mr Mactaggart, I would have brought a pistol with me.' Defendant said, 'You would have shot me, would you?' and Mr Bidwill made no reply. Mr Mactaggart was greatly excited. Witness did not at that time know the cause of the excitement.⁷

John Murray was then called to the witness stand. The press report continued that Murray:

... remembered having called upon Mr Bidwill on the 12th of July, with a note from Mr Mactaggart. (Evidently the challenge to a duel) Mr Bidwill refused to take any notice of the note. He said that Mr Mactaggart was no gentleman, and was beyond the pale of his notice, in consequence of some alleged misbehaviour at Maryborough ... Mr Bidwill said that Mr Mactaggart had acted like a blackguard ...

His Honour then read the evidence to the Jury, commenting upon the same, and expressing, throughout his charge, the strongest detestation of the practice of duelling, out of which practice it appeared that the present case has arisen.

The Jury, after a very short consultation, returned a verdict of guilty.⁸

A descendant of J.D. Mactaggart, Douglas Mactaggart of Brisbane, claims that after J.D. Mactaggart had been released from prison a small welcoming band was waiting for him on the Maryborough wharf.⁹

Bidwill is credited with having introduced the first mango trees into Queensland. In 1852 he was appointed by the New South Wales government to mark a new tree line from Maryborough to Brisbane. The old road went via Gigoomgan, Booobyjan, Barambah, to Goode's Inn at what later became known as Nanango, and then on to Ipswich, a circuitous and difficult dray track. Bidwill set out with horses and a dray from Tinana Creek accompanied by five other men - a cook named Walker, another associate named Slade and three helpers.¹⁰ They cut a straight track to Tahiti station with Tiara approximately four miles on the right hand side of the line. Along the watershed of Tinana Creek they followed a spur of the main range that divided Tinana Creek from the Mary River and then through the heart of what is now Gympie. Bidwill was forced to erect a bridge over the river, and while doing so is attributed as being the first person, (rather than James Nash in 1867) to have discovered gold in the region.

George W. Dart, an employee of Bidwill's, who has been variously, and inaccurately, reported as being his nephew, was convinced that Bidwill was the original discoverer of gold at Gympie. He claimed that before his death Bidwill was fond of showing his gold samples to dinner guests.

Bidwill and Slade later became lost in the wild country after becoming confused over an erroneous sighting of Mount Cooroora - believing it to be Mount Beewah. Their food became short and, in order to survive, they were forced to forage for berries. Friendly aborigines guided them to Durundur station, but the deprivations of the journey - especially the trial of having to march through thickly wooded country for eight days without food - severely affected Bidwill's health, and, at the age of thirty-eight years, he died in March 1853. He was buried in his gardens at Tinana.

The *Maryborough Chronicle* also stated that Bidwill was the first to have found gold in the Gympie region. In an editorial of November 1864 the publication claimed that Bidwill had brought specimens of the gold with him to Maryborough and, '...a party was about to be organised which he had promised to conduct to the spot where he had collected them, but Mr Bidwill died while these arrangements were in progress and the matter (was) dropped.'¹¹

A later report also referred to this discovery, claiming that Bidwill had exhibited a gold nugget in the Maryborough court-house.¹²

However, in September 1851, many months before his discovery at Gympie, Bidwill was reported as having found another deposit of gold in the Wide Bay region, although the precise location remains something of a mystery, and indeed the claim seems far from accurate. The *Moreton Bay Courier* of 6 September that year reported that Bidwill had forwarded samples of the gold to the government with an official request that a gold commissioner be appointed. A later report claimed that the gold was in the Widgee-Widgee mountains and that a bucketful of earth had yielded an incredible thirty per cent of gold. The accuracy of this percentage was also later disputed.¹³ Bidwill's claims were allegedly substantiated by the assistant government surveyor, H.R. Labatt, who, according to contemporary news reports, stated that gold in considerable quantities had been found at Bauple and that the yield was very large, up to thirty per cent. Bidwill was alleged to have published notices cautioning all parties from digging without licences which he was then issuing. However, irrespective of Bidwill's directive, diggers were reportedly moving into the region at a 'furious rate'.¹⁴ Yet the days and weeks passed and no substantiation of the gold find arrived at either Maryborough or Brisbane. One traveller named Surplice arrived at Brisbane from Maryborough sometime early in November 1851 with the news that the reports of a gold discovery were 'well founded' and that the gold existed at a spot approximately sixty miles on the Brisbane side of Maryborough. Surplice claimed to have picked up a piece of quartz in which there was a knob of gold somewhat smaller than a pea.¹⁵ Some Maryborough men had allegedly gone in search of the elusive discovery, another man arrived in Brisbane with a few flecks of gold and, according to the *Moreton Bay Courier* of Saturday 8 November, 1851, registered his name as the discoverer of a goldfield so that he could collect the government reward for finding such a field. Eventually there seems to have been little or no evidence that Bidwill actually found any gold in the Mount Bauple region. The *Moreton Bay Courier* was forced to admit:

...the reports which reached us, and to which we gave publicity, namely, that licences were being issued, and that vast quantities of gold were being dug up, appear to be the creation of a fertile and not over-scrupulous imagination.¹⁶

One man employed by Bidwill was George Dart, who later became a well known and respected Maryborough businessman. Dart's memories of those times remained clear to him for the rest of his life, and in 1907 he wrote his reminiscences. These memoirs are worth reproducing, for they give us a clear description of the village of Maryborough as it then was, and a rare insight into the personality of Bidwill. Dart wrote:

The writer of these lines landed in Maryborough from Sydney by the small schooner *Liberty*. The captain (Johnson) was a black man. We arrived at the old township in the year 1850, in March. After we crossed the bar and coming into the river, scores of naked blacks swam to the schooner and boarded. They explained to the captain where the deep water was, pointing the way the schooner would have to go. When we arrived at the wharf at the old township there were more naked blacks, male and female, about the wharf, more so than whites. As soon as they commenced to discharge the cargo of the boat, which was principally flour, a train of blacks began carrying the 200 lb bags of flour to Mr H. Palmer's store and other places on their heads, and all in rotation. In fact, nearly all the discharging of vessels in those days was done by the naked blacks. My friend, Mr H. Palmer, our most respected and worthy citizen, kept at the old township a large general store of all sorts of goods. There were three public houses in the township, kept by Mr Richard Palmer, Mr Aldridge, and a Mr Surplice. In Mr Surplice's pub the court used to be held until there was a new one erected near the old Ululah water-holes. The chief magistrate was Mr John Carne Bidwell (sic); he was also chief commissioner of crown lands for the Wide Bay and Burnett districts. The first C.P.S. (clerk of petty sessions) of Maryborough was Mr Jamieson, a son of Sir John Jamieson, and the first Crown Surveyor was Mr H.R. Labatte (sic). He had the name of being a very harsh master and never kept his men any length of time in his employment.¹⁷

Dart soon found employment with Bidwill and became one of Bidwill's most valued employees. His comments are illuminating for, among other things, they clearly reveal the attitude of the colonists towards the aboriginal people at that time. As Dart claims, even Bidwill - the police magistrate - was not beyond killing aborigines who raided his sheep pen or vegetable garden. On one particular occasion the fatal shooting of an aboriginal man was of such inconsequence that the man may well have been considered as nothing more than vermin. Dart claimed that the commissioner was so determined to deal with the marauders of his gardens, herds and flocks that he even purchased a powerful man trap from Sydney and the unfortunate person who was subsequently caught in the trap was summarily executed. Dart wrote:

...the blacks were very bad, and constantly pilfering or committing some depredation. It was my duty every now and then to drive about 60 Muscovy ducks down to a little creek in the corner garden ... and I had to bring the ducks back to the house again about 4 p.m. One day I could not

find the ducks but I saw the feathers all over the creek. I then guessed what was up. I went home and told Mr Bidwell (sic). He and some of the men followed the track of feathers for some distance through the scrub near the edge of the river. Then darkness came on and they had to return home - but never got any of the ducks. Mr Bidwell always kept about 100 fat wethers to kill for rations, and at night they were placed in a strong paling yard to prevent the native dogs from getting at them, as they were very numerous and destructive. There was always a bell on one of the sheep for the purpose of finding them in the paddock. But one morning about 1 a.m. we heard the sheep scampering through the yard like mad. The bell on the sheep woke up Mr Bidwell, he got up and called me and we both went to the yard, and when we got near the yard we heard a great scrambling over the fence. As Mr Bidwell was carrying a lighted lamp it must have startled the blacks. We had been only a few minutes in the yard when a spear was thrown within a few inches of Mr Bidwell. He immediately fired his double-barrel gun in the direction the spear came from. Then we could hear the blacks running. In those days it was a usual thing to always carry firearms when going from the house either night or day. So Mr Bidwell made up his mind he would teach them a lesson the next time they came. The following day he got Wilson, the carpenter, to cut a large hardwood block, and this block of wood was about 4 feet long, and it was erected some 10 feet in the sheep-yard in front of the gate. On this block he had securely fixed an old heavy carbine-pistol, the trigger being connected with the gate by a strong string. Some few nights after the pistol was erected we heard the pistol go off. We were all up early to see what damage was done. The gate was smashed to pieces, and not far from the gate was a large dead blackfellow, and some distance from the dead black were tracks of blood showing that another black must have had a taste of the pistol.

Mr Bidwell had two gardens; the lower garden was at the junction of Tinana Creek and the Mary River, and the other garden was called the 'house garden' in which were pumpkins, sweet potatoes and yams. As the blacks were always pilfering day and night, Mr Bidwell was determined to try and frighten them, so he got a large man-trap from Sydney, and it was so strong that it took two strong men to set it. It was bolted to a large stump with a strong chain and was set every night. One night there was a great yelling and noise by a black who was caught in it. In fact his leg was nearly cut through and early in the morning one of the men put an end to his pain and misery.



Mary River aborigines.
Source - Tom Ryan
(Aldridge collection).

It was my work in the evening to yard the sheep which were kept for killing. One afternoon I could not find the sheep in the paddock, and after searching for some time I saw the tracks where the blacks had driven the whole lot, about 100 head, into Tinana Creek, and it was high tide at the time, otherwise some of the sheep would have got stuck in the muddy banks. Next morning, early, a party was sent out in a boat to where the sheep had crossed Tinana Creek. The party spent the whole day tracking but could not overtake the sheep, and came home late next day without the sheep and nearly exhausted. Whilst the men from the house were after the sheep, Mr Bidwell and I were the only persons left at home. At the time there was a cow calving near a swamp in sight of the house. I saw the blacks coming out of the scrub towards the cow. I guessed what they were up to and went and told Mr Bidwell, and when I came out they had the cow killed. Mr Bidwell was sick at the time and too weak to go at the blacks with me. I wanted to go alone with my gun and ammunition, but he forbade me to go. I was most anxious to go alone as I was a good shot and had a double-barrel gun and I was not in the least afraid, but poor Mr Bidwell prayed me to stay and protect him as the blacks knew he was sick and helpless and might come up and kill him. Anyhow, I obeyed from heartfelt sympathy for he was a generous good man and a real gentleman in every sense of the word. The blacks killed the cow and cut her up before my eyes and took her all away. We were watching them from the verandah. Whilst the blacks were carrying on their destruction I got all the firearms I could muster and loaded them in the event of the blacks coming up to the house to attack us. The blacks knew I was a deadly shot through previous combats. The double-barrelled gun which I had, is now in Mr H. Palmer's possession as he bought it and several other things at Mr Bidwell's sale after his death.

I may mention that some time previous to Mr Bidwell's death he was instructed by the government of New South Wales to make a shorter route from Maryborough to Brisbane, than the old route by Barambah, Nanango, and Colinton, etc., for the purpose of taking prisoners overland. So Mr Bidwell commenced to mark his line, starting between Mr G.A. White's present farm and Mr McGregor's, and from thence the line went to Tahiti, Walter Hay's old place, and Tiaro (about 3 miles to the east of Tiaro); thence following up the Tinana watershed, through Neardie old cattle station, to a spur that leads to the main range that divides the Mary River watershed from Tinana. Following the main range some distance, the line dropped down with the Mary River watershed thence following up the eastern side of the Mary River and right through the present Gympie goldfield. Mr Bidwell camped near Gympie several days, making a temporary bridge over a creek to take the bullock dray over, which was carrying their rations and tools, etc. It was whilst camped here erecting a bridge that Mr Bidwell found gold near his camp in the year 1852. The writer saw the gold on Bidwell's return from that route. It was in a pickle bottle. Continuing his marked tree line, in the direction of the Glasshouse Mountains towards Brisbane, the party came to another nasty creek with steep banks where they had to erect another temporary bridge. When they crossed this said bridge they were surprised to find that they were in a natural paddock surrounded by a dense scrub which was strewn all over with sheep skins. Some short time before Bidwell went to make his marked tree line the blacks had stolen from Scott Bros. sheep station at Marodian, a flock of sheep containing 2000 head, which they took near Miva, now Mr Atherton's station, crossed the river near there, and then made their way with the sheep on the Tinana watershed, travelling the sheep towards this natural paddock. When the news reached Maryborough that the blacks had stolen a flock of sheep from Scott Bros., of Marodian station, a party of men was organised to pursue the blacks by going in a boat up the Tinana Creek as far as the boat could take them, and then the party on foot, went to search for the tracks of the sheep. They saw a few tracks here and there, but the blacks were too cunning for the whites. As they drove the sheep along they burnt all the grass that the sheep had travelled on and the country was burnt for miles. As the party did not provide sufficient rations to proceed further in search, they all had to return nearly exhausted.

But, continuing with Bidwell's marked tree line, when he (Bidwell) got to this place he saw it was a natural paddock, and tribulation was fronting him; but he was determined to follow and make headway if possible. After camping in this paddock a few days the cook for the party told Bidwell that the rations were getting short. The cook's name was Walker, and at one time a servant of my friend, Mr H. Palmer. Next morning after Bidwell heard of the shortage of rations, he made up his mind that he and another man named Slade should cut through the scrub towards Durundur to get rations, thinking at the time that he could not be any great distance from Durundur cattle station; but he was greatly disappointed, for he and Slade were cutting their way through this scrub for 18 days. After the first two days cutting through this scrub their little rations were all consumed; but thinking they could not be far from Durundur station, they kept urging themselves on in a state of weakness. For sixteen days they lived on roots and snails, etc., and as

Mr Bidwell was a first-class botanist, he knew what roots were edible. Each had a horse all the time, and in going through the scrub every here and there they would come across a small patch of grass and give their horses a feed, and tie them up at night. On the eighteenth day, when near the edge of the scrub, they heard blacks camping not far from the scrub, and the blacks must have heard Bidwell and Slade. When the blacks saw the weak state that both men were in they took sympathy on them, and did not molest them in any way. Mr Bidwell made them understand that if they would take them to Durundur station he would make various presents. Mr Bidwell was too weak to get on his horse, but the blacks assisted him on, and led his horse by the bridle into Durundur, which was twelve miles away. Poor Bidwell never got over that rough trip and starvation, which caused a severe kidney complaint. After staying a few weeks at Durundur station Bidwell got a little stronger, and made his way to Brisbane to seek medical advice, but the doctors there at the time did not do him much good. He managed to go to Sydney to try the best doctors there. After some time he got a little better, and made his way back to Maryborough; but the poor fellow did not enjoy good health long after coming from Sydney. He had the two doctors here and one from Gayndah attending him, they all did their best for him. He was a very popular man in his vocation, and a great many squatters would come and dine with him at Tinana when they came down to Maryborough. Poor John Carne Bidwell died at Tinana on the 10th March, 1853, and was buried on his farm, where the tomb stone may be seen to this day...

Returning to that part of my epistle where Bidwell left the remainder of his party with the bullock-dray, in the natural paddock, the very next morning after Bidwell and Slade left, the blacks came out of the scrub early in the morning, making their warlike cry, or howl, and carrying their usual war weapons, and surrounded the dray, and Walker, Mr H. Palmer's old servant, was the first to come from under the dray. He immediately got speared in the thigh, and the other three men ran away in the opposite direction to get away from the blacks. The object of the blacks was to pilfer what rations they could get from the dray, or any tools that might be of use to them, but not to murder, for if they were inclined to murder they could have killed old Walker there and then, and could very soon have overtaken the other three men. After the blacks had satisfied themselves with pilfering they left the dray and went into the scrub from whence they came. Shortly after the blacks had gone the other three men came back from their hiding place. The first thing they did was to take the spear out of poor old Walker's leg and bandage his leg up the best way they could. The bullock driver then went to muster his bullocks to yoke up and return towards home, and when all was ready they placed poor old Walker in the dray. He was suffering from great pain and weak from loss of blood. What made things worse was that the party had no rations, as the blacks had stolen everything from the dray that was eatable. All the way back home they made tracks as fast as the bullocks could go without knocking them up. The party had to live by what they could kill with their guns.

While Bidwell was making the marked tree line to Brisbane Mr H.R. Labatte (sic), the then Government Surveyor, left this district, and the late Mr Buchanan was appointed Government Surveyor, and received instructions to proceed at once to finish the marked tree line to Durundur. When Mr Buchanan was ready with his men and bullock team to go, Mr George Furber, with his team of bullocks also went with Mr Buchanan, and after they had completed the marked tree line to Durundur they returned by the same line and brought back two bullock dray-loads of sheep skins from the above mentioned natural paddock. These sheep skins came off the sheep that the blacks had stolen from Scott Bros., of Marodian station.

Shortly after poor Bidwell's death the blacks became very troublesome, and more venturesome. Nearly every day they were pilfering or committing some depredation. In the lower garden of Mr Bidwell's farm there was a married man, his wife and two children and their house was situated not far from the scrub. His name was George Slater, and several times whilst Slater was working in some part of the garden the blacks would go to Mrs Slater and take all the ration she had at the time, and she was too much frightened to call her husband. There was a blackfellow named Kangaroo ... He was a very funny sort of black; never liked to live with the bush blacks; always lived with white men. This black and I one morning went with a horse and dray to the lower garden to collect all the pumpkins and corn and other crops we could manage to get before the blacks stole them all. We had already taken one load of produce to the house, and when returning for another load, and near Geo. Slater's, we heard Mrs Slater crying out: 'Murder' as loud as she could. I hastened my horse up to Mrs Slater as fast as I could with the dray. On my way I saw some blacks running for the scrub. I guessed at once what was up. I picked up my gun, which was in the bottom of the dray, and discharged it at once, thinking that there might be more blacks about in ambush. Anyhow, I went up quickly, and found poor Geo. Slater lying with a spear in his back, just



Aborigines at Booral Great Sandy Island.
Source - Tom Ryan (Aldridge collection).

above the loin. I at once pulled it out and sent the black to the house for some of the men to come down to assist me in carrying Slater into the house. After we had done all we could for him, I got a horse and came into the 'old township', leading another for a doctor. There were two doctors in at the time, Dr Brown and Dr Palmer, I got Dr Palmer to come with me. After he had examined the wound, he said if the spear had been a little lower it would have gone through both of his kidneys; anyhow, poor Slater got better. He was a long time on crutches. Afterwards he and his wife went to Sydney to live. But I never heard how he got on.¹⁸

Dart's memories of the Bidwill years give us some clear insights to the remarkable events which occurred at Tinana, and also during the historic attempt to mark a tree line from Maryborough to Brisbane. Dart's second instalment of his memories is equally as fascinating. He wrote:

The present town gardens was then a boiling establishment carried on by Mr E.B. Uhr. Mr Uhr and his family lived at the Ululah waterholes near the present bridge. A Mr Cameron was the first man in charge of the boiling, and after he had left the late Mr E. Mullett took charge. During the boiling season hundreds of blacks used to muster around the boiling from all parts of the Wide Bay and Burnett districts, and every boiling season the coast blacks and the country blacks would have a great fight. In one season there were supposed to be about two thousand fighting where the town is now situated and you could see the spears throwing from one tribe to the other like heavy drops of rain, and to finish up they would then fight with nulla nullas and knives in close contact.

In the (eighteen) fifties the blacks would often rob the bullock drays when going up the country with rations. The bend of the river and the three miles (Three Mile Swamp) were their most fancied places for sticking up the drays - nearly an every day occurrence at that time...

After Bidwell's (sic) death the writer had to look for a new field to earn his living, so I determined to try Barambah station, which at that time was the largest stock station in the Burnett district, and the owner, Mr Thomas Jones, was a great friend of poor Bidwell. I left Maryborough one morning in company with Mr J.D. Mactaggart, the then owner of Kilkivan station. After some trouble we got to Gigoomgan that night, and stayed with the owners, Hay Bros., and next day we went to Marodian station belonging to Scott Bros., whom the blacks had stolen 2000 sheep from some time previous. The next day we went to Kilkivan by the short-cut or Native Police track. The writer camped 3 or 4 days on Kilkivan to spell his horse, and on leaving Kilkivan Mr J.D. Mactaggart and a black boy came with us part of the road to Barambah, and when we got on the range that divides the Mary River water from the Burnett water, we bade each other good-bye, he returned home and I made my way into Barambah, and got there the same afternoon. That night I engaged with Mr Charles Mason, the then manager of that splendid station, for 12 months. I had been about 12 months on Barambah when one evening Mr (Arthur) Halloran with prisoners and police arrived from Maryborough. In the days I am writing of all prisoners committed to gaol for any length of time were sent to the Brisbane gaol, and were escorted overland by Halloran and his police - one of the police was Samuel Colbourn. Next morning Halloran's police and prisoners made a start for Nanango, which is 30 miles from Barambah station, and Colbourn with them, but he dropped back, and that same afternoon his horse was found with bridle and saddle and without its rider. That night Halloran's prisoners and the police camped at Gould's Hotel at Nanango; they were all expecting poor Sam to be up some time that night, but he did not arrive. All hands went in search of him for 4 or 5 days, and could not find the slightest trace of him, and he was never found nor any part of his garments. That was about the year 1854. Samuel Colbourn was the Crown purchaser of that piece of land on which the Commercial Hotel in Kent Street now stands. He left a wife and 2 children. Some few years after his wife married a man named Mick O'Shea. He was a carrier with two bullock teams. He was a very powerful man. When the dray got bogged, which was often in those days, they had at times to unload the dray. You would see Mick O'Shea carrying 2 large bags of flour one in each arm, and they seemed to be no burden.

Another incident occurred at Barambah whilst I was getting my six years' experience there. One evening, a little before sunset, Mr (John O'Connell) Bligh, of the Native Police, and his troopers came galloping up to the station and surrounded all the blacks, male and female, also the blacks that were in constant work on the station, and handcuffed all around a large gum tree all that night. His object in doing so was that he (Bligh) was after a white man who had been living with the blacks some time, and this white man was supposed to be amongst the blacks at the Bunya Bunya Scrub, which is about 16 miles from Barambah station. Next morning, when Mr Bligh and his troopers were ready, they released all the blacks from the tree, and he and his troopers started for the Bunya Scrub, where they managed to secure the white man, and took him to Brisbane.

During the writer's experience on Barambah at the time he had to follow many different sorts of vocation. In fact, all hands many times had to work at various jobs. One time - most of the shepherds ran away on short notice, and leaving considerable wages due to them. There was a report of a new goldfield found in some part of the colony. At the time this state belonged to New South Wales. When the shepherds went away all hands on the station had to go shepherding, even the overseer (John Monaghan). The manager's son and I also had to go. We took a flock of maiden ewes, 3000 head (two flocks made into one). Both of us had to look over his mob. We had to take the sheep to a place about 10 or 12 miles from Barambah head station called Piggott Plains, and we had a picnic during the lambing, for we had to do our own cooking during the few months we were there, as no hut keepers or cooks could be obtained, and shepherds, for a short time, were getting £2 per week; but by and by there was a batch of German immigrants arrived by the bullock drays; most of them were married men. Those were the first German immigrants that arrived in the Burnett, and they all turned out to be good servants. Their rations were 8 lbs flour, 2 lbs sugar, 1 lb tea, and 16 lbs meat per week for single men, and the married men got double rations. I remember one man was continually complaining to the manager about his meat. He said his agreement was meat; no bone, no fat. Mr Charles Mason, the manager, told this German that the next time he killed a bullock for rations he would kill one that had no bones. So the next beast killed, Mr Mason saved all the meat from the shins and legs, which was kept purposely for this man, but he soon got tired of that sort of meat, as he could not get any fat off the pot after boiling, for I often noticed those Germans were very fond of fat, which they ate with their bread.

Whilst the writer was on Barambah there were 25000 head of diseased sheep slaughtered for boiling. They were suffering from catarrh, a disease similar to the distemper in dogs, and the disease was always at its worst in the winter time. Some mornings you would see 20 or 30 fine large fat sheep dead in the yard. During the boiling of those diseased sheep all hands on the head station were working between two and three months amongst the slaughtering and boiling and cleaning sheep paunches, and when the paunches were clean they were filled with tallow, when half cold and were laid up in troughs made of wood purposely, and tightened up into a square, and next morning the paunches containing the tallow would come out quite hard. When there was about seven or eight tons of tallow ready they would be packed in three bullock drays, with grass and hurdles fixed around the drays, and when packed properly there would be no friction of the tallow paunches on their journey down to Maryborough for shipment. They were always delivered in good order for shipping to Sydney, and the sheep skins, when properly dried, were placed in a screw wool press, and made up into large bundles ready for the drays to convey to Maryborough.¹⁹

Sources and Notes for Chapter Five.

1. Crew, Vernon, paper for the Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, archive file B. 6.
2. *NSW Government Gazette*, 7 November, 1848, OL.
3. M/C. 1 July, 1945, p 2 and M/C. 1 July, 1947, p 2.
4. MBC. 3 February, 1849.
5. There has been considerable confusion concerning the spelling of this family name, some reports giving it as Mctaggart or MacTaggart. According to Douglas Mactaggart, a relative of J.D. Mactaggart, the original name, taken from the Gaelic, was spelt Macinsaigart which was later anglicized to Mactaggart.
6. MBC. 18 May, 1850.
7. MBC. 17 May, 1850.
8. MBC. *ibid*.
9. Author conversation with Douglas Mactaggart, December, 1994.
10. M/C. 4 June, 1907.
11. M/C. 2 November, 1864.
12. M/C. 23 October, 1867. See also, M/C. 23 October, 1896, p 3 & M/C. 27 October, 1896, p 3.
13. MBC. 25 October, 1851.
14. MBC. *ibid*.
15. MBC. 8 November, 1851.
16. MBC. *ibid*.
17. M/C. 4 June, 1907.
18. M/C. *ibid*.
19. M/C. 5 June, 1907.

Chapter Six.

The Old Township Grows.

For the following few years after the attack on George Furber and his servant, the village grew slowly as more and more ships arrived at the port taking out ever increasing quantities of timber, wool, hides and tallow. The pioneer residents continued to be cautiously aware that they were working in an environment of danger, surrounded as they were by a large number of hostile and indignant aboriginal people. There were instances of aggression on both sides, violent and bitter episodes which clearly demonstrated the difficult atmosphere in which the colony existed. As the village grew so too did the number of aborigines, many of whom had been displaced from their original lands and who found that they could earn a modest living by working for the colonists. Villagers often employed aborigines as servants, chopping wood, fetching water, paying them with a little food, some tobacco, or a piece of cloth. By 1852 the incidence of attacks against the white population was on the increase and the commissioner for crown lands, Arthur Halloran, was obliged to report: 'It is almost impossible for me to describe the constant state of alarm in which the townspeople are kept for the dread of aggressions of the blacks whose treachery and audacity are almost incredible.'¹

The small township was in an armed state of siege, its residents going in daily fear of their lives. E.T. Aldridge was determined to obtain better police protection in the region and petitioned the government in Sydney to send extra troopers. Newly arrived immigrants sometimes waited only as long as the next steamer before they left the town, claiming that the area was just too dangerous. Timber merchants found great difficulty getting labourers, and teamsters travelled with pistols and muskets ready for immediate use.

Two aborigines were known to have died after eating flour which had been mixed with arsenic, but who had tampered with the flour is a mystery which today remains a point for considerable conjecture. The victims had stolen flour from Henry Palmer's store. The contaminated flour had allegedly been left beside a larger sack of flour, and it was generally known at the time that Palmer had been vociferous in his condemnation of the aborigines and had made various complaints to the newspapers stating that because the police seemed unable to keep the aborigines in check, then it was about time the residents of the town took the law into their own hands. Palmer also kept a supply of arsenic in his store, the poison being used to control scab in sheep, to exterminate pests and for tanning hides.² Yet in fairness to Palmer, it must be stated that accidents with poisons were frequent. At Jondaryan station for example a woman killed most of her family in 1900 by accidentally mixing a poison with the flour she was using to bake her weekly bread.³

In April 1870, an anonymous pioneer, one of the original inhabitants of the old township, confirmed that accidents with poison in the region certainly occurred. He stated that pilfering by aborigines was rampant during those times and that the pilfering was on one occasion responsible for some poisonings. He wrote:

The stores had to be watched and yet the blacks would find some means to rob therefrom. Early one morning there was a great hubbub - the blacks had broken into one of the stores and stole a quantity of flour, but by some mistake they took poison also; they took it to be carbonate of soda as they had seen that article used by the settlers. They made damper and had a jolly good feast; in a few hours after, other symptoms than (normally) follow a good dinner were experienced. The police were sent for from the old township, but before they arrived some of the blacks had crossed the river and two had died and were partially eaten by their surviving friends. This was, perhaps, unfortunate as it had a double action. It was believed that many died from the effects of eating the human flesh, but the number could never be ascertained.⁴

Shortly after the poisonings at Palmer's store, Surveyor Buchanan was seriously wounded by a spear as he walked one evening through the village. Halloran reported to Sydney his belief that the attack had been the result of the poisoning of the two aborigines. Two other aborigines were shot by the police because they were suspects in the murder of Gregory Blaxland at Gin Gin. Another aboriginal man was shot by Constable Howard and it has not been recorded how many aborigines Furber was responsible for shooting.

The killing of Gregory Blaxland is particularly significant, for the events leading up to his death, his death itself, and the actions which followed his death, clearly demonstrate the type of dangers those early pioneers were facing shortly after they landed on the old township wharf or when they came overland from the southern colony.

Gregory Blaxland and his nephew William Forster had left the Clarence River region in 1847, taking with them a large number of stock and horses. One of the women travelling with this party was a widow named Mrs Pegg. Her husband had been drowned a few years previously and two of her sons were employed by Blaxland as shepherds. They travelled north for about twelve months through dangerous and uncertain territory,

occasionally meeting other parties of squatters with similar destinations, until eventually they came to a well-watered creek with countryside that looked promising for the production of sheep, and they called it Tirroan. However, little did Blaxland realize that here, his troubles were about to begin.

As with most other settled areas of south-east Queensland, the aboriginal people resented the presence of this large invading colony of white settlers, especially so because the site chosen by Blaxland was close to an ancient ceremonial bora ring. The first to die were the two Pegg brothers, speared and mutilated. One man who played a part in these events fortunately wrote a detailed report many years later. He never recorded his name, only stating that he had been a Wide Bay pioneer. Yet this is possibly the only written first hand account of what actually happened to Blaxland and his party, and written by one of the very men who actually buried Blaxland after he had been killed.

The pioneer arrived from Sydney at the wharf of the old township in 1849 after a very tedious passage of sixteen days aboard the schooner *Secret*. The ship was made fast to a gum tree near Furber's wharf and the passengers quickly disembarked. The pioneer recalled: 'The population consisted then of two store-keepers and station agents, a magistrate, clerk of petty sessions, a constable, three pairs of sawyers and a government surveyor and his staff. The sawyers were chiefly employed in squaring timber for the Sydney market.'⁵

The pioneer did not remain long in the newly named village of Maryborough. He was searching for employment and soon made arrangements to work at Tirroan. With a group of seven other men, two packhorses and a guide on horseback, they set off for the station. Their journey was unremarkable, but when they arrived at the banks of Gin Gin Creek they were met by one of the station hands with the news that one of the Pegg brothers had been killed the day before and that the second brother was missing. Soon afterwards the body of the second brother was found. The pioneer later wrote:

On reaching the spot ... such a sight was witnessed as would sicken the stoutest heart. There was the unfortunate shepherd lying on a large ants' nest with a black-fellow's spear driven through his belly, and stripped of every shred of clothing. They had likewise decamped with the gun and ammunition, but not until they had battered the body and face until he could hardly be recognised. Here was an encouraging sight for a new chum, two brothers had been murdered in the one day on the station.⁶

Following these attacks a punitive party was immediately formed. Led by Blaxland himself, this party tracked the aboriginal people to a place called the Cedars. This was the first instance in Tirroan's early history where events became enshrouded in secrecy. Blaxland's party returned from the Cedars claiming to have given the large group of aborigines a sound thrashing, however, several years later, as farmers were ploughing the land, many skulls, bones and spears were found where this 'sound thrashing' was said to have taken place.

Events, it seems, would have rested there had it not been for the aboriginal sense of revenge. The target for this revenge was Blaxland himself. The aboriginal survivors eventually straggled back to the station where they were allegedly treated with some kindness by Blaxland. However, it seems clear that the aboriginal people were merely biding their time, and shortly afterwards Blaxland went suddenly missing. The unnamed pioneer stated:

Not long after this the master of the station himself was killed by the blacks within fifty yards of his own house, in broad daylight, and, after killing him, they carried him away to one of the deepest holes in the creek where the water was six feet deep, and jammed the body under a large tea-tree root, believing, I suppose, that he would not be found so easily.⁷

The following day Blaxland's body was discovered by the author of these memoirs, who climbed down into the creek and lifted the body to the surface:

...a shocking sight which I shall remember until my dying day. His face and head were battered as to have lost all semblance of humanity. We had scarcely conveyed the master to the hut when all the shepherds from the outstations came in with the news that another shepherd was murdered. All the spare hands at once had to go to muster the sheep and bring in the body, but this time it was found that the man was not dead, but had both his eyes gouged out with the end of a nulla nulla, a dreadful sight to behold. One of the station hands had the presence of mind to bleed him under the eye which took away the swelling and some of the pain, and did him so much good that he survived the shock and was sent to Sydney at the earliest opportunity. I saw him in the streets of that city groping his way about with the assistance of a dog, as he continued stone blind ever after.

As I and another man were digging the grave for our employer, one digging while the other watched, rifle in hand, and as I happened to be the one digging at the time, and neither of us enjoyed any regular sleep, my mate, who was on watch, went to sleep as he stood and tumbled into the grave on top of me. I never had such a fright, either before or since, as I really believed that the man had been speared ... We completed the grave and buried the body and then started to muster the sheep that were left alive, the blacks having either killed or driven away one-half of the sheep on the station, and burned the grass after them so as to obliterate the track.⁸

After the killing of Blaxland, William Forster gathered together a punitive party from all the surrounding stations and tracked the aborigines to the mouth of the Burnett River near Paddy's Island. Once again a veil of secrecy descended on the whole affair.

The crown lands commissioner, Maurice O'Connell, in his official report of the retaliation, stated that the punitive party destroyed the possessions of the aborigines, burned their camp, and that the aborigines themselves managed to escape into the scrub. However, the real truth of this affair may never have been known, had it not been for Abraham Pegg - the youngest son of Mrs Pegg - who had been present at the time of the punitive action. He claimed before he died in 1908 that approximately one thousand aborigines were gathered together on that fateful day, and although many managed to escape by swimming the Burnett River, hundreds were actually killed in a holocaust of musket fire and sabre thrusts.

Such were the dangers of working and living in the wilderness of the region, a danger which was amply demonstrated in December 1855 when the entire Maryborough community was shocked to discover that Furber and his son-in-law William Wilmshurst had been killed. The *Sydney News* later reported:

...They were engaged cutting timber about 12 miles distant from here at Tinana Creek. In the party with them, though working separately, were two sawyers, Crudden and Boldery.

On Wednesday, December 5, when Crudden and Boldery on going to the tent to their dinner, as usual, and finding that Furber and Wilmshurst did not make an appearance, became alarmed, and in consequence of several indications of bad feelings on the part of the blacks, previously shown, proceeded in the direction where they had been working, and it would appear that they had been decoyed by the blacks to some distance on the pretext of showing them some large timber.

On reaching the spot they were horrified to find the bodies of both horribly mangled; Furber's head had been literally clove in two, and it would appear that he had a hard struggle with his murderers before receiving the fatal blow.

Wilmshurst appeared to have been killed instantly. Their bodies were brought into the settlement, and after a magisterial enquiry were buried in their untimely grave amidst the general sympathy of the whole inhabitants.⁹

Details of Furber's death were also recorded by James Lennon, himself an early resident of Wide Bay and an author. Lennon's account, albeit written many years later, is interesting for it indicates that Furber - as has been rumoured - was easily angered by the aboriginal people and did not hesitate to use his pistol. This account claimed that the two men were killed at their saw and not away in the scrub. Lennon's account demonstrates that the killing of Furber and his son-in-law must have been accomplished very quickly, as they were both found lying dead at the ends of the saw, indicating that their killers must have crept up to them silently and that the victims did not have a chance to turn and defend themselves. Lennon wrote:

They were both found dead, one at each end of the saw which, a short time before they were manipulating. A punitive expedition of all the lumbermen and others proceeded to Fraser Island to apprehend the niggers and give them short shift, but they could not be found. Furber was a daring venturesome man and had the name of being quick on the draw when a black appeared.¹⁰

It is difficult now to ascertain exactly why Furber and Wilmshurst were attacked, but the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 18 December, 1855, that a few weeks prior to the attack, Furber's tent had been robbed while he slept and that several bags of flour and sugar had been stolen. When Furber discovered the theft he and Wilmshurst reportedly tracked those who were responsible and recovered the stolen items. The news report does not embellish on this event, but it can be cautiously assumed that if Furber recovered the stolen goods then he also punished those who were responsible for the crime. Furber himself left no details of the event, but judging from contemporary reports concerning the way he generally treated the aborigines, it may be assumed that the punishment he meted out to them on this occasion was severe, and that the later aboriginal attack on himself and Wilmshurst was in retribution.

Yet we do have another account of the killing, that of the anonymous pioneer who wrote his reminiscences for the *Maryborough Chronicle* fifteen years after the events. This person makes some rather remarkable revelations, including the statement that Furber may have had some premonition about his impending death, and that his son-in-law, William Wilmshurst was in great fear of his life and had to be forced by Furber to work on that fateful day. The pioneer wrote:

Poor Furber had lost the rations he had purchased to take with him in the bush where he was getting timber with his son-in-law who had arrived a few weeks previous. The blacks were seen landing on the opposite bank of the river from the town and Furber and his son-in-law followed them and came upon their camp. Not being there I cannot tell what was done. They however returned. A week after this, Furber started in company with two others for a scrub on Tinana Creek; two powerful darkies accompanying them - Mine-Mine (also known as Minni Minni) and Jackey-Jackey. These two, who were considered good workers, were accustomed to work for Furber who had been warned to be careful of them; but he always said that no black could kill him while he had his pistol. But, strange to say, when leaving his family, which consisted at the time of two daughters, he turned back twice to kiss them and say goodbye. About four days after, one of the company came into the town, as it was beginning to be called, with the sad news of their death. It appeared after they got into the scrub, the blacks worked well for a short time, but I believe on the third morning the blacks sent away their gins and refused their food and tobacco which was a sure sign of mischief. The son-in-law, alarmed, refused to leave the camp to go to work with them on that account, until father-in-law charged him with cowardice and after this he went, but very reluctantly, with him and the two blacks, the other two men going to fell timber a short distance away in another direction, leaving a man as cook at the tent - this man I had forgotten to mention before. Dinner being ready, the cook cooeed, but no answer came. The two, thinking that Furber and his son-in-law wanted to finish a cut, waited a short time and then the stoutest went to look after them. Going to the log where he expected to find them - I give as near as I can recollect his own words, 'I was so horror struck that I could neither move nor call to my mates. The father was lying on one side of the log with his head nearly cut off and opened on one side with an axe, the son-in-law also dead apparently killed with a wedge, thus showing that both must have been killed at the same time. It appeared that the log, being high and difficult to cut, that the blacks must have feigned they were unable to cut it off and Furber and his son (sic) then commenced to do so, the blacks looking on, and as they were working with their heads down, the blacks must have struck father and son dead at one and the same time, as there was scarcely any trace of a struggle'.¹¹

There is no doubt that Furber was the object of many thefts by aboriginal people, some of them obviously of substantial financial importance. For example, in 1849 the *Moreton Bay Courier* published a report quoting a local correspondent who stated, '...the blacks are becoming very troublesome here. Last week they took the whole of Mr Furber's fat sheep which he had got down for slaughter'.¹²

The widespread belief that Furber was ruthless in his dealings with the aboriginal people is strengthened by the report of an early colonist who wrote an account of the killings for the press in 1922. He stated that one of Furber's killers had definitely been an aboriginal man named Minni Minni, and that the killings had been an act of revenge. He added that Minni Minni had killed Furber because Furber had previously shot and killed his mother after she had stolen some flour from his tent. Minni Minni was reportedly hunted for many years by the colonists and by the Native Police. It has been claimed that he sometimes received succour in the form of food and shelter from sympathetic white settlers, although, in light of colonial attitudes towards aborigines - especially those accused of killing white settlers - this seems highly unlikely. He was reported as having died sometime during the late 1860s.¹³

Another slightly different version of the events was given by a correspondent to the *Maryborough Chronicle* in 1924. A pioneer signing himself as 'Old Citizen', (almost certainly Edward Armitage) stated that Minni Minni had told him personally that Furber had killed his mother because she would not move her camp when Furber had ordered her to do so.¹⁴

Following the killing of Furber and Wilmshurst there was a spate of robberies and assaults on town residents. The house of a Mr Melville was entered and robbed of tea, flour and sugar, and the following night the garden of E.B. Uhr was robbed of all its vegetables. The next night a dray was robbed of eight bags of sugar and three bags of flour.¹⁵

Sources and Notes for Chapter Six.

1. A.E. Halloran to the chief commissioner for crown lands, 28 December, 1853. Queensland State Archives, CCL 3/61.
2. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 November, 1854.
3. *Toowoomba Chronicle*, 15 February, 1900.
4. M/C. 10 April, 1870.
5. M/C. 14 May, 1870.
6. M/C. *ibid.*
7. M/C. *ibid.*
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10. M/C. 15 July, 1924.
11. M/C. 16 April, 1870.
12. MBC. 10 June, 1849.
13. M/C. 31 January, 1922.
14. M/C. 3 July, 1924 p 8.
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Chapter Seven.

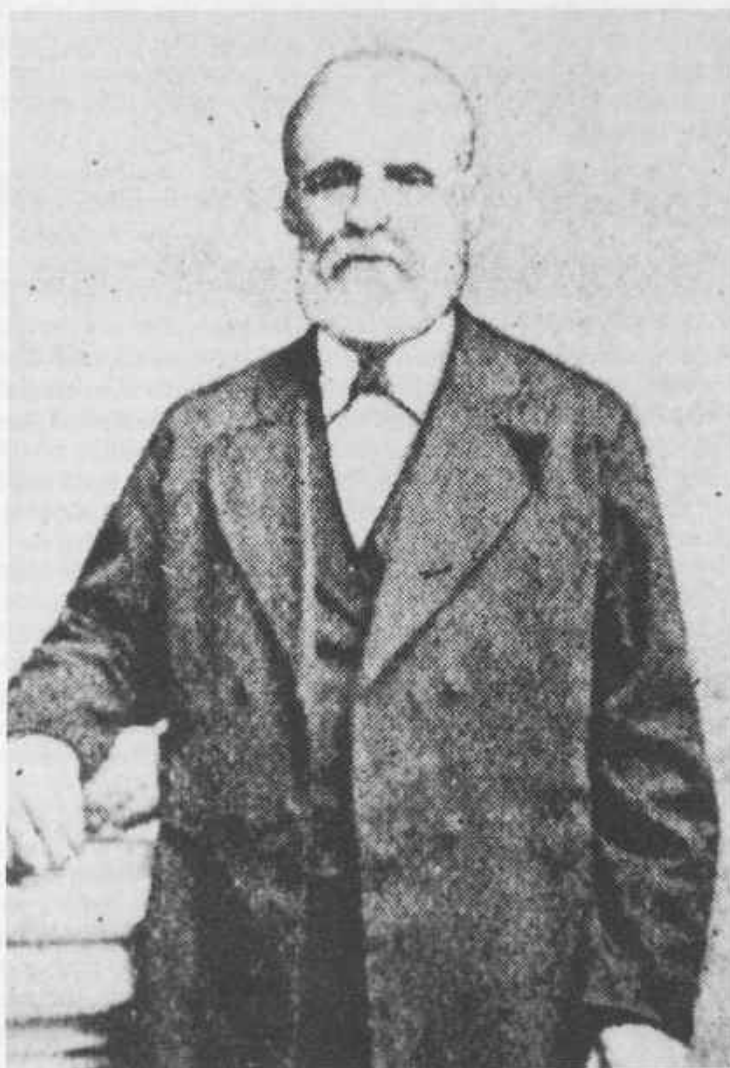
Troubles and the Early Township.

In a report to the chief commissioner of crown lands in Sydney, Commissioner Halloran made a powerful plea for an increase in the numbers of police. He wrote that after the murders of Furber and Wilmshurst the aborigines in the scrub had been in large numbers and were, '...exalting in what they had done.' He stated that the buildings of the town in the course of erection were at a standstill from the want of timber because the sawyers were afraid to continue their work. He added that the surveyor had been unable to procure men for work and that within the previous few days two men had been speared and several others beaten, some with nulla nullas. There had been an outbreak of robberies and large quantities of flour and sugar had been stolen.¹

In 1848 there was no police force operating in the Wide Bay area and a petition from residents the following year claimed that the region was badly in need of some kind of policing force. In January 1850 Chief Constable William McAdam was appointed with a staff of three constables and one clerk.²

One of the men contracted by Furber was John Harwood. A wheelwright from Lancashire who had been born in Bradford Yorkshire in 1817. Harwood came to Australia aboard the *Artemesia* in 1848, the first immigrant ship to Queensland, landing at Moreton Bay and proceeding immediately to Wide Bay village to take up a work contract with Furber. Harwood himself narrowly escaped several attempts on his life and in 1852 he joined the N.S.W. police force (Queensland had not then been separated), and became one of the town's first police officers, a position he held for twelve years.³ Harwood was described as being, 'not tall in stature, but his work for Furber had toughened him.'⁴

Harwood and McAdam allegedly ruled the district, '...with a rod of iron,'⁵ and in 1854 they were joined by another police officer named Patrick Glindon.⁶



John Harwood.
Tom Ryan Collection.

Harwood's wife was the second white woman in the town and his third son, James, was, reportedly, the first white male child born at the old township.⁷

During his term in office as a police officer in the settlement, Harwood was involved in a magisterial scandal which rocked the small township. In December 1857, Mary Doran, the wife of another police officer, preferred charges against Harwood, claiming that Harwood had assaulted her. Harwood was brought before the bench upon which resided Arthur E. Halloran, the police magistrate, and E.B. Uhr, J.P. The court was held in the office of the clerk of petty sessions. The charges related to a series of incidents which had taken place on Christmas Day, 1857. On that day Harwood had brought a prisoner from Gayndah and conveyed him to the town lock-up where he found Constable Doran in a state of intoxication. There was a violent argument between the two men during which Mrs Doran, '...went to the lock-up and interfered.' Harwood ordered Mrs Doran from the lock-up but she became even more aggressive and would not leave. Finally, Harwood was obliged to forcibly evict her, for which Mrs Doran quickly brought a charge of assault against the unfortunate police officer. Harwood soon found himself standing as a defendant before the very people for whom he worked. It was a situation which caused considerable disagreement between Uhr and Halloran concerning the management and discipline of the police. Halloran insisted that the responsibility was his alone, while Uhr claimed that he should have some say in the matter. Their argument became more pronounced and Uhr finally declared that he could no longer sit on the bench with a person such as Halloran, and, in a fit of pique, left the room. Mrs Doran herself was finally fined twenty shillings for interfering with a constable in the execution of his duty.⁸

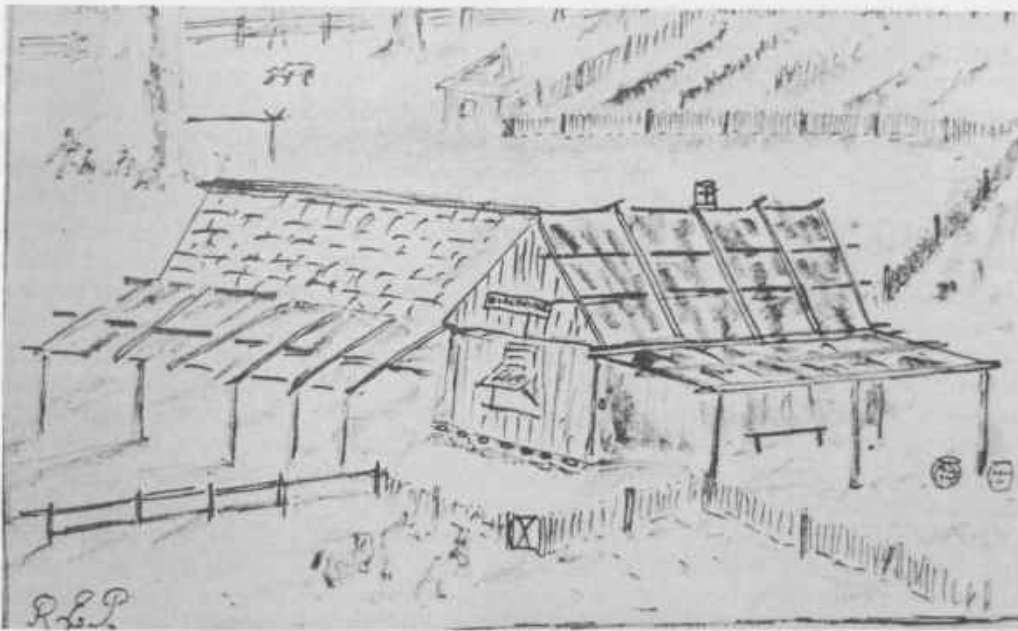
Harwood later became a bullock driver and station owner near Musket Flat. He died at Rockhampton aged eighty-five in 1902, and was buried at Maryborough.⁹

Harwood's associate, William McAdam, had a sad life at the early settlement. He lived in a small cottage with his wife, Rose, and their children. The first Roman Catholic service in Wide Bay village was reported to have been held in their small hut, and their residence in George Street, near Aldridge Street, also doubled as a police station. The lives of some of the McAdam children were particularly tragic, two of them, Phelip Agustine and Susanah Mary were drowned when a ship, the *Effort*, in which they were travelling to Brisbane, was wrecked in 1852. In 1853 McAdam wrote to the governor complaining that he was almost destitute as he had spent a considerable amount of his money refurbishing his house and that most of his money had been lost because Phelip had been carrying it with him when the *Effort* was wrecked. The governor granted McAdam the land on which the house then stood.¹⁰

McAdam himself died at the age of seventy years on 19 March, 1860, and his youngest daughter, Catherine Deigan, aged twenty four, died on 23 December that year.¹¹

One of the most detailed and colourful descriptions we have of the old township was written by a pioneer in 1870. He wrote:

On or about the 3rd of October, 1853, the good brig *Triumph*... came over the Wide Bay Bar, at 6 o'clock in the morning. The sea was tolerably smooth, and all hands were on deck to inhale the land breeze and to take a good view of the island upon which Mrs Fraser had passed so many of her days among the aborigines. All eyes were strained to see what could be distinguished on shore. The brig going at the rate of eight knots an hour, we were soon a good way up the bay, and the dusky forms of the blacks could be seen running to and fro on the sand, waving whatever came to hand to attract our attention towards them; but when they found that we neither stopped nor sent a boat, some that were in advance of us made towards us in a bark canoe, and as they drew near all eyes were upon them - the lady passengers ducking between their fingers and commenting on the impropriety of their coming so close in their nude condition. They were now under our counter, trying with might and main to throw some fish on board but as we had a fair and steady breeze the brig was forging ahead so fast that, in spite of our appreciation of the value of such gifts, we had to leave them behind ... The day being still young and the sun low on the horizon everything breathed peace and serenity. The stroke of the lumberer's axe had not yet roused the echoes of the forest ... As soon as the anchor was let go, the Captain permitted us to go ashore, but disappointment seemed to be felt by nearly all when they found that the only living beings that came to welcome them were a score of blacks, naked as the day they were born, and dancing and capering about with their waddis over their heads, the males painted in stripes of white and red, and the females all bedaubed with pipeclay and feathers. Such a reception was not anticipated ... Maryborough (was) within a day's ride. The boat was got ready and a few of us ventured, after getting proper directions, to seek out the (Maryborough) magistrate's dwelling ... Being only half tide we had to scramble out the best way we could knee deep in mud. On reaching the bank we were greeted with such jabbering from a dozen darkies as would have puzzled



A rare drawing of the old township showing Aldridge's Bush Inn. The initials at the bottom left corner of this drawing seem to indicate that the artist was Richard Palmer. Courtesy - Tom Ryan Collection.

Mahomedan or Latter-day saint. On commencing our journey towards the settlement, now known as the 'old township', nothing could be seen but a faint track leading through a dense brush ... dense scrubs extended on all sides, reaching up to the spot where the court-house now stands. Here commenced the open forest, with the same faint track, shewing (sic) but small signs of civilized occupation or traffic. The majestic ironbark and gum still grew on either side, scarcely one had been removed until drawing near the Yululah (sic) water holes, and here could be seen a few head of cattle grazing near the magistrate's house ... To describe the house minutely is superfluous, suffice it to say that it was a good slab house, standing on the Maryborough side of the Yululah waterholes. On the opposite side of the said waterholes stood the court house - a slab hut, about 20 x 12, with a mud floor. At the back was a smaller hut, used for a kitchen; the clerk of petty sessions sometimes living there. Queer looking places indeed. But the township had to be reached, so we toddled on for another mile when the old township, as it is now termed, opened out to our view. Being pleased to see an addition to their population, nearly all the inhabitants came out of their huts to welcome us and make enquiries as to our numbers, qualifications, and positions ... In looking about, prior to our return to the ship for the night, we found that the inhabitants consisted of two publicans, three storekeepers, two pairs of sawyers, one shipwright, one tailor, two carpenters, one butcher, a government surveyor with one or two labourers, four constables, and one or two gentlemen out of luck, besides the resident magistrate, and the C.P.S. and the commissioner of crown lands, who had both just arrived. There were also representatives of two very necessary crafts - a blacksmith and a shoemaker.

Being now satisfied that we had thoroughly explored the township, we returned to communicate to the female passengers the result of our tramp, and alas it was now that the false impression conveyed to us before leaving Sydney was rudely dissipated. Some of the females began to weep, others were for having their agreements cancelled and returning in the same vessel. After carefully considering the matter, and finding that their own employers, or their friends, would have to adjudicate on each particular case, it was thought advisable to see it out, and make the best of what was considered a bad bargain.¹²

The following morning this pioneer and the other passengers of the brig landed again at the old township. They were certainly disheartened and dispirited by what they saw, a bleak gathering of huts and shanties set between dusty tracks, a few domestic animals and a meagre gathering of vegetable crops struggling under a burning sun. The pioneer continued his monograph:

No conveyance being at hand to remove those who had to travel farther up the country, we had an opportunity of walking out to see the features of the country and what progress had been made in agriculture by the first settlers, but nothing of this kind could be seen beyond a small patch of garden cultivated for the use of the kitchen of the Bush (Inn) with a few valuable tropical

plants and trees and small plots, as gardens, cultivated by two of the police, until we followed the river bank down a short distance, when we came across the house of Mr Cleary. There this pioneer of the settlement had, by the assistance of the darkies, cultivated a few acres in the middle of the then existing dense scrub. To this gentleman the few inhabitants had to look for whatever vegetables they might require and, of course, had to pay handsomely for what they got. Here, then was the extent of cultivation ... until crossing over to Tinana Creek, (to) the residence of the commissioner for crown lands. (Bidwill) Here, also, was a number of tropical plants and trees, planted with a view to ascertain what would be best for the district. All else to be seen was heavily timbered forest, or dense scrub. Even where the post-cum-telegraph offices, and principal building in Kent Street, now stand was a dense scrub, and many were the pigeons that fell at our hands on that and the succeeding days. But it may well be asked how did these people live? ... The storekeepers were either connected with stations or commission agents; and, even in these days, I have seen as many as twenty-five bullock teams in from the distant stations at once. The blacksmith was kept busy; shoes had to be made or repaired; the tailor was also brought into requisition; and the butcher had to supply the beef. As soon as the teamsters had unloaded, and sent their drays to be repaired, they generally adjourned to one of the public-houses, lodged their cheque with the host, and went in for a real jollification, and, in many instances, they have had to go tick for grog for the road, and when they had left, others took their places. In fact, at this time it was nothing strange to see either a quarter cask of wine or a five gallon keg of rum planted at the tail of a dray, the pint pot at its side, with 'help yourself' chalked on the keg in large letters. A regular jolly set I assure you.

The sawyers had to get their timber from the adjoining scrubs, bring or float it to their pit, and saw it up to supply the new-comers with material to build. All were consequently kept pretty well employed.¹³

This early pioneer then went on to recall the moving of the old township to the present site and the growth of the region as more and more settlers moved in:

Our population was now increasing fast. The stores and the post-office were shifted down. The other public-house was also down here; houses were springing up in different parts; timber was procured for the Sydney market; and from this time we may begin to date its rise. The schooner *Blue Jacket* was built by our respected townsman Mr John George Walker in 1854 and 1855, and proved, under the management of Captain Prout, who was both captain and owner, the fastest vessel between here and Sydney, having cleared from heads to heads in three days.¹⁴

Some of James Lennon's writings of the early township and of life generally during those early days are also worth recording, as they give a colourful portrayal of what Wide Bay village and its people must have been like at that time. Lennon wrote:

The dress worn in those days was very primitive, especially so amongst the bush hands, cabbage tree hat, flannel shirt, moleskin pants and blutcher boots were about the wardrobe of the average bushmen. We used to save our old shirts to make 'Prince Alberts', socks being unprocurable ... Boots were prohibitive in price. We used to get the hides from the butcher and make sandals to save our boots, many poor devils had nothing but green hides to travel in...

A word is due to good old Mrs Milner (Granny Dick), who used to go round both the old and new township on foot delivering bread in picturesque half-man's attire. She always carried a revolver ... In the palmy days of wool I have seen teams laden with wool stretching all the way from Thurecht's old White Swan Hotel, (corner of Ferry and Alice Streets) out to Richmond's Hotel at the Six Mile on the Gayndah road. The teamsters had to camp for days waiting their turn to come in and unload their waggons.¹⁵

The baker's wife referred to in Lennon's report must have been quite a woman, a woman who made no small impression on the fledgling township. Carrying a pistol to protect herself against attack, she one day arrived back at her bake-house to discover an aboriginal man stealing bread in the bakery. With some degree of courage she immediately slammed the door of the building and held it closed by the clasp until the police could arrive. Meanwhile the intending thief was doing his utmost to literally tear the door from its hinges, but each time his fingers appeared at the bottom of the door the plucky Mrs Milner stamped on them with her boots. She succeeded in holding the man prisoner until the arrival of a police officer.¹⁶



John Eaton.

Source - John Oxley Library print number 152537.

Early Maryborough resident John Eaton arrived with his family in 1846 and purchased Teebar station from Henry Cox Corfield.

Eaton was born at Richmond Bottoms, in the Maitland district and, as a boy, had worked in Sydney. He later took up work in the country, farming and cattle breeding, and was reputed to have lived through difficult times during this period.

Despite this, Eaton was evidently already a wealthy man when he arrived in the Wide Bay district. In the 1840s and 1850s he owned a sheep station called Berriarye not far from the Namoi River near Boggabri. In 1844 he took up a station called Roseberry on the Richmond River near Kyogle. It was here at Roseberry that he built a beautiful cedar homestead and his family moved there from Bulga. Roseberry was sold in 1855 and it seems likely that Berriarye was disposed of at around the same time - prior to Eaton's trek overland to Teebar.

Shortly after their arrival in the region the Eaton family evidently decided to build another house in Maryborough. At a land sale on 25 March, 1856, Eaton bought portion 1 in the County of March, an area of 35 acres 2 roods. At the price of £1 per acre, it cost Eaton £35/10/-. The land was on the river bank at Tinana and is the block upon which Rosehill homestead was built. Subsequently Eaton bought the adjoining portions 2, 3, 4 and 5 on the downstream side of portion 1 and portion 70 on the upstream side, thus bringing to over 227 acres the area that became the Rosehill farm.

The house was constructed during the next three years and finished around 1858.

Historian Marie Walker later wrote:

The house was two-storeyed. The lower storey was constructed of bricks manufactured on the property, and the upper storey was of timber with a roof of slate imported from overseas. Rooms on the ground floor included a long dining room and a drawing room, each with an open fireplace. On the second floor was a large ball-room lit by a chandelier suspended from the ceiling. All the joinery in the building was hand-made. A special feature was the doors leading to the main reception room. These doors had beautiful glass panels which John had imported from Italy. Each panel was engraved with an etching representing a Greek goddess, and a different goddess appeared on each panel. The lower storey was surrounded by wide verandas with attractive colonnades of brick supporting the squared rafters. Fine furniture completed the interior of the building, including a piano which was reputed to have been the first in Maryborough. Also imported was a landau, drawn by five horses, and this too was reputed to have been the first of its kind in the district.¹⁷

On 4 September, 1861, Eaton was elected Maryborough's second mayor, replacing Henry Palmer. He remained mayor until 15 February, 1862.

The family remained at the Tinana house until around 1880 when they moved back to Teebar.

Historian Marie Walker later wrote:

After about fifteen years of sugar cane growing and small farming John and (his wife) Mary Ann returned to 'Teebar' to live. By then all of their children were married. When Mary Ann's health deteriorated in the mid-1880s, daughter Veronica and husband, Abraham Ezzy, moved to Teebar also. Mary Ann died on 19 March, 1887, and her son, William, who had come over from his nearby property, died the next morning from a heart attack. They were buried on the slope below the homestead.¹⁸

Even later in life Eaton was reputed to have been an exceptionally active man. At the age of ninety years he would still go out regularly with his horse and spend all day mustering stock. He had a family of one son and eight daughters. In June 1904 he suddenly died. Although ninety-four years of age at the time of his death, the loss of this man was keenly felt within the Maryborough community, for with him went many memories of the events of those early years of the region.

He was buried at Teebar in a grave beside his wife and children on 22 June, 1904.¹⁹

Sources and Notes for Chapter Seven.

1. Walker, *ibid.* pp 22-23.
2. Sheehan, *ibid.* p 5.
3. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society archive file H 15 and M/C. 19 January, 1952, p 5.
4. M/C. 18 April, 1964, p 2.
5. M/C. 5 June, 1952, p 7.
6. M/C. *ibid.*
7. M/C. 11 March, 1961, p 2.
8. MBC. 16 January, 1858.
9. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society archive file H 15, M/C. 19 January, 1952, p 5, M/C. 11 March, 1961, p 2, and M/C. 18 April, 1964, p 2.
10. Inscriptions on gravestones, Baddow cemetery and M/C. 7 October, 1988, p 11b.
11. Inscriptions on grave at Baddow cemetery.
12. M/C. 9 April, 1870.
13. M/C. 12 April, 1870.
14. M/C. *ibid.*
15. M/C. 15 July, 1924.
16. M/C. 17 July, 1924.
17. Walker, Marie, private papers, *Rosehill Maryborough*, p 2.
18. *Ibid.* p 2.
19. M/C. 23 June, 1904.

Chapter Eight.

The Fraser Island Girls.

In 1859 two half-caste or white girls were reported to be living with an aboriginal community on Fraser Island and were variously reported as being the daughters of a white woman who had allegedly been stranded when a vessel named the *Sea Belle* was wrecked on the coast several years previously. The *Sea Belle* had sailed from Gladstone on 2 April, 1857, en-route to Sydney, she did not arrive at her destination and no trace of the ship was ever found.¹ Aboard the vessel had been a man named Chief Constable James Harty, his wife and two children, and it was generally believed that Mrs Harty and her children had somehow survived the wreck and were stranded on Fraser Island, although earlier reports from aborigines in the Port Curtis region seemed to indicate that the survivors were stranded on one of the islands off Port Curtis.²

In August 1859, Captain Richard Arnold, skipper of the schooner *Coquette*, a vessel which was trading between Maryborough and Sydney, claimed that the *Sea Belle* survivors had been sighted on Fraser Island. His information, which he claimed had come from aborigines on Fraser Island, gave a fairly detailed description of the fate of the *Sea Belle*, its crew and passengers. Arnold told the publication *Empire* that the *Sea Belle* had been wrecked on Breaksea Spit, its crew and passengers had come ashore by boat and had been surrounded by a large group of aborigines. Beef and biscuits had been distributed to the indigenous people, but some kind of altercation had occurred and an aboriginal person had been killed. This act led to a revenge attack during which all the crew and passengers, with the exception of Mrs Harty and her children, had been killed.

This claim led to rapid action by the New South Wales government which called for tenders to mount a rescue operation and later authorized two men named Molison and Black, with the owner of the *Coquette*, Captain William Sawyer to proceed to Fraser Island and to rescue the woman and her children. The government offered a reward of £100 to anyone who could find the girls and their mother, and a further £300 if they could be rescued and taken to Sydney. The *Coquette* carried a rescue party under the command of Captain Richard Arnold.

The *Coquette* discharged a cargo at Maryborough on 24 September, 1859, and almost immediately proceeded down river to Fraser Island. The rescue party was comprised of Captain Sawyer, Edward Preddy, (also reported as Priddy) an interpreter of Maryborough who also provided a whale boat for the expedition, and two aboriginal men, Toby and Tommy. Toby had previously been employed aboard the *Coquette*.

The *Coquette* anchored eleven miles south-west of Breaksea Spit on 29 September, 1859, and landed a party which was to search for the missing people. With the exception of one fowling piece they went unarmed to show that they were on a peaceful mission. Upon landing they found a group of aboriginal people who were, '...perfectly wild, one of them so excited as to be frothing at the mouth like a mad dog.'³

Gifts were distributed to these people and the rescue party was told through Preddy, the interpreter, that the white people were to be found six miles to the south. The group of aborigines confirmed that there were two white girls living there. The rescue party set off on foot and walked all that day without finding any trace of the missing girls. An old aboriginal woman informed the party that they had been moved even farther south. The trek south continued without success, that night they camped on the beach, and, having no provisions, spent a miserable night. They returned to the ship the following morning and Captain Sawyer wanted to discontinue the expedition as he was sure the tale was simply a fiction. However, it was decided to press on with the search.

The *Coquette* anchored near Little Woody Island on Sunday 2 October and at 6 a.m. the following day the rescue party comprising of Sawyer, Arnold, Preddy, a sailor named Frank Gillard and Tommy, again went ashore on Fraser Island. Accompanied by a group of about twenty friendly aborigines they marched across the island, reaching the eastern shore that afternoon. Another party of aborigines confirmed that the white people were then near Indian Head, they also pointed to a footprint made by a woman with a broken toe, and claimed that this was the imprint of Mrs Harty. They camped the night and the following day proceeded to Indian Head.

At Indian Head the girls were indeed found, but there was no sign of Mrs Harty. One of the girls was naked, the other was wearing only a 'waist-length worsted net jacket.' Frank Gillard, used his shirt to clothe the naked girl.⁴ Archibald Meston, protector of aborigines, later wrote:

There was great excitement amongst the blacks when the white men wanted the two girls, and if there had been time to summon the other tribes of the island it is quite certain the whites would have been killed, or the girls would not have been allowed to leave. By the aid of presents and solemn promises to bring them back within two moons, the girls were allowed to go. There was

no force used. If that had been attempted, there were quite enough men at Indian Head to have settled the *Coquette* party in the days of muzzle-loaders. The girls were taken to Sydney and the reward of £300 paid. They were kept in Hyde Park barracks until Durramboi went down as an expert to give a report. For this trip he received twenty pounds.⁵

Shortly after the rescue, news of the event stirred much public debate in Brisbane and Maryborough. The *Moreton Bay Courier* reported:

We were not, until a few days since, aware of the fact that James Davis (alias Durham Boy) (sic) had paid a visit to Sydney and been examined by the board appointed to enquire into the case of the two girls rescued from Frazer's Island, (sic). The Sydney papers have been perfectly silent on the subject, nor have we heard a word relative to the unfortunate females for sometime past until the information was given us relative to Davis. His belief, founded on his intimate knowledge of the blacks, is that the girls are not half-castes but the off-spring of white parents, his expression being, '...there isn't a drop of black blood in 'em.' When questioned by him the girls appeared very anxious to know why they were taken from the island, and declared their belief that they were nursed by aboriginal mothers. This opinion of Davis still further enshrouds the case in mystery, and we fear that the solution is further off than ever.⁶

The subsequent report of the sub-committee of the pilot board assisted by the health officer and water police magistrate, to the colonial treasurer on the subject of the rescue of two girls is also interesting:

1. We have the honour to report, for the information of the Honourable the Minister for Finance and Trade, that, having examined all the available witnesses likely to throw light upon the previous history of the two children recently rescued from the natives of Frazer's Island, (sic) we now beg to forward copies of the evidence taken at the enquiry, as also of the communications which have been received from several persons whom the board considered likely to afford information.

2. The expedition, undertaken in search of these persons, was originated in consequence of a paragraph which appeared in the *Empire* newspaper, of the 19th of August, notifying the probable existence of some white persons on Frazer's Island; and an offer was made by Messrs Molison and Black, the agents for the schooner *Coquette*, to undertake the service of terms accepted by the Executive Government, vis. £100 if unsuccessful, and £300 if accomplishing the object of which it set out.

3. From the evidence adduced, it seems that Mr Sawyer, the owner of the vessel, undertook the conduct of the expedition himself, and he appears to have spared no trouble in making a diligent examination of the island, or expense in the distribution of presents to conciliate the natives.

4. The persons rescued consist of two females; the elder probably about 16 or 17 years of age, the younger about 7 or 8. They were in a frightful state of emaciation when discovered, and their bodies were covered with a pigment of a brown color, rendering it almost impossible to distinguish the true color of their skin; their noses, also, were flattened, and their faces otherwise slightly disfigured.

5. It having been presumed that these persons were probably a portion of the passengers who embarked, at Port Curtis, on board of the ill-fated *Sea Belle*, in 1857, which vessel was never afterwards heard of, it was considered advisable to seek out some person who had been acquainted with the late chief constable's family at Port Curtis, who, it appears, were the only females who embarked in that vessel; and John Hourigan and his wife, who were at that time resident at Gladstone, were accordingly examined.

6. The testimony of these persons goes to some extent in identification of the younger child as that of the late Mrs Harty, but has no reference to the elder one, Mrs Harty's other child being an infant in arms.

7. A feeling having existed in the minds of the rescuers, and also in those of other persons, that the mother of these children was still in captivity on the island, the Board placed themselves in communication with the government residence at Moreton Bay and Port Curtis, as also with the police magistrate at Maryborough, with a view of ascertaining whether any person could be obtained likely to be sufficiently conversant with the language of the Frazer's Island blacks to obtain from the children themselves the information which it was so desirable to establish.

8. The government resident of Moreton Bay having reported that a person named Davis, residing there, who had been a resident with the blacks in the neighbourhood of Frazer's Island for some years, was willing to proceed to Sydney on condition of receiving a sum of £20 for his trouble, and

the cost of his passage to and from Brisbane, and the government having acquiesced in the measure, Davis was invited to Sydney, and arrived on 26th November.

9. He stated that he could freely converse with the two girls, but at the same time observed that he was unable to obtain much information from them, in consequence of their disinclination to make any disclosures, and their entire ignorance of all that had transpired on the island, accounted for by Davis as being occasioned by their being treated as a degraded race by the blacks, and therefor (sic) excluded from all participation in the feasts, fishing excursions, or wrecking expeditions, and thus purposely kept ignorant.

10. Davis's examination of these children went little way in illustrating how they originally came on the island, but to a considerable extent shook the testimony of Hourigan as to the probability of the younger one being Harty's daughter - the elder child stating that she had known the younger one from infancy, even at the time that it was nursed by a black mother.

11. It however sets at rest one point of importance, which is as to the existence of any other white persons on the island; and on this head the girls are both consistent in their replies.

12. Seeing that the whole matter was in so unsatisfactory a state, the Board determined on ascertaining, if possible, whether a person named Fahey, (also an escaped convict), could be obtained to test the interpretation made by Davis, he being a person well conversant with the language of the Frazer's Island blacks; but although the Inspector-General of police has done all in his power to discover this person, he has not as yet been able to trace him, and the Board feel that they must close their proceedings without this corroboration of evidence.

13. Soon after the arrival of these children in Sydney they were received into the Female Immigration Depot, at Hyde Park, and have been under the care of the Matron of that institution ever since. They have now, under kind treatment and attention to cleanliness, much improved in appearance, and much of the paint with which they were covered has now worn off. They now speak a little English; the younger one, who the most intelligent of the two, picking it up fast.

14. During their residence in Hyde Park barracks they have been visited by many persons - some from the neighbourhood of Wide Bay, as also by several medical men - and almost all have expressed one opinion as to their European origin.

15. We have therefore to report, that in our opinion the children rescued by Mr Sawyer and the crew of the schooner *Coquette* are the children of white parents, but how they became residents on Frazer's Island there is no evidence to prove.

16. That the eldest is certainly not the child of Harty, and there is also considerable doubt whether the younger is either.

17. That there are no white persons on Frazer's Island now, in captivity amongst the blacks, and consequently no necessity to renew the expedition.

18. That the service accomplished by Mr Sawyer is not exactly the one which he undertook when the engagement was entered into, that being for the rescue of a white woman and her two children, whereas the white woman does not seem to have had any existence whatever, but the two children were rescued.

19. Under these circumstances, therefore, it appears to the Board that the service has been performed in the spirit in which it was undertaken, although not strictly indeed.

20. These children having now been brought to Sydney, it becomes a matter for consideration as to what course would be the best to adopt for their future education and maintenance. The elder is so completely habituated to native life, is somewhat imbecile, and is likely for many years to yearn for a return to her old companions; the younger one is, however, far more tractable and intelligent, and already is inclined to take kindly to the matron.

21. It seems, therefore, to the Board, that there are only two places in which they could be received - the Orphan School at Parramatta, and the Destitute Children's Asylum; either of which institutions would afford them all necessary protection and education.

Signed H.H. Browne, S. North, W.P.M., W.E. Deloitte, J.P.
and Thos. Watson, Sydney 25 January, 1860.⁷

Writing from Fraser Island thirty-eight years later, Archibald Meston stated:

The girls were never returned to Fraser Island, and I have so far failed to find any trace of their subsequent history. They were not even half-castes, being pure-blooded children of aboriginal parents. Their brother, now an old man, is at present on the aboriginal station at Fraser's Island. His name is Dunee-cang-wa, and he tells me his mother's name was War-aon-oong, his father's Toowoongaeaa, and one sister who died was called Mang-eeng. The mother had never even seen a white man until the *Coquette* people arrived on the scene. The names of the girls were Mundi and Coyeen. One was about 18, and the other 10 years of age. They were either albinos or possessed of the olive skin and dark brown hair common among the old Fraser Island tribes. There are still two or three of them at this present station.

The father and mother of Mundi and Coyeen mourned them for years, with the endless pain of waiting for someone to come who never more would come again, and their fate was the theme by many a camp fire under the honey-flowered wallum trees.⁸

Seven years after writing this report Meston stated that both girls had died in New South Wales and that the girls' brother, Dunee-cang-wa had died on Fraser Island in 1903.⁹ In fact, the eldest child, who had been given the anglicized name of Kitty, did not live for long, and reportedly died 'an imbecile'. The youngest child, whose anglicized name was Maria, became a domestic servant, was reportedly very intelligent, and died in 1878.¹⁰

E.T. Aldridge was also involved in a small way in these events. Prior to landing on the island the 'rescue' party had arrived at the old township of Maryborough where, as we have seen, they had engaged the services of Edward Preddy. It was later alleged that after landing on the island, Preddy and the other men, in payment for their assistance, gave the Fraser Island aborigines bags of what they said was white man's money and that they could use it to buy flour, tobacco, sugar and other necessities at the township. However, when those aboriginal people arrived at the town soon afterwards and offered this 'money' in payment for items, they discovered that they had been cheated, and that the coins they had thought to be half crowns, were actually only cheap medals struck in commemoration of the exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851. Aldridge, writing of the event about two months later, stated:

Large numbers of the blacks immediately made their way to this township to make their purchases, when they found out their deception - bakers, stores, inns, and almost every other house was besieged by the victims offering these medals for articles they wanted ... and vows of vengeance were uttered to kill the first white people that ever came amongst them again.¹¹

Preddy later admitted the subterfuge to Aldridge and also to three local magistrates, although it is not known if he was punished in any way. Aldridge claimed that, knowing something of the habits of the local aboriginal people, he thought the fraud would be the cause of death for any shipwrecked mariner who was unfortunate enough to land on Fraser Island. He recommended that an immediate distribution of blankets, flour and sugar be made to the islanders with the message that any rescued white people would, in future, be rewarded in a similar fashion.¹²

Sources and Notes for Chapter Eight.

1. M/C. 13 June, 1977, p 11.
2. Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 1859-60, IV, p 990.
3. M/C. 13 June, 1977, p 11.
4. M/C. 24 August, 1898 and M/C. 13 June, 1977, p 11.
5. M/C. 24 August, 1898.
6. MBC. 7 January, 1860.
7. NSW Votes and Proceedings, 1859-1860, iv, p 933. Queensland Heritage, the Library Board of Queensland. Vol. 2 No 10 May, 1974, p 6. also printed in MBC. 21 February, 1860.
8. M/C. 24 August, 1898.
9. M/C. 30 November, 1905.
10. M/C. 13 June, 1977, p 11.
11. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society file A 45.
12. Ibid.

Chapter Nine.

Hostilities.

It is difficult to know exactly how the individual aboriginal person felt as the white colonists arrived on the banks of the Mary River. Aboriginal historian Olga Miller quotes her grandfather, Willy Wondunna, as saying that the aboriginal community benefited little or not at all from the invasion. She claims that her grandfather would come up river to look at the sailing ships moored at the wharf, and the young aboriginal men would look at them with wonder. In answer to a question Mrs Miller claimed to have asked the old man regarding what the aboriginal people had learned from the colonists, what changes they had wrought and what they had first given to the aboriginal community, Mrs Miller records him as saying: 'The women learned prostitution, and the gifts they gave us were influenza and venereal disease.'¹

Willy Wondunna was the *caboonya*, the historian and record-keeper of the *Butchulla* people who, before his death in 1946, reportedly passed this responsibility to Olga Miller.

The coming together of the two entirely different civilizations caused fears and hatreds on both sides of the racial barrier. Newcomers to the Wide Bay district landed at the wharves and eyed the aboriginal people with wariness and trepidation, as Loyau colourfully enthuses in prose typical of the day:

Intending settlers who came from the other colonies were strongly warned to beware how they risked their precious lives among the savages of Wide Bay, and to tell the truth, many a new chum who landed here shivered in his shoes at the sight of the naked aborigines who he fully expected to eat him uncooked ... At first I was inclined to funk, especially when looking at the roof of a hut in which I and my mates were located, at the sight of many dark faces peering down at us caused a thrill to pass through my frame. But I got over that 'ere long and made many friends with those same blackfellows, who succeeded in wheedling a bit of ... negrohead tobacco out of me. Shortly after the great Bunya and Borah, two popular native customs in 1857, a monster gathering of the Burnett and Wide Bay blacks took place near Six Mile Creek. The crowd, which comprised some very saucy, rowdy and treacherous 'myalls' from Frazer's Island (sic) were said to be preparing to attack the township and make a raid on the stores, but it culminated in a sort of free fight and the slaughter of about ten natives. As I passed the next day and saw the groups of sable mourners seated on the ground, my sympathies were aroused by the novelty of the scene and the grief exhibited by the females who cast ashes on their heads and even cut their heads and breasts with sharp pieces of glass bottles, crooning as if to keep time to their lamentations. As I observed all this, my ideas ran much on the poetic aspect of the position, and I sat on a log to rest, listening to the wailing of some of the weird hags who much resembled the witches in Macbeth.²

The act of self-mutilation witnessed by Loyau was, in fact, an ancient aboriginal custom to record the death of a relative. Women often cut the front of their heads and men incised the rear of their heads. At funeral ceremonies it was not unusual to see the mourners covered from head to foot in their own blood. Other acts of self-mutilation involved the cutting of cicatrices on the men, these were made for identification purposes, the cicatrices themselves were sacred and could not be damaged even during aboriginal fights. The women often disposed of the top joint of the little finger on their left hand. This joint was tightly bound with woven strands of their own hair to prevent blood circulation until it withered and fell off. Theories for this mutilation are varied, some claim that it aided in the digging for edible roots, or that it indicated the woman was married or engaged to be married. Both theories are probably correct.

By 1850, the structure of colonial settlement was beginning to change from the extremely rough pioneering environment to a somewhat more permanent perspective. In July that year the government surveyor, Hugh Roland Labatt, arrived at the port in order to survey the township. His arrival had been prompted by several applications from residents who wished to purchase more land in the region.

Labatt was born in Dublin in 1815. He came to Australia - landing in New South Wales in 1841 - in order to take up employment as a draftsman for the surveyor-general. He was appointed as a licensed surveyor in 1844.³ However, Labatt's arrival at Maryborough was the beginning of a period of bitter acrimony. The surveyor was convinced, with good reason, that the old township was not the best possible site for the town, citing as his primary reason the difficulties of getting larger vessels up river to the settlement. Labatt was convinced that a better site existed near the place where E.B. Uhr's boiling down plant was situated, on a creek which ran through the present site of Queen's Gardens. The residents petitioned the government in Sydney claiming that Labatt was wrong. They cited some very good reasons for their belief, including the difficulties of landing stores or building wharves on high banks, marshy land and the lack of fresh water. Even so, the government

instructed Labatt to survey both sites and the first land sale took place on 14 January, 1852. Many of the town's residents, including Aldridge and Palmer, purchased tracts of land at £12 per acre. There were seventy-seven town lots for sale varying in size from one rood to 1.25 acres. One 'suburban' lot of forty acres was priced at £2 per acre. The next sale was held at the police office, district of Wide Bay on 11 May, 1853, with another seventy-seven town lots and twenty-seven suburban lots for sale.⁴

Surveyor Hugh Roland Labatt resigned from the Survey-General Department in 1854. He died at Appin aged seventy-two years and his grave was discovered in the churchyard of St Mark's Evangelist Church at Appin in 1991.⁵

It is popularly believed that Kent Street was named after Police Magistrate John Kent, but this, of course, is erroneous. Kent Street was named during the initial survey of the town whereas John Kent was not appointed to the magisterial bench until 1861.⁶ Kent was born at Boniton, Berkshire, England in 1809 and emigrated to Australia, arriving at Sydney in 1832. He was appointed an assistant commissary officer to Norfolk Island and in 1839 was transferred to Moreton Bay as deputy assistant commissary general, a position he held until his appointment to Maryborough.⁷

Kent arrived at Maryborough, with his family of five, aboard the steamer *Clarence* in January 1861.⁸ Because of widespread aboriginal depredations against the white community at this time, and fearing that Maryborough may some day become besieged, one of Kent's first initiatives was to call for volunteers to form a rifle corps. Forty-four men immediately answered the call.⁹ By March that year the men of the newly formed Wide Bay Rifle Rangers were described in the local press as being hard at drill two nights each week and that they were about to be issued with, '...a superb new firearm known as Perry's breech-loading rifle.'¹⁰

The move from the old township to the new site did not take place immediately. Those residents who had settled at the old township were exceedingly reluctant to relocate, having already spent many years and a great deal of money establishing their homes and businesses at the original site. Yet as the port grew, as the ships arriving at the Maryborough wharves became larger and more frequent, it finally became obvious to even the most sceptical resident that the township would have to be moved. Smaller vessels had no difficulty negotiating up-river to West Maryborough, but the larger ships, those of two hundred tons or more, experienced difficulties with the dangerous shoals - especially at low tides - and finally the masters of these vessels would not land stores at the old township unless a substantial surcharge was paid. Slowly the businessmen and their workers began to drift away from the first settlement to establish new businesses at the present site of the city.



Aborigines Maryborough ca. 1888.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 62344.

Writing in 1870, one pioneer stated that the site of where Maryborough now stands was once called the 'Boiling Down', and that those working at Uhr's boiling down works had to walk morning and evening to and from work with a gun over their shoulders to protect themselves from the aborigines. He stated that one worker:

...being rather deaf, did not notice that one fine morning he was stealthily followed by a blackfellow who, before he was aware of it, had wrenched the gun from his hand, knocked him down with the butt end, and when down, put the muzzle to his head and tried to shoot him, but the gun being on half cock, he could not get it to go off. Other blackfellows came up, who, after giving him a few more blows, left him lying in the bush, threw the gun away and decamped.¹¹

The writer also claimed that prior to this there had been one murder committed by the aborigines, the victim being a gardener who had been working for John Carne Bidwill, then commissioner for crown lands. The site of the murder was alleged to have been at the edge of dense scrub where the Prince ferry later ran. He stated that the aborigines at this time numbered around a thousand at the site of what would later become Maryborough, and that many of them were attracted to the boiling down works where they would fight and scavenge for offal.¹²

The ships now arriving at the port were bringing in a wide variety of goods to support the tiny community. For example, the *Waratah*, one of Maryborough's regular ships, brought huge cargoes of clothing, casks of soda water, lemonade, arrowroot, ale, port, wine, flour, mustard, pickles, vinegar, rolls of leather, iron pots, oil, spades, turpentine, casks of apples, currants, Cape brandy, rum, whiskey, gin, sugar, salt, cases of lobsters and salmon, curry-powder, (evidently to disguise the taste of salted and often rancid beef) piping, sauces, jams, treacle, preserved ginger, tin-ware, tea, even perfume, and much more. Most of these items were destined for one of the stores operated by either Aldridge or Palmer.¹³

This was colonialism in its most basic form, a scattering of families eking out a meagre existence in a wilderness they barely understood, in a country filled with new and forbidding dangers. The food was of poor quality and there was little variation, the work was long, arduous and often dangerous, and in many cases the people suffered from loneliness and a longing to return to their homes where conditions were pleasant, where work was hard but not remorselessly so and where they could have contact with their families.

When George Loyau published his book on the history of Maryborough in 1897 it was received by the local press with some criticism. Loyau answered the criticism by writing that approximately eight hundred pages of manuscript had had to be deleted from the text as there had not been sufficient space to publish all he had written on the early history of the region. He claimed that some of the deletions had included stories of orgies, murder and wild parties. He said that he had deleted a vast amount of information, including:

...the numerous insolvencies and failures which have occurred in business here from the beginning of the town when we shot down the aboriginal residents to that period, when Thacker's Hotel had its nightly orgies and a poor intoxicated creature was cast out of its windows ... or the sprees at Hughey Graham's ... station when a number of old pioneer squatters tried to dance the Highland Fling naked on the kitchen table. I was cook and eyewitness also to the bloodless duel which came off at Graham's station a few days after.¹⁴

Despite these revelries, in reality there was little respite from the hardships and difficulties of that embryonic settlement. The realities were steeped in hatred and violence, but the depredations, hatreds, brutalities and seething resentments of the aboriginal people were not the only problems the squatters had to face. The country they were now settling was filled with danger and problems. Their vast flocks of sheep contracted many diseases and tens of thousands had to be slaughtered and their carcasses burned. The animals contracted catarrh, foot-rot, or scab, diseases which vastly decimated their numbers. Spear grass was also a major problem, the seed of which proved destructive to young lambs and caused the value of wool to be greatly depreciated. For the squatters such misfortunes could - and often did - spell disaster and financial ruin. At that time sheep and cattle were reared for their wool, hides and tallow rather than for their meat. With no refrigeration meat had little commercial value. The flocks of sheep were massive and the runs were equally as large, thus it was almost impossible for the squatters to effectively police these vast regions against aboriginal attack.

Writing his reminiscences in 1870, one early resident gave details of his experiences in Maryborough in 1850. He claimed:

Two of the shepherds, my mates, had left me in charge of the flocks while they went in search of some lambs. Between four and five in the afternoon a black-fellow came and called me by name, and asked me whether I was 'coola' (which means angry) with him. I said, no, I was not. With that

he came towards me and I told him to lay down his weapons, which he did; but at that moment I espied another black coming out of some bushes. I told him to leave his weapons also, and I thought he did so, but found afterwards that he had kept a tomahawk concealed in his belt behind him. I was making towards where my mates were as I thought there might be more blacks about, and the two marched on in company with me, leaving their weapons behind. I took no notice of this as they were both known to me, and as my back was to the sun. One of the blacks was behind and the other in front of me, talking all the while, when I noticed the shadow of a hand in front of me - (the sun being low the shadow could be easily seen). I turned short round and caught the hand, but only in sufficient time to break the fall of the tomahawk which entered the back of my head to the depth of $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch, of which I have the mark still. I had a great tussle with the black-fellow to try and throw him, so as to get possession of the weapon he held. The other black then turned back, and when he saw how I was engaged, and heard me snap a pistol out of my belt, he threw it down and ran away, which surprised me. But on clearing my eyes of the blood which was flowing fast from the wound, I found my mates had come just in time to save my life. They galloped after the other black for some distance, and I heard some shots fired, but of course I asked no questions, being glad to have escaped so easily. I still held the one that struck me and kept him until they came back. Of course we then gave him a fair trial.

Whilst all this was going on, a mob of blacks surrounded the sheep and slaughtered a number of them, and on our charging towards them, they speared one of our dogs, and then ran into an adjoining scrub. Of course we fired our guns, and the shots were heard at the head station, and it being the custom to get all the horses into the yard every morning at eight o'clock, it was not long before we had assistance. We then collected the sheep and drove in those that were left alive.

A few months after this event just related, I one day took my gun, and walked down the creek to see if I could find some game. After walking for some distance I came across some ducks, and fired one shot, and the echo had hardly died away when I was surrounded with blacks, to the number of eighteen or twenty, whom I had not seen before. I was so hemmed in that I could not retreat; to fire on them would have been madness, as I had but one barrel loaded, the creek at my back, and all the blacks before me. Escape was therefore impossible, and I was perfectly satisfied that they meant to take me with them, and expected that they would kill me. They did not leave me long in doubt, for the whole mob formed a circle around me and one of them, being a little civilised, took the gun from me, examined it, and took off the cap. After some parley they walked me off to the camp a prisoner. Immediately after our arrival at the camp they all collected around an old black, whom I believe to have been the king, to learn what they should do with me. While they were deliberating an old gin belonging to the king came up to me and examined my head, hands, arms, legs, and even my teeth. She took particular notice of some marks on my arms, and all at once began to dance around me, cutting her head with a tomahawk, and vociferating (as I learnt afterwards) that I was her son who had been killed and 'jumped up white-fellow'. This incident saved my life; for on the fourth night after, I made my escape, and got to an out-station with nothing on me but my shirt. All the rest of my clothing they made me divide with them. At first the men wanted to go and fire on the blacks but I did not allow them to do so for fear of shooting the old gin who had claimed me as her son. I should have been a very bad son indeed if I had allowed it, after she had saved my life. I was here provided with clothing, and I made tracks for the head station, knowing that all the spare hands would be out looking for me, and being anxious to let them know that I was safe. I was joyfully received, as they all believed that I was murdered, and I had to recount to them my adventures with the aborigines.

Shortly after this a man was found shot on one of the stations in the district - by one of the shepherds. When he came in with his flock he, of course, reported it at the head station at once. A medical man was sent for, and on his arrival the man who reported the death, and his mate, were arrested for the murder and committed to Brisbane to stand their trial. They were found guilty, and were hung for the offence - of which they protested their entire innocence. I happened, some twelve months after, to be talking with some blacks I knew and mentioned that the white-fellows were hung, and these same blacks told me that the blacks had been to the hut, speared the man, and then rammed a bullet into the wound so as to make it appear that he was shot. If the account given by the blacks be true, the men not only died innocent of the crime imputed to them, but the M.D. who examined the corpse could not have exercised much discrimination in the process.¹⁵

Outlying districts were particularly dangerous for wandering colonists and stock was frequently killed by the aboriginal people. In April 1873, one pioneer wrote an account of his troubles on the Burrum:

The blacks at this place are getting very bad, and it is almost dangerous for a man to leave the sight of his home. The scrub round most people's clearings here is well strewn with husks from corn that they are continually stealing, and not satisfied with corn they are stealing other things - sweet potatoes for instance. If there is a number of blacks together, they will dig them before our eyes. I caught three of them in the early part of last week with their bags filled with corn at my place. I took the bag from one and had a smart tussle with him during which I was near getting bit by one of their dogs and my head split with the other blackfellows' waddies, but my son coming up with the gun, they made off quick for the scrub. Their last exploit has been the sticking up and robbing the house of Mr Richard Milner. He saw seven blackfellows digging up his sweet potatoes, and on going over to them, a number of others ran into his house and stole his rations which he had only just got from town, consisting of flour, tea, sugar, a bottle of grog, and sixpence out of his trouser's pocket. This was done before his face, and the old man dared not interfere, for they threatened him with their waddies. I fancy some of them will be getting hurt if they are not more careful. We must protect ourselves or we cannot live here ... One of their brethren named Pig Pig lately died here, and they buried him, or rather, should have buried him, close to the edge of the scrub within a dozen yards of my road. He is placed between some tea-tree bark on a kind of scaffold erected on forked sticks about three feet from the ground, and the smell is so bad, I have had to make another temporary road to keep clear of it.¹⁶



*Typical burial practice of the aborigines of Wide Bay. Artist's impression, 1878.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 57826.*

One of the earlier pioneers to the district was Charles S.A. Drain, who arrived at Maryborough aboard the paddle-steamer *Queensland* in 1863. Fortunately, Drain was one of the few people to leave a comprehensive report of his life in Maryborough at that time, and his descriptions of everyday working conditions are colourful additions to the recorded history of the region.

Writing his reminiscences in 1926, more than sixty years after the events, Drain claimed that shortly after his arrival he was contracted to work for a butcher named William Ring for six months. Drain stated that Ring worked his men remorselessly, seven days a week, and he was glad when his contract ended. One of Drain's jobs had been to take Tommy, the horse, in the spring cart to the killing yards and then return with the freshly killed meat. On the way to the killing yards Drain would have to pass an aboriginal encampment. He stated that the road was lined on both sides with tripod-built, bell-bottomed gunyahs, five or six feet high. He added that the aboriginal people were, '...always numerous,' and that they were all 'natural-born cadgers,' who would call out to him as he passed: 'You gibbit little fella bit meat please.'¹⁷ Drain wrote that one of these aboriginal men was named Pullaway, and that he was completely bald, with no hair anywhere on his body. Drain added:

Old Pullaway was the undoubted chief of the Wide Bay tribe, and as such his sable subjects practically worshipped him. He was of an old age and stood up as straight as a pole, and notwithstanding his many years, was lithe, limber and active. He was never known to speak a word of English, not even pidgin, and at the cart's side he would only say, 'Moorong, moorong,' (beef, beef). He was pleasant featured and, as a rule, carried a homely smile ... My almost daily trips to and fro along the flat road ... overlooking scores of dusky tenements, allowed of a good clear general view into the general customs, traits and vagaries of the blacks at home in their 'big-fella' camps.¹⁸

Drain claimed that at this very early period in Maryborough's history, the aboriginal people were happy, there was plenty of food, game, roots and fish, and that the indigenous people were, 'vigourous and healthy.' However, he added that this was before the invidious introduction of the white man's 'triple alliance', calico, rum and tobacco, and that the Chinese opium dens had not then decimated and corrupted all the young aboriginal girls. Drain added:

Characteristically, the members of the tribes, with very few exceptions, inherited a mania to beg, borrow or steal, and were saturated with low-down treachery and deep dark superstition. Heavy, or even light manual labour was not a leading feature in any of their venerable commandments, but sport, gambling, fun and frolic held a high place. Otherwise, laziness took root from infancy and increased as they grew. They took with alacrity to the early immigrant card games of 'twenty-fives' and occasionally finished the game, particularly the gins, with loud talk and yam sticks. Nearly all of them had a small piece of much prized looking-glass. They would look into it at all angles then burst into loud laughter and repeat the performance. The bearded grown-ups gave a lot of attention to shaving themselves with ... broken glass, and every day a man went into town to cadge ... something to eat, drink and smoke. Provisions in advance of requirements were invariably to be seen lying on top of their gunyahs in the shape of goannas, bandicoots and possums, the latter, whether from an acquired taste or from their laziness to skin them, they always roasted in the fur.¹⁹

While on a fishing trip down river shortly after his work contract with the butcher had ended, Charles Drain stated that he and several other men were suddenly surrounded by hostile aboriginal men who were, '...all wearing that treacherous, "we got you now" grin.' He said that the aborigines stood silently for some time, until their ranks parted and a, 'broad-faced flat-nosed black stepped up to our camp.' Drain reported that this man collected all the fishermen's belongings, including their camping outfit, a small amount of food and tea, and placed them into their half-moon shaped kurrajong fishing nets. One of the white group, a man named Davy, was roughly stripped of his belt, tobacco pouch and sheath knife. The situation became quickly even more tense and Drain claimed that two of the aboriginal men, 'evil-looking blacks,' stepped up to Davy in a very threatening way. The situation was saved by a voice calling from the bush, and soon afterwards the aboriginal elder Pullaway appeared. He ordered that all the stolen items be returned, with the exception of the tobacco, belt and knife.²⁰

George McLachlan was reputed to have been the first white child born in what is now the city of Maryborough. The exact location was a tent pitched on the site where the band pavilion now stands in Queen's Park, although the date is uncertain. McLachlan later claimed that his parents, Mrs and Mrs John McLachlan, built the first home on the new Maryborough site in 1856. The home was a neat slab cottage built facing Bazaar Street between a blacksmith's shop and a furniture warehouse. John McLachlan had brought with him from Broughton Creek New South Wales two hives of English bees, a flock of fowls, two draught mares, one spring dray, a herd of milking cows and several saddle horses.²¹

In 1924, George McLachlan, who later moved to Biggenden, wrote that he remembered a massive theft of flour by aboriginal people which had taken place in 1853. McLachlan stated that the flour had been brought to Maryborough by a Mr J.E. Brown. The flour was placed in a newly erected lumber store which had been built by Brown. McLachlan wrote:

One night the blacks broke into the store and removed fully two tons of the flour - which had been made up into 200 lb bags - and carried it across the Mary River. All the residents of the town went in pursuit of the plunderers, and ... came upon the blacks resting on a flat piece of ground on the coast opposite Fraser's Island. They were surrounded by the natives and had to stand back to back to withstand an attack until reinforcements came to their assistance. The whites were unable to re-capture the flour, however, they were obliged to beat a hasty retreat to escape with their lives. The flour was transferred by the blacks from the bags to containers made out of tea-tree bark. The natives responsible for the robbery came from Fraser's Island.²²

McLachlan later added that aboriginal men were often used to unload wool from the wagons at Brown's store and when the steamer *Waratah* arrived they would act as stevedores. McLachlan claimed that they loved to play marbles and would play the game at the side of Brown's store for hours each day.²³

Historian George Loyau wrote of those times:

The most lively times in Maryborough were when the Sydney steamers came in ... or when there was a goodly array of bullock teams in town with loadings of wool, hides, tallow and the like, or some false alarm was raised that the blacks had been playing up at the station ... then everybody got slightly scared and went to the stores to inspect the firearms in stock, in case we might want some, you know ... I know I was foolishly persuaded into purchasing a Colt's revolver from a new-comer, but as it was more likely to kill me than anyone else, I sold it about ten years afterwards at the Hanging Rock without having fired even a shot out of it. Still, I always kept it loaded for fear of accidents, and one day when a blackfellow at Graham's Creek was handling it in a spurt of curiosity, he pulled the trigger and a couple of slugs passing through my hair showed me the danger I had escaped. The blackfellow's father, seeing the accident, 'yabbered' plenty at his son and ended by enforcing his logical argument by knocking him down with a nulla-nulla as punishment for his carelessness.²⁴

In 1933 one early pioneer to the region, Mr W. Hinsch, at the age of ninety years, made some interesting comments on the history of the region. Hinsch was born in London in 1843 and came to Australia with his parents. He built a ten ton vessel and used this craft to supply shells to the township for the production of lime. Lime was essential in the construction of buildings. For its maiden voyage the boat was hauled to the river by two bullocks and sailed down to a place called Round Bush, below the Second White Cliffs. The shells were brought back up river and burned to produce lime at the mouth of the creek near the gardens where the sailing club now stands. The first consignment of shells was sold to Dowzer and Purser which enabled Hinsch to purchase a new set of sails for his vessel. Hinsch recalled that the aborigines were often hostile towards him as he plied his boat up-river and he pacified them with gifts of tobacco or nips of rum. Hinsch's lime was in great demand in Maryborough, especially after the opening of the first building society when families could obtain the required funds more easily. Each house was built with a chimney and each chimney required at least two bags of lime. However, Hinsch's lime was later condemned by the architect commissioned for the construction of the post office, and Hinsch's fortunes in the lime industry evidently started to wane. He and his father were growing tobacco at Granville in 1893, it seems that he was also the caretaker of the Tinana Bridge when that construction was destroyed during the 1893 flood.²⁵ Another settler who remembered Hinsch and his father wrote years later that the tobacco drying shed at Tinana had, '...a bark roof and (was) slabbed half way to the ground where the tobacco leaf was hung on wires to dry, and where Hinsch senior used to make tobacco which found a ready sale with the Tinana residents, also with the workmen on the sugar plantations.'²⁶

Tinana at that time was a busy little community with three hotels, the Diggers' Arms, the Corn Stalk Inn and the Tinana Hotel. There were four stores, a sawmill, a large blacksmith's shop owned by J. Cummings who kept three fires going and was reputedly an expert in manufacturing ploughs, dressing shares and making horse shoes. There was also a cooper's shop, a wheelwright and a saddler's business, all of which were reputedly kept very busy.²⁷ The Diggers' Arms was the first hotel in Tinana, its original name was the Erin-go-Briagh and was run by the St Leger family with William St Leger as licensee. William St Leger had come from New South Wales and purchased land for £1 per acre. The block where the Tinana Hotel now stands was known as St Leger's paddock.²⁸

Owing to drought Hinsch later became a building contractor and, with his partner, Harry Neale, was responsible for the construction of Fairlie's Sash and Door factory. After the partnership was dissolved Hinsch built a row of shops in Adelaide Street, Boys' shop and several other retail premises. He built the Primary School and the school at Yengarie and aided Jack Annear the successful contractor for the Maryborough to Gympie railway line. Hinsch constructed many of the buildings and gates along the line.²⁹

Often the isolation and danger of living on outback stations forced the owners to give in and abandon their runs. George Beardmore, the Tiaro squatter, was one of these. Beardmore claimed that from September 1857 to May 1858 the region suffered from an extended spell of wet weather and therefore there was little or no summer. The country became boggy, horses floundering often knee deep. Trees with unstable root systems would easily topple in a stiff breeze and the sheep did poorly with only innutritional grasses. Shearing was accomplished with great difficulty, the wool being pressed into bales using a spade and then carted by dray over the muddy and difficult terrain to Maryborough. It was during one of these journeys that disaster struck. Beardmore's brother, Samuel, was killed when a dray slid into the base of a dead iron-bark tree. The tree fell suddenly hitting Samuel on the head. The enormous difficulties, the danger, the unseasonable weather and the death of his much loved brother all combined to force Beardmore to abandon his run and he returned to Ipswich where he eventually married.³⁰

As we have seen, one of the earliest stations in the Wide Bay region, and one to which many early colonists referred to with some degree of respect, was Gigoomgan. Today we would have little concept of the way this historic station looked during the 1850s and 1860s, had it not been for an un-named correspondent who wrote a description of the settlement in 1863. The correspondent described the head station in detail, stating that the gables were painted blue and capped with minaret-like apices. He said that there was an air of luxury about the place, with extensive gardens, about four or five acres in size. He added that being solely a cattle station there were no shepherds' huts dotted over the countryside as one would find on a sheep station. He wrote:

The house is situated on a pretty hill with a W.S.W. aspect, and was evidently so placed as to catch the view of Mount Joseph and the blue mountain range beyond ... Mount Joseph is covered with trees but exhibiting patches of open land ... it is a pretty prospect. Nothing could surpass the kindness and hospitality of Gigoomgan.³¹

At the time of this correspondent's visit to Gigoomgan it was owned by George Mant, one of the region's earliest pioneers. Yet the station had originally been taken up by H.C. Corfield and William Richardson who tendered for it in May 1849, the tender being accepted on 24 November that year. The area of the land was approximately thirty-two thousand acres for which Corfield was to pay £25 per year for a fourteen year lease. The run was transferred to George Mant in 1852.³² In the original tender document the run was described as:

...bounded in the south and east by the Uhla Creek, three miles from its junction with Munna Creek, and in the north and west by Munna Creek to the head of a conical hill known as Mount Joseph.³³

George Mant was the son of George Joseph Mant, a colonel in the Indian Army. He was born in Bombay in 1838 and, as a child, went with his parents to Ireland and later England where he attended school at Brighton. He later trained at an agricultural college. He arrived in Australia in May 1856 to join his uncle, Peter Anderson, then part-owner, with Peter Leslie, of Gigoomgan. On the death of Anderson, George Mant became the manager of Gigoomgan and in 1874 H.S. Littleton joined him in partnership, although Mant later bought Littleton's share in the property and continued to run it himself with the help of his son, George. In 1861 Mant married Ellen Palmer, the daughter of the police magistrate at Bathurst. They had four daughters and four sons. Mant died, aged seventy-seven years, on Friday 24 January, 1913.³⁴

Gigoomgan homestead boasted some innovative features of design. Constructed in 1856, it was a U-shaped home, the builder charged a fee of £50 per year for his work when the standard rate at that time was £45. He justified the extra expense by stating that his work would last for far longer than any ordinary building. The drawing room was lined with red cedar - all cut by hand. The master bedroom was lined with silky oak. The kitchen was fitted with what was believed to have been the first colonial oven in the region. Using this the cooks were capable of preparing a high quality bread rather than damper. The kitchens were built on one side of the U-shape with the living quarters on the other. Meals were taken across an open court which separated the two sections. To keep the food hot until it arrived at the dining room it was carried in special pans in which there was a quantity of hot water.³⁵

Another early settler to this district was John Townsend Atherton who arrived at Gigoomgan in 1861.³⁶ He purchased Miva station which had been tendered for by Gideon Scott in March 1851. Gideon Scott had sold the station to Charles Scott who in turn sold it to Anderson and Leslie in 1859. They sold it to John Atherton in 1862.³⁷ Atherton and Mant remained close friends for the rest of their lives and Atherton managed to run his property despite being afflicted with blindness later in life. He died, aged eighty-five years, on Thursday 16 February, 1922.³⁸ Miva cattle station is still run by the Atherton family today.

Other well known early selections included Teebar, tendered for by H.C. Corfield in June 1849, Hugh Graham's Marianna in 1848 and Aramooroo in October 1855. W.H. Walsh's Degilbo station in 1847, Gregory Blaxland and his nephew William Forster's Tirroan (Gin Gin) the same year, and J.D. Mactaggart's Kilkivan in 1845. Some of these stations were enormous by modern standards. Hugh Graham's Aramooroo was twenty five thousand acres, as was his Dunmora. Gigoomgan was 32 thousand acres, Teebar, Marianna, (Edmund Uhr, tender March 1850) Marodian, East Doongal, (James Smith, tender February 1852) Miva and Wongi (James Cleary, tender January 1860), were all sixteen thousand acres. Other well known and extensive stations in the immediate vicinity of Maryborough included those owned by Edgar Aldridge, Henry Palmer, and J.D. and J.G. Walker. Yet even stations from considerable distances were sending their products through the port of Maryborough, including Henry Stuart Russell's Burrandowan, and C.B. Haly's Taabinga station near Kingaroy.³⁹

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24. Loyau, *ibid*, pp 180-181.
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34. M/C. 27 January, 1913.
35. M/C. 28 September, 1967, p 21.
36. M/C. 17 February, 1922, p 2, and 2 March, 1922, p 2.
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Chapter Ten.

A Harsh and Dangerous Environment.

The state of war which raged for years between white colonists and the aboriginal people was widespread in the territory which would later become Queensland, and also along the 'frontier' which now comprises the New South Wales/Queensland border. For years, aboriginal and white aggression had been a constant problem to the government in Sydney, and pressure to control the problem - especially from the British government - was steadily mounting.

In June 1838 a large number of stockmen and ruffians armed with muskets, pistols and swords travelled north from various head-stations on a mission of murder and mayhem. Despite its distance from the area where Maryborough would later become established, the events at Myall Creek and the subsequent court rulings would play a large part in the hostilities and the secrecy which surrounded the killings of aboriginal people in the Maryborough region and elsewhere.

At Myall Creek the stockmen rounded up some thirty or so aboriginal people, roping them together for slaughter. The helpless people, men, women and children, were led into the foothills. Soon afterwards local squatters heard several distinct shots, later they found a gruesome scene, the aboriginal people had been slaughtered and lay in a widening pool of blood. Not wanting to waste too much ammunition the killers had used their swords on their victims, most of the babies and children had been decapitated.

Later the killers boasted of the massacre. They believed they had been applying rough frontier 'justice' and had no regrets. Several days afterwards the killers carried out another massacre - the action was again exercised with ruthless and bloody efficiency.

After these killings the men responsible for the crimes returned to the various stations where they worked. They believed that no retribution against them would be possible or even sought. The killing of local aboriginal people was a common occurrence, no white man had ever been punished for what was euphemistically termed - 'dispensing the blacks'.

Yet they were wrong, finally, after years of such atrocities and under mounting pressure from the British government, Governor Gipps was determined to stamp out the practice of mass slaughter. The killers were arrested and tried during the most sensational Australian court case of the century. Never before had any white colonists been brought to trial for murdering aboriginal people. The defendants were found not guilty, but immediately after the verdict was announced it was decided to hold the eleven defendants in custody for a re-trial. In November, after substantial legal wrangling, seven of the original eleven men were again tried and found guilty of murder. On 18 December these men were hanged. The message to the white colonists was now clear. Don't kill aboriginal people, but if you must, don't get caught.

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

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

The force, however, was comprised of ex-convicts, labourers, out of work stockmen and ruffians from the Sydney wharfs who were attracted to its ranks because of the availability of almost unlimited power. Over the following years they were to prove to be an utterly brutal corps comprised of men who killed mercilessly and without compassion. The people of Wide Bay had watched these events with mounting curiosity. Legislation to prevent the deaths of aborigines, the formation of the Border Police, were all vitally important aspects of colonial settlement.

By 1851 there were four hundred and six people in the Wide Bay and Burnett districts. By 1860 Maryborough's population had risen to six hundred and sixty.¹ Among the early residents were store-keepers named the Blackman brothers, a baker named McPherson, Jimmy Fanning the boot-maker, Charles Gregory a tailor, a tinsmith named Big Jim, a butcher named Ward, George Bennett and Bob Atkins bullock drivers, John Harwood and his wife, Elijah Smith, a carpenter, James Cleary, a farmer, Dr O'Neill the first surgeon and George (Cocky) Howard the well known inn-keeper who owned the Maryborough Inn. Howard, who later became one of the

town's first aldermen, will feature prominently in this publication. An astute businessman who made enemies easily, in 1860 he was advertising that his inn boasted the only cool cellar in Maryborough. An advertisement on the front page of the *Maryborough Chronicle* read:

The undersigned begs to return thanks for the long continued patronage he has received from the public generally, and to acquaint them that he has at great cost erected a billiard room, and fitted up one of the best billiard tables in Queensland, therefore gentlemen can wile away a few hours in an agreeable manner which might otherwise be rather tedious in 'Merry Maryborough'. Connoisseurs of a real glass of Burton ale should call and try one on a hot day, the ale being engine drawn from a deep clay cellar is always delightfully cool. The only cellar in Maryborough.²

Howard did not remain the licensee of the inn for long, another announcement in December the following year claimed that he was retiring from the business and that he had disposed of his interests to his son William and his former manager, P.U. Walker.³

Maryborough was proclaimed a municipality in the *Government Gazette* of the 23 March, 1861. The official proclamation read:

Whereas a petition, signed by eighty-six householders resident within the town of Maryborough, in the Colony of Queensland, praying that the same might be proclaimed a municipality, and whereas no counter-petition, signed by a greater number of householders resident within the said town was received by the Colonial Secretary within three months. Now, therefore, I, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, declare that the said town of Maryborough shall be a municipality within the meaning of the said Act: And I do hereby, with the advice aforesaid, declare and direct that such municipality shall be called by the name of 'The Municipality of Maryborough'.⁴

Another proclamation of the same date declared that the boundaries for the new municipality would be:

Commencing on the left bank of the River Mary where the road from Maryborough to Gayndah leaves that river at the 'Bend', thence by a line bearing north to Salt-water Creek, and by Salt-water Creek downwards to the River Mary, and by the River Mary upwards to the point of commencement.⁵

A third proclamation, bearing the date 27 March, 1861, declared:

That the Council of the said Municipality of Maryborough shall consist of a Mayor and Aldermen, with all the rights, duties, and privileges thereunto annexed under the said Act or otherwise howsoever; and I also nominate and notify that John Kent, Esq., of Maryborough, shall be the first Returning Officer of the said Municipality, and that the first meeting of the said electors shall be held at noon, at the Court-house, Maryborough, on Saturday, the 20th day of April 1861, for the purposes of the said Act.⁶

When the first Maryborough Town Council was elected with Henry Palmer as its Mayor. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reporting:

Saturday last having been appointed polling day was taken advantage of by most people as a time for relaxation, and business was generally suspended, even by that small section of the community which has opposed incorporation as being the first step to irretrievable ruin. The excitement was very great, particularly after 4 o'clock. At that time a great crowd of persons had assembled outside the Court-house, a few of whom had become extremely 'merry' at the expense, it is said, of one of the candidates who had kindly supplied good liquor *ad libitum*. The erudite anti-municipalist, Ned Preddy - the Nero of Wide Bay - indulged in a shocking display of joviality and oratorical volatility, while others of the late obstructionists were loudly demanding the state of the poll and manifested an amount of impatience that was quite inexcusable when so much spirituous consolation had been received. However, at half-past four Alderman Booker appeared, mounted a chair in front of the Court-house, and proclaimed the result of the polling, which was followed by enthusiastic cheering. It was then announced that the poll would be declared by the Returning Officer at noon on Monday next.⁷

At noon the following Monday a large number of electors met in the court-house to hear the official declaration of the poll and the maiden speeches of the new aldermen.

The returning officer commenced the proceedings by reading the names and votes of the candidates. These were:

Aldermen

Henry Palmer	58
John Eaton	53
Edward Booker	49
Robert Travis	48
James Cleary	43
George Howard	40
James Edwin Brown	37
James Dowzer	33
Thomas Hanlon	23
Edgar Thomas Aldridge	23
John Bourke	17
Robert Case	1

Auditors

James Halcro Robertson	46
John Tobin	40
John Purser	21
William Isaac Inman	16 ⁸

Kent then declared Henry Palmer, John Eaton, Edward Booker, Robert Travis, James Cleary and George Howard to be elected as aldermen, and James Halcro Robertson and John Tobin as auditors of the municipality of Maryborough. After this result had been announced the successful applicants - at least those who were there at the time - made short speeches. Palmer stated that he would immediately apply to the government for a grant to repair the road which ran from the wharf through the town and to Salt-water Creek. George Howard made no speech, he considered that business was more important than attending the meeting and he was, '...up country' at the time.⁹ The press later reported:

The whole proceedings were characterized by good feeling and no interruptions were made to any of the speakers. Mr Palmer was, soon after the meeting, placed in a chair and carried on the shoulders of his supporters to Thacker's Crown and Anchor Inn where an excellent luncheon had been provided for the aldermen and their friends. The usual amount of speechifying took place after this repast, and at about four p.m. Alderman Palmer was then mounted and carried to his residence amid the vociferous cheers of the crowd.¹⁰

Soon afterwards it was discovered that, owing to the court-house not being available for council meetings until four p.m., the council meetings did not finish until after darkness had fallen. To remedy the problem George Howard offered the use of one of his cottages at the corner of Richmond and Kent Streets - free of charge for three months. The offer was accepted by the other aldermen.¹¹

Henry Palmer's position as the mayor of Maryborough was to be short lived. He resigned in September 1861 following an acrimonious debate in council, Palmer stated that his resignation had come because Alderman Cleary had privately communicated with the colonial secretary making charges against the council. George Howard defended the colonial secretary and later said that he wanted to know why some people were, 'so thinned skinned.' A somewhat tongue-in-cheek advertisement later appeared in the press:

Wanted, a mayor. Must be a good pugilist and a chap with a commanding voice and figure. Must not be an animal of phlegmatic temperament nor adverse to the judicious practice of the science of phlebotomy. (The opening of a vein for blood-letting). Apply to the Town Clerk.¹²

Revenue for the new council was a problem from the inception of the municipality as the population of the town was so small at the time that the council was constantly searching for ways to increase taxation. For example, by 1866 a toll was imposed on all traffic coming in from Gayndah at Copenhagen Bend, this included a farthing for each sheep, goat or pig, a penny for cattle, twopence for a horse, sixpence for a vehicle such as a dray or cart, and a shilling for wagons with four wheels. At night, in the absence of moonlight, a light, 'properly trimmed', was kept burning at the turnpike gate.¹³ The timber-getters were so incensed by the introduction of a toll that they once tipped their loads of timber into the river and rafted them down to the mills - thus circumnavigating the toll gate.

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Chapter Eleven. The Native Police.

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

Opinion today is divided concerning the turbulent career of Frederick Walker. Some historians and researchers regard Walker as being a shiftless drunkard with little or no regard for human life, while others see in the various reports, personal and official letters of the man, a more humble considerate person who was confused only by his own methodology and weakness of character. Walker was a man plagued by the turmoil of his conscience and emotionally torn by his duties. His testing came when aboriginal and European interaction throughout colonized Australia was beset with violence and bloodshed.

But why Native Police, why set aborigines to hunt and kill other aborigines? The reason was simple - guerrilla warfare. In the hinterland which formed much of the 'frontier' regions of New South Wales, the local people, despite the depredations of white hunting parties, maintained the advantage of knowing the country and being able to move quickly and silently through it. The colonists perceived that the formation of an aboriginal force, a force with no kinships or allegiances to the people being hunted, would be an effective method of curtailing aboriginal aggression. The Native Police recruits were lured to the work by the privileges they were offered, a horse, a double-barrelled carbine, a pistol, a smart blue and white uniform, alcohol, food, tobacco, blankets, regular pay - and women. This force was to become one of the most deadly and ill-disciplined groups ever seen in Australia.



Frederick Walker, first commandant of the Native Police.
John Oxley Library print number 13924.

Scattered in small contingents throughout the state, the force consisted largely of English officers, many of whom were reasonably well educated and came from other British colonies such as India. These men controlled aboriginal forces of varying sizes. Some historians believe that the force has been much maligned since those troubled times and that a dispassionate view of their activities would reveal that their role in suppressing aboriginal depredations actually prevented the white settlers from turning violently on the indigenous people thus creating widespread and total destruction. Yet this is a subjective view, impossible to accurately assess and, in any case, the facts of the various Native Police atrocities - those few that were recorded - speak for themselves.

Frederick Walker was given the task of forming the force in 1848. He was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age when he was appointed commandant, notification appearing in the *Government Gazette*.¹ To be fair, Walker was a man who believed in a method of justice sympathetic to the aboriginal people. He believed the squatters and aborigines were capable of living together in harmony by forming a friendly employer/employee relationship. Naturally this controversial policy was not well received by most of the squatters who had petitioned long and diligently for some form of protection.

Walker initially recruited fourteen troopers from the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Edward River areas, and set about training them in the arts of armed combat. His pacific policy, however, was quickly disproved when his first real skirmish against the aborigines occurred in May 1849 near the MacIntyre River. At the camp of William Tooth, Walker found aborigines spearing cattle. A great fight followed and the indigenous people learned for the first time of the devastating effectiveness of Walker's force.

Soon afterwards, on Walker's recommendations, two more officers were appointed to the force, Lieutenants Purvis Marshall, and George Fulford.² On 17 January, 1850, Thomas Whitmill was made sergeant-major of the Native Police.³ When Walker and his force arrived in the Maryborough and Wide Bay regions, the hopelessness of his pacific policy was confirmed. The squatters regarded the force as their personal instrument to be used in the destruction of the aboriginal population, and sadly, battle commenced. Under constant pressure from the squatters, Walker bowed, partially at least, to their demands. His method of leadership was patronizing, his troops - ill trained and lacking discipline - often took advantage of their commander's weaknesses to kill, rape and destroy wherever they could.

Fraser Island was frequently used by the aboriginal people as a safe haven, a place to which they could flee with impunity after committing acts of aggression against settlers. It was decided therefore to invade the island with a large number of troops and several civilian squatters who were to be sworn in as special constables. The force landed on the island on 24 December, 1851, during the notorious wet season, foul weather turned the sand and weeds into a slimy mud.

During the following days the skirmishes continued all over the island. Walker became footsore and could not keep up with his men. With such unbridled licence to kill, the Native Police and constables allegedly indulged in an orgy of death, though the full details of this event will now never be known, despite Walker's subsequent carefully worded report to the colonial secretary.⁴

However, regardless of the many aborigines who had died during the invasion of Fraser Island, aboriginal attacks on lonely homesteads continued almost unabated. The Native Police force was being expanded in order to meet demand, and as the expansion continued Walker's restricted organizational abilities were tested to their limits and found to be wanting.

Walker believed in a show of force and demanded that his troopers were not to be spread thinly over the huge territories he was called upon to protect. Many squatters became furious at the seeming inactivity of the force. Walker's policy of police concentration at each troubled location meant that fewer areas could be successfully covered within the same span of time. When a large proportion of his men became ill with influenza, some even dying, the problem was compounded.⁵

William Forster, before selling Gin Gin station to the Brown brothers, wrote to the colonial secretary complaining that aborigines were still attacking his shepherds and killing sheep. He stated that the Native Police were never in the area and that troopers were drinking heavily and indulging in sexual intercourse with aboriginal women. Forster recommended that Walker be removed from command, calling him lazy in his police duties and a drunkard. Walker, in fact, was not entirely lazy but simply disorganized. He insisted upon rigidly following his own, often incorrect policies. However, the pressure being forced upon him by the squatters, combined with his own ineptitude to effectively deal with that pressure, was the reason why he repeatedly turned to the panacea of alcohol, and he was frequently seen trying to perform his duties under the obvious influence of his habit.⁶

In July 1852 fifteen other squatters wrote to the colonial secretary complaining of Walker's conduct. Walker naturally refuted every accusation made against him. Even so, the fact remains that aboriginal aggression in the area, instead of decreasing, was actually intensifying. Walker was forced to increase his force yet again, this time recruiting trusted aborigines directly from the squatters' stations. These trusted aboriginal people had often been employed to aid the settlers in the event of an aboriginal attack. As the months progressed, and under mounting aggression, Walker sank deeper into the mire of controversial social, economic and political tension.

By now the aboriginal people were at the height of their ferocity. Skirmishes and thefts of goods - especially in the Wide Bay region and in Maryborough - were almost everyday occurrences. In some areas aggressive groups of aborigines were numbered in their hundreds. Travellers and shepherds at lonely outposts went in constant fear of their lives.

Walker really began to feel the pressures of his own shortcomings when he was forced to accept the resignations of several of his key men. This problem of under-staffing was accentuated as dozens of his hastily-trained and brutal troopers deserted, unhappy with the restrictions imposed upon them by Walker's officers. They would usually leave quietly at night, taking with them their equipment, horses, rifles, ammunition, blankets and food. Using their new-found knowledge of armed combat, these deserters often became robbers and murderers themselves - and a constant problem for Walker.

By 1852 the situation was rapidly deteriorating and Walker was turning more and more to alcohol. Around him confusion and drunkenness reigned supreme. He attempted to defend his actions and the actions of his force by pointing out their value to the squatters. In July 1852 he wrote a long and detailed letter to the colonial secretary. He claimed that he was treating the problem with great intelligence, allowing the peaceful aboriginal people to remain at the various stations which ensured that those responsible for committing crimes were quickly tracked and brought to justice. He added that since the force had been formed, many stations in the areas under Native Police protection had increased dramatically in value, and quoted one instance where a station had increased from £100 to £500.⁷

In 1854, after an almost constant barrage of reports and a strongly worded letter from Lieutenant Marshall complaining of his commandant's abuse and drunkenness, the colonial secretary announced that an official board of enquiry was to be set up.⁸



Native Police officers. Source - John Oxley Library print number 61221.

The enquiry began its hearings on Tuesday 19 September, 1854. It was Walker's last chance to redeem himself in the eyes of his peers. However, he was late in appearing before them, and when he finally made an appearance he was so drunk that he could hardly recognize his fellow officers.⁹

Walker, quite naturally, was dismissed from command.¹⁰ History remembers him for his stupidity and drunkenness, but allowances are rarely made for his shortcomings. He was promoted to the position of commandant of the Native Police out of friendly patronage and well-placed connections, rather than talent. It was a position to which he was eminently unsuited. Walker was a man torn between his duties and his conscience. After his dismissal he became something of a champion of the aboriginal cause, and often publicly denounced the activities of the Native Police.

In September 1861 he wrote a letter to the colonial secretary damning police activities:

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

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

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

I have also forwarded to Captain Yorke the names of all the witnesses in every case alluded to by me.¹¹

For years afterwards Walker contracted his services to individual squatters, especially in the Wide Bay and throughout south-east Queensland, forming his own illegal police force. His purpose was to bring peace to the region through a show of force without the use of aggression. Yet his attempts were never very successful. He died almost twelve years later at Flora Villa, aged just forty six years. The reason for his death is recorded as 'diarrhoea'.¹²

Walker was replaced as commandant of the Native Police by one of his lieutenants, Richard Purvis Marshall. But Marshall too was plagued by ill-discipline and the desertions of many of his troopers, and he experienced great difficulty in supervising and controlling the enormous territories under his care. Sensing that the actions of the Native Police were becoming less effective, the aboriginal population began to increase their attacks against white incursion. In November 1856 a select committee was appointed to enquire into the state of the Native Police force, and in January the following year the committee reported that the reductions which had previously been made in the force had led to the difficulties which were being experienced by the settlers and that in consequence the numbers of aboriginal attacks had increased.

In May 1857 Edric Vaux Morisett was appointed commandant of the Native Police, superseding Marshall. Morisett's men remained untrustworthy and many managed to desert. By now the force was comprised of a hard core of experienced officers and N.C.O.s, and a body of inexperienced recruits from a wide variety of regions. The new recruits had been specifically selected for what was termed their 'semi-domestication', and for their love of fighting. They too had little discipline, and even less love for their superiors. In fact the force was now operating far less efficiently than during Walker's period of command.

Suddenly, through the act of one horrific example of aboriginal retaliation, the war, which had been simmering in wide-spread skirmishes for many years, erupted into a period of amassed attrition following the massacre of eleven people, nine of them members of the Fraser family, at Hornet Bank sheep station on the Dawson River.

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

This lone attack was to prove a catalyst in Queensland's history, what followed was the mass destruction of the aboriginal people in many of the settled 'frontier' areas. Armed punitive parties had little luck in capturing the perpetrators of the crime, however, to the white population it mattered little. The massacre acted as an excuse to slaughter every aboriginal person on sight, man, woman and child. Throughout the northern frontier



A detachment of Native Police. The Native Police were responsible for many depredations against the aboriginal people. This detachment was photographed at Mistake Creek. Source - John Oxley Library print number 66479.

colony an indiscriminate slaughter took place. For months, all else was forgotten except the revenge for these killings. Even the remote government in Sydney was somewhat influenced into changing its opinion, and authorized that large numbers of aboriginal people gathered together in one place were to be 'dispersed'. What exactly was meant by dispersed can now only be judged in light of what followed. This order, initially at least, served as tacit governmental consent for a total bloodletting. Never before, and certainly never afterwards, were the aboriginal people to face such a huge and determined retaliation. The numbers of aborigines decreased dramatically as whole aboriginal civilizations - civilizations which had existed for thousands of years - were systematically and ruthlessly destroyed. Aborigines who had had nothing to do with the events at Hornet Bank were cornered and killed by avenging white vigilantes and Native Police. Even servants - women and children working on remote stations - were executed without compassion.



The Scott family at Hornet Bank. Source - John Oxley Library print number 9717.

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

Hornet Bank station was situated on the site of an ancient aboriginal sacred ground. This intrusion would normally be enough to warrant the killings. However, it was also known at the time that William Fraser and his brothers were in the habit of abusing, kidnapping and raping some of the aboriginal girls, 'rushing the gins' as it was known. Doctor David Horton, general editor of the *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal History*, published in 1994, also claims that there had been, '...continuing conflict' between the aboriginal people and the Fraser family at Hornet bank, adding that approximately a dozen people had been shot during a punitive expedition and that many others had died after eating a Christmas pudding laced with strychnine.¹³ Thus the aboriginal people saw fit to return the abuse. It was a code of aboriginal law, a punishment to fit the crime.

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

The blacks had surprised the station, and till the sun was up made horrible revelry. Then the district rose to a man. The squatters called a council of war which was held (on) Naraigin verandah, and a band rode forth and took vengeance on all the blacks they could find, sparing only the gins and piccaninnies. Those were exciting times, and the memory of them remains with me still. I have a vision of our mother with us children in the kitchen one evening during the squatters' raid - and of a black face - the glittering eyes peering through a loose slab shutter. I remember the hurried barricade of doors and windows; then our unexpected deliverance from terror by a returning company of the raiders who had captured the blackfellow and chained him to a tree. He was one of the ringleaders in the Fraser murders, but there must have been treachery in the camp, for he escaped his bonds during the night.¹⁴



Aboriginal children at Hornet Bank station in 1904.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 24866.

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

I learned from various sources that a party of twelve squatters and their confidential overseers - went out mounted and armed to the teeth and scoured the country for the blacks, away from the source of the murders of the Frasers altogether, and shot upwards of eighty men, women and children. Not content with scouring the scrubs and forest country, they were bold enough to ride up to the head stations and shoot down the tame blacks whom they found camping there. Ten men were shot in this way at Ross's head station on the Upper Burnett. Several at Prior's station, and at Hay's and Lamb's, several more. The party in scouring the bush perceived an old blind blackfellow upon whom they immediately fired, sending a ball through his back, another through his arm which shattered the bone to pieces, and a third grazed his scalp. This old man had been for a long time a harmless hanger-on at the different head stations, and of course could have been

in no way identified with the Fraser murderers. A black boy belonging to Mr Cameron of Coonambula, long employed by that gentleman in carrying messages and rations to his out-stations ... went to Mr Prior's station on the Burnett and was shot there. A blackfellow was caught in the bush by an armed blackfellow in the employ of Mr Hay, who supplied him with a carbine for the purpose. The black brought the prisoner to the headstation, tied him to a sapling in the presence of all the white residents, and having addressed him in broken English in the most cruel and disgusting manner, placed the muzzle of his carbine to the helpless man's arm, and broke it with the first shot. He then addressed him again in the same strain as before, and shot him through the head.¹⁵

Lang's plaintive cry on behalf of the aboriginal population may well have fallen upon deaf ears. The white population was not interested in what should or should not be classed as justice for the indigenous people. Time and patience had now run their separate courses and the end of an era was drawing to a close.

In December the same year Commandant Morisett reported that the country was quiet, yet this was to herald a period when the Native Police were again to come under severe criticism. As the years progressed and the aboriginal population declined, the force found more time for drinking, gambling and womanizing, and Morisett, like Walker and Marshall before him, seemed incapable of controlling his men.

Reverend Lang later presented an article in the *Saturday Review*, of London, in which he pointed out the bitterness felt between the white colonists and the aborigines. He wrote:

This state of mutual distrust and apprehension on the part of the two races on certain frontier stations, gives rise to a horrible practice which I fear, however disgraceful to the British name, was at one time but too extensively prevalent in Australia - I mean that of mixing up arsenic or corrosive sublimate in the dampers or hominy, with which the settlers and squatters occasionally treated the natives. The idea that such a thing had been done in any part of the Empire has doubtless been scouted in certain quarters, but I have no doubt that it was done again and again. Nay more, it is consistent with my own knowledge that it has been openly defended and justified by people who have had not less than ten years' experience in the bush of New South Wales, and whose education, whose profession, and whose station in society ought to have taught them better things.¹⁶

Maryborough townspeople now began to see in the Native Police troopers the ugly side of their recalcitrant and belligerent character. Members of the force would often indulge in wild drunken parties which would last all night, and it was not unusual for town residents to find dishevelled unconscious Native Police troopers sprawled in the dirt at dawn. Following a continual barrage of complaints about such actions, a parliamentary committee was appointed to enquire into the organization and workings of the Native Police. For three months this committee laboured under a stream of conflicting and often irrelevant evidence, evidence which was liberally intermingled with half facts and fantasy.



Native Police. Source - John Oxley Library print number 61222.

But despite such enquiries, the depredations of the Native Police were not easy to curtail. Their inefficiency, the poor quality of their leadership and the excessive use of alcohol could only lead to more lawlessness and death.

T. and A. Mortimer of Manumbar station were so incensed at the needless killings that in 1861 they published an advertisement in the *Moreton Bay Courier* soundly castigating one Native Police officer for the devastation he had wreaked on the aboriginal people in that region. The advertisement read:

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

T & A Mortimer

Manumbar, February 22, 1861.¹⁷

In January 1861 another critic of the Native Police called strongly for the abolition of the service and wrote: 'It is currently reported that on Sunday night (6 January) some blacks belonging to this force attempted to carry off (with a view of taking them to Rockhampton) some gins belonging to blacks camped near town. How far they were successful is not known, but some of the poor wretches swam the river and came up to Maryborough to implore protection from the outrages of these diabolical scoundrels.'¹⁸

In March 1861, the *Maryborough Chronicle* lamented:

Taking advantage of the known hostility between various tribes of aborigines, and training their savageness rather than endeavouring to overcome it, able-bodied blacks belonging to one district are transferred to another 200 or 300 miles away, taught to use firearms, thoroughly equipped and then under the guidance of a European officer - upon the principle of set a thief to catch a thief - they are sent out with full licence to shoot and destroy as many blacks as they can find. There are those who from excessive sympathy with the oppressed and from mistaken views advocate the claims of the black man as superior to those of the white, - this is one extreme, arising naturally as it does from the bloodthirsty vindictiveness of those who (as the other extreme) because a single man has been murdered, would treacherously exterminate an entire tribe. Now do the Native Police perform the work required of them? We unhesitatingly reply, no. They do not succeed in checking the outrages of the blacks as our various journals testify in the continual reports of murders on stations and the loss of property even in the towns. The indiscriminate vengeance taken by the Native Police does but add fuel to the fire, and so the guerilla war goes on and hundreds of valuable lives are sacrificed. It really would appear as if retaliation and not prevention were the object sought after and that the business of the Native Police was to punish crime rather than prevent it ... For every guilty native who is shot, at least half a score of perfectly innocent ones share the same fate. That this inspires the blacks with terror at the very sight of the police is true, but it has no effect in preventing crime because it is not justice.¹⁹

In October 1861 came the last savage act of aboriginal retaliation when Horatio Wills, a squatter from Victoria, arrived at Cullin la Ringo on the Nogoia. Wills brought with him many shepherds, labourers and a large flock of sheep. The newcomers were quickly surrounded by aboriginal people who were eager to see and touch the bullock carts and bags of provisions. Wills ordered them away from the camp but also allegedly ordered that none of his men were to unpack any of the firearms on the wagons.

On the day of the attack the atmosphere was close and heavy with impending summer heat. One of the cooks, a man named John Moore, was suddenly awakened from an afternoon sleep by the cries of the aboriginal people as they attacked. Moore watched much of the killings and managed to slip away unnoticed to a nearby creek. In all, nineteen people were killed, including several children, Iden Baker, a boy of seven months, an infant of just three months and Ann Maynon, a girl of eight years.

Public indignation following the massacre of Wills and his party soared to new heights and the plight in which the unfortunate aboriginal people found themselves was dreadful. Hounded from the streets, hunted in the scrub, they were universally vilified and loathed. One newspaper correspondent stated: 'We all sincerely hope and trust that after this exploit of the niggers, strong measures will be taken for their suppression.'²⁰

Within three weeks of the massacre seven separate contingents of Native Police were hunting and killing in the Cullin la Ringo region, and the land was littered with the bones and bodies of those slain.



Graves of the massacre victims at Cullin-la-Ringo. Source - John Oxley Library print number 36055.

In Maryborough there was widespread belief that no aborigines should be allowed within the town area after dark, and several residents called publicly for their expulsion. One man wrote:

Last evening whilst standing conversing with a friend at the corner near the Bush Inn, (now the Royal Hotel) we observed a woman pass us and shortly after heard her call for assistance. Before reaching the spot we observed two blackfellows making off, a proceeding which was hastened by the toe of my friend's boot applied to an unmentionable part. It may be well enough for interested parties to sympathise with the 'poor blacks', and laying aside their arms take these faithful savages by the hand as brothers merely because they are useful as wood and water carriers or general servants. But justice to the immigrants, especially the females who have lately arrived in our midst, demands that we should not permit aboriginals (sic) to remain in the town after dark; the paddocks outside would be a more preferable camp. As long as the blacks are quiet none can raise objection to their remaining, but when they insult unprotected females it is high time some measure should be adopted to remedy the evil.²¹



A typical Native Police detachment in their camp. Source - John Oxley Library print number

Members of the aboriginal community often congregated in front of a large Moreton Bay fig which stood before a blacksmith's shop in Bazaar Street, near the Bush Inn. In order to prevent the aborigines from approaching the hotel, E.T. Aldridge had a strong three-rail fence erected all around the building. This fence was aptly termed the 'blockade'. The fence ran from Kent Street to Bazaar Street, up to the lane-way then known as Popp's Corner and down to Richmond Street, completely encircling the hotel.²²

The misunderstanding and hatred which surrounded aboriginal/colonial relations was an on-going and bitter problem which seemed insoluble. The following year the *Maryborough Chronicle* was claiming that it was receiving letters, '...thick and fast', on the problem of aboriginal people fighting and drinking in the town, and that all the correspondents were complaining of the massive amount of pilfering being carried out by the aborigines. 'What is to be done?' the editorial lamented. 'Some remedy must be promptly applied for the nuisance has become intolerable.'²³



Native Police. Source - John Oxley Library print number 147045.

During a lecture given at the Maryborough School of Arts in September 1905, pioneer Maryborough businessman John Purser stated:

Michael Landrigan, a sawyer ... was working in the bush, not far from the old township. He appears to have engaged a blackfellow to help him in his work as a sawyer, and when the work was done Landrigan either could not, or would not pay him the amount agreed upon. The black fellow took the law into his own hands, with the result that Landrigan had a spear driven into his shoulder, and Mr Halloran, commissioner for the district, brought the broken end of the spear into the store to show. It was about a foot in length and required a great deal of force to extract, and a large pair of pincers had to be used for the purpose ... Frequently the Native Police came in force and camped on the reserve where the railway station and workshops now are. Then the blacks would be chased whenever they were met with, and one evening some of the officers were not too sober and were galloping about. The senior constable, McAdam, came to our place and ordered that all blacks should be turned out of the premises at once. There was very nearly a fight over it. We had one black on the place who was a very good one, and I point-blank refused to allow him to be interfered with. The constable, finding that he was not going to get everything his own way, cooled down and went. Had the black been turned into the street, I fully believe he would have been shot.²⁴

James Lennon also recorded:

The block of land bounded by Alice, Lennox, Kent and Ferry Streets was known as the 90 acre reserve. It was fenced in, in the (18)60s, and was a great camping ground for the teamsters ... In the very early days this was a favourite camping ground of the niggers who roamed about the town in the nude, and in the latter 60s the police had to put the abo. out of the town residential area. It was a common sight in my younger days to see the mounted police ... with whips.²⁵

Yet there were voices of reason, one being the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle*, who published:

The number of outrages which have recently been committed by members of the Wide Bay tribes on the persons and property of our white residents has attracted unusual notice ... That we owe a duty to the aborigines of the colony is held by every right thinking man in the community ... there have been various ways in which we may demean ourselves towards the original inhabitants of the country, and these we may briefly notice, for they have almost all been already tried. First, we shoot them down. This, there can be no doubt, is the most effective way of removing the difficulty, and from its facility has been the most frequently tried. Kindred to this is the method of giving them poisoned flour; and we are acquainted with a gentleman (it was no secret) - who in one evening thus removed a whole tribe. At sunset they were ravenously drinking water in a creek (a symptom of strychnine poisoning), the morning dawn rose on the whole tribe stark dead on the bank ... Dwellers in the towns are not aware of the extent to which this is carried in the newly settled districts ... Wrongs have been perpetrated on the blacks, and they have taken the wild justice for revenge, or, on the other hand, a wild horde has suddenly swooped down on a Nogoa or a Hornet Bank, and the neighbouring settlers have risen to a man, and in wild but strictest justice have swept away whole tribes from the face of the earth ... far beyond what is believed or known in towns, the aboriginal population is swept down by the rifle ... Queensland, youthful as is our colony, we cannot look at the neighbourhood of our large towns without feeling that even now our tribes are on their deathbeds ... and shame, we stand listlessly by, and, closing our ears to their dying cries, see them sink one after the other into the ruin that we have ourselves brought ... We have a noble colony, given us in trust, we have countless hordes of aborigines, (sic) we have the history of Australian colonisation, we are founding one of the great southern empires, shall we do it with hands crimson in the blood of our murdered tribes?²⁶

The curfew imposed to restrict aboriginal people from within the precincts of Maryborough after dark was enthusiastically enforced. In 1907 a Maryborough resident who had lived in the town at that time stated:

Possibly, Maryborough residents of the present day would be somewhat scandalised, if, some afternoon, about 5 p.m. half a dozen mounted policemen armed with long stockwhips were seen chivvying a lot of blacks all over the town like a mob of cattle. Still, this was an almost daily occurrence in the days gone by. At that time there was generally a camp of 100 to 150 somewhere in the vicinity of the town. Of course the greater portion of them loafed about the town all day and well into the night, some getting odd jobs to do, others simply loafing, begging and stealing, until the nuisance became so intense that the order was issued: 'All blacks must clear out to camp before pickee bong,' (sundown). Of course, no notice was taken of this at first, so the police had to enforce it. Now, you can hit a black on the head with a tomahawk, or hammer him with your

fists until you break your knuckles, and he will simply laugh at you, but he can't stand a kick on the shins or a cut with the stockwhip. In fact, the latter has more moral effect on any Australian nigger than hanging, so that the stockwhip was by far the most effective and humane weapon that could be used for this purpose ... The old gins and piccaninnies, when once mustered, would go out quietly and with little trouble, although if a policeman cracked his whip within a hundred yards of them, they would set up a howl loud enough to knock the clock tower (which was not built in those days) down. The boys, however, gave much trouble, loafing about until the last possible minute, and really seemed to enjoy the fun of dodging the police round corners, through back yards, over fences etc. At times they would break cover and take to the open ... out of pure bravado, and a policeman would have to be well mounted, a first-class horseman and a good hand with a stockwhip to succeed in giving the boy a cut. They were such perfect adepts at dodging that many an unfortunate policeman came to grief. Possibly there are some old identities still living who will remember one memorable afternoon, when a boy named MacKenzie ... broke cover from Galbraith's backyard on to the open space in front of Graham and Gataker's ... pursued by a well known and most expert mounted trooper. It was a fierce fight between them, and far more exciting than a football match, so the numerous onlookers seemed to think, judging by the way they barracked first one then the other ... The little battle raged fast and furious for some time, then, just as the whip was coming down on MacKenzie's back, he made a sudden dart under the horse's neck and got on his near side, but reckoned without his horse, for the trooper was equally expert with the whip in either hand, and just as suddenly changed the whip from right to left hand. MacKenzie saw he would get it, so with a mighty spring, jumped up behind the trooper. The horse, not being used to carry double, started bucking, and sent the trooper and black boy sprawling. Both were up at once. MacKenzie made straight for the river with the trooper close at his heels, across Kent Street, in at front and out at back door of the old Commercial Bank (nearly frightening the life out of the manager, Mr Page, who thought the bank was [being] stuck up by the Wild Scotchman [sic] q.v.). Over the fence at back of Travis' wool store, along the wooden store in Wharf Street, down onto the Queen's wharf, across the old steamer *Eagle*, that was alongside, and into the river. The trooper was no match for the nigger in the water, being hampered by his heavy riding boots. Captain Hill, who was on the poop of the steamer, at once jumped into a boat and took the trooper out of the water...

Now these were the good old times when colonial rum, made at Tinana Creek, was not only plentiful but strong and cheap, and the blacks, although as a rule not very particular what they drank, from sulphuric acid to kerosene, dearly loved a drop of good rum. This was especially noticeable among the old gins, who would undertake any work for a glass of 'lum'.

Now one of the most constant visitors to the town was an old dame named Crazy Kitty. How and why she was called so, this historian knoweth not, except it was that on one occasion she paraded down Kent Street and did the block, gowned ... in one stocking and a paper collar only, which, however, in those days was considered full dress and very chic among the aboriginal fair sex. Kitty, although crazy, was considered very cute and very fond of a glass of good rum. Being a good and willing worker, she could daily earn a shilling or two in scrubbing verandahs, at which, not being troubled with housemaid's knee, she was very expert. Needless to say, all her earnings went in rum. She always carried with her one of those tin bottles that held a couple of quarts, and just below sundown, would appear at the back door of a bar ... (and) would show the neck of the bottle from under her blanket. The publican would measure out a quart of rum and pour same into the bottle ... Poor Crazy Kitty. When her grog was stopped, life had no further charms, so she fell into a decline, ultimately dying of old age.²⁷

The supply of alcohol to aboriginal people was, of course, illegal, and there were many instances of publicans being charged with the offence. For example, in 1879, publican George Ross, one of several publicans fined after a police raid on their public houses, lamented that the Publicans' Act was loosely administered and that it was unfair that a raid should be enforced without notice. Ross claimed that the aborigines were primarily being supplied with rum in return for the sexual favours of the women, and that it was men paying such a price for the prostitution of the aboriginal women who should be facing the law. Ross added: 'Why the police should make such an underhand sneaking raid against publicans who are almost altogether innocent in the matter of selling drinks to the blacks, and neglect to look after those dirty scoundrels who give them drink from the basest motives, I cannot understand. In many parts near the town, night is made hideous by their drunken orgies and the beastly intercourse which goes on. Why do not the police pay attention to this, and do some good, instead of tinkering ... Were it possible, I would rather suffer imprisonment than pay this fine.'²⁸

Sources and Notes for Chapter Eleven.

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23. M/C. 5 November, 1863.
24. M/C. 27 September, 1905.
25. M/C. 17 July, 1924.
26. M/C. 30 June, 1864.
27. M/C. 24 August, 1907.
28. M/C. 11 November, 1879.

Chapter Twelve.

Lieutenant John O'Connell Bligh - His Supporters and Detractors.

As we have seen, Frederick Walker was foolish, misguided and weak, and the officers under his command also had a myriad of social, political and personal problems. One of these officers, possibly the most infamous as far as Maryborough is concerned, was Lieutenant John O'Connell Bligh. Bligh was appointed to the New South Wales Civil Service in 1853 when he was just nineteen years of age. Two years later he was appointed the protector of aborigines in the Moreton Bay district, a position, like Walker, for which he was eminently unsuited. In her paper, historian Ailsa Dawson states: 'The name "Protector" was a sad misnomer for Bligh, for his callous and inhumane treatment of the natives was little short of a scandal.'¹



John O'Connell Bligh.

Source - John Oxley Library print number 147067.

Bligh's scandalous reputation was well known to the squatters of Wide Bay and the townspeople of Maryborough. Even as early as the 1850s they had been reading reports in the *Moreton Bay Courier* about the alleged activities of the man and the troopers under his command. The Native Police headquarters was at this time based at Owanyilla, a small hamlet extending from the Mary River to the Gympie Road half way between Maryborough and Tiaro.²

In December 1857, an unnamed squatter wrote to the editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier* complaining of Bligh's conduct while on patrol in the Dawson region. The squatter claimed that in about October that year, several Native Police troopers had entered a shepherd's hut while the shepherd was away tending his flocks, and had assaulted the shepherd's wife. A complaint had been laid with Bligh who promised to look into the affair. Several months passed and the owner of the station, having heard nothing more of the matter, took the case once again to Bligh. However, according to the report, Bligh simply told him that he could take his complaint elsewhere as he had no intention of doing anything about it. The editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier*

was incensed, and wrote: 'If it be true that conduct such as this has been passed over in the manner mentioned, the whole affair is one of the most disgraceful, that has, for a long time, come to our notice, and all the culpable parties should be forthwith brought to account.'³

Although Bligh later became the police magistrate and gold warden at Gympie - where he apparently repented for his sins - it was primarily during his term as the commander of the Maryborough detachment of Native Police that he won his infamous reputation as a callous and brutal murderer of aboriginal people.

Bligh's brutality towards the local indigenous people is legendary, but many of the people of Maryborough at that time obviously admired his efforts, for, in 1861, they honoured him with the award of a ceremonial sword in appreciation of his work.

The *Maryborough Chronicle* in March 1910, quoting a report the *Courier* had published fifty years previously stated:

A correspondent of the *Courier* at Maryborough reported the shooting dead of two blacks at that town by the native troopers under Lieutenant Bligh, and added: 'For the last two months and upwards, a great many outrages have been committed by the blacks between this and the Twelve Mile Creek. Bullock drivers have been obliged to travel with the whip in one hand and the gun in the other. Why should not a pocket of, say, a sergeant and four or six men be stationed on the public road somewhere between this and the Twelve Mile Creek. Were this done there would be no such thing as an outrage or attack by the sable marauders of the bush from one year's end to the other, and no such bloody scenes as that of Friday morning ever witnessed. Another correspondent said that Lieutenant Bligh had tracked the marauders down and tried all he could to induce them to surrender, but without effect, and one, named Darkie was shot by a native trooper in full pursuit just as he was entering a scrub. This Darkie had been committed for felony and had made his escape in irons from the steamer, for which the constable in charge got six months at the Brisbane Assizes. Some cries of "Shame" were raised at the shooting, and the biggest meeting ever seen in Maryborough was held, 400 persons being present with E.B. Uhr, J.P. in the chair, to thank Lieutenant Bligh. The following resolution was carried with only one dissenting voice: "That this meeting, considering the present state of affairs, consider the conduct of Lieutenant John O'Connell Bligh is deserving of all praise, not only for his gallant conduct in punishing the well-known tribe of depredators, but for the manner in which he punished them, and therefore propose that a committee of Messrs Howard, Naughton, Faulkner, Southerden and any other that may be appointed shall collect subscriptions limited to five shillings for the purpose of presenting Lieutenant Bligh with a suitable and useful present".'⁴

Loud and continued cheers followed this announcement, and it was decided that the present Bligh should receive would indeed be a 'useful' one; an inscribed sword with which he could wreak even further irreparable harm on the aboriginal people. The sword seems to have been the least costly of two possible gifts discussed during this meeting. The other gift would have been, 'a gold mounted carbine of the costliest description, expense no object.' Yet it seems clear that expense *was* an object and the less costly sword was finally chosen as Bligh's gift.⁵ The sword was later specially ordered from a London firm of weapon manufacturers. It arrived at Sydney in January 1861.⁶

This meeting was instructional for it brought to the fore some of the bitter acrimonies of several early Maryborough settlers, and George Howard certainly played a significant role in the debate. Howard claimed that those people who had called 'shame,' and, 'those poor blacks,' while Bligh had slaughtered the aborigines, were nothing more than 'croakers.' Howard went even further, and singled out one particular 'croaker' whom he could not name for legal reasons, but who could have been no-one else but Henry Palmer. Howard stated:

It (has) been remarked that the object of this meeting (is) to thank Lieutenant Bligh for merely doing his duty, but it (is) for no such purpose. It (is) for doing that duty under most peculiar circumstances, for doing it when there were several in the town whom (I) should designate croakers, that were watching and spying to try to find some speck on which they could form some complaint, and who (are) over-ready with lengthened faces to cry 'pity' for the poor blacks.⁷

Cheers followed this announcement and, heartened, Howard continued:

Some of those gentlemen should have been in Maryborough as long as (I), should have heard, seen, and felt the merciless outrages these wretches, called by the croakers, 'the poor blacks,' (have) committed, and (I have) little hesitation in saying their tone would be changed.⁸



Native police with officer. Source - John Oxley Library print number 57330.

Howard went on to state that he had heard continued murmurings against the Native Police - and especially against Bligh, and that those murmurs had become more deep and thundering, and, 'like the volcano,' showed sure symptoms of a speedy eruption. He claimed that the people of Maryborough had stood the robberies of the 'blacks' long enough, and that they had applied, time after time to the police for protection, protection which had never been forthcoming until Bligh had taken it upon himself to act with such, '...fearless action, in spite of all the croakers.' Howard said that one of these 'croakers,' five years previously, had been involved in some underhanded actions against the aborigines. Here the chairman interrupted Howard, warning him against bringing personalities and personal prejudices into the debate, however, Howard continued undaunted with his tirade, stating that he would mention no names but that he intended applying the lash where it was due. He went on to say that five years previously, the 'croaker's' store had been robbed on three successive nights by the aboriginal people, and that on the fourth night, flour stolen from the store had been inexplicable mixed with arsenic. Howard claimed that it was not for him to say how the arsenic had got into the flour but he did state that it was 'very suspicious,' and that the 'croaker' who may have been responsible for these murders now walked about the town with a white hat on his head and a bible under his arm.⁹

A further report in the *Moreton Bay Courier* actually mentioned Henry Palmer by name and stated that he had been the man to whom Howard had been referring. Giving Howard the pseudonym of 'Bantam' the *Courier* stated that Bantam had claimed he would be willing to die for Maryborough, but when confronted by opposition to some of his wild claims, he became vulgar, and that his, 'uneducated mind can do nothing more than vent itself in outpourings of personal scurrility and abuse.'¹⁰

A journalist who examined the sword subscribed to during this highly controversial meeting later described the weapon in detail. He wrote:

We have had the opportunity of examining the cavalry sword intended for presentation to Lieut. J. O'C. Bligh, which is decidedly a superior weapon. The blade, which is three feet in length, and handsomely decorated with embossed flowers and various other devices, bears on one side the following inscription in beautiful relief - 'Presented to Lieutenant John O'Connell Bligh, J.P. by the

inhabitants of Maryborough, Queensland, as a mark of esteem for his services in suppressing the outrages of the blacks, February, 1860.' The hilt of the sword is also adorned with a splendid gold tassel and sundry other ornaments. The sword, with the sheath, is enclosed in a very neat case, altogether forming a very handsome present.¹¹

The *Maryborough Chronicle* on 13 April, 1861, published the following letter which was sent through a prominent Maryborough resident to Rockhampton where Bligh was temporarily stationed:

Lieutenant J O'C. Bligh, Native Mounted Police, Rockhampton.

Dear Sir, I have much pleasure in forwarding through Mr J.E. Brown per steamer *Clarence*, the case containing the sword and belt voted to you by the inhabitants of this district at a public meeting assembled as an acknowledgement of your manifold services in repressing the outrages by the blacks and punishing the perpetrators thereof. I have also forwarded the list of subscribers and other papers connected therewith in order to show you that it was a willing offering from your many friends, and not from a small clique. Wishing you health, happiness and every success in life.

I have the honour to remain, dear sir,

George Howard.

Howard was no fool and was careful to use the sword to improve his own business. Before sending the sword to Rockhampton he had it displayed at his own hotel, the Maryborough Inn, and advertised in the press that the public could view it there.



Native Police trooper. Source - John Oxley Library number 10687.

Yet not all residents of Maryborough were happy with the awarding of the sword, a feeling of general injustice was felt by a few who were prepared to voice their opinions in the press. For example, on 28 February, 1861, one correspondent indignantly wrote:

Sir, the emblem of valour has been from time immemorial given to the brave ... given for acts of courage and daring, the last fragment of the age of chivalry. Such a gift a brave man could regard with sympathy, feeling perhaps a wish that the day might come when such a reward could be his, and that when his hour was come, those who reigned in his stead would prize the sword which had placed its brave possessor above his fellows.

Let us see what this John O'Connell Bligh has done to merit such a gift. If the fact of being placed in command of blacks of the lowest caste, of having little or no control over their actions - if butchering blacks in the midst of Maryborough, hunting them into the river and pursuing them in a boat, and firing into them before the townspeople - if giving his men a *carte blanche* to treat the blacks as suits their pleasure, ignoring all doctrine of conciliation and all justice which is at least their due, then certainly the sword was well earned, but I have yet to learn that so despicable an occupation calls for such a reward. It is a farce endeavouring to throw credit over such a trade, that by uniform and by bastard titles, gentlemen can be found to carry on the trade of a butcher.

Is there anything honourable or courageous in attacking flying blacks and massacring them? The honourable sword is fallen depths indeed. To such a purpose I should say a butcher's knife would be a fitter gift ... No doubt Mr Bligh is a very good killer of blacks, but the sword is not the reward for such a trade.¹²

Another resident claimed that the awarding of the sword would forever brand the people of Maryborough in eternal infamy. Writing to the editor of the *Chronicle* after he had read Howard's advertisement calling for the sword to be viewed at his public house, the correspondent stated:

One of the most impertinent and audacious advertisements I have ever read in all my life appears in your newspaper of last week ... mine host of the Maryborough Inn asking the public to invest in a nobler or glass of beer for a sight of the sword ... (the) presentation is one of the most disgraceful acts ever perpetrated by any community, a blot so foul and deep-stained as will leave on this otherwise fair portion of God's earth, the brand of eternal infamy.¹³



Native Police troopers. Source - John Oxley Library print number 10688.

Bligh's conduct, not only in respect to the killing of innocent aboriginal people, but also his amorous intentions towards the wife of one of his sergeants, Camp-Sergeant Gasson, became a public disgrace, and in an open letter to Bligh, one indignant letter-writer felt compelled to ask Bligh if he and another officer named Phibbs had taken 'indecent liberties' with Gasson's wife during his absence, when Phibbs and Bligh had been in a state of intoxication. Gasson had complained of the treatment his wife received and Bligh had promptly dismissed him. Soon afterwards Gasson had spread the word around Maryborough that Bligh had taken advantage of his wife. Commissioner Arthur Halloran soon afterwards took Gasson back into the police service. Yet the letter-writer felt compelled to continue his questioning of Bligh. It was a clever piece of writing, merely asking questions rather than making outright public accusations. Questions were not defamatory, accusations were:

Did you ... take your troopers into Maryborough, attack some blacks who were encamped near Mr Clonry's, have one shot dead opposite Mr Palmer's store, then chase those who were encamped near Mr Melville's into the river, and while they were in the river, did you row around them, close to them, and in the presence of men, women and children, who are said to be Christians, did you yourself shoot in the back the exhausted, imploring, yielding blackfellow ... a black who for years had been a constant and excellent labourer at one of those stores. Did you then capture an old man who also had been a constant attendant in the town, against whom there had never been a charge, did you, sir, capture the poor old fellow, handcuff him, march him out of the town and have him shot?¹⁴

Two weeks later an anonymous person who claimed to be a friend of Bligh, but may well have been Bligh himself, answered the questions in print and refuted most of the allegations. He stated that Gasson had not been immediately discharged and that his discharge had come about only because Gasson had become drunk and had abused Bligh. In answer to the massacre of aboriginal people which had taken place within the town, the 'correspondent' replied that it was: '...to a certain extent true, but mixed with so much falsehood that it gives to the public a totally wrong impression as to what did take place on the occasion.'¹⁵

At the same time, some Maryborough residents were inflamed over the actions of the Native Police and roundly castigated Lieutenant Murray, the officer who had taken over command from Bligh, for killing a large number of aboriginal people in the Wide Bay/Burnett. A correspondent of the *Maryborough Chronicle* stated:

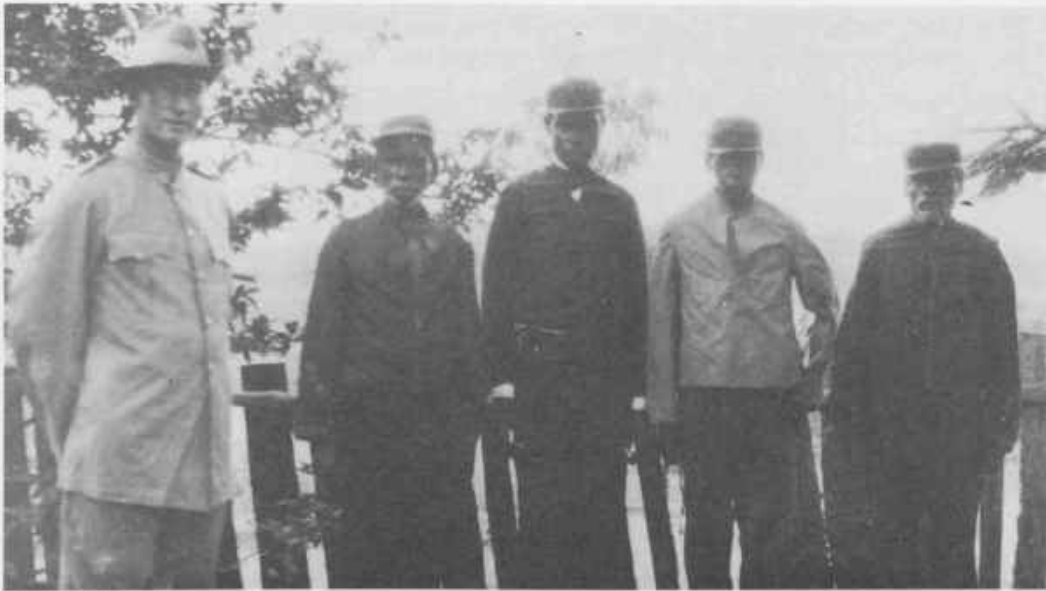
We know positively that a slaughter has lately taken place in a district contiguous to Wide Bay, and if half the horrors described as attendant upon it have any foundation in fact, civilization has been again disgraced by a cowardly and cold-blooded deed. It is reported that some thirty or thirty-five blacks - including men, women and children - have been butchered - there is no other term for it - by a detachment of Native Police, and it is further stated that this detachment was under the command of Lieutenant Murray.¹⁶

Indeed, the newspaper was filled with bitter recriminations and condemnations, accusations of massacre and injustice flowed freely. The newspaper's editor, Charles Buzacott, was even attacked on the street because of the many letters and other editorials he allowed to be published, as one correspondent indignantly recorded:

Last Monday afternoon, as the Editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* was passing along Adelaide Street, he was met by two nameless individuals. One of these, in reply to the editor's courteous salutation, made use of an expression for which a poor man would have been pulled up to court, and which was, to say the least of it, utterly unbecoming a gentleman. Shortly after, the other, with oaths both loud and deep, and with uplifted whip, swore that should his name ever again appear in print within the columns of the *Chronicle*, dire vengeance and a thrashing should befall the editor. 'And I', said he with an expressive gesture, 'am the man that'll give it to you.'¹⁷

Some proponents of the Native Police system were equally vociferous in print. One correspondent writing in March 1861 claimed, somewhat sardonically, that another sword should be presented to Lieutenant Murray:

Fellow Townsmen, another opportunity has just occurred for us to distinguish ourselves ... The brave Native Police have again been rendering us good service. Within the last few days they have knocked over several of these useless blacks. Let us get up a public meeting, let us pass resolution in praise of the gallant conduct of Mr Murray and his men, let us subscribe five shillings per head to purchase a sword to present to Mr Murray ... thus we shall show our brethren at home that the ancient orders of chivalry and high renown are not forgotten, even at the antipodes. My five shillings are ready at a moment's notice.¹⁸



Native Police, Dan Doyle and his troopers. Source - John Oxley Library print number 31699.

Proponents of harsh measures included those who lived outside the town itself. On 11 July, 1861, one of these complained that the aboriginal people who were being evicted from the town were gathering at his property where there was much fighting and lawlessness. The writer claimed:

On last Sunday morning, if I am rightly informed, the police drove the blacks out of the town for fighting, and threw down their camps. But did they know where the blacks went to. If not I will inform them. Those blacks are the greatest desperadoes in the Wide Bay ... Now these rascals, after being hunted out of the town, made for this spot, and there they were fighting until dark. Then they made for the neighbouring houses for plunder. As I and one of my neighbours were talking about nine o'clock in the evening, the dog barked, and on opening my door I saw one of these blacks in my verandah. How many more were in and about the place we cannot tell, but we may be sure he was not alone. Many nights we have been obliged to sit up and watch to protect ourselves and families from attack the last fortnight, as there have been upwards of one hundred blacks in this place ... could not the authorities do something in this matter so that we might be relieved from apprehension and be able to lie in our beds without fear of attack while asleep ... It would be much better if the mounted police were to pay us a visit when in town. Whenever the blacks are driven out of town by the police, we have to contend with them for a month after.¹⁹

A select committee of the Legislative Assembly, headed by R.R. MacKenzie, Queensland's first treasurer, was appointed by ballot on 1 May, 1861, to enquire into the organization and management of the Native Police and to report on ways which might be implemented to ameliorate the plight of aborigines in Queensland

The committee examined approximately thirty witnesses, including the principal officers of the Native Police and collected a mass of evidence. Committee members were also apprised of the evidence taken before an earlier select committee held in Sydney in 1858.

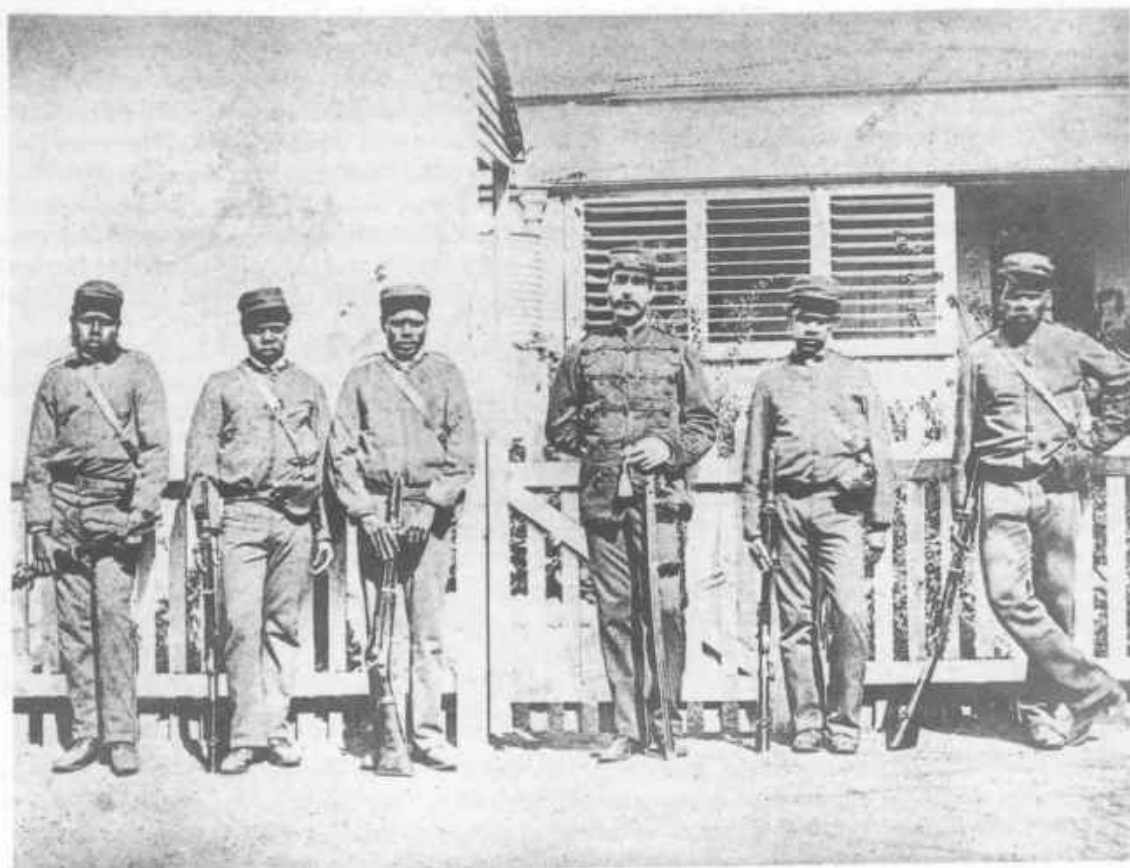
The terms of reference for this committee were, firstly, to investigate the condition and organization of the Native Police. Secondly, to investigate charges of unnecessary cruelty, and thirdly, to establish if the aboriginal people were capable of being 'civilized', or if their conditions could be improved.²⁰

The findings, issued on 17 July, 1861, were almost predictable. The committee later stated that any change in the organization of the Native Police by the substitution of white troopers for aborigines, would destroy its efficiency. They reported that any attempt to disband the force would lead to, 'disastrous results' and that the numerous incidences of poor discipline had arisen mainly from the, 'inefficiency, the indiscretion, and the intemperate habits of some of the officers, rather than from any defect in the system itself.'²¹

Committee members recommended that every effort should be made to employ efficient officers who would serve for a period under the supervision of superior officers before they could be considered eligible to hold commissions. They also recommended that no detachment of Native Police should be stationed in the vicinity of any of the towns where liquor was easily obtainable, and that troopers be recruited only at a distance from areas where they would be employed.²²



Lieutenant George Murray (centre, holding sword) with two junior officers and seven other members of the Native Police.
Source - John Oxley Library number 10686.



Native Police, Sub Inspector O'Connor and his detachment. Source - John Oxley Library print number 10685.

The committee condemned the 'indiscriminate slaughter' of aborigines and castigated certain officers, including Maryborough based Lieutenant Murray over his murderous zeal, adding, however:

Lieutenant Bligh appears, as far as evidence in his case was procurable, to have been justified in his attack on the natives in the town of Maryborough. He is generally spoken of as a zealous and efficient officer, and bears a high character from the Commandant ... The evidence ... shows beyond doubt that all attempts to Christianise or educate the aborigines of Australia have hitherto proved abortive. Except in one or two isolated cases, after being brought up and educated for a certain period, the natives of both sexes invariably return to their savage habits. Credible witnesses show that they are addicted to cannibalism; that they have no idea of a future state; and are sunk in the lowest depths of barbarism.²³

The *Maryborough Chronicle* later published:

The troopers have evidently earned for themselves a shameful notoriety for grog drinking, while with scarce an exception, gross open drunkenness has been brought home to the officers connected with the force, and to this circumstance does the (committee's) report trace almost all the immorality and crime committed under the disguise of constitutional authority.²⁴

Whether the findings had any affect upon the operations of the Native Police of the Wide Bay district is a moot point. In September that year an aboriginal man named Luke killed his wife and escaped into the bush. The press later reported that he had fallen into the hands of friends of the woman who had severely beaten him, probably with nulla nullas, before ham-stringing him and leaving him lying in agony in the scrub. The *Maryborough Chronicle* bitterly reported, '...those valiant warriors the Native Police, shortly afterwards came up, and seeing Luke in this plight, gallantly butchered the poor wretch.'²⁵

The Native Police question was a debate which raged for years. In 1863, for example, one correspondent of the *Maryborough Chronicle* claimed that the force was illegal and those who had sanctioned its formation should have been punished. He wrote: 'The history of the Native Police force, from its birth to the present moment of its existence is one which cannot be studied without a shudder ... so illegal is its construction that those who introduced and recognised it could, with justice, be tried for murder. It would be a lamentable spectacle to behold the (Queensland) Executive in full force arraigned at the bar on such a charge.'²⁶

Yet the newspaper correspondents seemed unable to accurately determine where they stood in regard to editorial policy. Some, as we have seen, openly condemned the aborigines while others condemned the Native Police. Undoubtedly these people, some of whom were professional journalists and editors, while others were simply residents who wrote letters to the press, were themselves confused and torn between loyalties to their fellow white man and the morality of having such large numbers of aboriginal people hunted down, sometimes right in the heart of Maryborough, and then shot. An example of this division of loyalties and emotions may be seen from a report of 1864, following the deaths of two aboriginal men who had recently been captured and killed, for which a police sergeant was censured. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

We are sorry to hear that Sergeant Brown of the Native Police is likely to be removed from the post he now holds of mounted patrol for neglecting to report to his superior officer that he had lately in his custody two blacks and of what has become of them. The bodies of two blacks having been found on the Stanton Harcourt run, which have been shot by bullets, and which are averred to be the bodies of the blacks Sergeant Brown had in custody when he left that station for Gircoom.

After the furious outcry raised against the blacks on account of the outrages they for some time had been perpetrating on the person and properties of the settlers, it would be harsh and unjust to punish him for a mere omission of this kind, providing he can explain satisfactorily what became of the blacks, for there is no proof that he shot them, or was in any way privy to their death, or if he were, that it was not justifiable. We understand the sympathy that is felt for the blacks. We are glad that there are so many voices to demand on their behalf justice and humanity. But on the other hand it is due from us to see that the man whom we entrust with large powers and send forth on a dangerous and difficult errand, has fair play. The public have been demanding of the government that a patrol should be appointed for the district, having considerable latitude in dealing with the aborigines. We have no proof that Sergeant Brown has exceeded his office, and, at any rate, if he has done so, the public must share the responsibility with him. We have clamoured for a man who, to execute swift and terrible justice, would, when necessary, risk defying the law.²⁷

As we have seen, one of Bligh's supporters was Maryborough businessman Edmund Uhr.²⁸ Uhr was reputed to have been extremely shrewd and vociferous, especially where matters of aboriginal depredations were concerned, however, according to John Purser, another Maryborough pioneer and one of Uhr's business

contemporaries, Uhr may not have been willing to hunt aborigines himself. Purser later wrote: 'There is a fairly good story told of Mr Uhr ... I was shown ... a copy of a poetic effusion setting forth a raid undertaken by the Burnett squatters against the blacks. Mr Uhr was to have taken part in the raid. The poem recites the excitement caused by his absence, and described the way he was looked for. After a careful search the hero was found carefully hidden underneath his wife's petticoats.'²⁹

Following the termination of his appointment to Maryborough and his brief posting to Rockhampton, Bligh was sent to the Gayndah district as police magistrate and in 1874 was appointed to Gympie where he became a much respected member of the community. While at Gayndah, Bligh was responsible for an act which saw him temporarily suspended as police magistrate.

In November 1866 a dying man named Timothy Shea was sentenced by Bligh to six months' imprisonment for being a vagrant. Shea, a man in his late 60s, was well known in the district, he owned a modest number of cattle and a few horses. However, he was described by the press of the day as a man who preferred his own company to that of others. One correspondent stated that Shea: '...has for several years been a monomaniac, roaming about the bush, living in every respect as a blackfellow, and by his own free will an outcast to civilised society.'³⁰ The correspondent went on to state that Shea was almost certainly insane and that he had at times attempted to burn down stockyards or release stock, and would often run through the small town ranting that he had the power to control the waters of the Burnett River and using these powers he could, at a whim, totally destroy Gayndah. He was never known to eat meat, and lived mainly on pumpkins he had grown from seeds at different places in the bush. On 9 November, 1866, he was discovered in one of the hotels, apparently in a dying state, and taken to the police lockup. Bligh was informed that Shea had recently escaped from the local hospital and that he refused to return there, claiming that the doctor and orderlies were trying to poison him.

According to Constable Michael Bennett, the arresting officer, Shea had had to be conveyed to the lockup in a wheelbarrow as he was unable to walk, his stomach was very distended and he was reportedly in great pain. Bligh, knowing that Shea was obviously dying and almost certainly insane, brusquely sentenced the man to six months' imprisonment. Bennett was instructed by Bligh to employ a dray carrier to take Shea to Maryborough, from there he was to be taken to Brisbane to serve his sentence. Bennett engaged the services of carrier John McLachan who later stated that in his opinion Shea had been in no condition for the long journey to Maryborough. However, accompanied by Constable Bennett the trio set off. As Shea was being loaded onto the dray he allegedly shouted towards Bligh, begging him to have mercy and trying to make Bligh understand that he would never survive the trip. Bennett too was very concerned about the prisoner's health and asked Bligh what should be done if the man died on the road. 'Bury him,' was Bligh's curt reply. Shea's clothes were in a dreadful mess, being soiled from his sickness, and so a three-bushel sack was procured and holes were cut for Shea's head and arms. He was stripped, dressed in this sack, and his clothes were destroyed.

The trip to Musket Flat took six days. Shea could hardly eat, and at night would ask only for a glass of wine or port, although he managed to drink a little milk and eat some arrowroot. Bennett later testified: 'We stopped at Degilbo for more wool, here I got (Shea) washed by some black gins. We stopped next at Bunting's Hotel where I got some arrowroot and wine ... here he lost all power of his hands and feet. We reached Musket Flat about noon on Sunday last. Finding the man was dying, I refused to go any further in the dray, he died about an hour after in my presence, and was buried the same day.'³¹

Bennett later made a statement to the police at Maryborough and a magisterial enquiry was conducted. Bligh was temporarily suspended over the affair but Bennett was eventually accused and charged with perjury by Bligh. Bligh refuted all the allegations made against him by Bennett and claimed that he had sentenced Shea to imprisonment because there had been no one in Gayndah capable of looking after him.³²

As police magistrate, Bligh was also responsible for another gross miscarriage of justice which occurred in 1868. As we have seen, by this time there was widespread concern over the actions of the Native Police and many members of the Maryborough public were openly calling for the police to be disbanded. Citing an example of the reasons why the force should have been disbanded, the *Maryborough Chronicle* gave details of a committee meeting of the Queensland government where instances of Native Police brutality were tabled. These included the shooting of an aboriginal man by Lieutenant James Turner Harris near Gayndah, and the shooting of another aboriginal man at Musket Flat by the same officer. The killings had been cold-blooded and premeditated, one of the victims, reportedly a quiet, unpretentious labourer at a nearby station, being shot in front of his wife and child. Harris was brought before Bligh at Gayndah on a charge of wilful murder. Bligh released the officer on a modest bail, and then spent some considerable time playing billiards with him. When Harris again appeared before Bligh he was quickly discharged from custody on the grounds of insufficient evidence.³³

Bligh died, aged forty-six, on 12 December, 1880, an event which still raises some interesting questions. Bligh's wife had died in 1877 and her death had apparently caused Bligh great mental anguish and even some

physical illness. Doctors had prescribed chloral to relieve the pain and to counter the chronic insomnia from which he was suffering. A few days prior to his death he seemed to be in excellent health and was looking forward to his obligation to oversee a series of examinations at the Gympie Primary School. However, according to a statement later made by his daughter, on the night before his death he seemed troubled and could not sleep. Early in the morning he asked his daughter for a glass of whiskey to help him sleep, but as this did not work he then took a measure of chloral and locked his door. His daughter soon realized that something was wrong and called two doctors. By the time they arrived Bligh was close to death.

The report of the magisterial enquiry which followed Bligh's death stated that the two doctors who had attended Bligh both severely criticized the pharmacist who had supplied the drug without warning Bligh of the danger of mixing it with alcohol. The coroner's verdict was death from an overdose of drugs accidentally taken.³⁴

There is a school of opinion, however, that Bligh may have committed suicide, that his conscience would no longer let him live with the knowledge of the crimes he had committed against the Wide Bay aborigines. Historian Ailsa Dawson certainly seems to believe that this was the case, and a hand-written note penned at the bottom of her paper indicates this belief.³⁵

Bligh was buried in the Two Mile cemetery, his epitaph reads: 'Lamented by many good men.'

Sources and Notes Chapter Twelve.

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2. For a brief history of the Owanyilla village see Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society file 07, pp 1-2.
3. MBC. 17 December, 1853.
4. MBC. 21 February, 1860.
5. MBC. 1 March, 1860.
6. M/C. 28 January, 1911.
7. MBC. *ibid.*
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11. M/C. 7 March, 1861.
12. M/C. 28 February, 1861.
13. M/C. 7 March, 1861.
14. M/C. 21 March, 1861.
15. M/C. 4 April, 1861.
16. M/C. *ibid.*
17. M/C. 2 May, 1861.
18. M/C. 7 March, 1861.
19. M/C. 11 July, 1861.
20. M/C. 8 August, 1861.
21. M/C. *ibid.*
22. M/C. 8 August, 1861.
23. M/C. *ibid.*
24. M/C. 1 August, 1864, reproduced in M/C. 1 August, 1911.
25. M/C. 12 September, 1861, reproduced in M/C. 20 September, 1911.
26. M/C. 8 October, 1863.
27. M/C. 12 October, 1864.
28. According to contemporary reports, Uhr's business acumen finally failed him and he took the position of usher of the black rod in the Queensland government. His sons became well known Queenslanders. One became postmaster in Cooktown and died in Bundaberg in 1915, the other served with the Native Police and was instrumental in capturing the infamous murderer and former gold commissioner Thomas John Griffin. See: M/C. 25 February, 1935, p 4. Griffin was hanged in Rockhampton gaol in June 1868. For further details on the life of Uhr's son, Sub Inspector Wentworth D'Arcy Uhr, see the *Courier Mail*, 29 April, 1993, p 18 and 6 May, 1993, p 23.
29. M/C. 27 September, 1905.
30. M/C. 21 January, 1867.
31. M/C. 21 November, 1866.
32. M/C. 2 March, 1867.
33. M/C. 3 September, 1863.
34. Dawson, *ibid.*, pp 11-12.
35. *Ibid.*, p 12.

Chapter Thirteen. The Fighting Continues.

A correspondent commenting on the actions of the Native Police in the *Maryborough Chronicle* in 1861, stated: 'It is becoming difficult to decide whether the officers or men of that force are the greatest plagues to the country. The lusts of the one cause many a poor husband or father or brother to be butchered, while the examples of the other have given that strong colouring of deceit and drunkenness which now distinguishes the society they move in.'¹

During the temporary absence of the Native Police from Maryborough, many residents went daily in fear of their lives. One of these was George Howard, the man who had done much to see that Lieutenant Bligh was awarded the sword of honour.



George 'Cocky' Howard.
Reproduced with permission of Nena Howard.

Howard himself went in fear of the aboriginal people and there are several recorded instances when he came into conflict with them. The most significant of these was perhaps the confrontation which took place on his property at Primrose Hill, east Maryborough, (now Granville), in March 1864, at a time when the Native Police had been temporarily withdrawn from the town. Following a brief visit to Sydney - where he had a book-binding business - Howard's property was inundated with aboriginal people who had gathered for some kind of ceremony. Howard himself stated that there were about five hundred aborigines around his house and that they were carrying out raids on his extensive vegetable gardens. Details of the subsequent events are interesting for they were written by Howard himself. He wrote: 'As many as two thousand were expected to muster on this occasion, this being some rite which is rare among them. Unfortunately for me they located close to my crop of corn, bananas and pumpkins. I suppose, they, like good generals, looked out for the commissariat during their sojourn.'²

Howard claimed that as it was raining heavily at the time and as the rain had continued for several days he had been unable to go out to chase the aboriginal people from his crop. However, when the rain finally cleared he mustered an armed party to deal with the problem. The party consisted of Howard himself, armed with a horse pistol, the town clerk, Robert Graham, armed with a five-barrelled Dean and Adams revolver, Howard's son, with a double-barrelled shotgun, and a man-servant armed with an unloaded revolver - ammunition being in short supply. Thus armed the party went out to deal with the rapidly growing aboriginal camp. Howard later wrote:

We soon came up to the camp, but I believe our bravery was considerably damped when we saw such a formidable display of gunyahs teeming with blacks, all armed with spears, boomerangs and nullah nullahs, and the redoubtable sambo leader, my son went pretty close to him, and asked where the corn was. He said, 'Oh yes, plenty blackfellow crammer plenty corn.'³

Howard wrote that this aboriginal man was actually an old adversary of his who had previously spent twelve months in Brisbane gaol.

However, observing that the aboriginal men had ordered off all the women and children and some of the warriors had weapons concealed beneath rags, Howard and his companions quickly retreated towards his home. Nearby Howard found several aboriginal women and two boys, guarded by an old man named Deaf Tommy who was armed with three nulla nullas. This aboriginal group was in the process of raiding what remained of Howard's corn crop. The woman and boys ran, dropping their corn, but Deaf Tommy was caught. Howard wrote:

My son made him lay down his weapons, then we went to where we thought they dropped the corn. When we found it we wanted the black to pick it up and carry it to my house, but this he would not do, but all of a sudden he faced my son and tried to get the gun from him. I, seeing the extreme danger he was in, run (sic) to the black and pointed my pistol at him, telling him that I would shoot him ... He then turned furiously upon me, stooped like lightning, picked up a nullah nullah, sent it at me, but missed his mark, and then sprang at me like a tiger. His hand was close to my throat; I fired and he dropped.⁴

As Deaf Tommy fell so a sudden ululation came from the aboriginal camp and hundreds of men began to advance threateningly on the white party. Seeing that they were hopelessly outnumbered, Howard and his men quickly retreated to his house where they barricaded themselves with the women and children in the upper part of the building. Help was sent for and this quickly arrived, after which the aborigines decamped and made off. The humpies were destroyed and Howard noticed that a huge bora circle, what he called a *thaur* existed within the camp. He described it as being an immense ring about twice the size of a circus. The following day an armed punitive party was organized, one of whom was wearing the cap of a Native Police officer. The party, led by George Howard, tracked the aborigines all day, and just as evening was falling they came upon their camp. On seeing the Native Police cap the aborigines fled into thick swampy bush-land. How many aborigines were 'dispersed' on this occasion, Howard was careful not to state, especially so because after the massacre at Myall Creek in northern New South Wales where seven white men had been convicted and executed for killing aborigines, there now existed a precedent for the conviction and execution of white men who openly killed aboriginal people. Howard only later claimed that the armed party, '... destroyed all the implements (weapons) they could find and killed about twenty dogs.'⁵

A later press report of the incident claimed that there had been no bloodshed during the 'dispersal' and that the armed punitive party which had followed the aboriginal people was only a token force, as the remaining police were away chasing Falkenberg the Forger (q.v.). The report also stated that approximately three or four hundred aboriginal people had been involved in the chase. Howard was not, of course, charged with the murder of Deaf Tommy.⁶

Despite the success of the punitive mission, after this episode Howard went in fear of his life. Some of his aboriginal workers informed him that he was marked for death and that the aboriginal community would kill him and his family at the first opportunity. 'Is this not a fearful state?' Howard lamented to the press. 'You can easily guess the state of terror I am in for the safety of my family.'⁷

There is little doubt that Howard had an evil temper, and it has been reported that during a rage he once shot and killed a number of his valuable horses simply because one of his mares had staked herself on a fence-post.⁸



Aborigines in Maryborough. This photograph was taken prior to 1879. Post office in background.
Source - Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

It may not be inconsistent to here mention some biographical details of George Howard.

George Howard, one of Maryborough's earliest residents, was certainly a colourful and controversial character. Dubbed the Father of Maryborough, it is probably not a title he deserved, as there were many dedicated men and women who did just as much and possibly a lot more for the region yet received little or no reward or recognition for their endeavours. Additionally, as we have seen, Howard was a somewhat polemical figure, a man who broached no argument, who knew exactly what he wanted and would stop at little in order to achieve his objectives. We have already recorded the debacle of Howard's support for Lieutenant John O'Connell Bligh's infamous sword and the shooting by Howard of Deaf Tommy at Primrose Hill. These incidents give us a clear indication of the man's character. In 1907 - long after Howard's death and when no action could be brought for defamation, the *Maryborough Chronicle* described him as, '...a short stout man with jet black rolling eyes and full of wit. He had a masterly command of language too, and might have challenged even Daniel O'Conner of fish-wife renown.'⁹

George Howard was an Englishman, born in the county of Essex in 1810. He was the son of a doctor, William Howard, who subsequently suffered a financial disaster - followed by ill health - and George was sent to school in Yorkshire - supposedly at the school which Charles Dickens depicted as Dothdboys Hall. After finishing school the young man was sent to London to undertake an apprenticeship. When he was twenty-one years of age he decided that he would attempt to make his fortune away from the depressing and constricting confines of England under the blundering rule of William IV. In 1831 he boarded the passenger ship *Medway*, bound for Van Diemen's Land, (renamed Tasmania in November 1855), with the intention of exploiting the colony as much as possible before returning to England a rich man. He carried with him several letters of introduction but he soon found that in the fledgling colony such letters meant little, what counted was determination and a certain degree of ruthlessness. After several months of attempting to establish himself he was finally offered a position in the government printing office. He soon became dissatisfied with this somewhat mundane position and opened his own business in Hobart as a stationer, bookbinder and machine-paper ruler. He later transferred his business to Sydney where it flourished. However, there seems to have been an element of the pioneer in Howard, and after establishing the business he left it in the hands of a manager and travelled to Maryborough in 1853 when the old township was still very much in its embryonic state.¹⁰

Howard, as we have seen, opened one of the first public houses, the Maryborough Inn, and later became a powerful public figure in the region. He was deeply involved in various business enterprises, real estate, municipal affairs, and the development of the coal industry. The town of Howard was named by the Douglas government in George Howard's and his son William Howard's honour.

But, not surprisingly, Howard had his share of enemies as well as his supporters. In 1866, if Howard's own account of the affair can be believed, he was the victim of a somewhat bizarre attack on his person. The events were soon afterwards related by Howard himself, who wrote a scathing letter to the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle*: Tongue in cheek, the newspaper's editor headlined the piece: *Hydropathy - Cold water Cure or Murder*. Howard wrote:

Sir, with your kind permission I wish to lay before the public of Maryborough the particulars of one of the most cruel pieces of villainy ever perpetrated upon anyone in this world. The facts are these: On Wednesday evening last I attended the meeting of the Wide Bay Building Society, and being afraid to face the cold air in crossing the river on account of my ill health (the Granville bridge had not then been erected and a ferry carried passengers from the town to the east bank), I made up my mind to take a bed at Mr Galbraith's Steam Packet Hotel, corner of Kent and Richmond Streets. I went to bed in the presence of my son, who saw, as well as I did, that the bed was clean, dry and comfortable. In the morning, just before daylight, I woke up as cold as ice. I could not conceive the reason. I lay rubbing myself, trying to get warm, but could not; at last I got up, thinking walking about would circulate my blood. On looking for an article of dress I accidentally put my hand on the top sheet, which I found to be perfectly wet, as though it had been soaked in water and then wrung out. I at once called Mr Galbraith into my room and showed him the sheet, and asked him if he could account for it. He said he could not, but he was certain that I could not have wetted it myself, as the sheet was uniformly wet from corner to corner; therefore it must have been put on me when I was sound asleep. I called in Mr Walker, who saw me go to bed, and he declared the bed was quite dry when he left me. I called in the servant woman who made the bed, and she said the bed was quite dry when she made it. I asked in a gentleman attached to your (newspaper) office, and showed him the sheet; and several others all agreed that someone put that on me for no good purpose, and I believe it was done to cripple me with rheumatics, or even to murder me. Had I been found dead in bed, no mortal man would have even imagined how my death came about. I must tell you that the mattress and the sheet under me were perfectly dry. Now, sir, could a more fiendish plan have been taken to ruin my health - a man who is known to be a great sufferer by rheumatics I must say that I for one do not approve of the cold water cure, and I hope the hydropathist who practised upon me will next time try the experiment upon himself, and then he may suffer similar pains to what I have suffered. I hope Mr. Galbraith will, for the sake of the reputation of his house, try by every means to ferret out the scoundrel who did the deed.¹¹

Yet perhaps one of the most well publicised controversies surrounded George Howard was his involvement with the ninety-acre reserve.

In 1872 Kent Street only extended as far as Lennox Street, its continuance in a north-westerly direction was blocked by a fence, erected by the council, which surrounded the ninety-acre reserve. The reserve embraced the present railway yards, the police station corner, the Central School grounds and the Grammar School property. Prior to the erection of the fence the reserve was widely used for a variety of reasons, for example bullock drivers would camp there with their teams after coming down the Gayndah Road. However, when the council erected the fence around the reserve and declared that it was going to be used as an agistment paddock, Howard and many of his supporters immediately protested. In a powerful memorial addressed to the governor, they stated:

We, the undersigned memorialists, resident of the town of Maryborough, beg to bring under the notice of your Excellency and your honourable Executive Council, the following matter, and we trust your intercession and influence to prevent a lasting injury from being inflicted on this town. The matter referred to is this. When the township of Maryborough was laid out, the Government reserved a large allotment of ground for supply of water and public recreation, which your memorialists have enjoyed for over twenty years, but now the Town Council, in opposition to the wishes of your memorialists, have closed up the streets running through the reserve, and have proposed to let it as an agistment paddock. Your memorialists are under the impression that the Government never contemplated that their grant should be turned to any such use, nor that any of our streets should be closed, more especially Kent Street ... there is no excuse for putting the inhabitants of this town to the great inconvenience of having their main street cut in two, and that turning a public reserve into an agistment paddock is a total perversion of the original intention of the Government which granted it.¹²

Howard achieved a small nucleus of public support and formed a committee, the People's Committee, of which he was elected chairman. One of the first actions of the committee was to send the following memorial to the council:

We, the undersigned rate-payers, respectfully request that you will cause Kent Street, from its intersection with Lennox Street, to its junction with the Gayndah Road, to be made fit for traffic. And we, your memorialists, further request that you ask the Executive Government to proclaim Kent Street as running through the reserve, as there seems to be some doubt held by your Council, whether it is a portion of Kent Street or not. We, at the same time, beg to assure your honourable Council that the people of Maryborough wish to act in perfect harmony with you, more especially as you have been elected by, and from, ourselves for our mutual benefit.¹³

The memorial was not successful as few people in Maryborough agreed to sign it. Howard was furious and became even more determined to achieve his aims. In 1926, fifty-four years after the events, the *Maryborough Chronicle* published a report of his subsequent actions.

Once upon a time Maryborough might have provided thrilling material for a Zane Grey or a Mark Twain. A factional feud in a small colonist town would have suggested the basis of a great story ... (George Howard) was an estimable citizen who saw the folly of preventing the extension of Kent Street. He endeavoured by constitutional means to have the 90 acre reserve fence removed, but failed. There were conservative spirits to be reckoned with. One of these was James Dowzer, who vigorously opposed the scheme. Both sides were determined, so Mr Howard began to enlist public sympathy. Sympathy is often created in the presence of a hogshead of beer, and in this case, a cask of XXX worked wonders. The leader, (so the legend goes), gathered his followers about the hogshead, which was placed near the reserve, and all made merry. It was obvious, of course, that merry men so fortified would soon make short work of the frail fence if the occasion arose, so a well-meaning solicitor, Mr William Barnes, quietly informed Mr Howard that he, Mr Howard, would immediately place himself outside the law if he removed the fence with his hands. But there are more ways of killing a cat than by drowning it, and ropes were attached to the posts. A few tugs at the rope by a band of brawny-armed men levelled the fence to the ground, and apparently, they were quite safe in relation to the law. The rival faction, the conservatives, headed by Mr Dowzer, raised Cain, threatening all sorts of dire penalties. In the depth of the night the conservatives re-erected the fence, the next day it was pulled down. This happened on three successive occasions, and the conservatives tired of their well-doing. The result was that a thoroughfare was opened and Kent Street extended to the further limits of the town.¹⁴

Yet the animosity and bitterness continued. Once the opening was made, Howard petitioned long and hard to have the boggy streets made passable. A proposed petition to the council received little support and angrily, Howard turned to the press, sending them a copy of the memorial and asking them to print it in the hope of gaining further public support. Howard wrote to the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle*: 'Sir, I respectfully request that you will publish the memorial I attempted to get signed addressed to our - I can only call them nothing else but a thickheaded - council.'¹⁵

Howard's career continued to be controversial - and financially successful until his death, at the age of seventy-three years, in April 1883.

Sources and Notes for Chapter Thirteen.

1. M/C. 23 January, 1861.
2. M/C. 17 March, 1864.
3. M/C. *ibid.*
4. M/C. *ibid.*
5. M/C. *ibid.*
6. M/C. 14 March, 1864, supplement.
7. M/C. 17 March, 1864.
8. Author interview with Nena Howard 22 April, 1993.
9. M/C. 5 March, 1907.
10. Wide Bay News. 19 April, 1883.
11. M/C. 9 June, 1866.
12. M/C. 12 October, 1872.
13. M/C. 23 November, 1872.
14. M/C. 2 March, 1926.
15. M/C. 23 November, 1872.

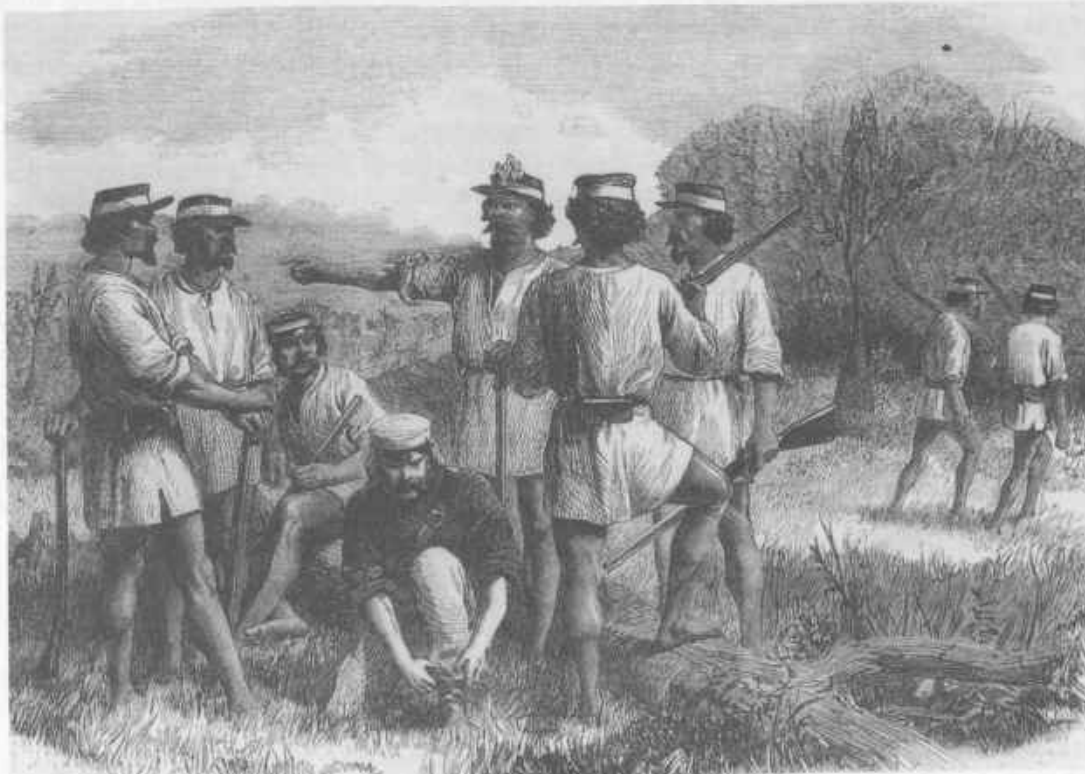
Chapter Fourteen.

Continued Aggression.

George Howard's attitude to the aboriginal people in the Maryborough region was, unfortunately, symptomatic of many of the earlier settlers, and because of this intransigence and intolerance, the depredations continued almost unchecked. In June 1864 a group of aboriginal people stole a quantity of tea from the government dray in Maryborough. However, soon afterwards they returned the tea and complained that they wanted instead a quantity of sugar, flour and tobacco. The previous Saturday an attempt had been made to rob the camp of a road gang as the men were at work and while a woman had been left in charge of the camp and its stores. But as the robbery was in progress the work's overseer suddenly arrived at the scene and, realizing what was taking place, managed to get into one of the tents where a gun was kept. He then quickly drove the aborigines from the camp. The following Monday a butcher named Gilbert was taking meat from Maryborough to Stradbally when a nulla-nulla was thrown at him. The weapon struck his horse near the hip and penetrated about an inch into the flesh. The horse broke into a gallop and Gilbert escaped from the aboriginal attack. On the same day, butcher C.E.S. Booker attempted to capture an aboriginal man who had been stealing beef from his slaughter-yard. Booker and the aboriginal were fighting in the yard - Booker being badly bitten and bruised - when about fifty aboriginal men suddenly arrived at the scene and threatened Booker with more serious injuries unless he let his captive go. Booker did as he was bid.

Booker, as we have seen, was one of the first pioneers of the region. He was born at Miller's Point, Sydney, and came to the Wide Bay region at the age of eighteen. In 1857 he established the butchering business which was carried on by himself and his son until 1904. Booker also established the Oakland Meat Works on the Mary River from which large quantities of meat and tallow were exported. He was aged sixty-nine when he died of dengue fever at his residence, *Warooga*, in Churchill Street at 1 a.m., 2 April, 1905. He left a family of five sons and five daughters.¹

The day after the attack on Booker the mailman from Gayndah was suddenly set upon by a large gang of aboriginal men who blocked his way and with fierce gesticulations and threats, frightened his horse into bolting. The mailman escaped injury and the horse with the mail was later recovered by a man travelling on the Maryborough road. Several other robberies and assaults occurred that week, including the attempted robbery of a tobacconist shop owned by a George Curtis, the man who was to be closely involved in the later discovery at Gympie of the famous Curtis Nugget.²



A contemporary artist's impression. Native Police 1863. Source - John Oxley Library print number 63530.



The Native Police roamed freely throughout south-east Queensland, travelling rapidly between widely diversified centres. The date on this photograph is ca. 1900, although it was almost certainly taken earlier as the Native Police, as a force, was disbanded in 1895. Source - John Oxley Library print number 36396.

Fraser Island inevitably became the last retreat for the aboriginal people of the Maryborough region, and during the 1860s there was widespread debate on the issue of having all aboriginal people confined to the island and forcibly kept there. It was a debate which, quite naturally, caused some heated comments, although the rights of the aborigines were not at issue, primary concern lay with the fact that once the island had been made into an aboriginal reserve, the vast tracts of timber - so vital to Maryborough's economy - could not be harvested.³

As we have seen, the events at Myall Creek certainly had some affect on the killing of aboriginal people in the Maryborough area, especially during 1863 when the Native Police were in the process of being withdrawn. Large gangs of aboriginal men regularly gathered in the Maryborough region from many outlying districts. They came for food and fighting, which they seemed to relish with equal intensity. In October 1863, one resident wrote:

There has been a large gathering of the aboriginal tribes from Durundur and Widgee Widgee at Maryborough during the past week, the object of the visit, we believe, being to settle one or two quarrels with the Wide Bay blacks, and generally to exhibit their prowess and endurance by breaking each other's heads with nullah-nullahs, or of lancing each other's persons with their spears. For three days the bloody fray continued, or, to be more correct, the bloodless fray, for we have heard of no accident of a serious nature ... which says much for their agility and coolness, for the flight of boomerangs, spears, nullah-nullahs would have confounded one not used to the excitement of such a shower of missiles. We understand that during these fighting days the greater portion of them have been without food, having been too much absorbed in the pursuit of revenge or glory to find time for such an ordinary affair.⁴

In November that year a timber-getter complained bitterly about the risks he and his fellow workers were being daily exposed to, and claimed that the Native Police should certainly remain in the district. He wrote:

There is talk about doing away with the black police up here ... if ever they do it will be a dreadful day for the blacks, for as sure as fate, we lumberers will have to shoot them down in self defence and run the risk of a hanging. We don't want their blood on our hands, but if all protection is withdrawn we must do the best we can for ourselves ... I think if a public meeting were got up in Maryborough and a memorial were sent to the Governor, he would see the black police force was not withdrawn until we had one as good in its place. I am told it is proposed to substitute for the fifteen troopers two white police, and they are to be chiefly engaged patrolling the town of Maryborough. Bah! What will the blacks care for that? No more than a crack on the cobra with a tobacco pipe. Don't let's have make-believe, but something that will overawe the poor wretches - it's mercy in the long run - you mind my word.⁵

Shortly afterwards the Native Police were withdrawn - much to the resentment of many Maryborough residents who called for an immediate increase in police numbers in the town. The Native Police were replaced by six white policemen, a chief officer, one sergeant, one watch-house keeper and three ordinary constables. These men were responsible for maintaining law and order throughout the entire Wide Bay region. Their duties frequently took them into the country and police staff were very often away from the town while doing escort duty, taking convicted prisoners to the Brisbane gaol. When staffing numbers were very low, the night and day watches had to be performed by the chief officer and an ordinary constable. In December 1863 the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported that on one occasion staffing levels were so low that the lockup had to be left in the care of the watch-house keeper's wife. There were five prisoners locked up at the time.⁶ In the same editorial the *Chronicle* stated that the problem of understaffing was an acute one, especially in view of the large numbers of aboriginal people in the town. The report continued, '...but the presence of the aborigines in such numbers in our very midst - a vagrant, thievish, untamable race - renders it absolutely necessary that all calculations as to the number of the police force required for the town should include sufficient to overawe this lawless race.'⁷

The population of Maryborough generally was calling for stricter controls over the aboriginal people and the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* stated that in one week alone, letters had been pouring into his office complaining, '...of the disorderly conduct of the blacks and the frequent robberies perpetrated by them.'⁸ His editorial called for police patrols and curfew hours, stating, '...being ourselves frequent witnesses to the disgusting exhibition of batches of drunken blackfellows, often in a state of nudity, yelling and howling, mingling with their own lingo the bits of English blasphemy they have learned from the "civilised" whites.'⁹

The 'outrages' continued. In June 1864 a man named Tallon was attacked, allegedly in revenge for the shootings of aboriginal people. Tallon was taking a boat down to Dundathu at the time of the attack. There were two aboriginal men with him, Sancho and Jimmy, who were acting as oarsmen. Suddenly these two men dropped their oars and rushed Tallon with knives, allegedly shouting: 'What you whitefellow shoot 'em blackfellow? Me kill you now.'¹⁰ Stripping Tallon of his clothing they rifled his pockets and took all his money and possessions. During the struggle the boat drifted towards a sawmill on the river bank. Tallon called for help and Sancho immediately dived into the water, swimming strongly for the far bank. Tallon managed to pin Jimmy down and, 'gave him a thorough hammering.'¹¹ Jimmy was later taken to the police lock-up.

By about July 1865, the Native Police were once again re-installed in the Maryborough region under a new local officer. Some residents regretted the decision but, if the newspaper editorials accurately portrayed the feelings of the majority, then most Maryborough residents rejoiced that the force had returned. The *Chronicle* stated:

During the period that the district was deprived of their presence, the conduct of the black population became so outrageous and violent that neither life nor property were safe - farms were pillaged, drays stuck up on the high road and plundered, and in the very streets of the town itself, the solitary laborer wending his way home with provisions for his family was stopped and robbed. The thing at last became unendurable, and if it had not been for the timely re-instatement of the Native Police under that judicious and active officer Lieutenant Freudenthall, in self defence the inhabitants must have risen up against their black tormentors and have made a severe example of some of them.¹²

Six months after the re-introduction of the force to Maryborough, the crime rate had dropped dramatically, so successful, in fact, was the force in curtailing aboriginal aggression in the region that the government was actively contemplating once again withdrawing the force as the crime rate was so low that it seemed unnecessary to retain the Native Police in the region. This, however, was not generally well accepted by the townspeople, and the *Chronicle* lamented:

The arrival of the Native Police put an end to (the) mischievous and ruinous state of things; but now, after a season of comparative quiet, we are threatened again with a recurrence of these evils. No wonder that the inhabitants contemplate the prospect with alarm, and hasten to take every precautionary measure for averting what they deem a catastrophe.¹³

On Tuesday 24 October, 1865, the steamer *Platypus* left the Maryborough wharf to collect a large number of immigrants who had travelled from England aboard the *Golden Hind*. Unfortunately the steamer returned to Maryborough without the passengers, as the immigration officials aboard had discovered that the *Golden Hind* had experienced a number of cases of contagious fever. All the sick people and every one of the immigrants were therefore landed on Woody Island and placed in quarantine, stores and tents were sent for their comfort.¹⁴

Soon afterwards, on 11 November, came the disconcerting news that the quarantine camp had been attacked by aborigines. Details of the attack were, at first, sparse, but as the hours wore on further news arrived. It seems that several aboriginal men had been employed by immigration officials to land the stores on the island. These men had carried the stores up to the camp where they had been rewarded with a plentiful supply of ship's biscuits. They went away happily, but shortly afterwards another group of aboriginal people arrived and demanded food. The doctor in charge of the camp gave them biscuits and tobacco and a few articles of clothing, and they too went happily away. Yet within an hour or so another much larger group - up to sixty in number - came to the camp, these men were carrying spears and nulla nullas and were openly hostile. They did not ask for food but simply began throwing spears, nulla nullas and boomerangs. The only weapons at the camp during this time consisted of a rifle with a broken nipple and one revolver. The doctor received a severe blow on the head with a nulla nulla, as did one of his assistants. The sick were turned out of their beds by the hostile aborigines and all the camp stores, medicines, surgical equipment and clothing were stolen. Several of the immigrants ran to the beach where they managed to attract the attention of a passing ship, the *Golden Land*. The immigrants were taken off the beach and a punitive party was quickly formed. This party was comprised of members of the ship's crew and a number of passengers bound for Brisbane. The party was split into two boats, one to attack the camp and the other to go to the far side of the island and destroy the aborigines' canoes. However, when the parties landed they discovered that the island was deserted. News was sent to Maryborough and the Native Police were instructed to find and 'disperse' the culprits.¹⁵

There is little doubt that some monstrous cruelties were being perpetrated against aborigines, especially children. In May 1865 the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported that an eight years' old aboriginal girl had been blinded by pranksters. The journalist wrote: 'We were yesterday the horrified spectators of the agonies of a fine little black girl, apparently about eight years of age whose eyes had been scorched by an explosion of gunpowder. The gunpowder had been placed in a short tobacco pipe and given to the child to smoke.'¹⁶

It also remains clear that those few who *were* caught killing or otherwise abusing the aboriginal people very often received lenient sentences or merely fines. On 30 March, 1868, a thirteen years' old boy named John Fitzpatrick was brought before Justice Lutwyche at the Maryborough Circuit Court charged with manslaughter, he had shot and killed a young aboriginal woman named Rosa. The details laid before the court were that on 14 December, 1867, Fitzpatrick and several other young men armed themselves with guns and went in search of aboriginal people whom they wanted to 'frighten'. Fitzpatrick claimed that the guns were loaded with blanks. He said that he had borrowed a gun and had fired it at groups of aborigines but that one of the barrels had missed-fire on several occasions. However, on pointing it at Rosa, the weapon had discharged and the woman had been fatally shot through the heart and lungs.¹⁷

Justice Lutwyche, in his wisdom, stated that Fitzpatrick should have been flogged for the offence, adding that it was a wonder he and his friends had not been attacked by the aboriginal men at the time of the shooting. Fitzpatrick was found guilty of killing Rosa and the jurors made a strong plea for mercy. Lutwyche must have listened attentively to this plea, after ruminating somewhat he fined Fitzpatrick just one shilling.¹⁸

Aboriginal deaths could not, of course, be solely attributed to white colonialism and aggression. Prior to the coming of the European influence aboriginal wars were frequent and bloody. These wars continued after white colonization, further adding to the disappearance of the nations. In 1894 early Maryborough pioneer Peter O'Kelly wrote:

As time went on these blacks disappeared ... how rapid has been the disappearance of the blacks in some districts, even within the memories of some colonists still resident in Queensland ... Even as recently as the year 1860, (the) Mount Bopple tribe was one of the most powerful and ferocious to be met with in the whole colony. Its members were a real terror to the white settlers as well as the blacks of other districts. But apart from their aggressive ferocity, they certainly were a splendid-looking lot of fellows. No law or police had the least terror for these braves, they maintained their wild independence against all comers, spearing bullocks and driving away whole flocks of sheep to their mountain fastnesses to be devoured at their leisure; and, to keep them in any sort of order, a Native Police camp had to be established in the immediate vicinity of their hunting grounds. On the first day of January 1862, I had the privilege of witnessing a pitched battle from the tribe and fully a thousand picked warriors from Fraser Island, Port Curtis and the Burnett. The battle took place in what was then the old township of Maryborough ... I had seen but little aboriginal warfare before that date, but have witnessed a great number of regular field days since then, and must say these latter were incomparable to that great battle when one regards either the multitude of the slain or the magnitude of the numbers engaged. It was calculated that the allies had not less than a thousand warriors of all arms, while the Boppleites had close to five hundred men, and what they lacked in numbers they certainly made up in manly physique and martial bearing.

Hostilities commenced about 3 p.m. and did not cease until near sundown when the King of Fraser Island was laid low by a spear right through his abdomen. About a dozen other warriors were killed on both sides, but the allies were completely routed. They appeared to be crest-fallen, and did not offer the least resistance when a Bopple chief rushed on to claim the young princess, daughter of the fallen monarch, or whilst, as afterwards happened, they carried her away in triumph.¹⁹

Sources and Notes for Chapter Fourteen.

1. M/C. 3 April, 1905.
2. M/C. 9 June, 1864.
3. M/C. 28 April, 1864.
4. M/C. 15 October, 1863.
5. M/C. 12 November, 1863.
6. M/C. 10 December, 1863.
7. M/C. *ibid.*
8. M/C. 5 November, 1863.
9. M/C. *ibid.*
10. M/C. 23 June, 1864.
11. M/C. *ibid.*
12. M/C. 7 January, 1865.
13. M/C. *ibid.*
14. M/C. 28 October, 1865.
15. M/C. 11 November, 1865.
16. M/C. 20 May, 1865.
17. M/C. 31 March, 1868.
18. M/C. *ibid.*
19. M/C. 31 January, 1894.

Chapter Fifteen.

Aboriginal Missions on Fraser Island, and the Decrease in Aboriginal Numbers.

There were several attempts to found missions to the aborigines on Fraser Island, the first was a dream of the Lutheran missionaries stationed at Zion Hill, near the settlement of Brisbane. In 1842 these missionaries had appealed to Sir George Gipps, the governor of New South Wales, stating that they needed land at a distance from the corrupting influence of white people where a mission could be established. The crown lands commissioner, Dr Stephen Simpson, later recommended Fraser Island, but nothing came of the scheme, primarily through lack of funds. Several years later, in 1846, the idea was again proposed, but on this occasion with a cynical addition - that the mission be combined with a penal institution for aboriginal offenders. Once more the scheme did not come to fruition.

However, in November 1870, the first mission to Fraser Island was quietly established by Reverend Edward Fuller. Fuller was a minister belonging to the Primitive Methodist denomination who had spent many years working as a bush missionary, reportedly travelling over five thousand miles while carrying on his work on the Darling Downs and in northern Queensland. With the advice of his confidant and friend, Reverend Nelson of Toowoomba, and following a series of meetings with church leaders in Brisbane, Warwick, Ipswich and Toowoomba, Fuller decided that the best place to establish a mission for the aboriginal people would be in the relevant seclusion of Fraser Island. Shortly afterwards, in October 1870, Fuller arrived in Maryborough where he recruited the services of a young minister from one of the local churches. He was also aided in his endeavours by the harbour master, Richard B. Sheridan. On 1 November Fuller travelled to Fraser Island aboard the Maryborough pilot boat taking with him a quantity of gardening tools, seeds, and other supplies.¹

For several weeks he searched the island looking for a likely place to establish his mission, finally selecting a site near White Cliffs where the sandy soils seemed a little darker. Fuller knew that if his mission was to succeed he would have to be able to grow most of his food, and the sandy soils seemed to indicate that he would have difficulty in this.

The life Fuller was to lead in the wilderness of Fraser Island was a hard one, yet he was no newcomer to hardships and difficulties. During his earlier wanderings he had travelled some seven hundred miles to Roma and Bourke, - when it was known as Fort Bourke - and when those regions had been only an inhospitable wilderness filled with dangers. He had carried with him just a few meagre supplies and a haversack filled with bibles. Yet Fuller was not the archetypal bible-thumping missionary, he was hardened by several years in the British Army, having served in India and South Africa.²

After arriving on Fraser Island he soon gathered a small community of aboriginal people around him and began his work by attempting to teach them English. At the same time he studied the aboriginal dialect and held great hopes of one day being able to preach the gospel in that language. Yet his task was not an easy one. The aboriginal people who gathered to watch and listen soon became bored with the monotonous chant of Fuller reciting the alphabet at them or labouring them with long monologues on the life of Christ. The missionary was only able to retain his intended converts at the mission by giving them food and other gifts.

The people of Maryborough were sceptical over the introduction of a mission station, but at a meeting held at the Presbyterian Church in February 1871, many leading citizens pledged to help Fuller in any way they could, including the raising of funds for the mission station.³

Fuller also had his detractors, one of whom wrote:

The Reverend Mr Fuller has no doubt vivid recollections of comfortable beds, good and wholesome ... food, agreeable communications with his fellow men and all the unnumbered enjoyments which go to make life so happy, and without which it must be miserable indeed. Of course the nigger knows very little about such things. Many of his communications with his fellow man are conveyed by means of a nullah nullah or boomerang. The point of his jokes he finds at the end of a spear, and the sharper that point is, the more it tickles ... His bed, the earth, his roof, a sheet of bark (and that only when it rains, for in fine weather he is positively too lazy to make his gin cut it) ... I know right well the gravity of the matter ... neither have I any wish to jeer at Mr Fuller, but I think he has made a mistake.⁴

Fuller was certainly experiencing difficulties. The aborigines could not be kept at the mission, there was insufficient food to feed them all, and, of necessity, they were forced to wander in search of food. When a large group of aboriginal men and women arrived from the mainland, the island aborigines deserted the mission in droves and went off to sing and dance at the various corroborees. At one time in early 1871 there was no one at the mission apart from Fuller himself and a young aboriginal man named Lenny who was employed by Fuller to cook and clean and to act as a translator. Fuller's attempts to grow food for the aboriginal people proved a failure, as the *Maryborough Chronicle* correspondent wrote in March, 1871:

Nearly everything that was planted, such as maize, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, lettuce, radish, mustard and cress, pumpkins, melons etc, came up, but having got their heads above ground, the sight of Fraser Island seemed to frighten them and they declined coming any further ... If the soil fails altogether, Mr Fuller intends, if he can get a boat, to turn his attentions to the sea, and if possible, do something in the fishing line. For he considers that there ought to be a mission on Fraser's Island, whatever may be done elsewhere, on account of the number of natives constantly resorting there. But unless some means can be devised for employing the natives so as to put a stop to their wanderings, much success in Christianising or civilising them can hardly be expected.⁵

Fuller himself was disheartened. Two months later he sat in his tent and wrote:

For more than a week I have been quite alone, not a soul on the place but myself, as my man Lenny who generally stays with me when the others wander away, asked for leave of absence to go and see his relatives at the south end of the island ... after all my five months hard labour, working day and night, there now seems nothing for it but to proclaim Fraser Island as unfit for agricultural missionary settlement, and leave it for a more suitable locality. I must either look to the cultivating of soil as a means of inducing the natives to stay around me whilst I endeavour to teach them ... or else I must give up the station altogether and wander about with them *a la* blackfellow.⁶

Two months later, in June, 1871, Fuller had found that, '...it was not good for a man to be alone instructing naked adults of both sexes,' and so he arranged for another minister, Reverend J. Buckle, to bring a woman missionary, his fiancée Miss Winstone, to the island. Shortly afterwards Fuller married Miss Winstone, Reverend Buckle performing the ceremony. This was almost certainly the first white marriage ceremony on Fraser Island. The addition of an attractive white woman who could play hymns on a harmonium had a lasting affect on the aboriginal people who then came willingly and often to the mission tents.

However, the addition of Miss Winstone to the mission was only of novel and cosmetic value to the aboriginal people, and no real progress was being made in the conversion of the islanders to Christianity. Some of the men and women, especially the younger ones, could chant the alphabet by rote, others could say a few simple prayers, but to most of the aborigines it was all meaningless, they came for the music and the food, and little else.

By August that year, despite intensive efforts made by Fuller to grow crops, the mission was obviously on the edge of closing. An inspection of the mission was made by the Maryborough committee formed to assist Fuller, and recommendations were made to move the mission from Fraser Island to Tin Can Bay. However, inspection of several sites at Tin Can Bay indicated that even there, Fuller would have the same or similar problems he was then experiencing on Fraser Island.⁷

In December 1873 the Queensland government gazetted one square mile of land at White Cliffs to be used as a quarantine station for the plethora of British and European immigrants who were then arriving at Maryborough. The mission closed soon afterwards and Fuller and his wife moved to Cardwell in North Queensland where they established another unsuccessful mission on Hinchinbrook Island.⁸

Over the following years the social degradation of aborigines in the Maryborough district continued at an alarming rate. The introduction of opium dens at Pialba and in Adelaide and Kent Streets Maryborough all contributed to daily scenes of emaciated aboriginal men, women and children, wandering through the streets of the town begging for food, clothing and money. Aboriginal females, many of them little more than children, became prostitutes, working at the Chinese opium dens or on the wharfs, desperate for the opium ash with which they were paid for their services. The prevalence of half-caste children remained evidence of this trade.



Blanket distribution to aborigines in Adelaide Street near original court-house. ca. 1867.
Source - Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

A limited number of blankets were distributed annually to the aborigines in the Maryborough district. This practice, apart from its humanitarian gesture, was one way in which the authorities could keep a rough record of the numbers of aboriginal people in the region. Census counts were often incorrect, as many aborigines were either on walkabout when the censuses were taken, or simply did not bother to register.

The blanket distribution which took place in Maryborough in 1862 revealed that the numbers of aborigines in the region did not seem to be diminishing. The chief constable counted more than two hundred aboriginal people, mostly males. The *Chronicle* reported:

Old inhabitants stated that this was the largest muster they had ever seen, and gave it as their opinion that the race in this neighbourhood is not by any means diminishing. There was a fair proportion of fat chubby babies and active healthy looking children. The gins were chiefly young and appeared to be nearly all blessed with progeny ... A few of the gins were apparently aged, being shrivelled and repulsive-looking creatures, and were in some cases grey-headed. The men were generally fine stalwart fellows, some of them exhibiting signs of great muscular strength. Generally they appeared to be a tractable race, and not by any means destitute of intelligence.⁹

That year only a limited number of blankets were sent from Brisbane, and as there were not enough to supply all the aboriginal people in the region, a large feast was prepared for them. Two bullocks were killed and cooked on open fires. The press later reporting:

...after which there was a variety of performances in the way of running, dancing, shooting, yelling and singing which highly diverted the numerous assemblage who witnessed the scene. Liquor was made up for the occasion by mixing sugar in large tubs of water of which the sable guests partook with peculiar gusto. Flour was then evenly distributed amongst them.¹⁰

However, by 1886, just twenty-four years later, it was clear that aboriginal numbers were, in fact, dramatically decreasing, as the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

The annual muster of aborigines for the purpose of the distribution of the Queen's bounty disclosed the fact that slowly, but surely, the race is becoming extinguished by the march of civilization and the ministerial policy of 'Queensland for white people'. Last year the blacks on Frazer's Island, (sic) where they live under the most favourable natural conditions, mustered to the number of 123. This year only 100 could be got together, and no explanation of the decline in numbers could be got beyond a vague statement that 'plenty fellow die.' It is asserted that the death rate amongst the Frazer's Island blacks, is influenced by peculiar circumstances. Some ten years ago, a schooner bound for Townsville, with a cargo largely composed of beer and spirits in cases, was wrecked on the outer beach of the island, and timber-getters, who were numerous in the vicinity at the time, were very busy for some days in getting the grog and planting it in the sand here, there, and everywhere. In the orgy, the whereabouts of many of the plants were forgotten, and it is said that even at this remote period, the blacks occasionally come across a lost case or two of brandy, and indulge forthwith in a spree which usually produces a death or two.¹¹



Protector of Aborigines Archibald Meston.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 68274.

In 1905, Archibald Meston, the protector of aborigines stated: 'Fifty years ago there were from 2000 to 3000 aborigines (sic) on Fraser Island, an exceptionally fine race of people. Today there are about twenty left on the island.'¹²

One man who remembered the annual blanket distribution to aborigines at Tiaro was J. Jeppsen, who later wrote:

I remember the Blackfellows coming to Tiaro on the 24th May, Queen Victoria's Birthday. They were given blankets, I believe it was a gift from the British government. There were about 100 of them. The women carried their babies in a bag on their backs, they camped in a paddock below the Tiaro school, they camped there for about 2 weeks or a month. There were 3 butchers in Tiaro at that time, they gave the blacks, hearts, liver, tripe, kidneys, white people would not eat these at that time. The butchers gave the blacks soup after they skinned the tallow off it, it would not be bad soup, they put in a bit of old salt or brine to make it tasty, it would be 50 gallons or 100 gallons. They hunted round Tiaro for food, bandicoots, snakes, lizards, grubs also honey. They left and went back to places they came from, they used to work for the graziers and farmers - food and about 1/- a week - they were not worth any more. They had tomahawks and knives, they had clothes on, they were not wild ... There was a half-cast abo. around Tiaro at one time. I believe he was adopted by a squatter ... This abo. was educated by some squatter, he wore a white suit, nice and clean, he spoke at Tiaro one night, I was there, he had an idea he was going to stand for Parliament ... He spoke about the freshes in the Mary River, he advocated a canal around Bauple Mountains to take the water from the farms at Tiaro. He stood on a box in front of the post office there ... was a good crowd. They pelted him with flour, he said I am a white-man now, his name was Billy Beaston.¹³ (It seems likely that this man may also have been known as Billy Beasting).¹⁴

In 1896 the colonial secretary, Horace Tozer, sent the protector of aborigines, Archibald Meston, to Fraser Island with instructions to choose a site for the last remnants of the aboriginal people in the Maryborough region. Tozer was acting after receiving a myriad of complaints from the people of Maryborough and surrounding districts who claimed that the aboriginal people were a disgrace, a continuing nuisance to the region, and that they should be placed somewhere out of harm's way where they could no longer plague a delicate white society. However, nothing was immediately achieved.¹⁵

In February the following year Meston sent an urgent message to the colonial secretary:

Besides the vices of opium and drink and general degradation, the young gins are spreading venereal disease amongst the whites. Last week Mr Lukin, P.M. assured me that this particular evil is greater than any people except the doctors are aware of. I would strongly advise their early removal to Fraser's Island and absolute exclusion from the town.¹⁶

Tozer's immediate response was an order to remove all aborigines from the Maryborough region to Fraser Island. Meston, probably with the help of the Maryborough police, rounded up fifty-one aboriginal men, women and children, loaded them aboard the steamer *Llewellyn* and took them to the old immigration barracks at White Cliffs. When Meston returned to the mainland he was immediately interviewed by the press and claimed:

The blacks who were removed represented thirty-three men, youths, and boys, and eighteen women and girls. They all speak the same dialect, the 'Cabbee' of Wide Bay, Mary River, and Fraser's Island, and nearly all belong to Fraser Island tribes, so they were actually returning to their own original home. On receipt of the Home Secretary's instructions to remove these blacks, I went at once and instructed them to muster on a certain day and be prepared to leave Maryborough at short notice. They all responded, even ten more than I expected, including all the 'outlaws' and the confirmed opium smokers. They obeyed me implicitly and yet I had not spoken a dozen sentences to them from start to finish, I only allowed them to take eight of their dogs, the rest being left behind.

They landed at the White Cliffs, and occupied the buildings of the abandoned quarantine station, three large houses capable of accommodating about a hundred. The single men, the married couples, and the single women are all in separate apartments.

Within two hours after arrival they had all bathed and washed in both salt and fresh water and oiled and combed their hair. Next day all their clothes were washed and the houses all scrubbed out. Bathing was the chief recreation, and they used great quantities of soap. In the afternoon of the second day they had recovered their natural energy and vivacity in a truly surprising manner, and the Maryborough people would not have recognised the lively, clean skinned, clean clothed men, women, and children at the Cliffs as the mournful band parading the streets and begging money a couple of days before.

The intention is to make Fraser Island an aboriginal reserve. Originally it was inhabited by about 2000 blacks, who were among the finest specimens in Australia. A week ago there were only seven on the whole island. There is an unlimited supply of fresh water, and the fishing facilities are equal to any on the Queensland coast. Already the blacks have an excellent four-oared whaleboat and a new fishing drag net, both obtained through the courtesy of Captain Almond, Portmaster. Before I left they were catching scores of whiting with the hand lines. They will also be supplied with harpoons, and a dugong net whenever one can be obtained. Fish and crabs are in abundance. On land, there are wallabies, iguanas, opossums, squirrels, bandicoots, and a considerable supply of vegetable food. They will return as soon as possible to the habits of their ancestors and live clean, healthy, active lives. The men will start to make the old weapons, the boomerang, spear, nulla and shield, and the women will make bags and tow-row nets out of locally made twine. The whole life of the settlement will be under a regular system, including their own police. The men will also be taught to do all their own carpenter and blacksmith work, and the women to make their own and children's clothing.

... There were about ten opium men, and I never mentioned the subject until the third day after arrival. Then I walked in suddenly and took them all by surprise. It was all over in three minutes, and the opium and all appliances were instantly annihilated. They had never seen men in that particularly unpleasant mood before, and were something more than surprised. There will be no more opium used at that station ... (I) hope within three months to show results that will fully justify the Government expenditure and the Home Secretary's confidence in myself. I may mention here that the present is a turning point in the history of the Queensland aboriginal. For the first

time since separation we have a Ministry who are all friendly to the blacks and unanimous in a desire to improve them. ... If the Fraser Island settlement realizes my expectations, it will establish a permanent precedent, and the problem of the future of the aboriginals (sic) will be at last near a satisfactory solution.¹⁷

Meston was diligent in his efforts to have all the local aboriginal people housed on the island, and he was especially aware of incidences of aboriginal abuse. For example in March 1897 the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported: 'Mr Meston made a capture last night that greatly impressed the two blacks he had with him. They (the two aboriginal men) had discovered that a half-caste girl was kept in a Chinese kanaka shop in town and reported the matter to their "boss". A raid was made and the girl found in the company of kanakas half stupefied with opium. She was taken away by the police and locked up and will be sent down to White Cliffs on Monday.'¹⁸

During the months following the opening of the mission station more aboriginal people arrived on Fraser Island and by May that year a total of seventy-three people were housed there.¹⁹ This was the beginning of Meston's great dream for the remnants of the aboriginal people in southern Queensland. Other centres were being established at Deebing Creek, near Ipswich and also at Durundur. Meston believed that when these reserves were in full operation they would be the salvation of the aboriginal people.

Meston quickly set the aboriginal people to work on Fraser Island, clearing the scrub and establishing a sports' field where demonstrations of boomerang throwing and cricket, athletics and football were played. The inmates of the reserve were encouraged to make their own clothes and to revive the manufacture of aboriginal weapons and artifacts - although they were not allowed to carry any weapons. Meston encountered a large number of problems in establishing the reserve, including the reluctance of many of the aboriginal people to give up the habit of opium smoking or opium eating. For addicts suffering withdrawal symptoms he supplied a measure of rum, honey, mother-tincture and aconite, and ordered regular bathing and scouring of the skin with sand.²⁰

The establishment of this reserve in the vicinity of White Cliffs, and the exclusion of white people from that vicinity, quickly became a contentious issue in Maryborough. White Cliffs was a favourite picnic place and camping ground, and many residents resented being banned from the area. Mr A.A. Walker, the honorary secretary to the Maryborough Annual Sailing Regatta Committee, even wrote to the home secretary's office in April that year, forcefully requesting that the ban should not be placed into effect as the spot was popular with steamer excursions from Maryborough and that it was the only place on the island where fresh water could be easily obtained.²¹

Archibald Meston, the aboriginal protector for the entire southern and central Queensland regions, installed his son, Harold, as superintendent for the mission with a salary of £50 per year.²² Both men were fiercely protective of the aboriginal people under their care and were determined to prevent anyone other than aborigines from landing at the site. In April 1897 two men in a sailing boat called the *Rover* landed on the beach at White Cliffs - allegedly for the purpose of obtaining water. Meston met them on the beach and informed them that they were not to land. Meston was ignored and the two sailors proceeded to fill their water cask. Meston retired to the aboriginal camp and several minutes later the two sailors were attacked by a large group of aboriginal men who were wielding waddies. Meston called the attackers off before they could inflict serious damage, but the case caused a furore in Maryborough.²³ Meston later stated that there had been two boats involved, both of which were filled with 'larrikins' whose real purpose had been to cause a disruption at the aboriginal camp. He said there had never been any real intention of obtaining water. Meston added that anyone who wanted to obtain water and who did not interfere with the aboriginal community would have been well received at White Cliffs.²⁴ The event finally ended with a court case in Maryborough where one of the aboriginal men, Paddy Brown, who was alleged to have attacked the white sailors, was accused of assault. Brown was found guilty and fined five shillings.²⁵ Meston was also brought before the court but the affair apparently ended in a private agreement.²⁶

Maryborough residents presented several petitions to the home secretary's office protesting against the aboriginal camp, but they were of little use, and the home secretary issued a public letter in May, stating that there was no objection to people landing at the site providing they did not interfere with the aboriginal camp there.²⁷

Under increasing political pressure from Maryborough residents the home secretary's office, in May that year, in an effort to defend its action in having the camp established at White Cliffs, issued a letter to the town clerk of Maryborough, (E.J. Wells), which stated in part:

...during last November, representation having been made to the Home Secretary that about 50 aboriginals (sic) were camped in and around Maryborough in a deplorable state of degradation, clothed in rags and completely demoralised by opium, drink, and periods of semi-starvation, the women and girls frequenting the opium dens of the Chinese and cohabiting with white men and Kanakas, the Minister requested Mr Meston, whose mission to Northern Queensland had terminated, to devote his spare time, pending the decision of Parliament upon some general system dealing with the whole question of provision for the aboriginals, to removing the Maryborough blacks to some locality where their condition could be improved. For this purpose the Home Secretary chose the site entered in the books of this department as a reserve for quarantine purposes, and which had been used for at least 21 years.²⁸

Despite the fracas and public vilification Meston received in Maryborough, the aboriginal people certainly seemed to be healthier and happier at the White Cliffs settlement. In May, Meston sent a report to the home secretary's office:

I have to report this new aboriginal settlement in a most satisfactory condition. In addition to the original fifty-one brought down from Maryborough on the 24th February, there are twenty-two others who have come of their own accord ... One man, Nabo, had a leg broken and I sent him to the hospital in Maryborough, I also sent a woman suffering from a venereal disease of long standing ... With these exceptions, and one sick man who is now recovering, the other sixty-nine are remarkably clean-skinned and healthy. All the effects of opium and drink are now completely eradicated, and all the ordinary ailments have been successfully treated by medicines kept on the station.

...The mullet season is now coming in and the old men have made a lot of hand nets ready for the occasion. As more will be caught than the station can use, the surplus will be smoke-dried for future requirement. They have made a splendid dugong net, which now only requires a couple of anchors and some floats to be ready for use. Turtle are also being captured, and large numbers of whiting are caught daily with hand lines by women, children and old men. All hands are contented and happy.²⁹

A few days later, on 20 May, 1897, the home secretary, responding to mounting pressure from the people of Maryborough, ordered that the reserve at White Cliffs be removed to Bogimbah Creek. Reluctantly, Meston arranged for many of the buildings of the old quarantine station to be dismantled and moved to the new site.

On 1 January, 1898, the Aboriginal Protection Act was passed. The act enforced measures which were deemed necessary to remove all aborigines to reserves such as the one at Bogimbah. Meston, who had long pressed for such an act, immediately mustered thirty aborigines from Childers and took them to Fraser Island. Soon afterwards another thirty-one were taken from Durundur and Gympie. Numbers swelled rapidly as aborigines were brought in from Roma, Bundaberg, Stradbroke Island, Cooktown and many other centres. It was an enforced deportation which affected a great number of Queensland aborigines. Additionally, many former aboriginal criminals, released from gaol, were immediately taken to the island and placed under Meston's care. As his responsibilities grew, Meston was forced to create his own small police force, comprised of aboriginal men, some of whom were former Native Police troopers. A lockup was erected close to the superintendent's residence and miscreants were punished with beatings or incarceration.

Quoting from contemporary press reports, historian Alice Wilson later wrote that the aborigines were:

...Sent from gaols at Roma, Townsville, Rockhampton and Brisbane, some being notorious criminals ... There were blacks from as far north as Cooktown and Normanton on the Gulf of Carpentaria and as far west as the Georgina River, beside men from the south west and Darling Downs area. Fraser Island was apparently being used as a type of 'Siberia' for incorrigible and troublesome natives at this time.³⁰

The discipline and constricting lifestyle enforced on the inmates at Bogimbah were often the reasons why they sometimes fled into the bush, some travelling to the mainland to escape, however temporarily, the confines of the mission. Alice Wilson later wrote:

In those days Bogimbah aboriginal mission was in operation on Fraser Island, across the straits from Boonooroo House, and very frequently a few aboriginals, (sic) men, women and children,

by borrowing or stealing dinghies, rowed across to the mainland and camped for days at a time in a patch of scrub near Boonooroo House. As their camp was between the Johnstone home and my home, they visited both homes to eke out their larders of fish, crabs, oysters and their kills from the land. My mother would fry scones for them on an outside fire, and it is impressed upon my memory how they loved to take the scones from the boiling fat, hardly waiting for them to be cooked. One little piccaninny, Bella Barboon, in particular, was a general favourite, and could join in the games of the white children. She was severely burnt at one of the camp fires and did not recover. According to tribal custom, her body was wrapped in ti-tree bark and placed in the fork of a tree.³¹

In October 1897, several somewhat regal visitors to Fraser Island were shocked and horrified by the reception they received from the aboriginal people. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

Mr Purvis, the Superintendent in charge of the Frazer's Island (sic) settlement at Bogimbah Creek arrived in town by the *Llewellyn* (steamer) yesterday morning in borrowed clothes with a remarkable story to relate. Last week he had invited Lord and Lady Brassey to pay a visit to the settlement when passing by in the *Sunbeam* (steamer), and had received a telegram from Lord Brassey from Rockhampton, stating his intention of doing so on Sunday. Mr Purvis thereupon set to work to give the distinguished visitors a right royal reception and a grand corroboree in the evening. The blacks entered enthusiastically into the preparations for the occasion. A space was cleared for the corroboree, torches were put up round about, several big piles of wood for bonfires were built up, wild flowers and ferns were gathered, the place reserved for the visitors was beautifully decorated and seats improvised. Add to all this a programme comprising war dances, songs, tumbling and other feats at which the blacks are expert, and it will be seen that a very striking and unique spectacle had been arranged for the pleasure of the expected guests.³²

Yet when the guests were landed by boat the following Sunday, they were greeted, not with the warm welcoming glow of bonfires and dancing, but by an almost malevolent darkness. The visiting party included Lord and Lady Brassey, (Lady Brassey being carried through the surf on a chair), Earl Shaftesbury, Mr de Burgh Persse, Mr H.J. Hill, Mr Albercy Brassey M.P., Captain Edward James Boulton, (Maryborough's harbour master), and several officers from the ship *Sunbeam*. The *Chronicle* report continued: 'Discordant cries rent the air ... it became clearly evident every moment that the blacks had abandoned the carefully prepared programme.'³³

In fact the aboriginal welcoming party had gained entrance to the superintendent's house where they had found a jar containing two gallons of whisky. The spirits had been distributed and consumed, and almost all of the party were uproariously drunk. As threats of violence grew, the official visitors were quickly ushered back into the boats. The superintendent - protected by a group of sober aborigines - remained behind to conduct an investigation. He discovered that his house had been ransacked and many valuable items ruined.³⁴

In 1900, the home secretary sent circulars to various churches requesting them to contribute to the support of the Bogimbah mission, and that year the work was taken over by the Board of Missions on behalf of the Church of England.³⁵

The first superintendent installed by the church to take charge of the mission was Charles Kitchen. Kitchen had received his training in London and had considerable experience in missionary work before arriving in the Maryborough region. For five years prior to his arrival he had been working as head of the church mission in Brisbane. He was more than forty years of age at the time of his appointment, he was to be assisted by a younger man named Irwin who was to take charge of the heavier tasks in the stores and gardens, and to assist with the educational work. Shortly after their arrival new dormitories and a store were erected, and extensive renovations were made to the missionaries' residence.³⁶ However, the task these missionaries had been set was almost an impossible one. Opium had made its re-appearance at the reserve, and many of the aborigines were suffering its debilitating affects.

On 6 May, 1901, four of the Bogimbah aborigines, Barney, Bennet, Jim Bennett and Tom Pickles, were drowned while sailing a small boat from the mission to Woody Island. One of these men, Barney, had achieved some fame within the district, having been one of the police trackers who had helped hunt down Ned Kelly in 1888. John Davidson, the mission superintendent at Bogimbah at this time, later told the magisterial enquiry - held aboard the government steamer *Llewellyn* at anchor just off the mission's shore - that he had sent the aborigines to visit Charles Joseph Tottenham, the light-keeper on Woody Island, taking a number of telegrams with them. Davidson testified: 'The boat was a 22-footer sailing boat, in addition to the sails the boat carried oars and the boat was quite sound, having just been thoroughly repaired and overhauled.'³⁷

Davidson said that he had not seen the men leave the mission, but had later watched them through his telescope. Sometime later smoke signals were seen coming from Woody Island and Davidson immediately realized that something was wrong. His testimony continued: 'I sent out four boys in a skiff to see if they could see anything of the other boat, and if not, to go to Woody Island ... when the boys in the skiff returned next morning, they said the boys were all drowned.'³⁸

A clear indication that the men were dead came soon afterwards when a search party discovered a white shirt with some skin still adhering to it. However, no other trace of the missing men could be found. The light-keeper at Woody Island later testified:

At about 11.10 a.m. that day my sister called me and told me that the mission boat had capsized, (I) looked through the spy glass and saw four black boys hanging on to the boat, she was capsized and there was a plank above the water when I saw her, she was about two and a half miles from Woody and three miles from Bogimbah, the boat capsized in the ship's channel. (I) sent a wire to Captain Boulton, Harbour Master at Maryborough, stating that the mission boat had capsized and there was no steamer or anything around to assist them. (I) Made a smoke to try to call the attention of the mission station to send the other boat, it was blowing a good fresh breeze. (I) continued to watch the boys hanging on to the boat drifting out seawards ... the boys hung on to the boat for about an hour, and then seemed to separate and hang on to pieces of the boat. By this time the boat had drifted about two miles.³⁹

Soon afterwards the men disappeared. Captain Edward James Boulton, the harbour master at Maryborough, later stated that he had received the signal from the light-keeper and had instructed the government steamer *Llewellyn* to search for the men, he also admitted that the area where the boat had capsized was, 'stiff with sharks,' and said he thought it likely that sharks had taken them.⁴⁰

Over the following three years there were three more unsuccessful superintendents at the mission as the reserve descended steadily into chaos. In June 1903 the reserve was taken over by Captain Herbert Kent who, on 19 October that year, addressed a small gathering of Maryborough residents in the town hall. Kent told them of the conditions at the mission and asked for their support. He stated that he had arrived in June that year and had found everything at the mission in great disorder. He added that upon his arrival there had been one hundred and sixty-eight aborigines there, and although they had been without a resident superintendent for only two or three weeks, these people were ready to leave the mission and to go once again into the bush. *The Chronicle* reported:

His first act had been to create a police force and set up a code of laws and to see that they were enforced. He described the difficulty in getting the blacks to work, stating that one party of fifteen had been given axes and provisions and sent out to do work on the Sandy Cape telegraph line. They hid their axes and went off for a holiday, and did not return until their provisions were exhausted, when they came back and stated they had completed the work. On the Bogimbah station they had three tribes to deal with, first, Frazer's Island (sic) natives, a tall war-like race who would do anything but work. Second, the Durundur blacks who were an extraordinarily indolent tribe, third, the Northern Criminals, numbering 18, who were the most crotchety and quarrelsome of the lot, among them being one on whom the sentence of death had been passed, and two others who had received life sentences. These different tribes were always quarrelling amongst themselves, and order was preserved only with the greatest difficulty.⁴¹

When Kent had first arrived at the mission he found that there were no decent huts for the aborigines. One of his first tasks was to lay out a small township on which several huts were quickly erected.⁴² He also found that the fishing boats were holed, the nets were in a state of disrepair and the church was dilapidated.

The general health of the aboriginal population continued to fail, primarily through a combination of malnutrition and insanitary conditions. Many of the aboriginal residents took to eating clay, and several doctors who visited the reserve reported that the inmates were suffering from ankylostomiasis, a form of hookworm infestation of the intestines. The prognosis was a continued weakness, palpitations of the heart and subsequently death. Clay eating was no new phenomenon. Aboriginal historian Olga Miller asserts that clay was eaten by the aboriginal people as a medicine.⁴³ The practice of clay eating was never satisfactorily eradicated and, in March 1904, as the death toll mounted, it was decided to close the reserve. A large number of its inmates were transferred to the Yarrabah mission near Cairns, under the superintendence of Reverend Ernest R. Gribble. Many of those people who had been transferred quickly complained of the life they were forced to lead at Yarrabah, and some of these even absconded, stating that there was insufficient food and that the work they were forced to do was too hard.⁴⁴



Aborigines - Fraser Island. Source - John Oxley Library print number 31352.

Other aborigines at Bogimbah were taken to the reserve at Durundur, and those who were original Fraser Islanders were allowed to temporarily remain in the derelict ruins of the Bogimbah reserve. However, these people too, numbering one hundred and seventeen men, women and children, were eventually, and with extreme reluctance, shipped aboard the brigantine *Rio Logue* for Yarrabah.

When the Church of England had taken over the mission and placed their own administrator in charge, Archibald Meston had greatly resented the change. Four years later when the mission closed, Meston publicly berated the church for their mismanagement.

Reverend Ernest R. Gribble retaliated with a long letter in the press in which he pointed out the state of affairs at the mission when the church had taken over. He claimed:

Mr Meston did not favour the transfer and made matters very difficult for the new management ... A week after the transfer I arrived to organise the work for the Board of Missions. Mr Meston is decidedly inaccurate when he says the people were perfectly healthy at the time of the change of management. As a matter of fact there was hardly a woman in the settlement free from some form of disease, and all, with very few exceptions, were addicted to earth eating and this disease was creating great havoc among them ... At the time of my arrival on the island there were two very full cemeteries in use.⁴⁵

Meston was almost apoplectic when he read Gribble's comments in the newspapers. He quickly retaliated by stating that the residents of the mission had almost all been healthy and had been pronounced so by a visiting doctor, he added that aboriginal deaths under the Church of England's administration had increased dramatically, stating:

A death rate of one half the whole (mission) population in four years, continued complaints for want of food and clothing, the introduction of opium and a chronic discontent shown by repeated escapes from the island, two men being drowned in the attempt. From time to time at least seventy escaped, the majority being sent back. Some walked to Durundur and one man walked north to Cairns and Mareeba and was sent down again to me and passed onto Durundur.⁴⁶

Raymond Evans and Jan Walker succinctly and accurately gave a clear synopsis of the affects of the mission in their work, *These Strangers Where Are They Going* when they wrote:

This then was the tragic legacy of enforced institutionalization and the final cultural spoliation of the several hundred Queensland Aborigines who were sequestered at Bogimbah - ravenous, ragged

and depleted, apathetic and constantly grieving for their sacred country whilst zealous missionaries went mining daily for their souls. Apart from the scourge of earth eating, they suffered severely from syphilis, influenza and other bronchial and chest complaints, particularly tuberculosis which the moist climate of the island did much to aggravate.⁴⁷

Sources and Notes for Chapter Fifteen.

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23. M/C. 20 April, 1897.
24. M/C. 27 April, 1897.
25. M/C. 5 May, 1897.
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27. M/C. *ibid*.
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30. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society file F 11 p 9.
31. Wison, A. *Boonooroo Towards the End of Last Century*, Unpublished paper, Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society file B 15. pp 2-3.
32. M/C. 6 October, 1897.
33. M/C. *ibid*.
34. M/C. 6 October, 1897. See also Archibald Meston's report of the affair published in M/C. 16 October, 1887, p 3, in which he claimed that the whisky was supplied by a 'half-caste' servant named Percy who was in Purvis's employ and who had allegedly told members of the welcoming party that as they had all worked so hard they were entitled to a drink of Purvis's whisky.
35. M/C. 20 October, 1903.
36. M/C. 31 January, 1900.
37. M/C. 30 May, 1901.
38. M/C. *ibid*.
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40. M/C. *ibid*.
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46. M/C. 23 October, 1905. For details on the career of Archibald Meston, see, Waterson D.B. *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament, 1860-1929*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1972, p 126.
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Part Two.

Growth and Commercialism.

Chapter Sixteen.

The Immigrants.

During the early 1860s, when Maryborough was still very much a fledgling township - its residents struggling to live and to make the small town grow and prosper against extremely difficult odds - it was generally realized that if the town was to have a stable future and sound economic growth, it would need a large influx of immigrants. Maryborough was in desperate need of a solid work-force. Squatters and other land-holders were beginning to break their ground, clearing scrub and planting largely experimental crops. A considerable influx of labourers was required for a wide diversity of work positions, cooks, field-hands, general servants, errand boys, housemaids, nurses, and shop assistants.

One of the earliest proponents of large-scale immigration to Queensland was Reverend John Dunmore Lang, a Presbyterian minister and ardent separationist who believed that here in the northern colony of New South Wales, three new states could and should be formed. These new states, he considered, should be called, Cooksland, Capricornia and Carpentaria. He believed that within these states there would be scope to bring significant numbers of Protestant settlers. Lang was profoundly anti-Catholic and was distressed over the numbers of Catholic Irish immigrants then arriving in the colony. In order to help combat this Catholic invasion Lang formed the Cooksland Colonisation Company, an organization which selected and superintended the arrival of several immigrant ships, including the *Fortitude*, which arrived at Moreton Bay in January 1849. Many of its passengers quickly found employment, either in Brisbane, Maryborough or on the outlying stations.

Some of the ships arriving at Brisbane were carrying large numbers of immigrants. For example, in February 1862, when the immigrants ships *Jessie Munn*, *Saldanha* and *Caesar Godeffroy* tied up at the Brisbane wharf, they landed a total of 1108 people.¹

Shortly afterwards the press reported that of the one hundred immigrants from the *Jessie Munn* who had travelled to Maryborough, all had found employment in the region within two days. Yet many of those who had arrived in the *Saldanha* had held out for better wages. The report claimed that one family had refused £90 per year - a handsome wage in those times. The report continued, however: 'All the new arrivals appear to be satisfied with the treatment received here, but one or two are needlessly in terror of the blacks to such a degree that they talk of returning to Brisbane.'²

Many immigrants, arriving at Brisbane or even farther south at Sydney and Melbourne, travelled into what was then the wilderness, a small scattering of huts and saw-pits where they hoped to begin a better life than the one they had left behind in their mother countries. But this trickle of immigrants was not enough to adequately stimulate substantial economic and social growth in the region. What was needed, residents claimed, was direct immigration, men, women and children brought directly from England and landed at the Maryborough wharf. The first of these ships was, of course, the now well known *Ariadne*, arriving from Liverpool at Maryborough in October, 1862. Over the following years there were more than one hundred and fifty immigrant ship arrivals, bringing immigrants from such diversified places as Hokitika in New Zealand, Hamburg, Belfast, Glasgow and London, although London was certainly the principal port of departure.

There were a number of methods of immigration into the colony. Free passages for particular classes of people whose services were especially required, assisted passages, remittance passengers, indentured immigrants and full paying passengers.

Up until January 1861 immigrants were largely introduced under the Remission Regulations or at the expense of the government. However, from that date immigrants were invited to come under new provisions, the immigrants would repay their passage money to their guarantors and employers, and would then be eligible for a land grant to the value of £18. After two years in the colony a further land grant of £12 would be awarded, and any two children between the ages of four and fourteen would receive a further land order.³

The first ship which was to have arrived at Maryborough direct from England was the *City of Brisbane*. This vessel had been chartered to convey more than three hundred immigrants to Hervey Bay with an expected arrival of June or July 1862. For weeks prior to this impending arrival Maryborough residents had been in a state of nervous excitement. The harbour master, R.B. Sheridan, had twice been down to Hervey Bay, remaining

a week each time, and each day expecting the ship to appear. However, soon afterwards came the, 'exasperating news' that the ship had put into Moreton Bay where all the passengers had landed. Only about forty of the ship's passengers finally came north by steamer to Maryborough.⁴

On 8 October, 1862, two hundred and fifty-nine immigrants from the Black Ball Line ship *Ariadne* arrived at the Queen's wharf Maryborough, the first group of immigrants to arrive directly from Great Britain. It was a time of great celebration in Maryborough, at last there was a large number of people coming directly to where they were most urgently needed, men for the farms, women for domestic work, families to help build the economy. The *Maryborough Chronicle* editor wrote: 'The arrival of the *Ariadne* at Wide Bay - the first of a series of vessels bringing human life - the most needed, the most enriching freight that can be transplanted from the soil of Britain to our own - will never be forgotten. The present residents will calculate from the year of the *Ariadne* ... as a year of mark, the beginning of an era of unusual vigour and progress.'⁵

The voyage of the *Ariadne* had been a good one. There had been a little trouble with the crew, a normal event on such long voyages when crew members were subjected to harsh discipline, poor rations and hard work. Two of the crew members arrived in chains. One man had fallen from the rigging and had to be put ashore at Maryborough to recuperate.

On 8 October, 1862, the steamer *Telegraph*, out of Rockhampton, came alongside the *Ariadne* at the entrance to the Mary River and took aboard all the immigrants for the short passage up river. It must have been a colourful sight, the *Ariadne* was dressed in bright flags and bunting, and, as the *Telegraph* moved slowly away, the immigrant ship gave a thunderous salute with eleven of its cannons. The immigrants, crowded onto the steamer's decks, waved wildly and gave three loud cheers. For them, it was the beginning of a new life in a strange land.

One of the advantages of the arrival of the *Ariadne* was that the ship brought a large number of young unmarried women to the town, and it was not long before the colonial bachelors of Maryborough were pursuing these young ladies in courtship. The first marriage of one of the *Ariadne* women was almost certainly that of Mary Sutherland to Keith McKintyre. McIntyre, accompanied by his friend, William Keith, was on the wharf when the *Ariadne* immigrants arrived. McKintyre later wrote:

I am sure Mr Keith and myself will never forget the arrival of the first immigrant ship in the River Mary, the *Ariadne*. How the poor girls and women shuddered as they saw the hundreds of nude aborigines staring at them as they landed on terra firma. With what gusto I joined in the fair-faced pioneers in beating back the sable faces and scarecrows from terrifying them. Said one of the girls to me as she came ashore, 'Whaur's the city of Maryborough?'

Pointing to the few scattered cottages I exclaimed, 'There it is.'

'But whaur's a' the streets?'

Pointing to the allotment pegs I exclaimed, 'Behold them.'

The poor maiden then sat down on a fallen tree and after shedding a few tears asked,

'D'ye call this a city or a toon? I never saw a toon without streets afore.'⁶

Indeed, the *Chronicle* editor, realizing the disappointment which many of the newly arrived migrants must have felt at the sight of such an embryonic township, later reported:

A word or two to the immigrants from ourselves will be worth something to them, and may suggest matters which many old settlers may from want of reflection be apt to overlook.

Maryborough, we honestly confess, has a very mean and shabby look. A great deal worse than it might have if a reasonable degree of pride, a little more thought and planning, and a ton or two of paint had been bestowed on it ... Appearances may be against us, but penetrate to the substance and our prosperity will be found to be, if not extensive, solid and progressive.⁷

The editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* decided that a special edition was to be published which would mention all the names of the immigrants and tell the story of the voyage. Each of the immigrants was given a free copy of this publication.

Keith McKintyre later wrote: 'I had the pleasure of distributing copies to a good few lassies, some of whom were remarkably winsome. I was so smitten with the charms of one that I presented her with two copies, spoke to her the next Thursday, proposed to her, was accepted, and married her on the following Saturday. We spent the first week or two of our honeymoon in one of Mr Keith's beautiful cottages on his orchard at Tinana Creek.'⁸

Thirty years later Keith McKintyre, who, with his wife Mary Sutherland, left Maryborough ten months after their marriage, wrote to an acquaintance in Maryborough, stating: 'I was very young and romantic in those days, and was a child of impulse. My two days' courtship and sudden marriage may have shocked the more delicate, but my bride is as bonny as ever, and has gone hand in hand with me over the hills and down the valleys of life for more than thirty years, and we have not come to the end of our honeymoon yet.'⁹

Mary Sutherland was described in the passenger lists as an eighteen years of age domestic from Scotland.¹⁰

The arrival of the *Ariadne* also had its less publicized and somewhat darker side. When news of the imminent arrival of the vessel reached Maryborough, a group of unemployed men was reported to have held a meeting protesting against the arrival. These men claimed that there was already a significant unemployment problem in the town, sixty men were either out of work or could find only casual employment. Yet proof that immigration was exactly what was required as a fillip to Maryborough's economy may be seen from the fact that despite this protest, after the arrival of the *Ariadne*, the Maryborough economy boomed. The press reported:

...houses were going up in all directions to accommodate such of the immigrants as did not get employment on the pastoral stations of the district. About a year afterwards there were two pairs of pit sawyers employed in Maryborough ... Two Victorians came to spy out the district and decided there was encouragement for a sawmill at Maryborough. Their names were Gladwell and Greathead. They secured a site, imported machinery and started their mill amid mutterings of the unemployed and threats to blow up the works because the new machinery would throw the pit sawyers out of employment. In two years the mill, however, gave employment to hundreds of men.¹¹

William Keith, who had been standing on the wharf with Keith McKintyre when the *Ariadne* arrived at Maryborough, was one of the region's earliest journalists and publishers. He had been born in Glasgow in 1841 and came to Australia in 1854, arriving at Sydney. Shortly afterwards he travelled to Brisbane where he worked for a while as a compositor on the *Moreton Bay Courier*. He arrived at Maryborough in 1860 and worked for Thomas White, the proprietor of the *Wide Bay and Burnett Times*, Maryborough's first and ill-fated newspaper. When the newspaper collapsed after the introduction of the *Maryborough Chronicle*, Keith farmed a small area of the Pocket for a while but this proved financially unsuccessful and he later joined the *Maryborough Chronicle*, working with that publication until 1871 when he joined Carl Fieldberg as part-owner in the *Wide Bay News*. Some time afterwards Keith purchased Fieldberg's share and became the sole owner of the publication. He suffered a stroke in April 1902 and died quietly, aged sixty-one years, at 5 p.m. on 14 May, 1902.¹²



Kent Street ca. 1863-64. Source - John Oxley Library print number 361.

The second ship bringing immigrants direct to Maryborough was the 896 tons *David McIver*, (also extensively recorded as *McIvor*) which landed nine months after the *Ariadne*, on 9 July, 1863. The voyage had been a good one for the 413 passengers, with only one death being recorded, that of a child who had been ill when the ship had first left port.

The *David McIver* arrived at Hervey Bay on 3 July, but as there was no communication with Maryborough the captain was forced to send a rowing boat to land on a sandy cape - probably at Urangan - where two aboriginal people were taken in the boat. These aborigines directed the boat's crew to a survey camp from where word was sent to Maryborough of the ship's arrival. The paddle steamer *Queensland* was then sent down river to collect the passengers and their luggage.

It was dark as the *Queensland* brought the immigrants up river, but even so the town was astir with excitement. As the *Queensland* brought the immigrants up river the ship's brass cannon on the bridge was repeatedly fired and Maryborough erupted in a massive fireworks display.

Writing sixty years after the event, Mr T. Holden recalled:

We left home a few days after the late King Edward VII was married. Consequently we saw some fireworks before leaving, but for real good fun and hearty good will the fireworks on the banks of the Mary on our arrival at the wharf would be hard to beat. Rockets were sent up, tar and pitch barrels set alight and rolled down the bank of the river, large bush fires were set ablaze and the whole bank seemed to be one moving mass of fire. It was really grand and made us feel that we had found some good chums in our new home.¹³

The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported:

All Maryborough immediately flocked to the wharf to give a hearty welcome to the new arrivals. The disembarkation, as was natural from the darkness of the night, was accompanied by no little confusion and excitement, but chiefly owing to the indefatigable exertions of the harbour master, the police magistrate and the agent of the ship, Mr R. Travis, (the disembarkation) was effected without accident, and within a few hours the immigrants and their luggage were all safely stowed in the new (immigration) depot.¹⁴ The new arrivals all appeared to be in excellent spirits, thankful after so long a journey to be so well greeted and comfortably lodged.¹⁵

The immigrants were primarily from Lancashire, although there were also people from Ireland and Scotland. The ship had not been chartered by the Queensland government, most of the immigrants had paid their own passages and so were entitled to land orders. There were several carpenters, labourers and bricklayers among them, but evidently not enough of these types of people to satisfy the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* who complained:

We should have liked to have seen a larger number of these classes. We want capitalists, agriculturalists and unskilled mechanics as well as labourers. If the due proportion of these are not observed in building up the social fabric, the result will be confusion and mischief. However, they are supposed to possess some measure of intellect and pluck, as well as muscle, and it will be their own fault if in Queensland their brains and energy do not find their hands something profitable to do.¹⁶

The next immigrant vessel to have any impact on Maryborough's immigration was the 812 tons clipper *Montmorency*, which had left Liverpool for Moreton Bay on 13 April, 1863. Most of the *Montmorency* passengers embarked aboard the steamer *Queensland* at Moreton Bay and proceeded to Maryborough, arriving on 22 July, 1863.¹⁷ While the *Montmorency* never actually arrived at Hervey Bay, its passengers were regarded as Maryborough immigrants as they had not landed at Brisbane but had transferred directly to the coastal steamer *Queensland*.

On 22 March, 1864, the immigrant ship *Prince Consort* arrived at Hervey Bay from London. The ship was forced to wait in the bay as the river was in flood. Eventually, on 30 March, a paddle steamer went down river and transferred the newly arrived immigrants to Maryborough.¹⁸

The voyage of the *Prince Consort* had not been a happy one, there had been seven or eight deaths and the passengers had evidently suffered considerable discomfort. After its arrival at Hervey Bay there were numerous complaints, and one passenger wrote:

I must, to speak the truth, say that had proper accommodation and an abundance of necessary medical comforts been provided, in my opinion the vessel would have arrived in Hervey Bay with

a greater number of living souls than did arrive there. I know not who is to blame for this cruel neglect ... Of lesser evils, but still serious ones, the number is almost legion. Leakage from the water closets and upper decks into the berths of the passengers, bad ventilation, obstruction and inefficiency of the deck lights, foul smells caused by the too-close proximity of a dirty pen of swine to the second cabin hatchway, want of civility from the officers of the ship, and a total disregard of the feelings of the passengers generally, not to speak of the total incompetence of all the second class stewards - form a few of the grievances on board.¹⁹

One of the young girls who arrived with the *Prince Consort* was J. McIntyre. She later wrote:

Nearly all the residents of Maryborough came to meet us, as well as about 200 blacks, and we children were all very frightened ... We had to go to the depot with all the others as there was no cottage or house untenanted. We were only allowed to stay there a for night as another immigrant vessel was due, so we departed to a clear patch surrounded by scrub where the Union foundry was built afterwards.

My parents rigged up a tent in which we lived for about two weeks. On a Sunday morning we were surrounded by about 40 blacks at daybreak. My father called to me to lie quite still and not open my eyes or scream, or else we would all be killed, but I half opened them now and again to see what was going on. I was very excited as I saw two old gins and one strong blackfellow, almost nude, with gleaming eyes and white teeth looking fierce as he grasped a nullah in his hand. He was speaking to the gins in an undertone and they were robbing our boxes of all knives, clothes, tools, rations and a gun, while the rest waited outside to receive them. Then they all took to flight.²⁰

Immigrants arriving at the port must have been greeted with a wild and beautiful sight, as historian W.J.E. Watson eloquently demonstrated in his paper:

Can you imagine those early migrants wending their way up the placid waters of the Mary River, watching the tall forest giants on the high banks of the river. The ironbarks, the bloodwoods, the stringybarks, the messmates and the ghostly gums, the rich alluvial flats covered with dense scrub with giant kauri and hoop pines towering above the scrub, the trees along the banks of the river festooned with the wild wistaria with its mauve coloured flowers, the tidal waters dotted here and there with the lovely yellow and red bell-shaped flowers of the river hibiscus and here and there the sunlight flashing on the leaping mullet. Listening to the strange bird calls, the raucous laugh of the kookaburra, the screech of the sulphur-crested cockatoo, the harsh grating notes of the dollar birds, and, late in the evening, the melancholy call of the wild curlew. The women apprehensive of the reception they would receive at the hands of the aborigines. Soon the primitive conditions existing before the arrival of the migrants were to be shattered by the ring of the axe and the crosscut saw, the crash of falling forest giants, the planting of crops and citrus trees.²¹

Pioneer immigrant Mrs J. McIntyre of the *Prince Consort* clearly remembered those early times and later stated:

Oh those days, will I ever forget them? Flour was such a price and came from San Francisco when Adelaide flour could not be procured. Bread was 6d for a 2 lb loaf and brown sugar 8d per lb in 1865, we never saw butter but meat was cheap 1 ½d and 2d per lb. We had lots of nice dripping for our bread and toast but seldom saw vegetables, and fruit was an awful price, it all came from Sydney except bananas. I well remember Yengarie being started ... many a boy walked out and in, 10 miles with bare feet to get a billy full of molasses to put on bread. There were no creameries, butter or cheese or jam factories in Queensland in those days. The people in those early days had to get used to black tea and black sugar in the tea. After a few years the butter came from Wollongong and cost three shillings per lb. Cheese came from New Zealand and was three shillings per lb when it could be got. The family jam was made from wild guavas from trees on the banks of the river ... and wild gooseberries and love apples. The children were not dainty, they ate what was given to them and never knew sickness. It was in 1868 that the stores began to sell bottled fruits and jam which came from London.²²

Following the *Prince Consort's* arrival at Hervey Bay in late March 1864, immigrant ships continued to land passengers at Maryborough, the *Sultana* arrived in July the same year with 425 immigrants. In January 1865, immigrants from the Brisbane-bound vessel *Elizabeth Ann Bright* were transferred from the immigrant ship to the steamer *Clarence* and brought to the Maryborough wharf. Another ship, the *Golden Land* arrived in October 1865 with a further 273 passengers.

However, the following year the *Sultana* once more arrived, bringing with it a tale of suffering, tragedy and death the likes of which had never before been seen in Maryborough.

On 28 February, 1866, the *Sultana* anchored near Woody Island and waited for the immigration officer to arrive from Maryborough. The *Sultana* was a large sailing ship capable of carrying up to six hundred passengers. It was employed on a regular run between Liverpool and various Queensland ports.

On Tuesday, 4 November, 1865, she had left Liverpool with 558 passengers, of which 13 were single men, 77 single women, and 468 members of families. A few days prior to departure, a small family of migrants had been granted passage and placed on board. However, within hours it was discovered that the children of the family - who were now occupying several ship's bunks - were all suffering from scarlet fever, and the entire family was immediately placed ashore. Unfortunately the micro-biological damage had been done, the deadly scarlet fever virus was alive on the bunks and in the blankets once occupied by the infected children, and because of poor medical inspection methods, no cleaning of the infected area was carried out.

For the first one hundred and fifty miles of the journey the ship's passage was described as being exceedingly fine. Nothing of note happened until the night of 8 November when the ship barely missed collision with another vessel. So close did they come to each other that rigging from the two ships became entangled.

On 12 November, just over a week out of Liverpool, the first of many children died - a not unnatural occurrence, and the ship's surgeon, Dr. J.G. Campbell, attributed the death to croup.

On 14 December they crossed the equator in fine weather conditions. By now the heat was becoming almost unbearable, and, among the children, the first symptoms of scarlet fever manifested themselves. One after another the children became infected, and one by one they died. Amid mounting fear, confusion and hysteria, the death toll quickly grew. Five children one evening, ten the following day, the bodies were quickly tipped overboard with little or no ceremony. Within five hours five more were dead, then twenty, the number quickly rising to thirty, all of them children, and all suffering the same symptoms. These deaths were followed by two women who died within hours of each other.

Christmas came and went with only little cheer. Plum puddings were made and, as there was no fresh beef on board for the traditional dinner, a porpoise was harpooned and cooked in the ship's galley.

Yet even now the dreaded fever had not run its course and more children were dying at a rate of several each day. The New Year came and went taking more lives with its passing. One passenger later testified: 'The deaths at this time were so numerous, that the recording of each would both weary and sicken you.'

None of these events was known in Maryborough when the ship finally arrived in late February 1866. News of its arrival near Woody Island was quickly transferred to the town and a group of officials, the immigration agent, the health officer, the ship's agent and several others went down river to attend to the formalities of the arrival. However, when they discovered that the ship had experienced an unusually high number of deaths during the voyage, only the health officer, Dr J.H. Ward, was allowed to go aboard. Ward ordered that the immigrants were to be landed on Woody Island and kept under medical supervision until the cause of the many deaths could be verified. Dr J.G. Campbell, the ship's surgeon, stated that as the ship had now arrived at Maryborough his responsibilities as the attending doctor were over and he refused to do any more for the passengers. In fact Campbell's behaviour was to later come under severe criticism, and at the subsequent enquiry, which took place in Maryborough, his actions during the voyage were closely scrutinized. During the hearings several members of the immigrant community testified that the doctor had been incapable of attending the sick, he had neglected his duty and in so doing had caused the disease to spread. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported:

The surgeon regarded his passengers evidently as not nearly so valuable as so many cattle. One day he would order mothers to bring their sick children to him (in) his cabin, though the exposure of passing from the heated berths below through the cold air to the saloon was almost certain death; another time he would refuse to see patients brought to him - he would see them when on his rounds. One poor woman expostulated with him on his indifference and was placed in confinement with a young baby for twelve hours; and, of course, the infant soon after died. These are only specimens of the general treatment. In all, eighty children died, and it is alleged that upwards of forty of them were thrown overboard without the doctor ever seeing them, he refused to do so.²³



Early shipping on the Mary. Source - John Oxley Library print number 38820A.

Campbell, who was thoroughly castigated during the Maryborough hearings, appealed to have his case heard at an enquiry in Brisbane. Several witnesses confirmed that the doctor had been negligent, including Mary Bird, the ship's sub-matron, who testified that the doctor's memory had seemed to be defective. Matron Bird stated that the doctor would attend to people on one day, and then forget them altogether the next.²⁴

The captain of the vessel, Thomas Williams, was called as a witness by Campbell, who, despite a strong enmity which had formed between the two men over disagreements during the voyage, hoped that Williams would state that the deaths had been unavoidable and that the surgeon was blameless. Williams, however, said that, '...he could not say that he ever saw anything amiss in the conduct of Dr Campbell towards the emigrants during the voyage, except that he neglected to attend the sick.'²⁵ Evidence such as this was damning, and the chairman of the enquiry stated: '... as Campbell has failed to rebut by independent evidence a single charge brought against him, the appeal must be dismissed.'²⁶

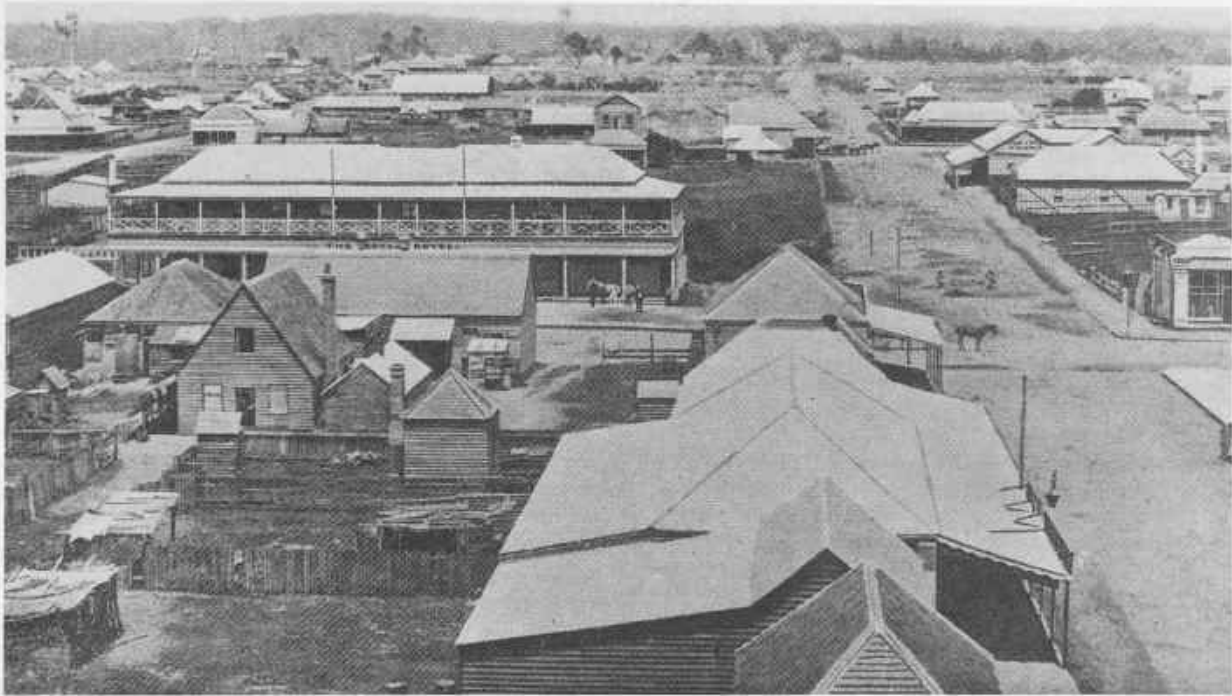
The ship had arrived at Maryborough during a time of considerable economic depression and most of the passengers were slow in finding employment. One of these was Thomas Watson, who later became well known for his pioneering work on the Burrum coal fields.²⁷

However, most of the survivors of the *Sultana* voyage eventually found employment in Maryborough or on the surrounding stations of the Wide Bay district. On Thursday 5 April, 1866, a group of thirty or so *Sultana* immigrants left Maryborough with a large bullock dray piled high with their possessions. The people, sixteen families in all, had been ordered by the government to proceed to Gayndah under the charge of Robert Bolton where they were to search for work. Seven other families left on board the steamer *Leichardt*, bound for Rockhampton, also on government orders, their passage fee being paid by the government.

In all, seventy-eight deaths had occurred during the voyage, and seven more deaths had occurred after the ship had anchored in Hervey Bay.²⁸

From the example of the *Sultana*, it was clear that immigration into this colony was often a most risky business, and this was doubly so when arrangements for immigration were made by unscrupulous profiteers who used their positions of power in order to make handsome profits for themselves and their accomplices.

The Queensland government too was becoming increasingly aware that the quality of some of the immigrants were not up to a satisfactory standard - that immigrants were sometimes former convicts or had incurable illnesses. On Wednesday 9 May, 1866, there were questions in the Legislative Assembly regarding the diminishing quality of immigrants, which, according to comments made at that time, '...continued to get from bad to worse.'²⁹



Bazaar Street from the post office 1872. Source - John Oxley Library print number 19762.

Land-owners, planters and businessmen usually preferred British migrants, there were no problems with language and the migrants from Britain were generally good workers who came from working class families and who were used to being employed in heavy industries or in agriculture. Italian and German migrants were also welcome, although the arrival of such immigrants always posed a language problem. The *Maryborough Chronicle* lamented on 27 February, 1862, '...the German families are a rather impractical lot, being totally ignorant of the English language and encumbered by a host of helpless children. They would be useful on a station, but not in town.'³⁰

The first German immigrant ship to arrive directly at Maryborough seems to have been the *Sophie*, which anchored at Hervey Bay on the evening of 29 August, 1865. The following morning the steamer *Eagle*, which ran a regular route between Rockhampton and Brisbane, called at Hervey Bay and brought the passengers up river to Maryborough.³¹

While German and Italian immigrants were equally as welcome at Maryborough as almost any other form of immigrant at that time, there was often a general feeling that migrants from these countries were not physically as strong or as healthy as those from Great Britain.

Such was the case in 1865 when a German scandal was exposed which revealed the appalling state of the German emigration system, a system which was then allegedly being used by German authorities to rid their society of many of its lower and criminal classes.

The scandalous revelations were made public by the medical attendant of the German migrant ship *Wandrahm*, which arrived in Queensland in December 1865. He claimed that some German officials were making fortunes from the immigration trade, and of this one particular voyage stated:

The passengers of the *Wandrahm* were collected together by a person of the name of Drieseldorf who has not enjoyed a very good reputation and who is considered in Hamburg not to be a man of very strict principles to say the least. He gets a certain percentage per head, and of course produces at a certain day a certain amount of heads. As the medical officer is not allowed to examine them they may be suffering from chronic disease, they may be criminals just out of gaol, they may be otherwise unfit to form good colonists, they may be lunatics even, or idiots, that makes no difference to our unscrupulous gentleman. They are supplied with a medical certificate which is to be got very easily from an obliging medical practitioner for the moderate charge of three shillings English; and if just out of gaol, the authorities, glad to be rid of the scum of the population, will very obligingly find a certificate to morals. In our case we had several people in the last stages of consumption, two with cancer of the stomach, both of whom were supplied with splendid medical certificates, one perfect idiot, three with very much impaired mental faculties,

one person just out of gaol for having committed a rape, and several old people who have no other chance but to become inmates of benevolent asylums or similar institutions. It may be mentioned here that the better class of Germans, who certainly will make very good colonists, can never be obtained by a system of cheap or free emigration. They have been swindled so many times by unscrupulous and unprincipled firms that they consider free emigration only a sort of slave trade. They have been sold to the Brazilian and other governments and been frequently sent to places where more than two thirds of the emigrants die in the first year or so.³²



Immigrant ship Flying Cloud.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 19316.

Over the following years there were many arrivals of immigrant ships at Maryborough. The *Golden South* in June 1866, the *Flying Cloud* in August 1870. This vessel anchored in Hervey Bay on Tuesday 30 August, 1870. The ship had completed a very fast voyage from Liverpool, experiencing mainly light winds and fine weather. One adult and five children had died during the voyage, all of whom had been described as '...mostly in indifferent health at starting.'³³ Three children were born during the voyage and another, a girl, was born while the ship lay at anchor in Hervey Bay. The vessel was described as being unusually clean and orderly and that arrangements made by the captain, J.L. Owen, were '...almost perfect.'³⁴ Measles had broken out soon after leaving England, of which three of the children had died. It was not recorded how the other two children died. Six weeks before arriving at Hervey Bay a woman was taken ill with typhus fever and she soon afterwards died. Careful quarantine procedures implemented by the doctor on board prevented the spread of the disease, and the passengers generally described the voyage as '...just a pleasure trip.'³⁵

The *Flying Cloud* was followed by the *Reichstag* in March 1871, the *Star Queen* also in March 1871, the *Shakespeare* in August 1871, the *Herschel* in March 1872 and many more.

In September 1869 the immigration laws were again altered. Immigrants could come to Queensland under four separate systems, full paying passengers, free passages, assisted passages and remittance immigration. (For full details on these systems see appendices).

The *Polmaise* arrived from London in September 1872, however, by now, there were serious problems with the immigration reception centre (where the court-house now stands) which, although designed to accommodate large numbers of people, had, by this time, been partially taken over by the Lands Department as offices, and overcrowding in the remaining immigration depot had reached critical proportions.

The *Maryborough Chronicle* editor indignantly wrote: 'In a fortnight from this time, or three weeks at the latest, another emigrant ship with 350 souls on board may be expected at the Heads, and as yet nothing has been done to set the depot in proper order for the reception of so large a number.'³⁶



Maryborough wharves 1872. Source - John Oxley Library print number 19197.

The editor was responding to the circumstances surrounding the arrival of the *Polmaise* four months previously, when 294 immigrants had been housed in such cramped conditions that many of them had not been able to sleep. The buildings were also in such a state of disrepair that there was little privacy, especially for the young, single women, and several attempts had been made by Maryborough men to get into the single women's quarters. The *Chronicle* editor castigated:

We have too vivid a recollection of the discreditable scenes that took place on the arrival of the *Polmaise*, owing to overcrowded conditions of those unlovely premises, not to wish that future shiploads of newcomers might be spared a repetition of the annoyances and discomforts which were endured by the passengers of that vessel, especially the single girls. It is notorious that the latter, rather than make a pretence at sleeping - real sleep being impossible within the cramped space allotted to them inside the stifling ward - have spent the night in wandering about the streets and reserves in groups of threes and fours for mutual protection ... The time is too short before the arrival of the next immigrant vessel to effect alterations and extensions at the depot as seem desirable. It is to be hoped that in the meantime something will be done to remedy the present rotten and insecure condition of the surrounding partition fences. What with white ant and dry rot, most of the palings are mere touchwood and can be broken down or displaced by any gay Lothario who may choose to run the risk of fluttering the dove cote. This is a matter of urgent necessity and should be attended to without any preliminary expenditure of red tape. The Treasury should be able to afford a few pounds for the promotion of peace, good order and morality, even in Maryborough.³⁷

Despite these pleas, few, if any, changes were made to the immigration depot and substantially it seems that the depot remained in poor condition for the ships' passengers who were to arrive soon afterwards. The *Alardus* brought 337 German immigrants from Hamburg in June 1873 after a voyage of seven months during which twenty-seven people had died. A representative of the press visited the immigration depot and found the immigrants huddled together and standing ankle deep in mud. Some were leaning against the decrepit fencing, and many preferred to be standing in the rain rather than suffering the, '...pestilential atmosphere of the overcrowded wards.'³⁸ The passengers' possessions, some twenty trunks and bags, were stacked in the open and exposed to the rain because there was no room in the wards.³⁹

The problem was compounded the following month when the *Gloucester* brought a further 233 immigrants, transferring its passengers onto the steamer *Lady Bowen* for the trip up river to the township. There was a somewhat moving case of unrequited love aboard the *Gloucester*, as the *Chronicle* reported:

Whilst the *Lady Bowen* lay alongside the ship, cheer after cheer was given for the ship, the captain, the surgeon, the matron, in fact nobody was forgotten. It is difficult to say how long the mutual admiration speeches would have lasted had not the tide, which waits for no man, compelled the

steamer to leave or risk not crossing the bar until another tide. As the steamer moved off, one of the sailors, determined to risk a watery grave to join his love, accordingly plunged into the sea from the deck of the *Gloucester* and struck out manfully after the retreating steamer. He was rescued by a boat from the steamer, but alas for his hopes, was sent back to his ship.⁴⁰

By August the immigration depot was still in a sorry state of disrepair. No funds had been allocated by the government and no repairs or alterations had been effected. That month an unofficial investigation of the depot was made, the investigator later writing:

I had been told of the infamous treatment the immigrants lately to hand had been subjected to by the provincial Government, and my blood froze. I determined to investigate the matter for myself. I went to the immigration officer, and I said, 'Will you allow me to witness the abuses of the immigrant sufferers?' He said the law couldn't prevent me, and as he never interfered with the law, he wasn't going to make any objection.

Then I went to the barracks, and I saw sights which riveted my gaze, and went straight to the heart. The building, some 500 feet long and 80 feet wide, was divided into two compartments, and one of the compartments was divided off into small tents, where the married couples, with their families disposed of themselves from the time they retired at night until the hour they turned out in the morning. Nothing could be more blighting to the feelings ... There were two rooms with only roofs to keep out the rain ... here were placed the matter of two hundred new arrivals to witness so much nakedness - the floors not carpeted, the walls not papered, the windows not curtained, nor a fender or fire-iron to be seen anywhere.⁴¹

From 1872 to 1875 there were many immigrant ships arriving at Wide Bay, including the *Reichstag* (second voyage) in July 1873 with 341 immigrants, the *Humboldt* in late October the same year with another 364. These were followed by the *Tim Wiffler* from London, which arrived on 26 January, 1874, with 377 passengers, the *Glamorganshire* in May the same year with 346, the *St James* two months later in July 1874 with 457 passengers, the *Great Queensland*, the *Gauntlet*, *Indus*, *City of Agra* and many others.

One of these, the *Glamorganshire*, was the cause of some controversy after its arrival at Maryborough, and it seems that the practice of shipping 'undesirable' persons from Britain to the antipodes did not end with the cessation of the convict era. Even as late as 1874 there was at least one instance of people being taken from prisons and herded aboard the immigrant ships. In May 1874, Doctor Young who had served as the surgeon superintendent aboard the immigrant ship *Glamorganshire*, stated shortly after the ship's arrival at Maryborough that the vessel had left Plymouth and called at Gravesend to take on board approximately half a dozen men who had been taken out of London gaols for the voyage. Young said that the prisoners owned nothing but the scanty prison clothes in which they were dressed. He added that one of the prisoners was, 'a rather intelligent man', who had been arrested for, 'singing comic songs at beer shop windows.' He had been given an ultimatum, emigrate to Australia or face the magistrate.⁴² The *Glamorganshire* also brought five highly skilled men who were to be indentured to Walkers to head their expanding workshops.

In 1875, newly arrived immigrant John Johnson, who came with his wife Eliza and son John aboard the *Great Queensland*, wrote:

Thursday, November 18, 106th Day.

Got up at 4, breakfast at 6. The steamer came alongside at daybreak and took luggage and embarked us and got away at 9.30 a.m. A beautiful morning, a very pleasant journey up river, the scenery was very fine and covered with vegetation; we got twenty miles before we saw any signs of human life. Arrived at Maryborough about 2 o'clock, marched up to the depot, found a very good place but only half large enough, much confusion, gave us some tea at 7, after all our luggage was brought up, women and children slept on the floor on straw beds, the men rolled themselves into blankets and slept on the boxes outside in the courtyard. A fine night but heavy dew.⁴³

Almost immediately upon arriving Johnson also wrote a letter to his mother and brother, stating: 'We have arrived in Maryborough after a long voyage ... We are going to look for a house today. Please inform all kind friends of our arrival. We are all well, hoping this will find you all the same. It is very hot here. The old chums tried to dishearten us directly we landed, but I believe it is all bosh. Good bye, God bless you all. From your affectionate son, John Johnson.'⁴⁴



Immigrant ship Star Queen. This vessel achieved notoriety for its master's inhuman treatment of his passengers en-route to Maryborough. Source - John Oxley Library print number 63421.

Most of these ships landed immigrants after experiencing relatively comfortable voyages, however, in late September 1875 the immigrant vessel *Star Queen* arrived at White Cliffs after what was almost certainly one of the most deliberately infamous voyages of any vessel ever brought to the port of Maryborough.

The ship had left the East India Dock London on 6 May, 1875, with more than two hundred passengers on board. She called at Gravesend where a further ninety-two or ninety-three passengers were embarked. Here too the stores were surveyed to ensure that there were sufficient provisions for the long journey - approximately one hundred and forty-seven days - to Maryborough. One of the men responsible for ensuring that the survey was carried out correctly was the ship's husband, a Captain Roberts. However, Roberts ordered one of the ship's crew, a man named William Bellamy, to bring on deck some of the stores which had already been counted in London, so that they could be counted again as being a part of the extra provisions. Bellamy later testified that he brought up six casks of wine or spirits and eleven bags of biscuits from the hold. He added that after leaving Gravesend: '...I assisted the purser in serving out short stores, we did so because we were afraid the stores would run short.'⁴⁵

Leaving Gravesend on the 13th of the month was itself sufficient to cause concern among many of the superstitious passengers of the *Star Queen*, but trouble commenced almost immediately when a tug towing the sailing ship broke down, and the services of a second tug were required.⁴⁶

For the first few days of the voyage all went reasonably well as the ship sailed easily through the usually treacherous waters of the Bay of Biscay, and down the coastal spine of West Africa. However, by the fifteenth day of the voyage it was suspected by the passengers that the ship had been under-provisioned for the journey.

A representative of the passengers confronted the captain, Henry Matthew Downing, and demanded that rations be increased and that the ship be put into the nearest port for re-provisioning. This the captain refused to do, extra money spent on the voyage would mean less profit in his own pocket. As the journey progressed, the rations became shorter and tempers quickly flared.

The single men aboard the *Star Queen* held a secret meeting with the ship's sailors and conspired to put the captain overboard if he would not immediately make for port. However, this rash decision of mutiny came to the ears of the first mate who visited the single men's quarters one night and begged them not to cause any trouble. Mutiny on the high seas was a hanging offence.⁴⁷

Eventually, the ship's doctor, Isaiah de Zouche, sought permission of the captain to survey the stores. At first his request was refused, but when the ship had been at sea for one hundred days and Downing could no longer conceal the fact that there were rationing problems, he finally relented and the doctor discovered that the supplies aboard were indeed totally insufficient for the voyage.

Zouche later stated: 'I found there was only flour on board to last 19 days, vegetables on board to last 32 days on short allowance, oatmeal for 33 days, sugar for 23 days, salt meat, pork and beef for 17 days, preserved potatoes for 2 days ... biscuits, half rations for crew for 30 days and none for the passengers.'⁴⁸

The doctor also found that some of the casks of provisions were marked with different contents on either end. Some had 'salt beef' on one end while on the other was stencilled 'suet', others were marked 'split peas' on one end and 'biscuits' on the other. It was a clever subterfuge perpetuated by the captain. As the stores were counted, casks could be surreptitiously turned around without the knowledge of the surveyor, and counted again as other items.

The ship's purser later admitted that on Downing's orders he had been serving out short rations on scales which had been tampered with by the ship's engineer. In this way, one and a half pounds of food in every five pounds were saved.

One of the ship's passengers, Thomas Wright, later testified:

Two days after we left port we were put on salt meat not fit to give dogs - it was stinking. Then we were supposed to have 5 pounds of meat for a mess of ten men, but we only got one and a half pounds very often. One day the salt meat was served out and the doctor would not have it cooked for it smelt very bad indeed, but the next day it was served out to us again. When we ran out of biscuits we had a half pint of porridge for breakfast and a drop of coffee not fit to drink. For dinner we had half pint of soup with our meat and we had soft bread three times a week and four times a week we had duff. When the flour was served out we had only four pounds instead of five as per scale. One day the flour was served out to the baker and he thought it looked short in weight, so he and the assistant baker had it weighed in the presence of the doctor and it was 15 lbs short. It did not matter what was served out, it was always short in weight.⁴⁹

In her evidence to the subsequent police court proceedings, the matron of the ship, Elizabeth Currie, stated there had been considerable concern and anguish among the passengers, and that at times it was hard for the doctor to prevent riots. Some of the single women were seen crying when the brick-hard ship's biscuits ran out, and many suffered greatly from hunger and malnutrition. On one occasion just a single tablespoon of rice had been issued to each person. There was some oatmeal porridge aboard, but this was so unpalatable and weevil infested that many could not eat it.⁵⁰

In desperation the passengers accused the purser and captain of robbery and demanded that the ship call into Melbourne for re-provisioning. At first the captain refused, stating that he could halve the food issue to the steerage passengers and they would make it to Maryborough. However, neither the purser nor the doctor would permit the rations to be cut. Under mounting pressure, Downing finally relented and called into Melbourne for fresh supplies.

The date was 14 September, 1875. A government steamer came alongside with fresh provisions of fruit and vegetables, yet the troubles of the *Star Queen* were far from over. Upon preparing to leave port the sailors refused to proceed until a pilot had been placed aboard. They had by now lost all confidence in their captain. This caused a considerable delay and when the ship finally left port under tow, a hawser from the tug broke and the *Star Queen* began to drift onto rocks.⁵¹

It was a blustery day of winds, squalls and choppy seas, and for an hour or so it seemed that Downing would finally have to order the passengers to abandon ship. Luckily the tug eventually managed to get a line aboard and towed the immigrant ship away from danger.

The following day the *Star Queen* proceeded on her voyage, its passengers and crew reasonably happy. However, upon arrival at Brisbane an enquiry was immediately set up aboard the government steamer *Kate*.⁵²

Evidence tendered at the court was damning, one of the investigators who inspected the vessel, a member of the Immigration Board, after telling of the lack of stores and double marking of food casks, also testified: '...We went on board the ship and found her to be disgustingly dirty, the ventilation between decks insufficient, especially in the single women's compartment, and with a foul stench between decks, especially in the single men's compartment, which was intolerable.'⁵³

The court found Downing guilty of under-provisioning the ship in order to save himself, and its owners, a considerable sum of money, and he was fined £200.

Upon arrival at Fraser Island's White Cliffs, the sailors finally took possession of the *Star Queen*'s boats and deserted. A steamer was sent from Maryborough for the immigrants, and when they were eventually brought ashore they were housed in the now infamous immigration depot. Yet even now, their problems were not over. Upon making application for food at dinner-time they were ungraciously offered a small ration of bread with a piece of raw meat, and those who remained that night at the depot were compelled to sleep on the bare floor of the building.⁵⁴

At about this time, however, funds were made available for the erection of a new immigration centre, which was to be situated on a vacant site within the ninety acre reserve. The site was an elevated piece of ground which had originally been set aside for a grammar school. By early April 1876 the centre had been completed by its contractor, well-known Maryborough builder J.T. Annear, and was ready to hand over to the immigration authorities. Compared to the original immigration barracks these quarters were grand indeed. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported: 'The architectural design may be classed as semi-Italian, a style of building well adapted to the climate. It is composed of dark bricks with cement strings running around the building and dressings of stone which add considerably to the picturesque appearance of the building.'⁵⁵

The foundations to the construction were all made of Maryborough stone, the back portion of the building stood about a yard high owing to the fall of the ground. All the dressed stone was imported from Sydney. Although there was an excellent quality stone available at Gympie, it was cheaper to bring stone from Sydney. The lengthy verandah rested on brick piers, verandahs were carried completely around the building on each floor, the approach to the front door was by a flight of stone steps and through an elegant portico.⁵⁶

The interior of the building was vast and airy with more than adequate room and ventilation for the hundreds of immigrants who would be housed there until they could find work and alternative accommodation. There were spacious and fully equipped kitchens, private quarters for the women and single men, a luggage store, wardsmen's quarters, sitting rooms and storerooms. Open fireplaces had been provided in several of the rooms and wards. Architect for the construction had been F.D.G. Stanley, and the building had been erected at a total cost of £4650.⁵⁷

The contractor for this construction, J.T. Annear, was one of Maryborough's most prominent personalities, businessmen and politicians, he served as an alderman on the Maryborough Town Council and later as a member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

J.T. Annear was himself an immigrant. He was born at Budock, near Penhryn, Cornwall, on 3 June, 1842, the son of Joseph Job Annear and Louisa (nee Rogers). He was educated at the Church of England School Budock and later apprenticed to the brick building trade. He came to Queensland in 1863 and settled in Ipswich until gold was discovered at Gympie in 1867, after which he travelled to the goldfields to try his luck. After a few months on the field he travelled to Maryborough where he and his wife, Sarah Ann (nee Skinnerty) were destined to remain for many years. As a building contractor Annear was responsible for the construction of many Maryborough buildings, including the Commercial Bank, Central State School, and the court-house. In 1878, as head of the firm of J.T. Annear & Co., he secured the contract for the construction of the first railway in the Wide Bay and Burnett district - that from Maryborough to Gympie.

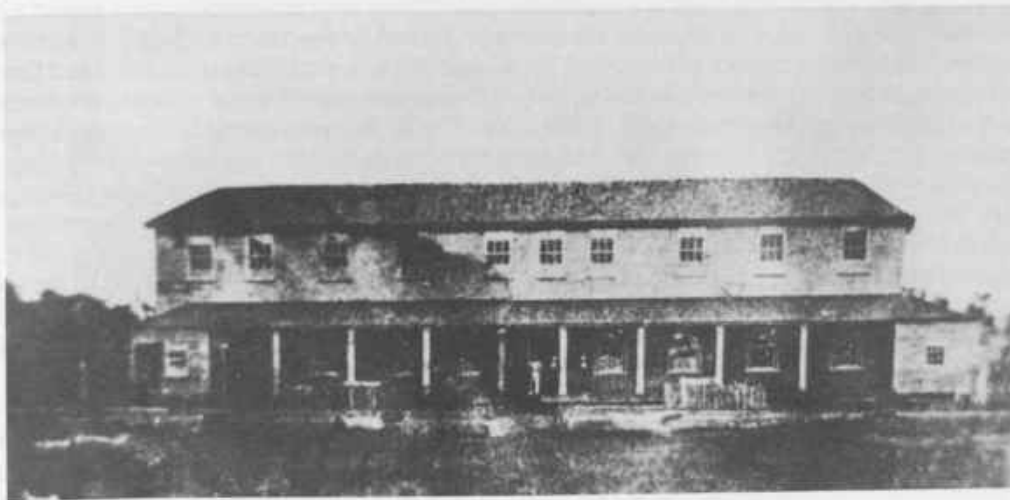


*John Thomas Annear,
the well known
Maryborough builder.*

Source - John Oxley
Library print number
142130.

He was a member of the Maryborough Town Council for fourteen years, being mayor in 1877. In 1884 he contested the Maryborough seat with Dr John Joseph Power, whom he defeated with a margin of just twenty-two votes. On all subsequent occasions he was re-elected by substantial majorities and held the seat continuously until 1902, a period of eighteen years, when he decided not to seek election for this constituency. He then became a candidate in the Liberal plebiscite for South Brisbane, but was not successful and this closed his career in the Legislative Assembly. Soon afterwards he became a member of the Legislative Council and retained his seat in the council for the remainder of his life. He died at Teneriffe, Brisbane on Saturday 28 May, 1910.⁵⁸

Another prominent immigrant pioneer builder was John Linklater who was born in the Orkney Islands north of Scotland. He served an apprenticeship in the shipbuilding industry at Glasgow and later emigrated to Australia, arriving at Maryborough in 1855. He entered into a partnership with John Thompson to form the contracting company of Linklater and Thompson which grew steadily over the following years. Linklater built the first Catholic Church in Maryborough during the early 1860s and was responsible for the erection of the waterworks at Teddington, the installation of the machinery, the building of the reservoir and the laying of the pipes to town. He constructed the A.U.S.N. and Howard Smith wharves at Maryborough, the first sugar mill in the district, and later another sugar mill at Antigua. The first town hall at the corner of Kent and Lennox Streets was also built by Linklater, as well as the original *Chronicle* office in Kent Street, the original Bush Inn on the site of the present Royal Hotel, and he erected the bell tower in St Paul's Church of England. Linklater was a ship builder and owner. He built and operated the steamer *Hercules* and later constructed the steamer *Premier* which had been commissioned by the Queensland government. He built several lightships for the Torres Straits; took part in both the Gympie and Kanoona gold-rushes and later served on the Maryborough council for several years. He died at the Maryborough general hospital on the night of 26 January, 1920.⁵⁹ Both Linklater and his partner, John Thompson, were Presbyterians and both were on the original church committee. Thompson pre-deceased Linklater, dying on 27 April, 1883.⁶⁰



The Bush Inn. Source - Tom Ryan (Aldridge collection).

Other well known Maryborough builders who did much to construct houses for the newly arriving immigrants included Elijah Smith, the town's first undertaker and who erected the first store at the new township, W. Case, Robert Spiden, George and Edmund Negus, John and Jacob Rooney (builders of Sandy Cape lighthouse) and Frank Itzstein.⁶¹

The experiences of some of the early immigrants to Maryborough are quite moving. On 28 March, 1877, a distressed young Maryborough woman named Ellen Mary O'Hara wrote a long plaintive letter from Maryborough to her parents in Cambridgeshire, England. The letter, now carefully preserved in the files of the Maryborough Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, gives a clear indication of the difficulties and suffering which many of those early pioneers had to endure. Ellen O'Hara wrote:

My dear father and mother, I now sit down to rite (sic) these few lines to you, hoping to find you quite well, as it leave (sic) me in a poor state of health so that I am not able to do anything for myself and have not been for some weeks. Dear mother I have had very great truble (sic), I have lost both my dear children, almost both together. My dear little William Joseph was always ailing, but I did not think I should have to part with him, for he was such a chatty little fellow ... he died the 10th of February and was buried on the 11th of February, he was 2 years and five months and

I do miss his dear little voice, and my darling little baby, he was nine months and such a little darling, he had eight teeth and began to walk along the things so nicely, and could say dad and mum ... his name was Auther Henery (sic) and he died on the 13 of February and was buried on the 14, so you see I lost them both together...⁶²

The death certificates of both children reveal that William Joseph died after suffering for eighteen months from *tubes mesenterica* and that the baby died from dysentery after being ill for three weeks. Thirteen months after writing this letter, Ellen Mary O'Hara also died, she was just twenty-six years of age at the time of her death.⁶³

Ellen Mary O'Hara's letter demonstrates with appalling clarity the difficulties and tragedies with which women were faced once they had arrived in the colony. Women in Queensland during the state's formative years have rarely been adequately represented in subsequent historical writings, but it seems clear that women faced difficulties as arduous and often as dangerous as their men. Working beside their men in the fields, they were required, once the field work had been completed for the day, to continue with their duties in the house, cleaning, cooking and raising the children. Women seemed always to be in the background of history, the silent, often shadowy partners who, apparently, took little part in the decision making or the direct actions of their menfolk. Yet with their men they endured the heat, the primitive conditions, the hostility of the indigenous people, the poor food, the isolation, the longing for homes they had left behind, and the apathy of a social system which precluded them from many social activities. Women in early Queensland were, of course, broadly discriminated against. For example in 1868 the Queensland government passed a law which made provision for the incarceration of women who were suffering from venereal diseases, yet men who suffered from the same disease were treated merely as outpatients.

Immigrants with suspected illnesses were quarantined on Fraser Island before being allowed to proceed up river to Maryborough. There were frequent complaints concerning the quarantine station, especially over the lack of discipline which often led to what the *Maryborough Chronicle* described as, '...gross immorality.'⁶⁴ For example, in October 1865 the captain of the vessel *Young Australia*, informed the authorities and the press that he had had to listen to a string of complaints from many of his passengers en-route to Brisbane, concerning the seeming lack of discipline at the station. He said that, according to his passengers, the single girls were allowed to ramble all over the island and that two girls had been particularly noticed passing every evening at dusk in the direction of the police camp, about half a mile away. Visiting the station on 25 September to collect passengers for Brisbane, the captain and one of his saloon passengers had patrolled in the vicinity of the station at around eight o'clock in the evening. He later stated that single girls and men were walking around together, and when he approached the police camp, lights were furtively extinguished and two girls were dragged from two police tents. The captain later stated that, '...while all this was going on, the official in charge of the quarantine station, Mr Sydney Moore, and the health officer, Dr Purdie, were quietly at home in the quarters of the former gentleman, enjoying a social glass.'⁶⁵

Without doubt the crews and staff of the various immigrant ships arriving at the port of Maryborough were well trained, competent and attentive to their duties, however, when the immigrant ship *Glamis* arrived at Maryborough in May, 1878, many of the newly arrived immigrants, and especially the young single girls aboard, and the ship's matron, began to tell of the irresponsible and drunken conduct of the ship's surgeon-superintendent, Dr Shapland Homan Newell.

An official enquiry into the allegations levelled against the doctor was held in Maryborough in July that year. At the enquiry Matron Alice Wadley testified that Dr Newell had been drunk on many occasions during the voyage and had, at one time, severely shaken a young French boy who had been calling him names in French. Newell was also accused of having sent letters to some of the single girls. He had allegedly been infatuated with a married woman named Margaret Hiccin, and on one occasion had ordered a number of the girls from the deck to their cabins so that he and Hiccin could be alone. Newell later refuted these allegations and Hiccin stated that although the girls had been ordered below, she had wanted nothing to do with the doctor and did not know why she had not been ordered below with the other girls. Newell claimed that he ordered the girls below because they were making a disturbance, he added that he would have had them put in irons. Matron Alice Wadley later testified, '...after this about 12 girls went into hysterics, (and I) had to ask the captain and officers to assist me in holding the girls to prevent some of them from jumping overboard.'⁶⁶

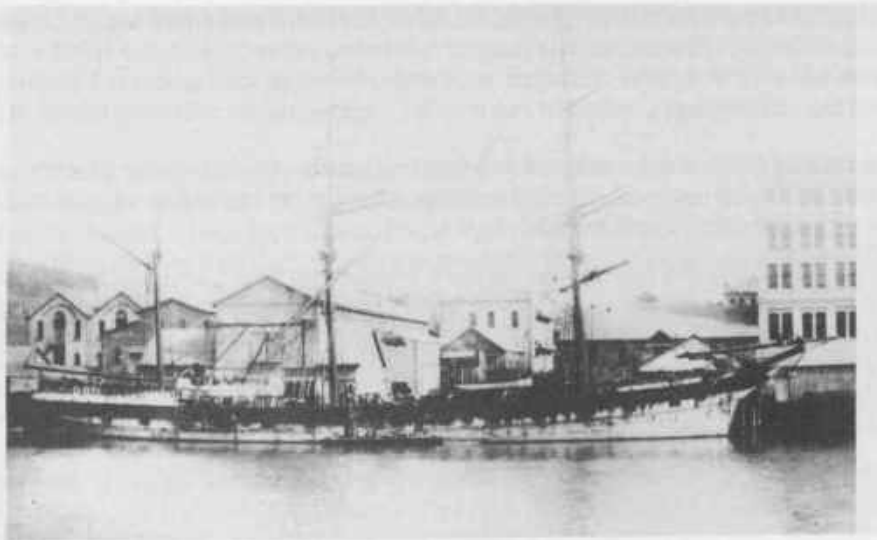
Many people, mainly young women, testified that they had seen the doctor drunk on numerous occasions during the voyage and one man, Thomas F. Trudgeon, stated that when his wife had been taken ill he had gone for the doctor only to find him at dinner. He had been told that the doctor could not be disturbed and that his wife would be attended to after dinner. Accordingly, Trudgeon had once again sought the doctor after dinner only to be told - this time by Newell himself - '...that he could not come every ten minutes to see sick people.'⁶⁷

Despite the damning testimony of these witnesses, other immigrants stated that Newell had performed his duty admirably. Newell refuted every allegation brought against him, although upon examination of the ship's stores it was discovered that most of the brandy and wine allocations placed on board the ship for medicinal purposes were missing.⁶⁸

The immigrant ship *Herschel* arrived from Hamburg in September 1878 with 333 passengers, the *Caroline* arrived the following month from London with a further 327 immigrants, then came the *Highflyer* in December the same year. The following year saw the arrival in April of the *Scottish Hero* with 279 men, women and children, followed by the *Silver Eagle* in May 1880 and the *Duke of Athole* almost exactly a year later.

The population of Maryborough and surrounding district was increasing dramatically at this time, a fact evident in the census figures taken in April 1881 which showed there were 9880 people living in Maryborough, Tinana, east Maryborough (Granville) and Yengarie. The previous census, taken in 1876, had shown just 8608 people living in the same area. In five years the population had increased by 1272. The district of Burrum increased by twenty-six per cent over the same period, and the Tiaro district increased by a massive forty per cent.⁶⁹

In January 1882 the immigrant ship *Scottish Wizard* arrived at the port of Maryborough. At first it was treated as a regular arrival, with no hint of controversy, however, the events that had occurred on the vessel during its voyage were soon to lead to a bitter court case in Maryborough.



The immigrant vessel Scottish Wizard. Source - John Oxley Library print number 62897.

This was the first trip to Queensland of the *Scottish Wizard*, a new iron-hulled sailing vessel built in Aberdeen by Alexander Hall and Co. She was a comfortable ship, every convenience having been built into its structure to ensure a healthy environment for its passengers. There was a modest hospital ward, a small but well equipped sick bay for single women, and a doctor's laboratory. The vessel could easily accommodate up to four hundred people in reasonable comfort.

Upon the arrival of the *Scottish Wizard* at White Cliffs, the Wilson and Hart steamer *Jessie* was sent down river taking the harbour master and health officer. Later the immigrants were shipped aboard the steamer *Keilawarra* for the trip up-river. After the *Keilawarra* had berthed, the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

The new arrivals are an exceedingly healthy lot, and may be considered a decided acquisition to Maryborough, they are very orderly and well mannered, more especially the single girls who proved themselves to be a highly satisfactory indication of the skilful management of the (ship's) matron ... A fife and drum band, organised on board by the emigrants, helped to relieve the monotony of the long voyage. Dancing and concerts were the principal amusement. Captain Scales and his two officers, Mr Moffatt and Mr Barnes, deserve to be complimented for the way in which the ship has been kept in the extremely trim and clean condition that it is at present.⁷⁰

However, a few days later one of the ship's officers, a man named Barns, (also reported as Barnes) was brought before both the police and water police magistrates on a charge of assault. The complainant was Richard Johnson, who had filed charges against Barns after having received a beating on board the vessel

while it was anchored at Hervey Bay. The precise reason for the beating is today not clear, yet it seems that Johnson had been accused by the captain of the ship and the other ship's officers of having - in conjunction with several other immigrants - broached the ship's cargo. Johnson testified that he had been called to the doctor's cabin which was situated adjacent to the small hospital. Upon arriving at the cabin he had been ordered inside by the captain. There he had found the purser in the act of rolling up his sleeves. Johnson later testified:

The purser struck me on the nose with his fist ... he then commenced to kick me about the body and the head. The captain then came and said to the purser 'Kick the head off him.' Moffatt, the chief mate came in, and the 2nd mate, (Barns) came in ... Barns handcuffed me around a post, he then got a piece of small rope and put it around my thumb, and swore that if I did not tell the sailors' names who broached the cargo, he would take the thumb off me. He twisted my thumb around with the signal halyard and stick until I could not bear the pain. (I) called out 'murder'.⁷¹

Alarmed that Johnson's cries would attract the attention of the other immigrants, the mate, Moffatt, pushed a handkerchief into Johnson's mouth. Johnson later testified:

The 2nd mate drew a revolver from his shirt and presented it at my head and said: 'If you do not tell the names of those who broached the cargo, I will blow your brains out and swing you on the yard-arm for it.'⁷²

After this treatment Johnson was struck repeatedly by the purser and then placed in chains. The doctor, Charles Rowland Woodward, who had allegedly been present when all this was happening, later refuted all the allegations, claiming that a fight had taken place in the cabin, but that it was only a fair and manly fight between two men to settle a difference of opinion. The judges, however, realized that some terrible wrong had taken place. Most of those involved were never charged, yet the second mate, who seems to have been the scapegoat for the captain and the other officers, received two months' imprisonment with hard labour at Brisbane gaol.⁷³

The immigration policy of the state continued to bring thousands of people to the Maryborough region, yet even so the labour market did not reach saturation point. After the arrival of the ship *Shenir* in January 1883, the *Maryborough Chronicle* editor commented:

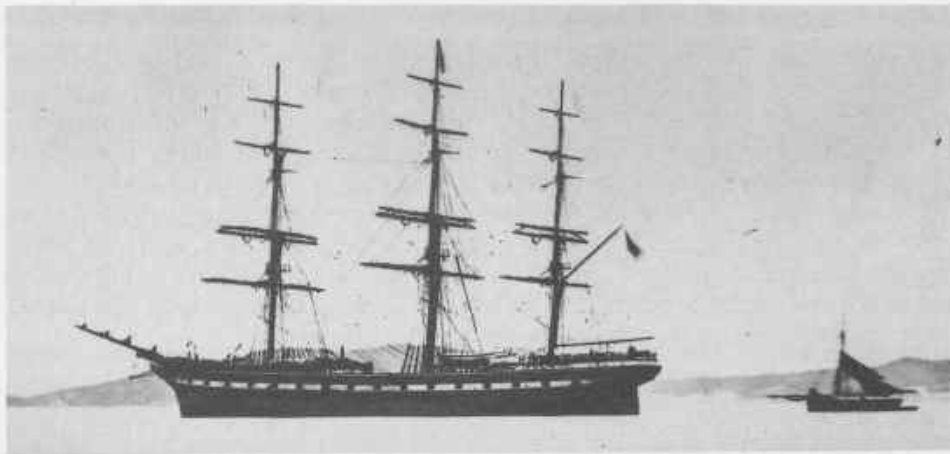
The rapidity with which the bulk of the *Shenir's* immigrants found employment, or otherwise disposed of themselves, compels us once more to harp on the old string about the great advantages which would accrue to this town and district if we could only secure more frequent and regular arrival of European laborers of all classes ... However, we must be thankful for what mercies are vouchsafed us, and therefore may we announce with pleasure and on the best authority that we may expect three ship-loads to land at Maryborough during the next six months.⁷⁴

Despite the arrival of regular immigrant ships to the town, there was no sign that the labour market was beginning to become saturated. Large numbers of vessels were pouring thousands of people at ports between Cooktown and Brisbane, but few of these immigrants made their way to Maryborough. The *Maryborough Chronicle* complained:

In the meantime the labor famine continues here with unabated intensity. Important industries are everywhere languishing for want of hands, large contracts, the completion of which would give vast stimulus to the progress of the town, remain in suspense, and a kind of industrial dead-lock is the result ... Advertising, the ordinary channel of appeal to those who seek employment, is ineffectual to supply a tithe of the most pressing wants. There is a plethora of work and no hands to perform it.⁷⁵

On 16 April, 1883, the *Earl Granville* (also reported as the *Earl of Granville*) arrived from Glasgow with 336 passengers and a quantity of general cargo. John Walker and Co. were the shipping agents for the vessel.⁷⁶ The ship was met by the health officer aboard the steamer *Jessie*, just off the coast of North Woody Island. The health of the immigrants was announced as being satisfactory, there having been only two infant deaths and a few cases of whooping cough during the voyage. The immigrants were transferred to the steamer *Keilawarra* on the morning of Wednesday 18 April for the journey up river to the township.⁷⁷

The fastest passage made by any ship up until this time was achieved by the iron-hulled sailing ship *Maulesden*. The ship had cast off from Greenock on the evening of 1 March, 1883, and was brought to anchor at Hervey Bay on 12 May. The ship had found favourable winds and was able to often travel approximately three hundred miles each day. On several occasions, with strong winds and good currents, the ship had been driven almost twice that distance in a day. One child had died during the voyage, a not uncommon occurrence. The only other fatality was that of a sailor. The *Chronicle* reported: 'He was engaged in scrubbing the ship's side and, in



The Maulesden. Source - John Oxley Library print number 6757.

attempting to return on deck, lost his hold and fell into the sea. He was unable to swim and sank immediately. A boat was lowered and a search made, the ship being put back. The search continued for about two hours, but proved fruitless, only the man's cap being found.⁷⁸

Most of the immigrants who had arrived aboard the *Maulesden* were Scottish and of the Presbyterian faith. On 17 May, just a few days after their arrival at the township, approximately three hundred of them were entertained at a special meeting held at the Presbyterian Church in Sussex Street. The meeting was a huge success.⁷⁹

However, it was shortly afterwards revealed that at least some of the new arrivals had not wanted to come to Maryborough and had been tricked by the immigration agents - who were working for the Queensland Emigration Office in London. These immigrants had actually wanted to land in Brisbane, yet they were forced to board the ship with promises that their passage to Brisbane would be taken care of once they had landed at Maryborough. The charge was illustrated in the case of one *Maulesden* passenger who, with his family, had applied to the Queensland Emigration Office for assisted passages. He had stated at the time that he had a brother living near Brisbane and that he and his family wanted to be taken to Brisbane where the brother had arranged for employment. The assisted passage had been approved by the Queensland Emigration Office and the man had been told to wait for notice of a berth. Three months had passed when he suddenly received notice that he was to board the *Maulesden* at Glasgow two weeks later. The man had hurriedly sold all his possessions and then taken his family to Glasgow where he was given, not an 'approval' ticket but a 'contract' ticket to Maryborough. The difference between these two tickets was important. An 'approval' ticket allowed the man free passage from the port of disembarkation to his preferred destination, whereas a 'contract' ticket did not. None, if any, of the passengers realized the difference between the two tickets. For people who arrived at Maryborough with little money under the contract ticket system, they were left with no alternative but to seek employment in Maryborough. Upon arrival at Maryborough the man and his family had applied for a transfer to Brisbane but were 'peremptorily refused'.⁸⁰ The *Maryborough Chronicle's* editor angrily stated:

This appears to be no isolated case of deception, the same thing has occurred to many arrivals by the *Maulesden* and several by preceding vessels. It so happens that one of the *Maulesden* emigrants - a father of a family - took an early opportunity of examining the 'contract' ticket given him on boarding the vessel, and (was) possessed of sufficient intelligence and knowledge of the geography of Queensland to understand the dilemma that awaited him and his family on arrival at Maryborough. He accordingly availed himself of a brief delay in the departure of the ship to interview one of the officers of the London (Emigration) Department, and made him acquainted with his grievance and his pecuniary inability to bear the consequences ... There is no excuse for this slipshod and downright deceptive method of despatching emigrants to Queensland ports, and it is with astonishment that we learn that the Queensland office in London ... is guilty of it.⁸¹

It was a confusing and controversial issue. Largely at fault were the ship's owners and captains themselves. They were under contract to the government to bring a specified number of immigrants to Australia. When they could not obtain the set number of migrants for the specific port for which the ship was destined, they then resorted to the use of such subterfuge in order to fill their quota - a quota which had to be filled under contractual penalty.⁸²

The *Maulesden* immigrants were particularly affected by this confusion, as the *Chronicle* later reported:

Several heads of families who believed themselves to be merely landed here en-route to the localities where their friends reside, declined to seek employment or a home here, as their intention has been, and still is, to settle with their friends. Over one hundred men by the *Maulesden* received offers of immediate employment by sugar planters and others, at Bundaberg. But to the surprise of both men and employers, applications to the Brisbane department by means of telegram were met with a lordly reply to the effect that the immigrants can go to Bundaberg or blazes, or anywhere else for all the department cares. The result is that while the single men, with true British pluck, accepted the situation and trudged forth to do or die, several families have had to part with their last coin or borrow money to reach their friends, while many still remain in Maryborough, the victims of a mean deception perpetrated by the London officials.⁸³

This type of situation naturally led to discontent, and the discontent eventually found its way back to Great Britain in the way of letters to families at home. Immigration agents all over Great Britain had to contend with such complaints as well as they could, while still encouraging more potential emigrants to sign for the voyages and a new start in life. Other complaints sent home in letters dealt with the problems of employment and wages. There was certainly sufficient employment at this time, but some men were reluctant to take any kind of work, feeling that they would not be suited to it, and held out for work for which they had been trained.

One immigrant named Westwood, who had come to Maryborough aboard the *Maulesden*, wrote a bitter letter to his brother in Dundee, complaining that the paid immigration lecturers in Great Britain were misrepresenting the true situation in Queensland. He added that he had experienced great difficulty in finding work in the Maryborough region and had been forced to go to Brisbane where the situation was no better and where the wages were equally as poor. His letter continued, '...the sole object of the Queensland government seems to be to take down wages and cheapen labour ... there are scores of Chinamen and white people going about Brisbane, and shiploads of South Sea Islanders arrive in the colony every week, and the government never tries to get work for them ... I am certain that if Mr Russell, the lecturer in Scotland, had been in Maryborough when we landed, he would have got his neck stretched, for scarce an emigrant that came by our ship but was vowing vengeance on Russell for misrepresenting the work and wages so much.'⁸⁴

The paid lecturer, G.D. Russell, later replied to this letter in the press, stating that Westwood had completely misrepresented the true situation in the colonies, and adding that, according to checks made through the Immigration Department, Westwood had easily obtained work in Brisbane but had left the situation two weeks later to return to Maryborough. According to Russell, Westwood had not been primarily induced to come to Queensland because of a lecturer's talk, but because he already had friends in the colony who had sponsored him.⁸⁵

After leaving Hervey Bay the *Maulesden* sailed to San Francisco where it was to take on a consignment of wheat. This was another fast passage of just forty-four days as Captain Miller was attempting to reach San Francisco before the beginning of August so that he would not have to pay tonnage dues. These dues were payable once a year and had already been paid the previous August. After leaving the United States the vessel then went around Cape Horn and on to Sharpness in the Bristol Channel. The around the world trip of forty-five thousand miles had taken two hundred and twenty-two sailing days. Her skipper, Captain J.Y. Miller, later wrote a small booklet about the voyage.⁸⁶

One of the *Maulesden* passengers to disembark at Maryborough was Daniel Raverty who later served an apprenticeship at Walkers. In 1970, Raverty, then aged eighty-nine years, was almost certainly the last remaining original passenger of the *Maulesden*. He spent his second birthday aboard the ship during its passage to Australia, arriving with his parents, Thomas and Amelia Raverty and several other members of the family.⁸⁷

During the following five years, at least thirty-two ships arrived at Maryborough with vast numbers of immigrants. By now the town was swelling rapidly as businesses expanded and trade increased.

An example of the difficulties and dangers experienced by early immigrants and settlers who were then living in the outback can be clearly demonstrated through the life of Mina Rawson, the first white woman to settle at Boonooroo. Mrs Rawson and her husband, Lance, originally operated a small sugar plantation at Kirkcubbin, approximately eight miles from Maryborough, but this was not a success and in March 1880 they moved to the thick and dangerous scrub of Boonooroo, taking their three children with them. A fourth child was born shortly after their arrival. Lance Rawson was born in England around 1850 and was reportedly related to Admiral Sir Harry Rawson.⁸⁸ At the time of the family's move to Boonooroo they were almost penniless, having lost everything on the abandoned sugar venture. Mina Rawson had a total of twenty-five shillings, a fee

she had earned by selling an article to the *Wide Bay News*. One of the children, a daughter, was a frail child and Mrs Rawson fed her a diet of oysters, after which her health was reported to have improved greatly. Writing of her life in 1920, Mrs Rawson claimed that it was thirteen months after moving to Boonooroo before she saw another white woman, an event which occurred when she took her child into Maryborough to be christened. The family grew their own arrowroot and cured dugong flesh for bacon. Mrs Rawson also cured the breasts of pelicans and sold them as muffs. When tenders were called for the supply of mattresses for the Polynesian hospital in Maryborough, Mrs Rawson won the contract to supply twelve mattresses. She made them from ticking stuffed with seaweed. When a fifteen years of age half-cast aboriginal girl was attacked by sharks, Mrs Rawson was among those who helped to rescue her. She tied the severed arteries and cut away the torn strips of flesh. The girl survived and, according to Mina Rawson, later acquired an artificial foot.

The family burned green leaves and dry cow excrement in an effort to cut down the numbers of mosquitoes which attacked in their thousands. Meals of flying foxes were standard fare. Mrs Rawson used to cook the animals by cutting them into strips and baking them inside pumpkins. Mina Rawson died in Sydney on 15 July, 1933, aged eight-one years, after having made a successful career as an author, writing primarily of her experiences at Boonooroo.⁸⁹

Another early settler to the region was Alice Wilson, herself a keen historian who presented many papers to the Maryborough Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society. In an undated paper entitled, *Boonooroo Towards the End of the Last Century*, Miss Wilson claimed that she remembered another early settler to the region, a man named Robert Johnstone, who was the owner of Boonooroo House - the same house which had been previously occupied by Mrs Mina Rawson. Johnstone was a retired inspector of police and, reportedly, the discoverer of the Johnstone River in the Cardwell district. Miss Wilson claimed that he was a snake charmer and, '...almost always walked about with a snake inside his shirt or around his neck.'⁹⁰

But perhaps the most remarkable letter to survive those immigrant days was found in 1964 under equally remarkable circumstances. In July 1964 a resident of South Australia wrote to the Maryborough postmaster explaining that the previous year his daughter had gone to live in England. Shortly after her arrival she had purchased a wooden chest and in one of the chest's drawers she had discovered a letter written by a Maryborough immigrant in September 1883. As this is most certainly one of the most detailed descriptions now available of nineteenth century immigration into the port of Maryborough, the letter, addressed from a house in 'Lennox Street, Maryborough' and written by a man named John Funge, is here reproduced in full:

September 12 1883.

Dear Father, Brother and Sister (the sister being Miss Fanny Funge, of Cambridge):

No doubt you all think me very ungrateful in not sending you word before, but I can assure you this has not been my fault.

The *Kapunda*, being a sailing vessel, called at no ports, in fact after we lost sight of the island of Madeira we never saw land until we sighted Sydney Heads on the 11th July. All down the African coast we were 1500 miles out at sea.

This we could tell for ourselves, as every day after the sun was taken at Noon the distance we had done with the Latitude and Longitude and course were posted up on a black board and by there referring to the Map we would tell exactly where we was then. I could understand the meaning of the Latitude and Long. lines which so puzzled me at school.

We left the Depot, Plymouth, on the 14th April in a large steam tug at 11 a.m. 387 emigrants and as fine and healthy a lot as ever set sail for the colonies.⁹¹ (A) young man aboard struck up Auld Lang Zine (sic) on a violin to which we all joined, and after three good hearty cheers to thoes (sic) ashore away we went to the *Kapunda*.

After we had all embarked we were towed out a good way beyond the breakwater. Here the Government officials, Emigrants, Missionary and others left us and we were then fairley (sic) on our way. It was a beautiful day and brought to my mind a verse on the Inchscape Bell, viz -

The sun in Heaven was shining gay
All things were joyful on that day
The sea birds screamed as they wheeled around
And there was joyance in their sound.

We made a beautiful run of 200 miles the first day. The second day out was also beautifully fine. On the third day, when on the skirts of the Bay of Biscay, we got what the sailors called half a cap full of wind, then began such a pantomime you never saw, children screaming, mothers and fathers unable to look after them all busy with a bucket in front of them and the vessel rolling from side to side with tremendous force until buckets bowls and everything they were using were tumbled over and the poor women and children were rolling backwards and forwards like dead things some crying, some praying, some wanting to be taken back. This state of things lasted for about three days. We got finer weather and everyone improved accordingly, but for a week or two every time we got a shaking up the same performance began. Strange to say I was not sick at all, and this I believe was owing to the fact that I had too much to do to think about it. I had not been on the vessel ten minutes before I looked out after a job. I went to the Steward and he put me into the stores and I had to serve out, every morning, rations for the day. No small job you may be sure. Then twice a day I went round with condensed milk ready mixed to all the children and a bottle of stout and two eggs to all the women who were nursing babies. Then I had to make pies, puddings and other nic-nacks for the cabin and my books to keep correct.

I held this job for a month. Then as the ship's cook was not up to his work the captain put me into his place. I had the crew and cabin to cook for. 35 of crew and 14 cabin passengers, captain and doctor, the other cook looked after the emigrants.

Two days after I took this job we entered the Tropics. Inside the cooking place the heat was unbearable, outside the sun was blazing straight over us, my arms and neck got so frightfully burnt and blistered that I had to go to the doctor's and have them bandaged up with lotion and wadding. This lasted nearly three weeks then nearly all the rest of the way was frightfully cold. Dark just after 4 p.m. and not fairly light until 8 a.m. Going round the Cape of Good Hope we had some frightfully rough weather.

My cooking room was on top deck, next to me the condensing engine, making 2000 gals, of fresh water daily out of sea-water, then the emigrants cooking room and next the bakery and then the store room. So you see I was always exposed I had always to be up at 4 a.m. hot coffee to serve out to all the sailors at 5, breakfast at $\frac{1}{4}$ past seven and 8, in the cabin, dinner at 12 for the sailors and 1 o'clock in the cabin.

Twice when I had everything ready for sending up to the cabin the sea broke straight into my cooking place and wash (sic) me, dinner, saucepans, pots, kettles and everything straight out on to the deck. The first time I was horribly frightened. I didn't know whether I was on the vessel or overboard. Many a time when I have been mixing anything over I have gone and everything on top of me. As for scalds, burns, cuts and bruises I got them by the score.

We had quite a farm aboard, 12 sheep, 2 pigs, 144 fowls, 24 ducks. Every one of these found their way into my place to be cooked and many a nice little bit I was able to give to Jane and the children.

When the weather was fine their (sic) was plenty of fun and life going on. The children especially enjoyed themselves imitating the sailors, singing the songs they heard the sailors singing whilst setting sail, or taking in sail, for they always do everything with a song. It amused me wonderfully, perhaps there would be 30 or 40 at a rope, one would start a song and at the end of each verse they would all give a good pull.

We had a concert every Saturday evening when the weather was fine, and Church on Sunday, the captain and doctor conducting the service, on the whole putting bad and good together I thoroughly enjoyed the voyage.

It was on the 11th July the man on the look-out called out land on the weather bow - It was just breaking day but everyone was up in a few minutes straining their eyes to see all they could. Six days after we anchored in Harvey's Bay (sic) and were all taken on board the *Clarence* to Maryborough. We landed at 9 p.m. and were took (sic) off to the Depot where a large wooden building with a heap of mattresses to lie down on at night. We were allowed to stay there seven days if we liked and had so much bread meat potatoes tea and sugar served out to us or we were at liberty to go where we liked. People came there and hired the single girls and men.

A lot of single men went to work on sugar plantations and sawmills, single women were in good demand. The married people seemed to have the greatest difficulty to find situations.

Houses were frightfully scarce. I got one the third day, a wooden one like all the rest with 4 rooms, 12/- per week paid in advance. It was Wednesday night when we arrived here. Friday I took the house and on Sunday Jane was confined of a daughter, both have gone on well. Well to make a long story short after Advt. (advertising) etc., and calling everywhere I thought there was likely for a chance and nothing turned up and expenses were going on at home, I went down to the Wharf, a large Steamer just then came in, the Mate sung out for a double gang of men to unship her cargo.

I went up with a doz. or two others, got our names entered and away I started at my first job at 1/- per hour up to 6 p.m. 2/- per hour after. Well I earned 10/6d at that job and had several after. It was a month before the Job I am now at turned up. I am first hand at a baker and confectioner 50/- per week and all my food - begin at 2 a.m. leave off 3 p.m.

It was mid-winter when we landed, but as hot as the hottest day in summer at home. If you will refer to the Map you will see we are scarcely $\frac{1}{2}$ a degree from the Equator, consequently we have tropical heat but I feel it very cold sometimes when I go to work at 2 a.m. What it will be like at Christmas I don't know as that is about the hottest part of the year.

Somehow I feel as if I had lived here all my life, as (a) great deal seems just the same, the English Church has the same service, sings the same hymns and is as nicely built and filled up as any at home, the same with all other denominations.

Maryborough stands on quite as mudi (sic) ground as Cambridge the only difference the houses are all built of wood and are only one story (sic) high with verandas in front of every house.

We had a terrible earthquake here the week before last. Just as I was going to work the ground tossed and trembled very bad - it woke everybody up and several came running out of their houses asking me what was the matter.

Meat is 3d. and 4d. per lb., best cuts. Bread 4d. per 2 lb. loaf. Potatoes 1/- for 14 lb., not fit to eat. Milk 7d. per quart, none to be had. Sugar 3d. and 4d. per lb. Cheese 1/10 per lb. Bacon 10d per lb. Clothes quite as cheap as at home. Boots very reasonable - Furniture, Bedding, Ironmongery, Crockery, etc., are very dear.

Colonial Beer 3d. small glass, 6d. per large or 1/- per Quart somehow it hasn't the taste or smell of Beer. I can't manage it at all. Bass and Allsopps 2/- per bottle.

Horses are very cheap, here nearly everybody keeps one or two, everything is taken out such as parcels groceries meat etc., by boys or men on horseback and everyone goes full gallop; even the lamplighters, bill posters, etc., ride their horses at their work. Rain is wanted here very bad, cattle and sheep are dying by thousands for want of water and grass.

Of course in a town like this we have the waterworks and almost every house has water laid on. I went to Brisbane after I had been here a week to see for work, but could not succeed. It takes 24 hours by fast Steamers from here.

I went by the *Leichardt* and came back by the *Clarence*. As we were outing the mouth of the Mary River we ran high and dry on a sandbank and had to remain their (sic) 3 days and nights, all the passengers were taken off on the fourth morning between one and two o'clock and brought on to Maryborough.

There are scarcely any Railways at present, everything is done by water. I believe this will be a very large town or city before long. I also believe I shall do well here after I get to know my way about. The climate is too hot for my liking, I don't think I am scarcely half the size I was when I left England. I was very ill last week but am all right now again. Jane and the children are all well, only worried to death with Musquitoes. (sic). Everywhere they bite they raise a lump as large as a wasp sting.

Every house and everywhere swarms (sic) with beetles, ants, flies, lizards and other insects. They get into everything. I have had one or two letters from Joe.

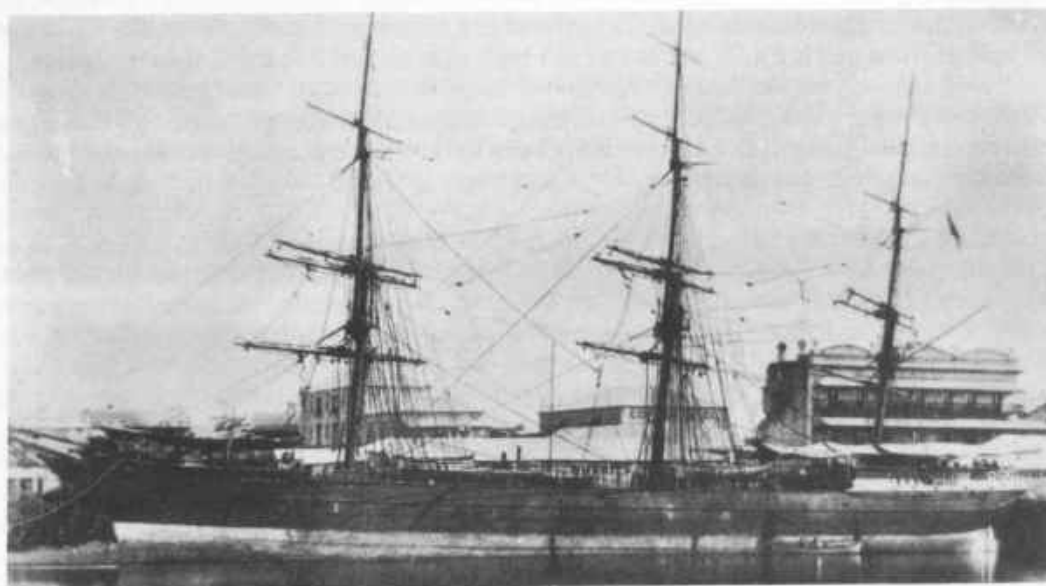
And now goodbye, I will try and write by each mail. Write and tell me all the news worth hearing also send any newspapers etc., direct all to the Post Office here as I shall get a cheaper house as soon as I can.

Trusting you are all enjoying good health with best love to you all.

Your affect., and dutiful son John (Funge).¹⁰²

Over the following years immigration into Maryborough continued unabated. Ships included the *Duke of Westminster*, the *La France*, the *Gulf of Carpentaria*, the *Duke of Buccleuch*, the *Waroonga* and many others.

In January 1888 the immigrant vessel *Eastminster* arrived at White Cliffs with more than two hundred and eighty new colonists. The *Eastminster* had left London on 4 November and arrived in Plymouth on the morning of the 6th where the immigrants had been embarked. Less than three hours later the ship left Plymouth under tow of a steam tug, and after dispensing with the tow proceeded on its voyage. The weather was inclement and the immigrants experienced rough seas and squalls for the first few weeks. On 26 December while in rough seas, one of the starboard davits carried away, and in January an immigrant named James Oswald was washed against the side of the deck by a huge wave and broke his leg. There were two births during the voyage and thirty-three cases of measles. Despite these set-backs the ship completed the voyage in just ninety-three days. However, this was to be the *Eastminster's* last voyage. During the return trip the vessel went mysteriously missing.



The ill-fated *Eastminster*, lost with all hands after landing immigrants at Maryborough. Seen here at the Maryborough wharf in 1888, prior to its disappearance. Source - Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

In February 1888, a savage storm lashed the eastern seaboard of Australia. Driving rain soon flooded rivers and creeks, trees were stripped of their foliage, waves pounded against the beaches with tremendous force. Even as this storm was building out at sea, the skipper of the *Eastminster*, Captain D.R. Rees, decided that it was probably safe to go to sea. The *Eastminster* was a vessel of almost twelve hundred tons, she was a Glasgow built ship, strong and able to withstand rough weather, she had weathered such ferocity many times.

On the 17th of that month, the vessel was towed down-river from the Maryborough wharves by the government steamer *Llewellyn*. At 5.30 that evening, the master of the *Llewellyn* dropped the tow cable and warned the *Eastminster's* captain that it might be wise for him to wait before proceeding to sea.

This sound advice was not taken. The *Eastminster's* telegraphs clanged and she got under way, rounding Woody Island and heading for the open sea.

She was never seen again.

Today, nobody really knows the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the *Eastminster*. It remains one of Queensland's most enduring seafaring mysteries. Her destination was Newcastle where she was scheduled to load a cargo of coal before setting sail for San Diego.

After breaking into the heavy seas the ship was tossed around literally at the whim of the storm. Rather than sailing south, as the captain had intended, it was forced farther north, driven before the gale.

A few days later the residents of Yeppoon were alarmed to see distress signals, - brightly coloured rockets, far out at sea - but in the teeth of such a gale there was little anyone could do. No rescue ship could survive in such a storm.

When the foul weather had abated sufficiently for a ship to be sent in search, the government steamer *Fitzroy*, under the command of harbour master Captain Sykes, was dispatched in order to discover who had sent up the distress flares. For many days they searched with no result, and it was not until they reached Port Bowen that the slightest trace of any wreckage was found. There, on the beach, some eight miles from Yeppoon, a stockman had discovered a boat and quickly sent a message to town. The message was relayed to Captain Sykes and he went to investigate. They found the boat, a white-painted craft with its bottom-boards smashed and splintered. The beach was strewn with spars and timber, including baulks of oak and cedar. There were also lifebuoys with *Eastminster* painted on them, and some of the ship's hatches. It seemed evident from this that the *Eastminster* had become a victim of the storm, but the wreckage was sparse, not really sufficient in itself to conclude that the ship had indeed foundered, and there were no survivors to tell the tale. In fact, the evidence was inconclusive.

And then, just a few days later, a ship under the command of a man called French Peter came across more wreckage on a small island in the Keppel group. French Peter was subsequently interviewed by Captain Sykes and the Frenchman claimed that he thought he had seen several white men on the island. Sykes proceeded to the spot to investigate and he did in fact find further evidence of wreckage. On a mass of rocks he discovered a deck decoration made of teak. The single word *Eastminster* was cut into this decoration in German text. The word was painted in Chinese vermilion over a representation of a cathedral - also in wood. It was, in effect, the ship's crest, and no doubt of the vessel's fate remained. Sykes sent a landing party to investigate the island in an effort to discover if there were any survivors. However, French Peter had evidently been wrong when he stated that he had seen white men there, all the landing party found were an aboriginal shepherd and several aboriginal women. These people stated that no white men had landed on the island, they had seen only the wreckage drifting ashore.⁹³

Nothing was known of the fate of the *Eastminster* for many years until a young man named James McWatters discovered the wreck on shore at the Bunker group of islands. McWatters was a well known sailor at Maryborough and Moreton Bay. He was running mails and stores to a group of Japanese guano gatherers on Lady Elliot Island when they told him that during an expedition they had mounted to discover fresh deposits of guano, they had found the wreck of a ship stranded and rusted on the rocks some twenty miles north of Lady Elliot Island. McWatters was immediately curious and took his small vessel, the *Lorna Doone*, north to investigate. He found the rusting hulk and to his surprise he immediately recognized it as the well known immigrant ship *Eastminster*.⁹⁴

By this time the labour situation in Queensland was approaching the point where there was a distinct drop in employment positions and the Queensland government was considering ending the free and assisted passage schemes. Yet progress to finalize such schemes was slow, perhaps due to the fact that it was becoming increasingly difficult to attract immigrants from Great Britain. By the middle of 1891 conditions in Britain were somewhat improving for the working man. Work was plentiful and wages were increasing, especially throughout agricultural districts.⁹⁵

Shortly afterwards the Queensland government ended the free immigration system, and in 1892 the last of the free immigrants arrived at Maryborough aboard the mail steamer *India*. By this time immigration numbers had seriously dwindled. Whereas during the 1870s and 1880s, ships had been arriving at Maryborough with up to four hundred and fifty immigrants, most of the vessels arriving in port during the 1890s were bringing substantially less. For example, the *Merkara* from London which arrived in November 1891 landed only thirty immigrants, the *Roma*, which arrived the following month brought just thirty-eight, and the steamer *India* brought only twenty-five people. After the end of the free passage system the numbers dwindled even further. The *Taroba* which landed in March 1892 brought two people, the *Tara*, arriving several weeks later brought twenty-eight immigrants, and the *Jumna* the following month landed just three.

The immigration debate throughout Queensland was a long and arduous one. The ending of the free passage scheme caused severe difficulties to the rural industries which relied on a steady work-force for many of the labour-intensive crops such as sugar and cotton. In England, lecturers continued to tour the country advising potential emigrants that land in Queensland could be purchased from the government at half a crown per acre and that loans could be extended up to ten years. They cajoled farmers and farm workers, telling them that there was work for all in a healthy climate with sound economic prospects.⁹⁶ Yet still the numbers of immigrants continued to remain low. In November 1906 a public meeting was convened by the Maryborough Chamber of Commerce. The object of the meeting was to discuss ways in which immigration to the region could be substantially increased. Farmers were experiencing a dearth of workers and there were fears that if the state were not colonized - and quickly - Japan, with its vast population and aggressive foreign and military policies, would cast envious eyes towards the millions of uncultivated acres in Australia. Maryborough businessman and politician E.B.C. Corser, who was present at the meeting, stated that the population of Queensland as it then was, could never hope to defend its shores against invasion, adding that the overcrowded Asiatic nations, often afflicted with famine, could not be blamed for casting envious eyes on Australia and that the possession of these lands should be justified by occupation and use.⁹⁷

The Immigration League of Australia, with its head branch in Sydney, was working hard in promoting emigration from Great Britain and the Continent. They had sent colourful and glowing descriptions of Australia to the press offices of various newspapers in Great Britain, and some of these had been translated into numerous languages for publication in European countries. Following their evident success, a branch of the league was formed in Maryborough in 1906.

The following year Premier William Kidston, himself a Scottish immigrant who had arrived in Queensland 1882, stated that the Queensland government was doing everything in its power to promote immigration. A £5 fee he intended imposing on employers as part payment for passage fees was a major cause of complaint, however, Kidston stated that employers should have a stake in the well-being of their employees: 'I believe that the sure way to set up a steady stream of immigration from the old country, is to secure good conditions for them when they come here. We will have no difficulty in getting good immigrants once it gets known that they are coming under good conditions. That is the aim of the government.'⁹⁸

An indication of the importance of immigration to the region, and the growth it stimulated, may be seen in the official census figures for Maryborough from 1871 to 1901. In 1871 Maryborough's population was 3542. Ten years later the numbers had doubled (minus one) to 7083, and by 1901 there were 10,159 people living in Maryborough. Clearly an extraordinary growth for a regional country centre, a growth which owed much to the liberal immigration policies of the times.⁹⁹

There is little doubt that the role immigration played in the growth and economic development of Maryborough was more than significant. Between 1862 and 1901, vessels travelling mainly through the Torres Straits brought 20,960 immigrants to Maryborough.¹⁰⁰

Sources and Notes for Chapter Sixteen.

1. M/C. 13 February, 1862.
2. M/C. 14 February, 1862, reproduced in M/C. 16 February, 1912.
3. M/C. Almanac, 21 November, 1860 and M/C. 19 December, 1860, p 4.
4. M/C. 12 July, 1862 and 23 July, 1912.
5. M/C. 9 October, 1862.
6. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society archive, file S 16.
7. M/C. 9 October, 1862.
8. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, file S 16.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. M/C. 14 September, 1909. For full details of the *Ariadne*, including lists of passengers, see Kay Gassan's and Judith Grimes's well documented account in, *Tall Ships on the River, Ariadne*, 1992. Verbatim accounts may also be found in Eileen B. Johnson's *Maryborough Heritage Register*, Vol. Four, Book 1, 1862-1869, pp 1-6.
12. M/C. 15 May, 1902.
13. M/C. 9 July, 1923, p 4.
14. The immigration depot was completed on the site of the present court-house in July, 1863. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported on Thursday 9 July, 1863 that the buildings would be finished before the end of the month.

15. M/C. 16 July, 1863.
16. M/C. *ibid.*
17. *Brisbane Courier*, 30 July, 1863 and M/C. 23 July, 1873.
18. M/C. 7 April, 1964, p 2.
19. M/C. *ibid.*
20. M/C. 2 August, 1924. See also, Kay Gassan's account of the voyage, M/C. 6 April, 1994, p 7, and Johnson, E. *ibid.*, pp 15-20.
21. Watson, W.J.E. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society file M 32 p 3.
22. M/C. 2 August, 1924.
23. M/C. 7 April, 1866.
24. M/C. 4 April, 1866.
25. M/C. *ibid.*
26. M/C. *ibid.*
27. M/C. 6 March, 1916, p 5.
28. For full details on the *Sultana* voyage, see: M/C. 3 March, 1866, 7 March, 1866, M/C. 4 April, 1866, M/C. 7 April, 1866.
29. M/C. 23 May, 1866.
30. Reproduced in M/C. 21 November, 1990, supplement p 4.
31. M/C. 23 August, 1990, p 9.
32. M/C. 2 May, 1866.
33. M/C. 3 September, 1870.
34. M/C. *ibid.*
35. M/C. *ibid.*
36. M/C. 28 January, 1873.
37. M/C. *ibid.*
38. M/C. 23 June, 1923, p 16.
39. M/C. *ibid.*
40. M/C. 12 July, 1873.
41. M/C. 27 August, 1874.
42. M/C. 7 May, 1934, p 4.
43. *Diary, Last Days, Great Queensland*. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, file G. 24.
44. *Ibid.*
45. M/C. 5 October, 1875.
46. M/C. 24 September, 1926.
47. M/C. *ibid.*
48. M/C. 2 October, 1875.
49. M/C. 21 October, 1875.
50. M/C. 24 September, 1926.
51. M/C. *ibid.*
52. M/C. *ibid.*
53. M/C. 28 September, 1875.
54. M/C. 24 September, 1926.
55. M/C. 8 April, 1876.
56. M/C. *ibid.*
57. M/C. *ibid.*
58. M/C. Monday 30 May, 1910. For further details of Annear's career, see, Waterson, *ibid.*, P 4 and the *Queenslander*, 4 June, 1910.
59. M/C. 26 January, 1920, p 3.
60. Cemetery records, Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society. See also, *The Semi-Jubilee of the Reverend J.I. Knipe*, printed at Maryborough in 1892.
61. M/C. 6 June, 1959, supplement p 1.
62. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society, file O 5.
63. *Ibid.*
64. M/C. 14 October, 1865.
65. M/C. *ibid.*
66. M/C. 9 July, 1878.
67. M/C. *ibid.*
68. M/C. *ibid.*
69. M/C. 21 June, 1881.
70. M/C. 31 January, 1882.
71. M/C. 4 February, 1882.

72. M/C. *ibid.*
73. M/C. *ibid.*
74. M/C. 8 January, 1883.
75. M/C. 16 March, 1883.
76. M/C. 17 April, 1883, p 2.
77. M/C. 18 April, 1993, p 2.
78. M/C. 16 May, 1883.
79. M/C. 18 May, 1883.
80. M/C. 22 May, 1883.
81. M/C. *ibid.*
82. M/C. *ibid.*
83. M/C. *ibid.*
84. M/C. 31 October, 1883.
85. M/C. *ibid.*
86. M/C. 28 August, 1970, p 7.
87. M/C. 28 August, 1970, p 7. For full details of the *Maulesden* voyage see *Tall Ships on the River, Maulesden*, by Kay Gassan and Judith Grimes, Heritage Research Publishing Co., 1993.
88. M/C. 4 June, 1973, p 9.
89. Maryborough, Wide Bay & Burnett Historical Society file B. 18 and M/C. 4 June, 1973, p 9.
90. Wilson, A. *ibid.*, p 2.
91. In his book *The Port of Maryborough*, Ronald Parsons claims there were only 365 immigrants aboard the *Kapunda*.
92. M/C. Saturday, 25 July, 1964, p 2.
93. M/C. 13 March, 1888.
94. M/C. 7 July, 1937, p 11.
95. M/C. 17 June, 1891.
96. M/C. 15 April, 1902.
97. M/C. 31 November, 1906.
98. M/C. 1 March, 1907.
99. Census figures from Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics (Queensland Office). Letter R/538 dated 3 December, 1959. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society file C 32.
100. M/C. 6 June, 1959, p 4. For listings of known immigration vessels to Maryborough see appendices.

Chapter Seventeen.

The Introduction of Sugar.

The history of the sugar industry in and around the Maryborough region is a fascinating one, for it encompasses a story of great pioneering imagination, determination, failures and successes. Many of the early characters involved in the production of sugar were people who firmly believed that such an industry could and would be viable, despite the plethora of difficulties and obstacles which had to be overcome.

To tell the story of the sugar industry in Maryborough and the surrounding districts, it is necessary to begin with a description of the town during the late 1850s and early 1860s. Maryborough then was a fledgling port with a few tall masted ships tied up at its wharves - ships bringing much needed food, tools, supplies and immigrants. Those same ships would leave with cargoes of wool, timber and tallow. The town itself consisted of streets reasonably well defined, but boggy during the rain and very dusty when dry. Kent Street, in 1862, was still dotted with tree stumps and a massive crater had formed in front of the Bush Inn, (now the Royal Hotel). This crater had been repaired with approximately thirty loads of stone and gravel but heavily laden bullock drays still became bogged to the axle trees when they attempted to cross the repair.¹

Houses were constructed mainly of timber with shingle roofs, there were no sewerage or septic systems, the town's sanitary carts carrying out their daily rounds. Maryborough was a rough, embryonic settlement struggling to establish itself on a firm economic footing during difficult times. It needed extra industries, manufacturing plants, rural enterprises and a large expansion of business. Cotton production seemed one of the most promising industries, and several experimental attempts had been made in the colony from as early as 1827 when a crop was grown at the Moreton Bay penal settlement. Good results at several early settlements prompted the formation of a cotton growing association in Maryborough in 1859. Sugar, however, was seen by several Maryborough pioneers as being a possible primary source of industry and commerce. One of the earliest attempts to grow sugar cane in the Maryborough region was carried out by E.T. Aldridge who grew a small experimental crop in 1859 and late that year sent three good quality sticks of cane (along with a quantity of bananas) on the steamer *Waratah* to Sydney for processing and analysis. The analysis proved to be very promising and a recommendation accompanying the report claimed that any industry producing sugar of such quality in the Maryborough region would be highly profitable.²

There were a few tentative steps to establish a sugar industry in the region, but growers were reluctant to invest money in a crop of which they knew almost nothing. Little was known of this fickle crop at the time, indeed, any kind of tropical or sub-tropical agriculture was something of a mystery to those early pioneers. In the main they had only experience in the agriculture of colder climate crops. However, in October 1864 John Buhot, the manager of the Victorian Cotton and Sugar Company at Pimpamba, having heard that John Eaton was growing an experimental crop of sugar, arrived in Maryborough to purchase ten thousand setts which would be used to plant a crop at the Victoria company's plantation. Buhot attended a meeting at the School of Arts on Monday 17 October, 1864, and gave a lecture to a large crowd on the cultivation and manufacture of sugar.³

One of Maryborough's early businessmen, John Purser, later stated that the setts had been purchased through the Dowser and Purser company, the price paid being £50. Purser added:

Mr Buhot was very enthusiastic over the quality of the cane, and expressed annoyance at not being able to make some sugar from it. I had a lot of talk about it with him, and said if the cane were as good as he considered it, there should be no great difficulty in making sugar. The result of our conversation was that I arranged to supply everything he required, and, I think on the Saturday following his arrival, Mr Eaton, with a number of blacks carrying the cane for treatment, came to my house. Several persons interested were present. I had procured the largest patent mangle to be had in the town, and when the cane was split into quarters, we got very good results.⁴

Buhot boiled the juice in enamelled saucepans and the results of the experiment were approximately two and a half pounds of rich dark sugar worth about £40 per ton.⁵ These results were so promising that Eaton offered £500 towards the establishment of a commercial plantation in the region. Yet still the fledgling industry faltered. However, in 1865 Mr Thomy de Keating, a man well versed in sugar production, arrived from Mauritius. His presence was to prove a boon to the sugar-growing prospects of the region. A group of wealthy townsmen including John Eaton, R.B. Sheridan, William Davidson and the mayor of Maryborough, Henry Palmer, drew up the prospectus for the Maryborough Sugar Company which was incorporated on 7 August, 1865 with a nominal capital of £10,000 in two hundred, £50 shares. Thomy de Keating was appointed managing director.

Shortly afterwards about four hundred hectares of land was purchased on the banks of Tinana Creek and the ground was cleared and ploughed ready for its first crop. The initial clearing operation was carried out under tender by Maryborough businessman Joseph Moore La Barte. These operations were hampered by the aborigines who once plundered the camp of the workers while the men were labouring in the scrub. The Native Police formed a punitive party and chased those responsible, presumably punishing them in the usual fashion.⁶ La Barte was unable to complete the tender and the work was finally finished by a group of the company's own labourers.

By October that year there were several blocks of land under sugar and when this crop was finally harvested the cane was crushed in a screw press, boiled, and the first knobbly yellow granules of coarse sugar were produced.

The first mill in the region was, however, established by two Maryborough saw-millers, Frederick William Gladwell and Robert Greathead, owners of the Union sawmill which had first begun operations in December 1861. In September 1866 these men visited the majority of farmers on the upper Mary for the purposes of obtaining their signatures on an agreement to supply sugar cane to the proposed new central mill for a period of four years. The cane was to be cut and deposited on the river bank of each farm, and Gladwell and Greathead contracted to deliver on the farmers' wharves half the sugar extracted from the cane. Some farmers agreed to the entire contract term of four years, some signed for two years, yet others, more reluctant to agree to the terms, decided not to sign at all, claiming that they had no guarantee of a true return on the yield of sugar and preferred the security of a small but fixed sum per acre on the sugar grown.⁷ It was a difficult decision for most of the farmers to make. Many were experimenting with the crop, some more extensively than others, but most small farmers had a corner of one of their paddocks planted to sugar. Yet the risks were enormous for wide-scale planting, when smaller crops such as potatoes, arrowroot, maize, pumpkins and other vegetables and fruits including pineapples, oranges and grapes, were providing modest but relatively secure incomes.⁸

Despite these early misgivings from many of the farmers, the two partners were determined to go ahead with their venture. They called tenders for the manufacture of fifty thousand bricks for the foundation work of their new mill, and Greathead travelled to Sydney where he purchased and arranged for the transportation of the factory's machinery. Soon after his return to Maryborough the men selected a site approximately five miles from Maryborough on the western side of the river, sending a team of men equipped with a steam engine and saw-bench, to clear the site.

A correspondent of the *Maryborough Chronicle* described the location in September that year.

I paid a visit on Thursday morning to the new sugar mills. A clearing of about four acres has been made in the scrub, some of which has yet to be burnt off, the blocks and joists of the future manufactory are in position, and one of the buildings for making the sugar is, or will be, 108 feet in length, and in breadth about 30 feet. Another, where the rum will be made, covers the ground to the extent of 75 feet by 25. There are two dwelling houses and offices nearly completed, a wharf erected, and a tramway leading from the wharf to the top of the hill where a windlass and rope hauls up a truck with goods from the river-side. The engine and boilers have arrived ... the situation of the sugar mill is well chosen, both for the owners and the cane growers - within one tide of any farm on the river and less than six miles from the ferry at Maryborough. The appearance of the new clearing was intensely business-like, countless bags of flour lying piled on the bank, on one side sheets of corrugated iron for roofing; and, scattered about, the different pieces of the engine and boilers and the piping for carrying the water to the boilers from the river. Such confusion, I believe, will be reduced to order in November ... the proprietors are going at it with a will and the enterprise deserves to meet with success. Nothing has yet been undertaken in Wide Bay of such moment to the farmers as the erection of this sugar mill. This seems to be the tide in the farmers' affairs they have waited for so long.⁹

Greathead and Gladwell were considered to be two pioneering adventurers and became immediate celebrities in the region, despite the fact that the mill machinery was, by later standards, clumsy and inefficient. The production process consisted of little more than crushing and boiling, the sugar being drained off by gravity into vast holding containers. Centrifugals and vacuum pans - prerequisites of sugar manufacture in later years - were unheard of at this time.¹⁰

Yet in spite of these initially primitive conditions the mill seemed sure of a successful future. However, in October an accident occurred which damaged some of the mill gearing and ruined the boiler. There would be no crushing completed in 1866. The first crushing took place the following February, but unfortunately the cane had been cut too early, the sugar content was almost negligible and the results were worthless. A second

crush with cane belonging to planters MacGregor and White proved successful, producing one ton of rich, high quality, dark brown sugar.¹¹ The operations of the mill were never on a large scale, inexperienced sugar producers cutting cane too soon resulted in poor returns in sugar content. The two partners borrowed a £2000 overdraft, but poor sugar content returns and a shortage of labour after the discovery of gold at Gympie forced the Australian Joint Stock Bank to begin legal proceedings to recover their money. It seemed for a while that the farmers might be able to take over the mill, but it was discovered that one of the pans had been fractured, and in December 1867 the plant was sold at auction in Brisbane. The operations of the mill continued under various ownership for more than a decade, however, suffering strong competition from the Yengarie refinery, it finally downgraded its operation to that of a juice mill.¹²

The Maryborough Sugar Company

Processing machinery for the Maryborough Sugar Company was purchased from Glasgow and by May 1867 this was in the process of being set up at the plantation. On Friday 4 October, 1867, steam was raised at the plant for the first time, and within a fortnight the machinery was in full production. Hundreds of bags of sugar and 70,000 litres of molasses were processed.

Yet the early years of this company were not without problems. De Keating was finally dismissed - his shares forfeited for being unable to meet his financial commitments to the company, and his assistant, William Cardew, was appointed manager. Cardew did not last long. He was dismissed for failing to crush a portion of accidentally burnt sugar cane when the sugar content had been high, and in February 1869 Andrew Cumming, a man who had been a sugar planter for many years, was appointed as manager. At the same time a large rum still was ordered as there was a ready and profitable market for rum in the colony. The following few years were mercurial. A profound lack of working capital severely affected the company's operations. There were extra share issues which helped to alleviate the problem somewhat, but frosts and floods took their toll of returns. By 1870 the situation had not improved although the company did offer a ten per cent share return, it was the only return ever offered by the company. That year the company produced two hundred tons of sugar and 48,000 litres of rum. New buildings were added to the plant, including a new sugar house, but the following year the crop was severely affected by frost, reducing the tonnage to half the previous year. Cumming resigned and moved to Mackay where he was part owner in the Richmond estate. He was succeeded by James Jamieson who replaced much of the Meera cane with Bourbon because of its ability to better withstand frost. Over the next few years the crops were moderately successful and extra equipment was installed at the plant, however, most of the profits of the company went into paying its debts.

In 1874, a visitor to the plantation wrote:

Mr Jamieson is extracting 6000 gallons of juice per day ... there is not a sign of rust on the estate. The distillery is under the care of the government inspector, Mr Wallace, who guards the vaults as vigilantly as ever Cerberus took care of the spirits under his charge. From this season's molasses alone, the company have made 70 hogsheads, or about 3500 gallons of rum ... the plantation is worked by 75 Polynesians and 13 white men, under which complement it is short-handed ... the manager's house is pleasantly situated on the banks of the creek near the mill. Some distance away are the almost deserted Polynesians' quarters, deserted because, as at Nerada, the niggers prefer living in models of their own domestic habitations.¹³

In 1875 the sugar crop was badly affected by rust disease and, unable to meet many of its debts and after the Commercial Bank foreclosed, the board of directors decided to sell the entire project which was auctioned at the Royal Hotel on 2 February, 1877. The mill, the distillery - complete with twenty cedar vats - and over 80 hectares of cane were sold for £6500. A liquidator was appointed and the company which had started with so much enthusiasm a few years previously, was finally wound up.

The original plantation was purchased by James and John Meiklejohn who operated it for many years providing juice to Yengarie until late in the 1880s.

Yengarie

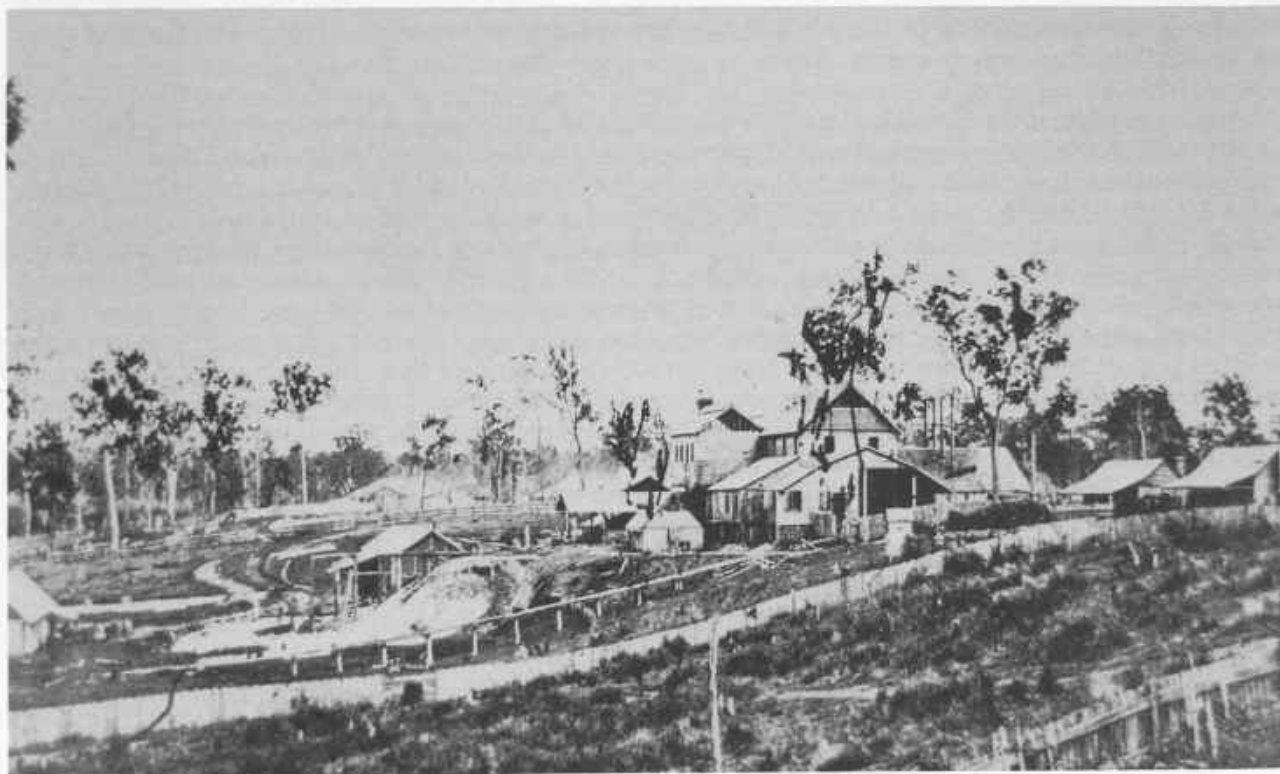
Notwithstanding the early problems of the sugar industry in Maryborough and surrounding districts, by the early 1870s that industry was quickly growing, and several juice mills were in production.

Juice mills were central to the entire sugar making process of the Maryborough region. As it became increasingly clear that decent profits were to be made from sugar production, so the industry flourished, and by around 1883 no less than twenty-eight mills were sending juice to Yengarie.¹⁴ The machinery required for

these mills was very simple, requiring only rollers to express the juice, far less costly than the complex machinery needed for the actual production of sugar. Thus, on a somewhat primitive scale, many of the sugar cane farmers were able to become juice mill owners, and such was the confidence placed in the Yengarie mill that banks were usually quite willing to lend substantial amounts of money to farmers for the erection of their small juice mills.

Certainly the most important operation for the continued success of the sugar industry was Yengarie, originally a meat boiling down works under the control of two enterprising men, Robert Tooth and Robert Cran.

Yengarie had first started its productive life as an abattoir in 1863. The previous year James Charles White advertised in the *Maryborough Chronicle* that it was his intention to open a meat boiling down works, '...on Graham's Creek, close to the junction with the Mary River, about four miles from Mariana, (sic) the station of Mr Graham, from which a road will be opened.'¹⁵



Yengarie ca. 1866. Source - Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

White stated that there would be extensive paddocks for horses and large yards for the reception of cattle. Produce would be shipped to Maryborough free of cost, and, if required, payments would be advanced to those who sent their cattle to the works. White's terms were eight shillings for cattle, including salting the hide.¹⁶ In addition to the cattle yards there were numerous killing pens and some stables. White was an enterprising and energetic businessman with broad cattle interests in Cape York. However, his dreams of building a pastoral empire were dashed when most of his herds perished during an outbreak of pleuropneumonia. White was unable to meet his mortgage payments and Robert Tooth and Robert Cran took over Yengarie, but it was not until 1866 that it began to come to profitable life. Tooth and Cran began a process of boiling down cattle to extract the highly nutritious juices. The operation, based upon the research of Professor Justin von Leibig (also reported as Liebig) of Glessner University, was highly successful, and the extract, exported to England and other countries, was warmly praised as 'mobile soup'. Tooth and Cran later won a gold medal at the Amsterdam Exhibition for their Leibig's Extract.¹⁷

Yet the operations of the boiling down works were limited. As cattle and sheep prices slowly increased, the need to boil down livestock naturally decreased. Tooth and Cran made the decision to close the meat boiling down process at the end of the 1873 killing season. Yengarie was subsequently converted into a sugar mill by Tooth and Cran who, during the conversion, imported and included some of the most technologically advanced equipment then available anywhere in the world, equipment capable of producing a crystal white, highly refined, almost transparent sugar from the cane then being supplied by a multitude of cane farmers.

The process adopted by Tooth and Cran was known as the sucrate of hydro-carbonate of lime system, which, according to contemporary reports, had been used in France since 1795.¹⁸ This system was then being used extensively in Europe, primarily, it seems, in Germany where, in 1883 alone, half a million tons of sugar had been processed from sugar beet. The advantages of this process were that sugar of a purer quality and in greater quantity could be made with much less waste. Its success in the Maryborough region was remarkable, proving that cane could be crushed even if it had been frosted or covered in mud from floods which were (and are) endemic to the region.¹⁹

Yengarie's successes were so good that a sizeable village soon grew up there, its residents working at the mill. The buildings consisted of a large store and office rooms, a chemist's laboratory, cottages, smithy's shop, two lime kilns and a gasometer from which gas was drawn to light the village at night.

In 1958, a Mr W.K. Adams, then eighty years of age, wrote a brief description of the Yengarie he had known when he had lived there during the 1870s. He recalled looking down at the Yengarie complex during an evening when the crushing season was at its height. He wrote:

I remember so well one night taking a party of young friends who came up from the south on a few days' holiday. This night I took them for a walk across to Yengarie to let them see the refinery works. It was crushing season and all was life and bustle. We were shown all through the refinery, all lit up with gas. It was a grand sight and my friends were amazed at all they saw and they thanked the head engineer ... After taking leave of that gentleman I said to my friends, 'I am taking you up to the top of that hill,' where the Yengarie State School now stands. I said to them, 'Don't look back any of you until I say so.' Arriving at the top of the hill I said: 'Now turn around and see Yengarie.'

There was Yengarie below us in all its glory, lit up by hundreds of twinkling lights, with its brick chimney towering 100 feet up into the air and with dense black smoke drifting away from it. The rumble of machinery, the hissing of steam, young folks singing, laughing and happy at the games they were playing. My young friends said it was a most glorious sight to ever remember.²⁰

Another early Maryborough resident also later wrote a description of the scene for the local press:

Long before coming in sight of the works, the clank of huge machinery and the shrill whistle of the steam engines striked (sic) upon the ear. On reaching the gate the visitor obtains a general view of the large establishment which at once impresses him with the notion of a busy hive of human industry. It is, in fact, a village of considerable dimensions, extending along the banks of the creek with the tall factory towering in the midst surrounded with workshops and other outbuildings, among which a neat little schoolhouse for the children of the workpeople is conspicuous. The private residence of Mr Cran, the managing partner, is nearer the river, on a pleasant eminence commanding a view of the winding creek and of the plantations on the opposite side of the Mary. The lands bordering the lower course of the creek, as well as the contiguous river banks, comprising in all about 100 acres, are cropped with cane available for this year's crushing ... the creek is navigable for small craft up to the wharf of the factory, and serves as a most useful highway for the transport of cane from those parts of the plantation which would otherwise be too difficult to access ... On entering the establishment, one is struck and bewildered at the sight presented in the enormous masses of machinery, which appears so crowded and so complicated that it is difficult for the visitor at first to form anything like a clear conception of what is going on. Ultimately, by the courtesy of Mr Tooth, and a little patient study of our own, we think we got sufficiently acquainted with the place to describe what we saw to our readers.²¹

What the correspondent saw that day was indeed a hive of industry. Cane was being brought in punts to the wharf and taken up on a wire rope tramway to one of the two crushing machines. The rollers of the machines were being fed sugar cane through a travelling table formed of boards. The juice from the cane poured into a large tank below and was then pumped into four open urn-shaped iron boilers heated by steam. Here the clarifying process was taking place. The juice was then taken to an evaporator and later to a large pan where crystallization took place. After this the mass of syrup and wet sugar was run off into coolers and through centrifugals.²²

The refinery itself was built overlooking Graham's Creek, and some of the old stone walls can still be seen today, although, for the sake of safety, the tall chimney was pulled down during the early 1980s. At its height of production the refinery was capable of producing three grades of sugar, Number One, the highest grade, Number Two White, and a coarse brown sugar suitable for rations or for distribution to the Polynesian labourers. The refinery also produced rum, treacle and tar.

Robert Cran returned to Maryborough from an extensive tour of Great Britain in May 1881. The tour was primarily for business purposes, Cran investigating modern methods of sugar production and machinery development. Upon his return more than one hundred of his employees, some of whom had worked for Cran for more than twenty years, lined the road to Yengarie to welcome him back. Hundreds of people, employees and dependants, met him in the town and formed a long procession, led by the town band, on the road to Yengarie. At the gates to the plantation, under an arch of evergreens and exotics, Cran was formally received by the reception committee who were, '...distinguished from the others by wearing rosettes,' and an address was read and presented by the spokesman, Mr J. Topping. The address, '...handsomely illuminated on white silk, proved a splendid specimen of ornamental calligraphy, and is undoubtedly the best piece of work of its kind turned out in the colony.'²³

The artist of this piece of work was a Signor Prosdocimi of Brisbane.²⁴

Following the reception a banquet was held at the massive storeroom of the refinery which had been decorated with flags, mottoes and other materials, '...equally gratifying to the eye.' It was a cloudy afternoon and so the scene was brilliantly lit by the acetylene glare of the gas which was produced at the refinery itself. It was a festive occasion, the tables were laid and decorated and the catering was carried out by the wives of the employees. More than one hundred men and women were privileged with an invitation, and after the meal was served, bottles of champagne were placed on the tables and a variety of toasts were proposed, including a 'bumper' toast to Cran himself which was followed by prolonged cheering while the band played 'Willie, We Have Missed You'.²⁵ The banquet was followed by an extravagant ball which took place under a large banner upon which were painted the words: 'Welcome Home'.

A similar reception was given to Robert Tooth when he returned to the region after a lengthy visit to England in 1882. Tooth had sold his share in the Yengarie refinery in 1879, and when leaving he fully believed that he would never return to Maryborough. The banquet was held at the town hall in February that year, and Tooth, who had planned on going to Victoria, stated that he had changed his mind after receiving two letters from Maryborough residents prompting him to return to the Maryborough region which owed much to his business acumen and insight.²⁶

The Yengarie Fire

In July 1887 a fire of considerable magnitude broke out at the Yengarie refinery. At 3.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 19 July, 1887, an engine driver noticed a flickering light in one of the storerooms, a building separated from the main structure by the tramway. Upon investigation the man discovered a pile of sugar bags on fire. He immediately rushed for a bucket of water but by the time he had returned the fire had spread twenty feet or so along the floor and flames were racing up the walls. The alarm was quickly raised and soon afterwards approximately forty people were on the scene and fighting the blaze. It was the height of the crushing season, the dry timbers of the building were impregnated with fine powdery sugar, and within a few minutes the entire building, some 129 feet in length, was engulfed in flames. Another store containing about fifty tons of white sugar, a laboratory, several offices and a drying room containing an expensive American dryer were abandoned when it seemed that nothing more could be done to save them. Efforts were then concentrated on saving the main structure, the eastern gables, just eight feet from the tongues of the flames, were already on fire. A light wind was blowing and clusters of crackling sparks were rising rapidly into the night sky. By now the alarm was spreading and more than one hundred and fifty men were on the scene and fighting the fire, some had come from as far away as Munger. James Cran had appeared at the scene, having seen the glow and rising sparks from Lindah plantation.

Yet it seemed that little could be done. Despite the vast army of fire-fighters the flames were rapidly spreading. Against the stone walls of the main building the fire was checked, but at the wooden gables towards the river and the massive hardwood uprights, studs, rafters and intricate mass of woodwork, the flames rushed along the wood consuming everything in their path until the machinery shed was also fully alight. The fires in the boilers were extinguished and the men worked furiously passing buckets of water hand over hand amid the confusion of smoke, fire and steam which was escaping from burst steam pipes. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported:

The scene was a weird one, to say the least of it, for the gas had been shut off for fear of an explosion and the whole place was alive with men, some working in most extraordinary places and visible only by the flickering flare of the fire. A number were employed in chopping away ignited timber and cutting off communication, and dangerous though it looked at first, the burst pipe proved of no small avail, as a fierce jet of steam was luckily thereby in constant play on the fired timber.²⁷

Slowly the flames were brought under control, and only just in time. The posts and studs around the expensive vacuum pans were already smouldering, and had this large storage of juice caught fire, nothing could have saved the factory.

The experiences of sugar boiler Gustav Dargatz (also reported as Dargaitz) during the blaze, are worthy of mention, for, in the face of mounting danger, he displayed a rather unique courage in order to complete his work at a critical point of the sugar boiling process. The *Maryborough Chronicle* recorded:

While surrounded by the hubbub, smoke and even approaching flames, he stood, Casablanca-like, on the vacuum platform and attended to his special duties as if nothing was happening. The syrup was approaching the critical point towards crystallization, but with the immobility of the proverbial Roman soldier on duty at Pompeii during its destruction, he calmly applied his test sticks, and his persistence in his work is most commendable.²⁸

Two hours after the alarm had first been raised the fire was out. The store no longer existed, there remained only a twisted charred wreckage of blackened galvanised iron and smouldering sugar bags. The store shed had disappeared and in its place was a huge mass of red-hot smouldering sugar from which streams of black toffee dripped and rolled. This grotesque glowing ember represented fifty tons of what had once been prime quality white sugar. Near the river were the remains of the dryer which had only recently been purchased from America at a cost of £1500. The laboratory had been destroyed along with all its valuable chemicals and appliances and a further two tons of sugar. The total loss was estimated at between £6000 and £8000. This was the second major fire at Yengarie, the first, not nearly as destructive, had taken place seventeen years previously in 1870.²⁹

The Industry Grows.

The formation and relatively rapid development of the various sugar mills in the Maryborough region was, in part, due to the vision of the proprietors of John Walker and Co., whose foundry produced much of the sugar milling machinery for the region. Walkers opened in 1868 and quickly built three mills for Lindah, Eatonvale and Alford. Other imported sugar mills were also being erected, creating a boom in the sugar industry. These included Myrtle Grove in 1870, Good Hope the following year, Antigua - named after the famous sugar-producing island in the West Indies - in 1874, in all, at this time, fourteen complete mills on the Mary River and its waterways. The coming of this huge sugar industry was the agricultural catalyst which changed the destiny of Maryborough.

Lindah was the first sugar mill completed by Walkers for Andrew Murray and James Jamieson in 1869. A reporter from the *Maryborough Chronicle* visited the site during construction and later complained in his report that the plantation was so inaccessible that anyone attempting to gain access by land would almost certainly be lost. Jamieson, however, showed the reporter all through the plantation and mill which resulted in a glowing report being published in the local press.³⁰

Yet the initial venture was never very profitable and the partners sold out to the Ramsay brothers in 1870 for £4000. These men later became well known in the district, they were one of the region's largest employers and won a bronze medal for their rum at the Sydney Intercolonial Exhibition. However, rust finally forced them to sell to James Cran in 1879.

Eatonvale plantation and mill was erected by Walkers for John Eaton at Copenhagen Bend in 1869. In 1873 he leased the mill and plantation to M.H. Moreton and W. Canny. These men managed the mill with great success, although they lost an estimated £7000 during the rust outbreak. One year after taking over the lease they had approximately two hundred and fifty acres under cultivation and Canny was credited as being one of the first men in the region to introduce a system of 'high farming draining and manuring', using bullock teams to double furrow and mulch in large quantities of composted materials.³¹ Canny relinquished his assets in the partnership in 1882 and went to the Herbert River to manage Gairloch. Moreton relinquished the lease in 1884 and William O'Conner took over the mill and plantation, later winning a gold medal for his sugar at the Philadelphia Exhibition. The Eatonvale mill was extensively damaged during the 1893 flood.

Alford was also erected in 1869 on Alexander Dunn's and Nathaniel Farquhar's property, one mile upstream from Eatonvale. This was only a small operation worked by half a dozen men and producing a modest half a ton of sugar each day. The mill was extensively damaged during the 1870 floods and aborigines raided the sugar cane selecting a large proportion for themselves.

Other mills included Myrtle Grove, established in 1870 by William McKean, Good Hope, near Tiaro, established by Grenfell and Company in 1871, Reckitt and Pronger's mill opposite Antigua in 1873, Bryrium

Mill at Oakey Creek near Tiaro, Binbirrim Mill, on the western side of the Mary near Miva in 1881, Magnolia in 1872, and Kirkcubbin in 1869 (upon which its manager, Mr M. Skene, insisted on flying the Irish flag) and many more.

Nerada.

The Nerada plantation was established in 1871 by Charles Alexander John Woodcock on the western bank of Tinana Creek. When Woodcock selected the land it was wild country, inhabited by '...kangaroos, paddy melons (small Australian scrub wallabies), bandicoots and snakes.' A correspondent writing three years later described the plantation in glowing terms stating that a large percentage of the cane was of the Bourbon variety, and that in 1873, two hundred acres of cane would be ready for crushing. The correspondent went on to describe the buildings and mill:

From the gate leading to the plantation we got a fine, almost bird's eye view of the area under cultivation ... the house, the bachelors' quarters, the kitchen, and some distance from the homestead, half hidden by a thin belt of forest trees, the mill and the village where the labourers live. Here and there vacant squares of ground from which the cane had just been cut and taken to the rollers broke the dull sameness of colouring, the sibilant monotony of the plantation proper, and from a distance gave it the appearance of an English farm divided into fields ... The mill and plant are housed at some distance from the (Tinana) creek, and the want of a natural store of water is supplied by an artificial pool ... the plant consists of a large boiler, a sixteen horsepower engine by Fletcher and Co., of London, which has been most admirably fixed and worked without any perceptible vibration and with scarcely any noise ... At the time of our visit to Nerada, Mr Woodcock was crushing 7000 gallons of juice a day ... the working men's houses, or, as the Maryborough people would call them, 'residences', are well built, clean and comfortable, notwithstanding the following inscription: 'This is a weerie bad 'ous,' which we noticed on the wall of one of the houses, chalked up by some witty or discontented idiot, perhaps to show that he had been accustomed to a more sumptuous domicile.³²

Four months after this report, in January 1875, Woodcock sold Nerada to Hugh Monckton. Woodcock then joined the public service and was appointed clerk of petty sessions at Warwick. Monckton dramatically expanded Nerada's cane production and installed extra equipment at the mill. However, as we shall see in the following chapter, he was to come in for considerable criticism for his handling of Polynesian labour, and the strict disciplinary measures he enforced on the plantation.

A picture of how these mills looked and operated during this time may be taken from the report of a Maryborough citizen who, during the Christmas period of 1869, spent a day or so wandering over several of the mills and plantations, later writing a lengthy description of what he had seen. The reporter described Yengarie as being a mass of confusing machinery and that, 'like butchering,' the production of sugar was an extremely dirty business. Visiting the central mill he was shown over the site and remarked that, compared to Yengarie, the central's operation seemed diminutive and that the machinery was, '...the essence of simplicity.'³³ The reporter added that the quality of the sugar being produced at the mill, for brightness of colour, purity and taste, could not be surpassed. After this visit the reporter crossed the river to visit Eatonvale plantation where everything seemed to be neat and tidy and, 'the erections are all of the most appropriate designs and wear an air of substantiality.'³⁴ The final mill to be visited was Murray and Jamieson's at Lindah, where it was noted that the plantation and mill operated entirely without the aid of South Sea Island labour.

Antigua.

The Antigua mill was established near Owanyilla by Alfred Henry and Arthur Brown, who applied for the land under the Sugar and Coffee Regulations and began clearing in 1867. Situated on the Mary River, almost opposite Owanyilla, the mill was erected under the guidance of a Brisbane engineer, C.G. Preston, and the first cane was crushed in 1873. The following year a visitor to the plantation wrote a colourfully Victorian description of his arrival:

One day last week I paid a visit to another of our industrial saccharine centres, in the amusing and instructive company of two gentlemen whom I met by appointment at the Owanyilla Hotel, where we put up our horses ... We were piloted by an islander to the Owanyilla wharf where Mr Richardson, (the manager and a partner in the business) had kindly sent his boat to take us across to Antigua ... and stepping into the boat were quickly rowed across by one of Mr Brown's niggers. On landing we had some difficulty in getting one of the party up the steep hill to the house, he was an old man, physically feeble, though his intellect showed no signs of decay. An attempt to lead him slowly up between us, supported by an arm on either side, failed, and it was

obviously impossible to carry him bodily to the top of the hill. A happy thought flashed across me, and I acted upon it. A cane truck had just been let down the inclined tramway to the wharf ... We led him to, and strapped him on it, gave the signal for hoisting, and away he went, faster than his old bones had travelled for many a long day. We could not help laughing to see how he shook his old fist, chattered, kicked, vociferated, in the ascent, but he reached the top all right, where he was levered out and toddled along the brow of the hill, half angry, half pleased, (to) meet us as we were laboriously struggling up the final pinch close to the manager's house, where a glass of hot grog and a piece of brandied pineapple brought the old gentleman round.³⁵

The visitor went on to describe the plantation at that time. He stated that the estate consisted of approximately four hundred acres of land, of which more than half was under cane. The Bourbon cane was steadily being replaced by other varieties such as Malabar, Chamier, Raphoe, Meera, Salangore, Java, and many others. The surface of the plantation was badly broken by steep gullies, over which bridges had been built by the plantation workers. The Brown brothers also intended laying hardwood tramways to facilitate the easier transportation of the cane to the mill. At this time there were seventy islanders and forty white workers on the plantation. They lived in a small cluster of houses which formed the plantation village. There was a dining hall for the men, a bakery, kitchen, stables and a cart shed. The draught horses on the plantation were said to be among the best in the district.³⁶ The Manager, Peter Richardson, who was also a partner in the operation, sold his holding to A.H. Brown.

Another description of the estate, written in 1884, gives us a clear idea of the plantation at that time:

Antigua ... is one of the finest plantations on the Mary River, and though a few years ago the impecunious farming which had cropped the land until the soil had become exhausted had greatly reduced its value, it has, under later more judicious management, recovered much of its former productiveness, and if the same care and thought be bestowed upon it in the future, it will, no doubt, continue to hold its high position among the sugar plantations of this district ... the plantation is distant by water about twenty miles from town, and by rail about 15 miles. The railway line passes through the estate, and a fine iron railway bridge spans the river. The homestead is on the northern side, the residence of the manager, Mr Ernest G. Porter, being upon the high bank, the slope of which has been planted with trees, plants and flowers. Splendid mangoes, rich with flower, and orange trees laden with fruit, the perfume of their thickly-clustered blossoms mingling with the scent of the violets carpeting the ground, are a few of the pleasant surroundings of this plantation home. A row of willows, their long sweeping branches knotted with bright green budding leaves, margin the bank, where, at full tide, the water laps against their spreading roots.³⁷

However, despite this idyllic setting and the obvious good management of the plantation, sugar prices later dropped and Brown unsuccessfully sued Richardson claiming that he had paid too much for the property. As the years progressed, so profits dwindled. Brown crushed the last crop in 1889 and offered the lease for dairy farming.

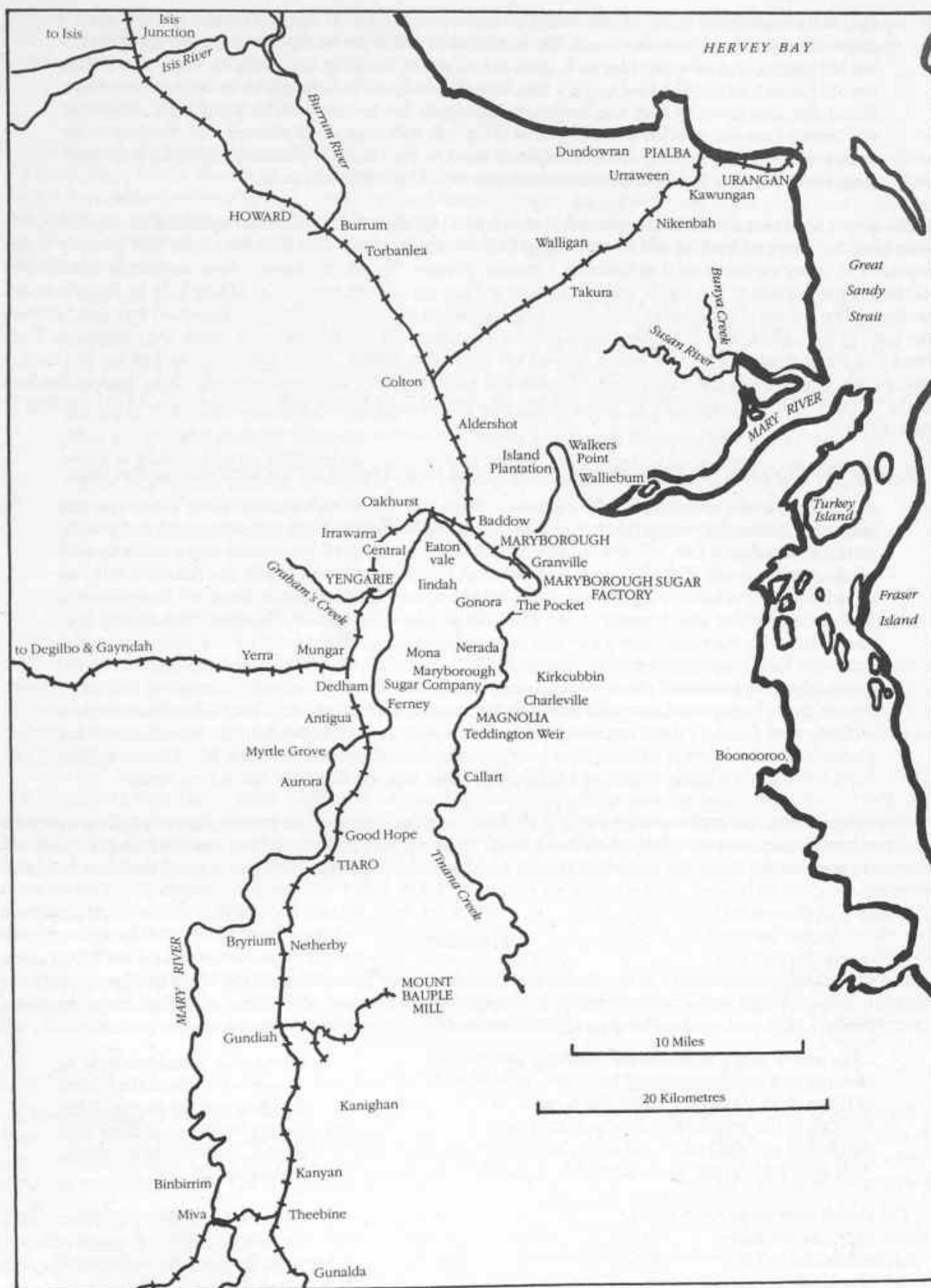
Lindah

The first applicant for the land where Lindah plantation was to be formed was Mr A. Murray. Murray, with his partner, Jamieson, earned a precarious living through the cultivation of arrowroot, Indian corn, potatoes, pumpkins and pigs, and, as the *Maryborough Almanac* of 1875 so succinctly describes:

...For some years alternatively exulting and despairing they carried on this primitive style of farming and supplementing it by cutting pine and other marketable woods with which the Lindah of those days abounded, when the arrival of Mr Buhot turned the attention and the hopes of the settlers to the possibility of cultivating a less uncertain and more remunerative crop than they had hitherto tried; and the partners, fencing off a small piece of forest land, planted it as a nursery with cane which they had obtained from Baddow, the seat of Mr E.T. Aldridge.³⁸

The Lindah plantation never returned to those days of utter poverty after this first tentative experiment with sugar cane. As we have seen, the Ramsay brothers purchased the land for £4000 in 1870. A small mill was established to crush the plantation's crops, most of the machinery being manufactured by Walkers. The mill had a crushing rate of twenty tons per week, the juice being sent to Yengarie.³⁹

A quantity of rum was also produced at Lindah, the *Maryborough Almanac* later reporting that five thousand gallons were produced in 1874. Cane production dwindled on Lindah after the 1893 floods and the property moved primarily into cattle production.



Wide Bay district sugar growing areas, plantations and mills.
Reproduced with the permission of the Maryborough Sugar Factory Ltd.



*Robert Cran, influential Maryborough sugar planter.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 37853.*

The Maryborough Sugar Factory.

The Maryborough Sugar Factory Company was first registered on 13 April, 1894, but its birth had been dramatic and difficult. Many public meetings had been held, meetings attended by some of the region's leading businessmen, industrialists and sugar planters, but for a considerable time no decisions could be reached concerning the introduction of another major mill to Maryborough. Finally, despite the set-back caused by the 1893 flood, a company was floated largely utilizing much of the machinery of the Island Plantation mill which was to be relocated to Maryborough and converted to a full sugar mill. A man named James Fiddes of the Bundaberg Foundry resigned his position to supervise the erection of the new mill, but the first crushing was delayed because a chain which was to connect the wooden slats of the cane carrier to the mill rollers had not arrived from England. A local chain was finally manufactured but the delay meant that some of the cane due to be cut and crushed was frosted on the night of 5 July, 1895. The crushing that year was finally completed - with difficulty - but because of the frosting the company lost £300, having underestimated the tonnage of cane to the quantity of sugar produced. However, despite this early set-back, the mill was completed in June 1896.

As the years progressed and the industry established itself, so to did profits for all the sugar growers. The introduction of expensive machinery which incorporated modern innovations such as the vacuum pan did much to produce for Maryborough a golden age of sugar production during the 1870s and 1880s. However, we must now return to the first years of the sugar industry, to investigate in depth, another issue which grew because of many problems then facing those pioneer planters. The initial years of production were slow, and many hopeful planters went bankrupt. Planters and mill operators were reluctant at first to accept that the cause of the problem was an operational one, preferring to believe that a succession of poor seasons and the high costs of labour were responsible. It had been a grave economical mistake for those early pioneers to have erected large volumes of expensive machinery. It was an under-productive system with too many mills and an unwieldy infrastructure. The problem largely rested in the number of acres under cultivation and the inefficient usage of the land. Constant harvesting and re-harvesting caused a serious loss of soil nutrition - and the crop yield lessened steadily.

In 1884 a correspondent writing for the *Maryborough Chronicle* remarked of those early days:

In these new scrub lands ... one frequently heard of returns of two and three tons to the acre. Everyone was full of the subject, all the farmers planted cane instead of maize. Capitalists were not slow in coming to the fore with plenty of cash to put up central mills. Both sides of the river for a distance of over 25 miles, were covered with stretches of splendid cane; and about this time, (1872), there were three central mills at regular intervals along the river depending solely for their supplies upon the farmers' cane. There was also a fourth one which got a large amount of its supplies from the same source. In some instances the cane was crushed on terms, but this proved unsatisfactory for the most part, while in other cases the cane was purchased at per acre.

The rates per acre ranged from £12 to £25, but of late, all the cane purchased has been by the bulk - that is to say by the punt load.

To be particular, there was the Good Hope mill at the head of navigation, then the Myrtle Grove mill about the centre of the sugar district. The Central mill being at the lower end of the district got all the cane in the vicinity of what was then called Graham's Creek ... And if latitude be a criterion of climatic difference, this district has had the advantage ... From the foregoing statement, it will be freely admitted that the sugar industry on what is called the Central Mill System, was in existence with us, under what everyone will allow, were favourable circumstances, and for all this, it turned out to be an unmitigated failure.

It ruined both the cane-growers and mill owners. Any one can see for himself, even yet, whole reaches of the river that were once covered with sugar cane, now deserted, their owners having been driven from house and home ... It might be stated broadly that the Central Mill System of the sugar industry got a fair trial on the Mary River, and that resulted in total failure.⁴⁰

The author of this work went on to state that the area was dotted with abandoned cane farms, the houses in derelict ruin, the cane roads choked with weeds. He also pointed out that the reason for the initial failure of the sugar industry was the very high cost of labour compared to the capital returns. He continued:

The labour available for cutting, carting, and the various operations about the mill, consisted mostly of new chums, with an occasional digger down on his luck. Now all these made no secret of their contempt for the job. They took it merely to make a few pounds to enable them to look for other work more congenial to their habits. Everyone knows how unsuited a new chum weaver ... from the towns of the United Kingdom, is for agricultural work in this hot climate; as is the miner or bushman, they look down on plantation work as only fit for niggers.⁴¹

The production of sugar world-wide was stagnating, Europe was suffering from over-production of beet sugar and here in Australia there was an abundance of the commodity. Tariffs were raising substantial revenues for the various colonial governments but tariff imposition did irreparable harm to the Queensland sugar industry. In 1885, Victoria, normally a fiercely protectionist colony, was arguing that all tariffs should be dropped - although Victoria had no sugar industry to protect. New South Wales, however, itself supporting a struggling sugar industry, had an import tariff of £5 per ton, bringing in a massive £153,000 sterling of revenue to the colony's coffers in 1884 alone.⁴²

Many correspondents lamented the rise and sudden collapse of the sugar industry at this time, and even major southern newspapers were publishing reports on the woeful agrarian situation in the Wide Bay district. In October 1890, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a lengthy report on the appalling state of the sugar industry at Maryborough, claiming that drought, poor crops, the fall of sugar prices and the impending abolition of South Sea Island labour had all played a significant role in the destruction of the industry.⁴³

The difficulties facing most of the sugar cane planters is probably well demonstrated in the case of the mysterious disappearance of Lionel Paul.

On 20 January, 1885, Lionel Frederick Paul suddenly and inexplicably disappeared from his home, Highgrove plantation on Tinana Creek. Police investigations revealed evidence of foul play and the *Government Gazette* published a notice offering a reward of £500 for information which would lead to the arrest of Paul's alleged murderer. Paul's sudden disappearance and the subsequent investigations had caused considerable public comment in Maryborough, the events were extensively discussed, Paul's antecedents and history critically examined.

The missing man had arrived in Maryborough several years previously and had originally been considered to be, '...a gentleman of considerable means.'⁴⁴ Upon arrival he had taken up residence with his brothers, well known planters Henry A. Paul and Arthur John Paul. Henry was the owner of Charleville plantation on Tinana Creek. Arthur leased Tulasco plantation and was responsible for inducing Lionel into taking over Highgrove plantation, adjacent to Charleville. It was not, however, a good financial venture, Lionel Paul's monthly remittances from home were insufficient to cover all the costs of running the property and when he went mysteriously missing in January 1885, several people believed that he had absconded, leaving his creditors to fight for their money through the courts.

Trouble was also plaguing Arthur Paul. He too could not meet the demands of his creditors. In July 1883 he unsuccessfully attempted to kill himself with a large dose of aconite, he was later refused credit by Bryant and Co. until promissory notes were paid in full, and in desperation he forged a promissory note under the name of Corser and Co. The forgery was soon afterwards discovered by the manager of the Bank of New South Wales, Arthur Paul was arrested, charged, found guilty of forgery and sent to the penal island of St Helena for eighteen months.⁴⁵ During the investigation which led to the conviction, Lionel Paul was sought by the police in relation to the debts of the two brothers. Arthur Paul testified on the stand that on 20 January his brother had ridden into Maryborough from Highgrove and that shortly afterwards his horse had returned without a rider. A few days later letters, addressed from the Metropolitan Hotel in Brisbane, were allegedly received which purported to have come from Lionel Paul. The contents of the letters claimed that Lionel would not be returning to Maryborough for some time and that in the interim Arthur should look after Highgrove plantation. Arthur stated on oath that he thought there was, 'a lady in the case.'⁴⁶ Arthur had indeed taken over the running of his brother's affairs and sometime afterwards another brother, Edward Paul, arrived from India to investigate matters. Advertisements were placed in most of the major newspapers of the colony in an attempt to discover the whereabouts of Lionel Paul, all with no result. Investigations at the Metropolitan Hotel discovered no evidence of Lionel ever having stayed there. His remittances were never drawn upon after his disappearance, and were finally stopped by his family in England.⁴⁷

The Bauple Sugar Mill.

The sugar mill at Bauple was constructed by Walkers in 1895 for the Mount Bauple Central Sugar Mill Company with a capital of £20,000 in £4 shares. The company had a total of thirty-one members with a guarantee of more than one hundred and eighty hectares of cane for the first season's crushing. As the mill was under construction, so the small community began to grow, a butchery was established, followed by cottages and a general store.

Steam was first raised at the mill in June 1896 and crushing commenced on 13 July. Yet throughout its history the Bauple mill was plagued with problems. Firstly there was a court injunction to halt operations because of effluents flowing into Turkey Creek. Over the following years the operation struggled to maintain its economic viability in the face of low cane tonnages and escalating costs, the transition from coloured labour to European labour also caused considerable problems with both supply and the cost of producing cane, as did dry seasons and heavy frosts.

Over the following years the debts grew until the government finally took control in 1904. Yet even now the situation did not improve. Over the following two decades the debts spiralled totally out of control, amounting to more than £141,000. In 1927 the government again handed control back to the growers, charging them just £20,000 which was to be paid over the following fifteen years.

However, over the following years, despite initial enthusiasm, the mill continued to lose money, ageing machinery only barely kept pace with more modern methods of production, and in 1950 the directors voted for liquidation. The mill finally closed with more than £35000 in liabilities in July 1951.⁴⁸

The problems occasioned by the shortage of good labour and the decline of sugar generally, were also to cause enormous problems, social, political, moral, ethical and economical, to sugar cane growers, mill operators and many other residents of early Maryborough. The problems, of course, stemmed originally from the introduction of the South Sea Island indentured labour system.

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45. M/C. 23 April, 1885, p 2 and M/C. 4 September, 1885, p 2.
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Chapter Eighteen.

South Sea Islands Labourers at Maryborough.

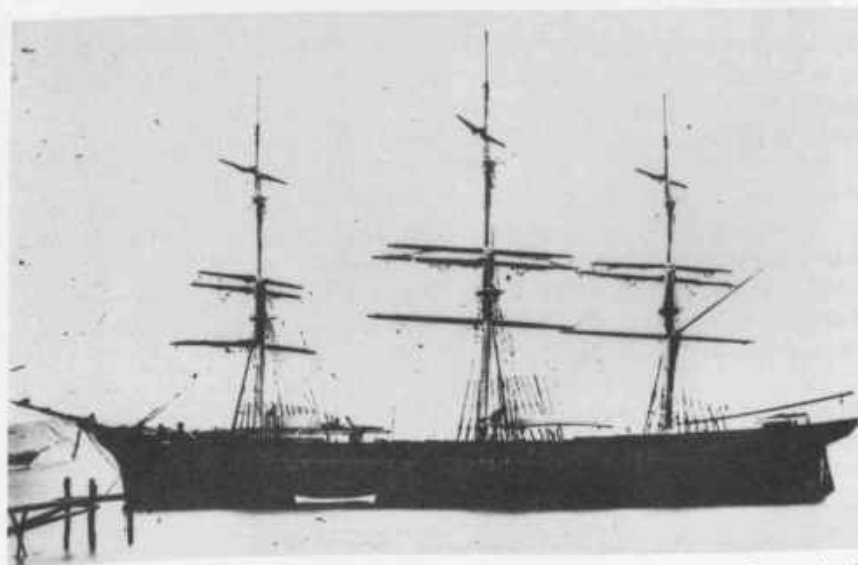
The South Sea Islands labour system was one which played an important part in the history of Maryborough and its surrounding region. The growth of the sugar industry depended largely upon this controversial labour programme for its continued success, and today, the question must be asked; had the early sugar planters and other squatters the right to bring to Australian shores men and women, sometimes children, to work for very basic wages, often against their will? There is little doubt that the sugar industry would not have survived on white labour alone, at least during the early years of sugar production. As we shall see, labour costs were far too high in comparison with the limited returns then being realized from sugar. The sugar planters had little choice but to look for a source of cheap labour. The aboriginal people were not suitable, despised by many early settlers, most indigenous people had no wish to work in the cane fields under white man's harsh employment laws which provided stiff fines and even gaol terms for absconders. Some theorists believed that the aboriginal people should have been forced into a kind of indentured apprenticeship where they would have been fully employed on farms and plantations for a period of several years.¹ However, this was uncomfortably close to being perceived as a kind of slavery, and realizing that such a scheme would probably never work, nothing came of the suggestions. Instead, the planters began to look east, towards the distant South Sea Islands as a source of labourers.

In 1861, the American Civil War broke out, a war which lasted until 1865. During this time the American cotton crop dwindled rapidly leaving Britain's clothing factories and its weaving industry without raw materials, and world-wide the demand for cotton was enormous.

Following the passing of the Coolie Act by the Queensland Legislature in July 1862, Robert Towns, a wealthy cotton planter, merchant and ship owner, along with many of his associates, attempted to import labourers from India. However, negotiations broke down due to financial and bureaucratic difficulties and Towns decided to import men from the Pacific Islands, probably the Solomons, although the trade was later expanded to the New Hebrides, Banks and Torres Straits Islands, the Loyalties, Gilberts, New Guinea and many of the adjacent islands throughout the archipelago.

Towns was well versed in the ways of the islanders. For years his ships had been collecting sandalwood from the islands and he felt that he knew and understood the people and regarded them as being perfect for labouring work. He commissioned the *Don Juan* - one of his many ships - to sail to the islands for the purpose of purchasing labour. The *Don Juan* sailed to the islands and returned in August 1863 with Queensland's first islander recruits.

The new recruits were immediately sent to Towns's property *Townsville* on the Logan River. He paid his workers ten shillings a month and promised to return them to their homes after twelve months. Crops could now be grown efficiently and economically, and interested agriculturalists and squatters began to look to the production of sugar as a viable prospect using such inexpensive labour.



The labour vessel Don Juan, the first ship to bring South Sea Islanders to Queensland.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 63102.

From contemporary records it seems that Robert Towns knew little of his recruiter, a man named Ross Lewin. Lewin had already made a name for himself in the Pacific as a sandalwood dealer. He was also a former slaver working to supply labour for the infamous Peruvian guano trade. Lewin completed a further voyage for Towns and brought a second consignment of labourers, double the original number. Cotton was doing so well on Towns's property that he ordered three more of his ships to recruit labourers from the islands. In fact so profitable was the brisk trade that within four years Lewin went into his own business of supplying labourers, advertising that he was ready to provide workers for just £7 per man.²

Maryborough did not require vast quantities of labourers until a drastic labour shortage occurred following the Gympie gold-strike, in October 1867, and the first shipment of recruits to arrive at the port was on 9 November, 1867, aboard the ninety-nine ton schooner *Mary Smith*. The 'cargo' consisted of eighty-four male islanders. These, seemingly, were willing recruits who claimed to have been contracted to work in Queensland for a period of twelve months.³

By February 1868 the first signs of trouble began when all the labourers refused to work, gathering in a tight knot outside the court-house where they complained, mainly in pidgin English, of the lack of food and its poor quality, the lack of clothing which had been promised to them, and also of the poor wages. They were given a large meal, promises of improvements, and induced to return to work.

However, just eight months later they again refused to continue working, stating that their term of employment had expired and that, as promised, they should be paid off and returned to their homeland.

But their employers, the Tinana Sugar Company, quickly refused the demand, claiming that the period of contract was three years. Company representatives demonstrated this period with thirty-six strokes of a pen on paper, each representing a month. The islanders stated that the period had specifically been twelve moons, yet they were each fined £2 for leaving the plantation, and, as they had no money, were forced to serve seven days in the Maryborough lock-up. Two of the ringleaders were sent to Brisbane gaol. The labourers, however, continued to insist that they had been wronged and maintained their demand that they be returned to their island. Conditions in the lock-up were appalling. According to a report in the *Maryborough Chronicle* of 26 November, 1868, the men were given no food for the first twenty-six hours of their incarceration and food was only provided when police officers finally took pity on them and made a small private subscription to purchase meals. The twenty prisoners were crowded into two cells, each just eleven feet long by nine feet wide. After being released from the lock-up they continued their strike, and so food was again denied them. Eventually, half starved, they were forced to return to the plantation and continue working. A public meeting took place in the court-house soon afterwards during which one speaker, a Mr Spence, stated:

Is it to be said that we, who come from a land of freedom, we who rejoice under a glorious Constitution, which recognizes all men as free and as equals, is it to be said that we shall allow slavery to get a hold amongst us in this our adopted country? Is it because we may be called agitators, stump orators, screamers and demagogues that we are to sit quietly and hold our peace upon this subject? It is slavery when labor is coerced either with the whip or the pistol ... it remains for you to put a stop to this infamous traffic, for it is the thin edge of the wedge, it is incipient slavery, and you have the power to stop it.⁴

Members of the meeting also took pains to point out that at the trial of the twenty islanders, their employers had been unable to produce the original agreement they had made with the islanders - an agreement which was a requirement of the law - claiming that they had lost it. The islanders were not defended at their trial, nor was there an interpreter present, despite the fact that few of them could speak any English.⁵

Yet there was evidently a consensus of opinion from a large number of those present at the meeting that islander labourers were taking jobs from white workers. This prompted the *Maryborough Chronicle* editor to print a long editorial on the financial pitfalls of sugar production using expensive white labour. The article stated in detail that if island labour were to be banned, then the white capitalists who were in the process of transforming Maryborough into a wealthy town would go elsewhere to conduct their business and that such a move would be vastly detrimental to the entire Wide Bay region.⁶

The anti-slavery campaigners were making their presence felt even in the very early years of the labour system, and they were careful to ensure that they received wide coverage in the press of the day. In 1868 the campaigners accused Peter O'Kelly - a well known Maryborough planter from Ferney plantation - of shooting at his islanders. O'Kelly was quick to refute their claims and to take the opportunity of publicly vilifying the abolitionists. He wrote to the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle*:

Sir, you doubtless have heard that two of my Polynesians lately accused me to the police magistrate of having fired several shots at them with intent to kill them. The story is pretty well known in town ... Last Friday a medical gentleman who called on me at my request examined and prescribed for one of my islanders who was suffering from a glandular swelling. Soon after my friend left, I happened to shoot a native bear ... At 7 p.m. I missed two of the darkies, and at 11 o'clock on the following Sunday morning, on my way to town to look for them, I asked Mr Hill's islanders if they saw them; they said no, although one of my men was there at the time. On seeing me he ran off to Maryborough where the two arrived that evening. Before leaving, however, he had asked the loan of Mr Hill's boat to convey the dead body of a third Polynesian from my place to Maryborough. They told Mr Hill's men that I killed a nigger and wounded another, they informed the magistrate that I fired three shots at themselves, 'with intent to kill' them also ... I wish to state for the information of the Maryborough anti-slavery mob and sentimental twaddlers generally, that I believe the cause of their (the islanders') extraordinary conduct on this occasion was their dread of a surgical operation being performed on the sick man.⁷

Yet there were substantial numbers of rumours concerning the general treatment of islanders, both before they arrived at Maryborough and after they had been housed on the various plantations. Rumours of kidnapping were growing rapidly and these rumours were widely substantiated by Christian missionaries stationed on the islands. In defence of their actions some of the planters argued that the sugar industry would never survive without islander labour, that the production of sugar was an expensive business and that using white labour the financial losses would greatly outweigh the prices realized from the crops.

One planter, in reply to public allegations over the issue, illustrated his point in the *Maryborough Chronicle*, claiming as an example that if a farmer had ten acres of cane and sold the cane for £15 per acre he would raise £150, but if he paid three white men to clear and weed the fields in order to obtain this crop, at the standard wage of thirty shillings per week, his wages bill would be £234. He stated that three men would be the minimum required for the work, and therefore the farmer would be in the red when his crop was harvested and sold. The only answer, the planter claimed, was the employment of islander labour at a fraction of white man's wages.⁸

Islanders cost the sugar planters approximately £9 when landed at the Maryborough wharf, their wages at this time were generally £6 per annum, (compared to £6 per month for white labour).⁹



South Sea Islanders in the 1880s.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 158125.

Following allegations of ill-treatment after the arrival of the labour vessel *Mary Smith* at Maryborough in November 1868, A.C. Kemball made an investigation of the journey and subsequently published his recommendations under orders of the Queensland Legislative Assembly. Kemball wrote that no illegal practices had been uncovered concerning the journey, but that as the investigations had taken place long after all the islanders had been distributed to the various plantations, it was difficult to establish exactly what had occurred during the voyage. The published report concluded:

Whilst wholly uninfluenced in making this report by the unpleasant rumour current, I much regret having to state that ... the system under which these people have been engaged seems to me, for the most part, seriously objectionable ... these islanders appear to be a very timid, docile and well-disposed race, and under proper treatment and intelligent masters, will, I am satisfied, in time prove a valuable acquisition to our labour population, but they are ... best adapted for large establishments ... to consign them indiscriminately to any employer or to any isolated place, unless in a company, is, I conceive, an act of cruelty.¹⁰

There were public calls to have the islanders work in tribal groups so that family members and friends were not separated, often for years, by the planters. Newspaper columnists called for fairer treatment and gave vent to the fact that many of the islanders whose time had expired were actually being retained by the planters. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported in December 1867:

There is an unpleasant suspicion abroad that many (islanders) are to be found in various places within the colony, whose term of service has long since expired, whilst their prospects of ever seeing their native shores again have become altogether remote and uncertain ... it is essential that a complete and unrestrained confidence is speedily established between us and the source of supply. Punctuality on the part of the colonists in despatching the islanders to their homes on the expiry of their term of service is of ... importance ... it seems desirable that a regular transport service under government control, and subsidised by fixed contributions from the employers ... should be organised with the least possible delay. Legally binding forms of contract and the appointment of competent interpreters at the several ports of entry, would be other necessary features in a scheme of this kind.¹¹

Ships' captains and owners normally employed on legitimate sea routes with cargoes of spices, sandalwood and copra, concluded that governmental inaction was a tacit sign of agreement with the trade, and so joined the recruiting industry for its promise of huge profits. Yet their vessels were often ill-equipped for such a trade, having little accommodation and the wrong types of food for the islanders. As a result of poor feeding and being unused to travelling by sea, the islanders were often seasick, they would not eat and developed dysentery, which, under the cramped conditions of the ships' holds, often resulted in significant numbers of deaths during voyages. Many of the ships employed in the labour business had come from the tea trade, they were fast vessels and relatively easy to handle at sea with only a small number of crew members. One early resident to Maryborough later recalled: 'Those schooners were *Stormbird*, *Young Dick*, *Alfred Vittery*, *Roderick Dhu*, *Ariel*, *Sybil*, *Rio Loge* (also reported as *Rio Logue*) and many others. Some of them were very fast, being tea clippers, and captains and owners who wanted a new boat always tried to get one of these tea clippers.'¹²

Death rates during the voyages varied greatly, but on some ships the rate was particularly high, the islanders suffering from dysentery or other contagious illnesses. These deaths, combined with the rumours of brutal recruiting methods, eventually brought enough public pressure on Governor Bowen to impose restrictions on the trade, and on 4 March, 1868, the Polynesian Labourers' Act was passed. The act, to regulate and control the introduction and treatment of Polynesian labourers, laid down a number of regulations. One of these was that a government agent be sent with each ship to ensure that all the regulations referred to in the act were being upheld. Shortly afterwards a commission was formed to investigate the workings of the act, yet this commission itself endorsed official sanction of the immigration policy. Six of its seven members were known to favour islander labour, and several were themselves employers of South Sea Islanders.

One of the more controversial vessels working on the South Sea Islander trade was the *Jason*, under Captain William Coath.

The *Jason* was owned by a consortium of Maryborough planters, including John Eaton, the Ramsay brothers, Tooth and Cran, the Maryborough Sugar Company and Robert Travis. The ship, which had just been overhauled, sailed from Maryborough in 1870. Three months later it returned with ninety-six recruits, all of whom were allotted to labouring positions among the ship's owners. Yet it was later alleged that once on the high seas Coath became a law unto himself. The allegations levelled against Coath included the rumour that he would use any kind of trickery to get labourers aboard his vessel. In December 1870 the *Jason* sailed on another recruiting mission, however, when she finally returned to Maryborough one of the ship's seamen turned on Coath in the street and began publicly berating the skipper for the way he had abused the recruits.



Solomon Islanders. Source - John Oxley Library print number 60312.

In March 1871, a *Jason* crew member named James Harper (also recorded as Harpur) reported to the Brisbane Immigration Office in the company of William Brookes, a fervent island labour abolitionist. The two men produced a statement written by Harper which claimed that in February 1871 Coath had been guilty of two distinct acts of kidnapping, the first concerned the abduction of two men at the island of Tanna (Tana), and the second of several islanders from a canoe near the island of Api (Epi). Harper was informed that he should embody his statement before a police magistrate as the first step to legal proceedings against Coath, but Harper took his time in doing so which allowed Coath to carry on with his recruiting practices.¹³

One of Coath's alleged tricks was to have a member of his crew dress as a missionary and invite the islanders aboard for talks. On one occasion a canoe, loaded with islanders, came alongside his ship. However, the islanders refused to come aboard and would not take hold of a rope sent down to them. Coath allegedly ordered one of his men to jump into the canoe, and with a loaded and fully cocked revolver to their heads, the islanders were reportedly forced aboard the *Jason* and batted into the hold.

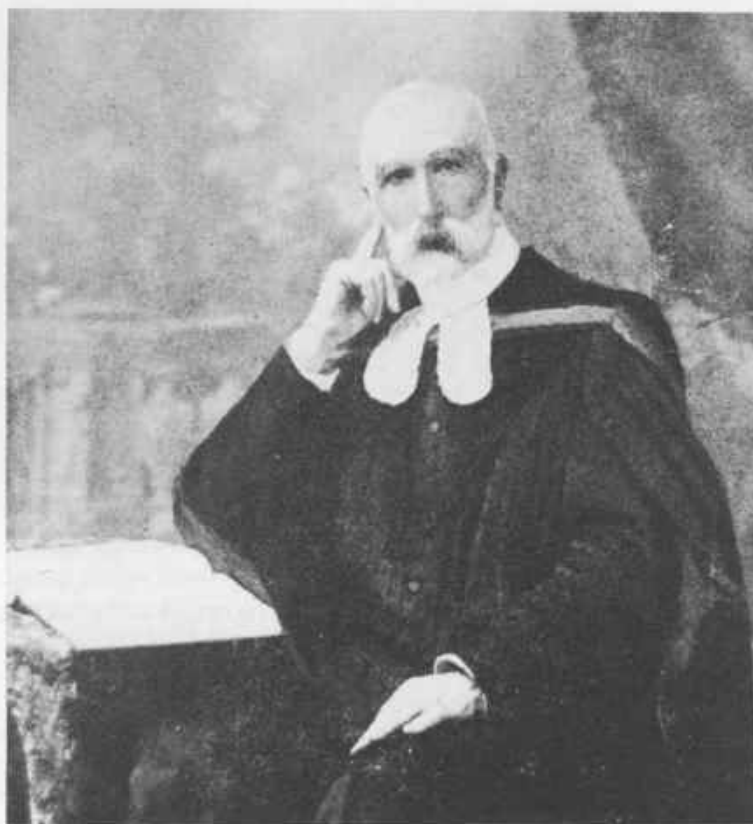
Under the terms of the new legislation such practices were not supposed to occur, the recruiting methods being strictly monitored by the ship's government agent. This agent was then to report to the immigration department at the end of each voyage. The *Jason* found itself with an agent named John Meiklejohn, a fifty-four years' old Maryborough sugar planter who was himself extremely concerned about the methods then in use to recruit labourers.

Shortly after the ship left Maryborough, Meiklejohn discovered that the rations carried aboard the *Jason* for the islanders were both inadequate and of an inferior quality. Some of the stores which were a requirement of government regulations were completely missing. Meiklejohn protested ardently, however, according to Meiklejohn's statement, Coath and the remainder of the crew exerted the power of their brutality to cower him.

Meiklejohn did his best to assert his authority, threatening Coath with the loss of his recruiting licence and heavy fines if he did not abide by the regulations. Coath, allegedly, ignored these threats, and when the *Jason* overtook two islander canoes and the crews were reportedly kidnapped, the potentially dangerous situation came to a head.

Meiklejohn protested with all the determination and force he could muster, at which Coath is said to have lost his temper and drawn a revolver, threatening to shoot the agent if he continued to interfere. A violent row followed and Meiklejohn soon found himself chained in the hold with the kidnapped islanders he had wished to protect. He remained in the hold for the rest of the voyage.

Three weeks later the *Jason* arrived in Maryborough with its cargo of islanders and the almost completely deranged government agent. Seeing Meiklejohn's naked form in the hold, the Reverend J.I. Knipe thought that Meiklejohn had died during the voyage. Coath later strongly defended his actions to the authorities, claiming that Meiklejohn had had to be chained for his own safety.



Reverend J.I. Knipe, D.D., son-in-law of John Meiklejohn. It was Knipe who discovered Meiklejohn chained in the hold.

Source - Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

Meiklejohn's own report of the events is illuminating, but the question must be asked, was it accurate? In September the following year he wrote to the colonial secretary stating:

Sir, I desire very respectfully to explain the delay in sending in the report I have now the honour to present as Government Agent on board the *Jason* on her voyage from Maryborough to the South Sea Islands and back in April, May, June and July last. (1871).

When the *Jason* returned to Maryborough on the 13th July, I was in an extremely feeble state and totally unable to attend to business, having been confined in the ship's hold among the islanders, handcuffed and chained to a ring-bolt for more than three weeks without bedding. This treatment I received by orders of the captain who said I was insane and dangerous. I was delirious for some time, but I attribute my being so to the captain having drugged me in a glass of wine on the 12th of June.

I was carried ashore to the residence of my son-in-law (Reverend J.I. Knipe) on the 18th July. The day after, Mr Cran, one of the owners of the *Jason*, called on me, and I told him I was not at all satisfied with the way the islanders had been procured.

On the 18th of July I saw Mr Faircloth, the Police Magistrate of Maryborough, and told him that I had been intimidated in the performance of my duties aboard the *Jason*, the captain having held

a loaded revolver to my head and threatened to shoot me ... To my great surprise, on the 20th July, two days after, Mr (W.H.) Walsh, (minister for works) at the request of the owners of the *Jason*, issued instructions in the name of the Queensland government ... to hold an inquiry into the voyage of the *Jason*. It was entered into the following Monday, the 24th July, when it must have been known I was too ill to attend.

I may be permitted here to state my belief that this inquiry was obtained and hurried on by the owners of the *Jason* in order to bring into discredit any statement I might afterwards make.

At the first sitting of the board my solicitor asked for an adjournment in order to enable me to be present ... the board declined to adjourn, and proceeded to receive statements tending mainly to injure me, and touching in only a general or cursory manner the reasons why I was on board at all. Amongst others, the statements of two islanders who had been useful on board, and been on better rations than the other islanders (who) were interpreted to the board by the mate, and were received as evidence that everything done during the voyage was lawful.

Although scarcely able to walk without assistance, I was present in the magistrate's room and met the board on the 25th July and requested an adjournment for a week, undertaking to hand them a written statement with dates and particulars. I stated that I was much too weak to give evidence that day, and that I thought it unfair to receive evidence not on oath, and that I had serious charges to prefer against the captain of the *Jason*. The board told me there was no case before them ... and that the board would excuse my attendance and that I might go home. On the 9th July I received a notice to attend on that day. At that date the *Jason* had sailed from Maryborough to Sydney with the captain, mate and all the crew who had given evidence to the board. Under these circumstances I thought I paid the board the respect it was entitled to when I replied ... that I would attend neither on that day nor at any other time...

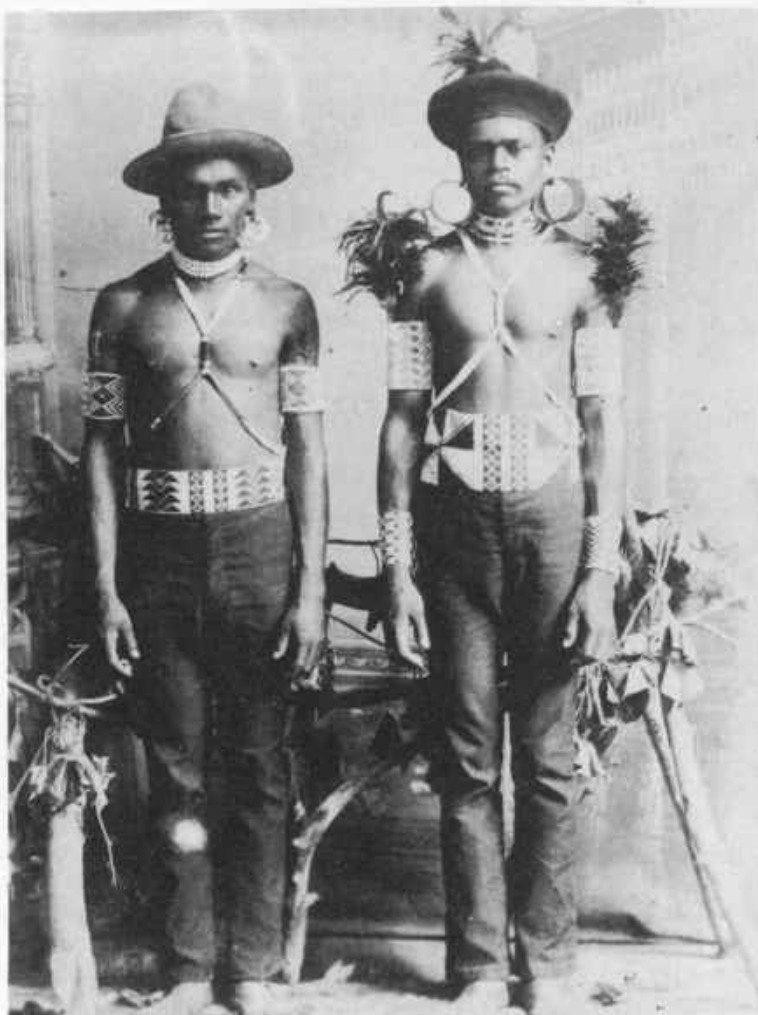
I found when I joined the ship that she was licensed to carry one hundred islanders, a number, in my opinion, much too large, as part of the space which ought to have been allotted to them was obliged to be used for stowage of sails and stores ... no tea or sugar was supplied to the islanders returning to the islands, nor to the islanders brought to Maryborough. I saw none supplied up to the time of my confinement in the ship's hold, and if any had been supplied while I was there, I must have known it, as I was chained near the door of the place where the provisions were kept ... the shirts provided were of cotton, and not of flannel or wool as required by the Act. The blankets supplied were of thin poor quality. The islanders were kept naked until within two days sail of Fairways buoy, Hervey's Bay, and they suffered much from cold as it was winter. I believe that nearly every one of them had a cold or cough when they landed, and this want of suitable warm clothing was in some degree connected with the great mortality amongst the islanders since their arrival. Out of twenty-four taken by the Maryborough Sugar Company, seven died within seven weeks.

With reference to the duties devolved upon me as Government Agent, I found, a few days after sailing, that I was regarded and treated as a spy, and that any remarks I made about the way the islanders were obtained or treated afterwards were met with sneers ... On the 7th June, when off Ambrym (Ambrim, New Hebrides), the captain came into the cabin and said we were in luck, as two canoes were coming off with men for us. One of these canoes took fright and made off. The two ship's boats went after the other canoe. The mate went in one of the boats. The mast of the canoe was struck down and I saw a shot fired at the canoe from the boat the mate was in. The *Jason* also bore down upon the canoe. The canoe was hauled alongside the vessel, and a ship's boat was on each quarter of the canoe. Nine islanders and a boy six or seven years' old were forced on board the *Jason*, the last islander being hoisted up by a rope passed under his arms. On seeing this plain kidnapping, I told the captain that these men did not wish to come with us. He was, at the time, in the canoe, stealing the pigs in her and handing up arrows. He shouted out from the canoe to me in an insolent manner - 'When you open your mouth, speak so as to be understood.' He came on deck very soon afterwards and approached where Mr Hawthorne and I were standing, said to me - 'How do you like it?' I replied not at all and I went into the cabin. He immediately followed with a loaded revolver in his hand, called me a scoundrel and threatened to shoot me through the head. I cautioned him and he ordered me on deck saying that the cabin was no place for me. He followed me with the revolver still in his hand, and I called Mr Hawthorne to witness that I was chased out of the cabin with a loaded pistol. The captain then threw the pistol violently down and wanted to fight me. He said he did not know me as Government Agent and taunted me with not drinking ... While this was going on I think the canoe escaped with some ten

or twelve islanders in her. After this I was shading myself from the sun under the sail forward when the captain ordered me to come aft saying that I had no right to be amongst the islanders, and he kept me in the sun for some five or six hours which gave me a violent headache for the whole next day ... These occurrences showed me most clearly that I was powerless to prevent any ill-doings, and that even my own personal safety depended upon my being extremely cautious in what I said or did.

On the 12th June, the captain asked me in the afternoon to take some wine with him to show I bore him no animosity. I told him I would do so, but that I would still do my duty and that he must not be deceived. He said 'If I thought you would report me you would never see Maryborough, as it would be very easy to put you out of the way' ... I had taken about a wineglass full of wine out of a tumbler, standing at the time in the cabin front of the captain's berth. I do not recollect leaving the place where I was standing. I seem to recollect being seized and dragged on deck. The next thing I remember was finding myself in the ship's hold amongst the islanders, handcuffed and chained. I suffered greatly from want of water. Several times afterwards the captain wanted me to take more wine and tried to force me to drink it. On these occasions the captain was generally accompanied by a sailor named George Parsfield ... From the 12th June when I was drugged, I was totally unable to note carefully what took place on board, and was often quite unconscious of what I said or did ... What I have witnessed of the Queensland Polynesian trade has convinced me that it is abominably and incurably immoral.¹⁴

As soon as his health returned Meiklejohn resigned as a government agent, and even went one step further by resigning as a magistrate. The information he had supplied, plus the testimony of James Harper and two other *Jason* sailors, was sufficient for charges to be laid against Coath - not for those kidnappings alleged to have taken place during Meiklejohn's voyage, but for the kidnappings which were alleged by James Harper to have taken place during the previous voyage. The case concerned the kidnapping of the canoe filled with islanders at Api (Epi) in February 1871.¹⁵



South Sea Island recruits. Source - John Oxley Library print number 13355.



South Sea Islanders. Source - John Oxley Library print number 18051.

Coath was tried in Brisbane and sentenced on 2 December, 1871, to five years in Brisbane gaol. He was also fined £50.¹⁶

What really occurred on board the *Jason* during these two voyages is now almost impossible to discover. Was Coath trading legally? Was Meiklejohn suffering from some kind of mental breakdown? By 1873, the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* certainly believed, as did many of the local planters and businessmen, that there had been a gross miscarriage of justice. In May that year the *Chronicle* reported: 'Ever since the condemnation of that unfortunate, and we believe, deeply wronged man (Coath), who, there is reason to believe, was merely the scape-goat of political antipathies, intercession was actively made on his behalf with the government by a few who ... still persist that he was innocent of the charges laid against him.'¹⁷

The 'intercession' was, in fact, a petition signed by a large number of Maryborough and district residents. These included seventeen justices of the peace, two clergymen, three lawyers, seven sugar planters, three bank managers, forty-five 'gentlemen', forty-four merchants, seventeen farmers, one hundred and thirty seamen and ships' captains, and thirty-eight labourers, all of whom had personally known Coath for some considerable time and who believed that he was incapable of committing the crimes for which he had been convicted. Clearly, Coath had some powerful backing in Maryborough.¹⁸

The petition was presented to the governor of Queensland, George Augustus Constantine, the Marquis of Normanby, who ordered that an official enquiry should immediately take place. He appointed Mr A.W. Manning, the inspector of public institutions, to conduct investigations at Maryborough. Manning travelled to Maryborough on 21 January, 1873, the very day he received the governor's instructions.¹⁹

Manning interviewed a number of islanders on various plantations and all of them agreed that Coath had not been kidnapping. As this investigation took place approximately two years after the event, most of the islanders in question could, by that time, speak some English, and according to Manning's reports, they all claimed that there had been no illegal recruiting.²⁰

However, Manning's enquiries had not been thorough enough and Attorney-General John Bramston was not convinced of Coath's innocence. In a later report dated 4 March, 1873, to the colonial secretary, Bramston accurately pointed out that the islanders interviewed by Manning were only those who had come voluntarily to Maryborough aboard the *Jason*, and were not the islanders who, Meiklejohn had claimed, were kidnapped. Bramston ended his report by stating that it would not be safe for Coath to be released upon the evidence provided by Manning.²¹ The Colonial Secretary's Office acknowledged the correctness of Bramston's comments and ordered that Coath be kept in custody. The petitioners at Maryborough were soon afterwards advised of this decision.

John Coath himself then entered his own plea to the governor, claiming that he had been badly wronged at the trial and asked that a review of the entire affair take place. Finally, the governor ordered a full enquiry.

At the enquiry, which took place in Maryborough on Tuesday 6 May, 1873, one islander named Maminie, (also known as Naminie and Namul) stated that he had not been coerced into boarding the *Jason*, that he had done so of his own free will and that he liked Captain Coath, claiming that Coath had been very kind to all the islanders on board and that he had provided them with plenty of food. Maminie, who worked for Robert Cran, said that he had been in Maryborough for two years and was looking forward to returning home. He added, however, that should he ever return to Maryborough, he would like to do so with Captain Coath.²²

Another islander named Namut, working for Robert Cran at Yengarie, gave similar evidence, stating that he had come willingly on board the *Jason* but that it had been a hot day and he had decided to go for a swim. One of the crew had thought he was deserting and had sent a boat after him, but it had all been an innocent mistake, he had returned willingly on board and had suffered no punishment for leaving the ship.²³

The chief mate of the *Jason*, John Celestin Irving, testified that during a previous voyage, two of the crew, James Harper and Thomas Betts, had planned to charge Coath with kidnapping so that they could claim a reward for such information. They had attacked another man, Malcolm McGuinness, who later died in Sydney hospital, allegedly as a result of injuries received during the attack. Before his death McGuinness had told Irving that the attack had been caused because he had overheard a conversation between Harper and Betts which included details of their plan to discredit Coath and have him charged with kidnapping. Irving's testimony was backed by the declaration of another crew member, George Parsfield, who testified that he too had spoken to McGuinness on board the ship, and that his story had been substantially the same. Clearly a conspiracy had been formed on board the *Jason* by at least two crew members during its previous voyage, and Meiklejohn's statements after the next voyage added weight to this conspiracy.²⁴

Some unsuccessful efforts were made during the enquiry in an attempt to discredit the evidence of the islander witnesses, and to show that Maminie and another islander who could not testify because he could not speak English, were, in fact, not the men brought to Maryborough aboard the *Jason*. Yet further evidence from other witnesses seemed to prove that Maminie was speaking the truth. On 12 May, 1873, another islander who had allegedly come to Maryborough aboard the *Jason*, stated that he had been to Maryborough on one other occasion and had returned to the islands aboard the schooner *Mary Campbell*. He had only been home for five days when he had volunteered to board the *Jason* for a second contract. Speaking reasonably good English, he clearly stated that there had been no improprieties aboard the *Jason* and that Coath had acted with the utmost honesty. Another recruit named Kilikobie (also reported as Killicowie and Killicobie) claimed through a fourteen years' old islander interpreter that he too had come willingly aboard the *Jason*, that he had taken a canoe of yams, coconuts and plantains to the *Jason*, and that he had sold these to Captain Coath. The exchange articles, calico, beads and tomahawks, had been sent ashore to his family before he was recruited. Kilikobie added that he had been recruited with eight other men, two of whom had since died. Seven other islanders also called for the enquiry gave similar statements - all exonerating Coath.²⁵

The results of the enquiry were so positive that the attorney-general, John Bramston, travelled to Maryborough in August that year (1873) and interrogated a number of the islanders who had given evidence. Bramston was very careful in the methods he used during these investigations, but despite his earlier reservations he could only come to the conclusion that Coath had been erroneously convicted. In a report dated 1 September, 1873, from the Crown Law Offices in Brisbane to the Queensland governor, Bramston recommended that Coath be released.²⁶

In September 1873 Coath was pardoned and freed. He died just six months later from a poisoned arrow wound while recruiting at Espiritu Santo in the Northern New Hebrides - circumstantial evidence perhaps that he was not as well liked on the islands as many in Maryborough would have believed.

John Meiklejohn - who had previously suffered from what was later described as 'fits of insanity' - was eventually incarcerated at the Gladesville Insane Asylum after burning down his own house in order to punish his children who had offended him.

Details of the incident were publicized during the magisterial enquiry which took place at Maryborough in December 1871. According to Meiklejohn's children, Meiklejohn had wanted to use a gun to kill a valuable kangaroo dog which belonged to one of his sons. Family members refused to let Meiklejohn have the weapon, and to punish them for their disobedience he ordered them all from the house - a residence called St Mungo in east Maryborough which was situated approximately one hundred and fifty yards from the Wilson, Hart and Bartholomew sawmill. The date was 18 December, 1871. For the following two days John Meiklejohn remained

alone in the house, family members, including James Speer Meiklejohn, John Meiklejohn junior and his married sister, Margaret Wilmott, having taken up residence in the separate kitchen at the rear of the house. During the following two days Meiklejohn became more belligerent and abusive. He dismissed the family's servant and told his children that if the gun was not returned to him he would burn down the house, thus leaving them homeless. At seven o'clock on the evening of the 19th, Margaret went into the house and offered to light a lamp for her father, but Meiklejohn told her that he, '...wanted no conversation with her.'²⁷ During the early hours of the morning of the 20th Margaret was awakened by a loud noise, she went outside, saw flames in the house and rushed to awaken the other members of the family. John Meiklejohn junior later testified:

I was sleeping with my brother James; both of us got up, and went over to the house; my brother was first; I followed him; I saw my mother's bedroom was on fire at the north end of the house; as I went into the house, my father, who was lying at the dining-room door, got up with a stick in his hand and in a threatening attitude; I avoided him and he followed me, but said nothing; he had his shirt and trousers on; I ran to the front of the house; my father remained at the end of the house near the tank; as the house was burning fiercely and rapidly, I assisted my brother to save what furniture we could; we got some out but it was nearly destroyed by the grass catching fire; the fire reached the kitchen, where we had all been sleeping, which, with the house and all the furniture therein, was completely burnt down; I saw my father standing about 30 or 40 yards away from the house, looking at the burning fire, without attempting to assist or to save anything; I have heard my father say since the fire that, '...he had done it for disobedience in his family,' the property was my father's own, and I believe uninsured; the property stood by itself in an enclosed paddock, some distance from any other property; I am quite satisfied that the fire was caused by my father's own hand, and by no other person.²⁸

Whether or not there had been a miscarriage of justice in the imprisonment of Captain Coath is difficult to determine. In February 1874, Alfred Davidson, who claimed to be associated with the Aborigines' Protection League of London, and who involved himself with the welfare of the islanders, wrote to the *Brisbane Courier* to state that the islanders who had given evidence during the enquiry which had ultimately led to Coath's release, had all been employed by men who were friends of Coath, and that these witnesses had perjured themselves after being threatened by their employers. Davidson claimed that his research had led him to understand that many of these witnesses had actually been kidnapped, and that after their disappearance from the islands, their wives and families had not known what had become of them for many years. Davidson also pointed out that when these witnesses had given their evidence, they had not been subjected to any cross-examination. He added: 'It now appears that a canoe and its crew can be captured, and its capturer can be released from gaol. What now is to deter men from committing similar acts, what redress has the defenceless islander?'²⁹

However, in his detailed report of the events which included the recommendation for Coath's release, Attorney-General John Bramston had given details of a statement made by Doctor Manning, the superintendent of the asylum where Meiklejohn had been incarcerated. Manning had stated that Meiklejohn had been suffering from an attack of acute mania when on board the *Jason*, and that he had not been of sound mind when he gave evidence for the trial. Manning added:

I have learned that Meiklejohn has been subject to attacks of mental excitement for three years, the original cause being sunstroke. He now has an attack of violent and dangerous mania about once in three months, and in the intervals he is calm, plausible and reasoning, displays considerable powers of memory and intellect, but is cunningly suspicious, prone to make the most malignant accusations against everyone about him with an air of the utmost truthfulness, to twist and torture the simplest fact so as to make charges against those to whom he has taken a dislike, and to invent the most malicious but plausible stories. I have a very imperfect memory of the *Jason* case, but I have a remembrance of some parts of this man's evidence, and reading them by the light of my knowledge of him, and his peculiarities, I regard them as utterly untrustworthy.³⁰

Meiklejohn's unhappy and troubled life lasted for only a further six years after this report, he died at the asylum in 1879.

In 1872 the *Jason* was again involved in a somewhat infamous affair when she returned from the islands carrying labourers who, during the voyage, had suffered a prolonged and fatal outbreak of dysentery. Indeed, so terrible had the voyage been that a magisterial enquiry was held at Maryborough soon after its arrival in October that year. After anchoring at Woody Island on 14 October, the ship's agents, R. Travis and Co., went down river with fresh supplies of meat and vegetables for the labourers. However, when it was discovered that such a terrible outbreak of dysentery had taken place, it was immediately decided to quarantine the ship until the problem could be solved. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

All communication having been temporarily suspended between this vessel and the shore, we have been unable to obtain any particulars of her voyage. Dysentery has been raging on board to a fearful extent, and we believe that 18 of the Polynesians she brings have died from this cause. No medical report has yet been received by the agents, but as the *Jason* is expected up at the wharf today, we shall, no doubt, learn all about the sad fatality that seems to have attended her present trip.³¹

During the subsequent magisterial enquiry, the master of the vessel, Captain James Taylor stated:

I left Maryborough on the 13th July last and cleared Hervey's Bay on the 21st; I am duly licensed to recruit islanders, and had the government agent, Mr James Stewart, on board, and 40 islanders as passengers returning to their native islands; I landed the passengers in good health at their respective destinations; after recruiting at the islands and having obtained 96 islanders, I left the Sandwich Islands on 30th September for Maryborough, arriving on the 13th October, with 86 Polynesians, ten having died during the passage; on 15th October 3 islanders died whilst at anchor in Hervey's Bay, another 1 died on the 14th October; on the 16th October, Tano, a native of the island of Mariaba ... died; deceased had been very ill and unable to assist himself for sixteen days previously from a severe attack of dysentery; I had him attended to, and prescribed for him as described in my medical book; administered opium, brandy, compound chalk powder, Dover's powder, castor oil, and pain killer, all of which were administered at different times as directed; I stopped all meat and vegetables, also water, and made rice, barley water, weak tea, sago, arrowroot, cornflour and beef tea. Deceased was carefully and properly attended to; he rallied occasionally, but was always very weak, and at last became so much worse that he could not sit up and became perfectly helpless. Deceased died about half-past five o'clock on the morning of the 16th. I am quite certain that every care and assistance was rendered to deceased, and everything done for him that could be done. On Thursday, the 17th, the health officer, accompanied by the medical officer, boarded the ship; I explained to the doctor what I had done for deceased and he answered that I had done perfectly right, and 'could not have done more,' or words to that effect. He made no complaint of my proceedings, all the islanders who died during the passage from the islands to Hervey's Bay were effected in the same way, and the cause of so many deaths was dysentery. We experienced severe weather in the early part of September - wet and stormy, succeeded by calms and warm, sultry weather.³²

John James Stewart, the government agent aboard the *Jason* also testified at the enquiry, and his testimony fully corroborated that of Captain Taylor. He added:

I am quite satisfied that everything that possibly could be done for deceased was cheerfully performed by the captain, cook, and all connected with the ship; I myself being present in nearly every case, I positively state that no person could be more carefully and attentively looked after; indeed, in every case of sickness from the first appearance every attention and comfort was afforded.³³

After such a disastrous voyage the ship must have been considerably soiled. Evidence of this came a few days later when the *Chronicle* reported that it was receiving, '...a thorough overhaul and cleaning preparatory to proceeding to the New Hebrides with return labourers.'³⁴

The *Jason* continued to sail to the islands searching for recruits, until she was finally destroyed by fire in June 1875. Captain J.C. McConnell was master of the vessel at the time of the fire, and the ship had recently returned to Maryborough after a successful recruiting run to the islands. Shortly after paying off the crew on shore, the captain returned aboard the vessel, the time was approximately 10 p.m. On board was a young man who was in charge of a number of islanders who had been sick during the voyage and who had not yet landed. At about 2 a.m., one of these islanders, a man named Mia, raised the alarm as smoke poured from a storeroom. McConnell ordered buckets of water to be hauled up which he then threw into the storeroom. Yet McConnell does not seem to have spent much time in attempting to extinguish the flames. He ordered everyone on deck, and shortly afterwards was seen leaving the ship in a row-boat. The fact that the storeroom contained twenty-five pounds of gunpowder in half pound tins, one tin of kerosene, and several other kinds of oils, may have had something to do with his decision to quickly abandon the ship. The islanders also left the ship soon afterwards. One man who certainly displayed some initiative and courage was the mate of another schooner, the *Native Lass*, which was moored close by. Fearing that the *Jason* would drift onto the wharf or onto other shipping, the mate boarded her and decided that she would have to be scuttled. Seeing McConnell in the row-boat he called to him for permission to scuttle the ship.

'You must do it on your own authority,' McConnell was reported to have shouted back.³⁵

McConnell's fears were partially justified, the gunpowder did explode, but among the furious conflagration which the ship had then become, the explosion was almost negligible. As news of the blaze spread around the town many people came to the river to see the ship's last hours, and there was a sizeable crowd on the river banks to watch as the ship disintegrated and the masts fell. At 6 a.m. the ship was still burning and she was towed by the steamer *Effie* up to Bryden's Flat and left close to the river bank. When the roll was called that morning it was discovered that one of the islanders was missing, but whether he was killed during the fire or had drowned was never established.³⁶

At the subsequent magisterial enquiry, R.B. Sheridan recorded that islanders smoking between decks was the probable cause of the blaze.³⁷ During the ship's final voyage two of the islanders had died of dysentery. Their bodies had been sewn into canvas shrouds and placed overboard as the ship had tacked up the Mary River. The bodies floated into the town reach on the following tide.

Sources and Notes for Chapter Eighteen.

1. M/C. 7 December, 1872.
2. M/C. 8 January, 1868. QVP 397 1863.
3. M/C. 27 September, 1958, p 2.
4. M/C. 26 November, 1868.
5. M/C. *ibid*.
6. M/C. *ibid*.
7. M/C. 29 December, 1868.
8. M/C. 24 December, 1868.
9. M/C. 4 January, 1868.
10. M/C. *ibid*. The *Mary Smith* schooner was owned at this time by a variety of Maryborough businessmen and sugar planters, including John Meiklejohn, J. Welsh and H. Palmer. She went missing during a voyage between Hobart and Invercargill, New Zealand in April 1874.
11. M/C. 4 December, 1867.
12. M/C. 15 March, 1941, p 8.
13. Queensland Votes and Proceedings (QVP) 1873, Vol. 2, p 425.
14. M/C. 28 September, 1871.
15. QVP 1873, Vol. 2, p 426.
16. *Ibid*. p 415.
17. M/C. 1 May, 1873.
18. QVP 1873, Vol. 2, p 415.
19. *Ibid*. p 417.
20. M/C. 1 May, 1873, and QVP 1873, Vol. 2, p 417.
21. QVP 1873, Vol. 2, p 419.
22. QVP 1873, Vol. 2, pp 420-421 and M/C. 8 May, 1873
23. QVP 1873, Vol. 2, p 421.
24. *Ibid*. pp 422-423.
25. M/C. 13 May, 1873.
26. QVP 1873, Vol. 2, pp 423-424.
27. M/C. 30 December, 1871, p 2.
28. M/C. *ibid*.
29. M/C. 10 February, 1874.
30. QVP 1873, Vol. 2, p 426.
31. M/C. 17 October, 1872.
32. M/C. 22 October, 1872.
33. M/C. *ibid*.
34. M/C. 24 October, 1872.
35. M/C. 15 June, 1875.
36. M/C. 20 June, 1925, p 8.
37. M/C. 15 June, 1875.

Chapter Nineteen.

Difficulties, Atrocities and Misunderstandings.

Some of the South Sea Islanders, captive in the ships' holds, could do little to resist their incarceration or kidnapping during the voyages, but they sometimes displayed a high degree of violence once landed in Queensland. On Wednesday 7 March, 1871, the steamer *Queensland* left Brisbane for Maryborough carrying six islanders who had recently been landed aboard the labour schooner *Spunkie*. One of these islanders was desperate not to be taken to Maryborough, and as the ship was crossing Moreton Bay - between the bar and Moreton Island - he suddenly jumped overboard. The alarm was quickly given but by the time the steamer turned and found the man, he had been in the water for over an hour. He was hauled aboard but as he did not seem to have suffered from his ordeal he was left to rejoin his fellow islanders on deck. At 10 o'clock the same morning the alarm was again given and it was discovered that the same islander had once more jumped overboard. He was again located in the water but as he refused to come aboard the steamer a bow line was thrown over his shoulders and he was hauled on deck. The following day one of the crew prevented him from again throwing himself into the water, and the captain of the ship ordered that he be confined to a small cabin on deck. However, the islander found some wool hooks in the cabin and he began to violently destroy the walls and ceiling. The ship's watch was called aft and the islander was secured. This time the captain ordered that he be tied with rope, there being no handcuffs on board. Yet the islander broke the bonds, took a hand-spike from the ship's rail, and attempted to attack one of the ship's crew. He was again restrained and chained until the ship arrived in Maryborough. He was later incarcerated in the police lock-up until taken to John Eaton's plantation.¹



South Sea Islanders clearing land. Source - John Oxley Library print number 60914.

In 1872, the Pacific Islanders Protection Act was passed. The office of the colonial secretary stated at the time: 'Enough is known of the state of terror and demoralisation which is growing up in those islands to justify more vigorous measures than any yet adopted.' The act made specific provisions for the protection of the islanders, yet it did little to curb the atrocities.

By now fifty-six mills in Queensland were producing more than 6000 tons of sugar and 734,000 litres of rum a year, and sugar was being exported to other colonies. The labour shortage remained acute and without islanders the entire industry would have collapsed.

Even as early as 1861, the diseases brought to the islands by white men were killing the islanders in large numbers. In May that year Reverend John G. Paton, a missionary based at Tanna (Tana), wrote a letter to his friend in Sydney describing the high mortality caused by measles. Paton stated that for five months measles had spread rapidly throughout the island and resulted in possibly thousands of deaths. In some districts Paton claimed that the mortality rate was so high that the dead were simply dragged from the villages and left to decompose in the jungle without burial. Others were sealed in the huts and left to rot where they had died. The islanders knew well where the diseases had come from and the white men were hated as a result. Copra dealers, labour recruiters and missionaries were alike attacked and often killed.²

In view of this, it was not surprising that the type of men this slave labour system was drawing were tough and un-caring. Brutality followed brutality as the trade flourished. Royal Naval ships were dispatched to patrol the seas around the islands, but the affects of their presence were limited.

One of the schooners which was to have a colourful and varied career in the island trade was the *Dancing Wave*. This ship had been built for Captain Thomas S. Brown³ at Auckland in 1864.

In August 1872 the 67 ton *Dancing Wave*, under the command of Captain Brown was at the Line Islands when a boat's crew was attacked and three of its occupants, Bartholomew Robinson, James Lustin and M. Hazlett were killed while on shore.⁴ This was not to be the last attack on a *Dancing Wave* crew.

Incidents occurring on the plantations sometimes had an affect on the reception of ships' crews when they arrived on the islands. If islanders were ill-treated or poorly paid, news of these events invariably travelled back to the islands when time-expired labourers returned to their homes. In April 1876 the *Dancing Wave* visited Gala, the ship was now under the command of Shetland-born Captain Harrison. The former ship's owner, Captain Thomas S. Brown, had sold the vessel to a Sydney company who had placed it under Harrison's command. This vessel was regularly seen in the port of Maryborough. Unfortunately for the crew of the ship, news of the ill-treatment of several islanders in Queensland had preceded their visit to Gala, and the reception which awaited the vessel was both swift and brutal.

No sooner had the ship dropped anchor when seventy or eighty islanders swam out to it and clambered aboard. They swarmed over the schooner, eagerly offering their services as labour recruits. Harrison should have been suspicious at this stage, as recruits were never so easily forthcoming.

The captain was in the act of counting the 'recruits', when suddenly, at a signal from their chief, the islanders produced a deadly array of knives, clubs and tomahawks, and fell upon the startled crew.

Captain Harrison was among the first to die, his head gashed open, he staggered to his cabin and fell to the floor. The mate, John Dare, and the steward - both badly wounded - managed to get to a cabin where they slammed and bolted the door. The islanders launched themselves furiously against the barricade in an attempt to break it down. In desperation, knowing they were trapped with only moments to live, the two men raised their pistols to their heads and shot themselves.

Those seamen caught on deck were instantly butchered. One sailor named William Broad, and an islander seaman named Harry, managed to hide as the Gala Islanders ransacked the ship taking everything of value, muskets, rum, beads, tools, food, gunpowder and shot - even the salt and pepper. The bodies of the captain and his crew were taken ashore, the heads to be shrunk, the trunks to be cooked in the vast clay ovens especially designed for such a purpose.

Harry and William Broad emerged from their places of hiding when all became quiet aboard the ship. Between them they managed to slip the anchor and raise enough sail to steer a course for Savo Island where they knew they would be safe. Unfortunately, luck was not on their side. A sudden squall blew up, and, unable to handle the ship alone, the two sailors were forced to abandon her, managing to get away in one of the *Dancing Wave's* boats.

The following morning the fury of the squall had abated leaving a mirror-smooth, plate-glass sea. Both Harry and William Broad were now in a desperate situation. In the distance they could still see the masts of the *Dancing Wave*, which, despite their fears, had managed to weather the storm. Even in its abandoned state the ship was still moving, drifting with the current, her sails hanging in tatters. The sailors knew they had little chance of ever catching up with her and resigned themselves to their fate.

However, later that day, the two men's hopes were raised when they saw the masts of another ship approaching over the horizon. As it came slowly closer the survivors waved their shirts in the air in order to attract attention.

The vessel, a barque named *Sydney* under the command of a Captain Woodhouse, finally turned towards the sailors. Harry and William Broad climbed aboard as the *Sydney* came alongside. After hearing an account of the duplicity and massacre, Woodhouse sent a boat after the abandoned *Dancing Wave*, but the sea soon afterwards became too rough and the boat's crew-members were forced to return to the *Sydney* without having accomplished their mission. Woodhouse then took the *Sydney* in pursuit of the *Dancing Wave* which he caught and boarded the following day. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported:

Having come up with the schooner, Captain Woodhouse, accompanied by twelve of his crew (mainly islanders) boarded the *Dancing Wave* and found that the vessel had been ransacked from stem to stern ... the decks and the cabin floor were all bespattered with blood and other human remains, and in the saloon, pickle and pepper bottles were found to have been emptied and their contents cast upon the floor, mixing themselves in heterogeneous masses with the blood etc. Near the mainmast the head of one of the native crew was found. As soon as Captain Woodhouse could make it convenient, he had the deck washed and removed, as far as possible, all signs of the fearful outrages that had been perpetrated on board her.⁵

Captain Hugh Rose, skipper of the *Dancing Wave* who died with his entire crew when the ship was wrecked in 1913. His wife, Elizabeth Ann Nash, (seated) was a niece of James Nash, the discoverer of gold at Gympie.

Source - Margaret Sutton.



The ship returned to Australia with a skeleton crew under the command of the *Sydney*'s chief-officer, Richard Davis. The *Dancing Wave*, under the command of Captain Hugh Rose, was finally lost during a voyage between Townsville and Cairns in January 1913. Sixty years later Captain Rose's grandson, Alan Rose built a fifty-three feet steel ketch at Maryborough, naming her, *Dancing Wave 2*.⁶

Sources and Notes for Chapter Nineteen.

1. M/C. 18 March, 1871.
2. MBC 28 May, 1861.
3. According to comments made in the *Maryborough Chronicle* on 7 February, 1913, by Captain John Mackay, the then portmaster of Queensland, Brown later took command of the *Sirrocco* and the *Bebring*, both of these vessels were also employed in the islander trade. Mackay was well qualified to make such comments, he had served on various ships as recruiter and later as captain, including the *Sybil* and the *Nautilus*. For details of Mackay's career see M/C. 12 May, 1931, p 7.
4. M/C. 31 October, 1872.
5. M/C. 15 July, 1876.
6. M/C. 13 June, 1973, p 11.

Chapter Twenty.

Islanders - The Controversial Problem.

During the 1870s huge advances were being made within the Queensland sugar industry, many of these advances were made economically viable because of the extremely low labour costs involved in the production of sugar cane. The islander labourers were a mixed society, dozens of different tribes from a wide diversity of islands, men, women and even children, drawn from entirely different societies and cultures. So how did these people fare once they had been landed in Maryborough? How were these bewildered workers accepted into the predominantly white Maryborough community?

Certainly, a furore over the use of imported labour had been growing steadily since its first introduction during the 1860s, and many people thought that the islanders were usurping the control of white workers, forcing them out of employment. Such an attitude naturally led to open hostility, and violence was often the result.

In 1875 the Queensland Working Men's Protection League was formed in Maryborough, its members calling for total opposition to islander labour. Their campaigns were vociferous and powerful. In January 1876, for example, they took a lengthy memorial to the minister for works, then staying briefly at the Customs House Hotel in Maryborough. The memorial, presented by Thomas Jemensen, the president of the league, stated that the importation of islanders was injurious to the continued prosperity of Queensland, that the labourers were not being obtained honestly according to law, that they were bringing diseases into the colony, that white workers could no longer earn a living in the colony, and that islanders should not be employed on government works such as railways.¹

Jemensen, however, was not well received by the press. In December 1875, the *Maryborough Chronicle*, quoting an article published in the *Rockhampton Bulletin* reported:

Does it not seem paradoxical that in a colony where enterprise is checked through want of labour, there should be men out of work and other men forming themselves into a Protection League? Yes, a Working Men's Protection League. A gentleman signing himself Thomas Jemenson (sic) on behalf of the Committee of the Working Men's Protection League at Maryborough, has written a very pathetic and very ungrammatical letter, entreating us to assist in promoting the objects of the league. Said objects appear to be comprised in the one desire, to suppress Polynesian immigration. Mr Thomas Jemenson is a person pretty well known in the central districts as a man who prefers agitation to work, and who is, moreover, afflicted with an itch for scribbling silly letters. Whether or not he is a fair representative of those comprising the Working Men's Protection League, we are unable to say, but one thing is quite clear - that if the work of Maryborough sawmills and sugar plantations depended upon such persons ... those industries would soon come to a standstill.²

Yet once in Queensland, the islanders found that they had to adjust to white man's ways, no longer could they roam the land free and naked, now they were restricted to certain areas, they had to wear white man's clothing, eat white man's food and live by the white man's laws. They were barred from alcoholic drinks but would often be found drunk in the centre of the town after having consumed a highly toxic brew of public house dregs which the publicans themselves sold as 'allsorts'.

White women generally considered the islanders to be socially unacceptable, and, as there was a drastic lack of imported islander women, the labourers turned instead to aboriginal women for their sexual requirements. This in turn created a rift between the indigenous aborigines and the islanders, and wild fights were often the result.

Upon their eventual repatriation back to their homelands, the islanders frequently complained of the treatment they had received at the hands of their masters. These complaints were mainly centred around the lack of food or its poor quality, but some stated that they had been beaten or even whipped for minor misdemeanours.

White man's diseases also killed the labourers at an alarming rate, influenza, T.B., dysentery, cholera, measles or pneumonia. Additionally there was a gross lack of sanitation and overcrowding in poorly constructed barracks. There was also a lack of medical attention which led to a death toll twice as high as the normal number of deaths among the aged white population. Yet the islanders were not aged, most of them were in their twenties or thirties - the prime of their lives.

Despite this, Maryborough was actually regarded by many of the islanders as the best place to go if they were recruited, better, they reasoned, than being taken as slaves to Fiji where a flourishing sugar industry had become established. To the South Sea Islanders the climate and people of the Maryborough district were vastly more acceptable. To some degree this was true. Many plantation owners treated their islanders with great kindness, and labourers fortunate enough to find themselves allocated to some of the more reputable plantations considered themselves to be extremely fortunate. They were given full rations of meat, potatoes or yams, tobacco and clothing, and at Christmas and other festive occasions, such as the plantation owner's birthday, huge feasts were served. Pigs were slaughtered and cooked in fire pits with large quantities of vegetables. There was singing and dancing until dawn, and then, irrespective of the night's entertainment, the work of cultivating the fields or cutting the cane would re-commence.

In January 1876, R.B. Sheridan, acting as the Polynesian inspector, sent a detailed report to the office of the colonial secretary stating that in his opinion all was certainly not well with the importation of islander labour. Sheridan claimed:

I am not quite satisfied that in all cases recruits are obtained of their own free will and accord, nor do I believe they in every instance understand the nature of their agreements. I am led to those conclusions by the facts, firstly, from the knowledge that the description of men sent as Government recruiting agents are ... too young, too inexperienced, or, I am sorry to say, too dissipated; hence readily become the tools or dupes of the masters and owners of the trading vessels, whose interest it is to fill up quickly, no matter how the cargo can be obtained. Secondly, because I have good reason to believe that in many instances the bargain for a certain or given number of recruits is made with some chief, who, to gratify his lust for luxuries of civilization, gives so many boys for so much trade, ie beads, tomahawks, old muskets, powder, tobacco and calico. Thirdly, because the result of my enquiries convinces me that before their arrival in Queensland, the Polynesians who have not been here before, do not understand the nature of the so-called agreement nominally signed by them at their native islands.³

Sheridan, who, through these caustic remarks, must have made himself extremely unpopular with plantation and ships' owners, went on to state that he was concerned that islanders were being used not only as field workers, as stipulated under the Polynesian Labourers' Act, but also as draymen, storemen, grooms, domestic servants and even nurses. He pointed out to the colonial secretary that in many instances islanders were being sent inland to work on sheep or cattle stations and that they were poorly clothed, unable to withstand the winter conditions - especially at places such as the Darling Downs - and that as a result many of them died of pulmonary illness. Sheridan continued:

I have very grave and serious misgivings as to the kind of treatment Polynesians ... receive from their employers. I am led to this conclusion by the fact that, even in the short period since my appointment, three complaints of ill-treatment have been made to me. In two of the instances alluded to, I am quite certain that ... Polynesians were whipped on different sugar plantations. I saw the marks of the blows cut through the skin in one instance ... There is not any regular system of medical treatment of the Polynesians on different plantations, nor is the cause of death, in every case, satisfactorily accounted for; whilst as to burial, I am led to believe that the interment of a South Sea Islander in no way differs from the burial of a dog or any other carrion. As I am informed, a hole or grave is made in the most convenient place, the body, as soon as possible after it has ceased to breathe, is rolled in the blanket in which it died, and put in the shallow resting place without further care or ceremony.⁴

Sheridan pointed out that for the previous quarter, of a population of six thousand whites, just fifty-nine white deaths had been recorded, whereas of a population of about eight hundred islanders, sixty-nine islander deaths had been recorded. He added that it should have been compulsory for employers to produce death certificates so that the causes of deaths could be verified. He stated that when islanders died no account was made of wages owing to them, wages which had often been owing for up to a year or more, and that the employers were in the habit of simply absorbing this money into their profits. Sheridan also voiced concerns over the indiscriminate provision of firearms and gunpowder to the islanders, stating that such recklessness would lead to added violence at the islands once the labourers returned home.⁵

In November 1876 a select committee was formed to investigate the labour traffic in the Maryborough region. The committee was specifically formed to look at the allegations made by Sheridan in his January report. The investigation was exhaustive and Sheridan was interrogated in great depth over his allegations. Members of the committee also questioned several of Maryborough's leading sugar planters, including William Canny who had leased Eatonvale from John Eaton three years previously. At the time of the investigation Canny was employing one hundred and twenty-three islanders on the plantation. Canny stated before the

committee that the islanders on his plantation were well cared for and in good health. He claimed that he fed all his workers - islanders and white men - exactly the same, with the exception that the islanders were given less beef because it upset their stomachs. In reply to a question regarding the great number of deaths experienced on the plantation during the previous year, Canny replied:

During the last twelve months we have had a great many, as last year there was an epidemic in the district, namely the measles, but previously to that we had not many deaths; we had more deaths from measles in two months than we had for two years previously; our percentage of deaths previous to September 1875 was very small, but when the measles broke out, it carried away a great many.⁶

Canny took the opportunity of defending the actions of Captain Coath of the labour vessel *Jason*, stating that one of the men Coath had brought to Maryborough, a man named Tommy Tasso, was then working at Eatonvale and had been for seven years. Canny added that according to Tasso, Coath was a good man, he and several other islanders had gone to the *Jason* in a canoe, had willingly volunteered for work and had allowed Coath to destroy the canoe because it was, '...no good, and that (Coath) could take it on board and burn it for firewood.'⁷ As unlikely as this may seem, Robert Cran, who was also investigated by the select committee, backed up such claims, stating that when Coath had visited Yengarie he had been very popular with the islanders and that: '...I have seen Captain Coath come to my plantation and the boys (islanders) go round him like chickens, they were very fond of him.'⁸

Cran, who was then employing three hundred and thirty-nine islanders at Yengarie, admitted, however, that he too restricted the meat ration because it seemed to cause dysentery among the labourers. He also admitted that when an islander died the money owed to that man was retained. The chairman of the committee asked:

'When an islander dies, what becomes of the arrears of money that is in the hands of the employer as far as you know, does the Curator of Intestate Estates receive it?'

Cran replied: 'No one has ever applied to me for it.'

The chairman then asked: 'Then if a man dies leaving money in your hands, that is profit?'

'I have never had much, the percentage is very small,' Cran answered.

'I am asking, what, in the event of a man's death, becomes of his money?' the chairman persisted.

'I retain it, it goes into a sinking fund,' Cran finally admitted.⁹

The committee's questioning of Richard Bingham Sheridan, is illuminating, for his replies give accurate and precise descriptions of what he believed was occurring on some of the region's sugar plantations at that time.

Questioned in connection to allegations he had made in his report concerning the punishment of islanders, and specifically the whippings, Sheridan stated: 'On each occasion not less than two or three boys came (to complain), once, seven or eight came together. One or two who could speak English told me of the whipping that occurred on that day, and asked me to pass my hand over the boy's back, and I found the corrugations of the whip there. This occurred on the Saturday night, and on the Monday I proceeded to the plantation and the whipping was not denied.'

The examiner then asked: 'Will you name the plantation?'

Sheridan: 'I will so if you wish.'

Examiner: 'Of course, will you name it?'

Sheridan: 'Nerada plantation.'

Examiner: '...What did you do when you found the whipping was not denied?'

Sheridan: 'I mustered all the Polynesians on the plantation in the presence of the employer, and I distinctly told them and made them understand that the punishment inflicted was exceedingly illegal and improper, and that if any such punishment occurred again they were to come to me instantly. This was in the presence of the employer, and I pointed out to him what his duty was should the Polynesians prove disobedient or refractory - namely that he was to report the matter to me and I should assist him seeing that they performed their duties satisfactorily.'

Examiner: 'What was the name of the employer?'

Sheridan: 'Permit me to say ... I give his name with reluctance.'

Examiner: 'We must have his name, what is his name?'

Sheridan: 'His name is Hugh Monckton.'

Examiner: 'And you made enquiries from the boys whether there were any other cases?'

Sheridan: 'I did, and they told me they had been frequently punished ... When I mustered the boys there were six absent, sick in their various huts, and I went and saw them individually. One man was very ill with fever, and he was lying on the bare ground with nothing between him and the earth but a bag. I pointed this out and remonstrated and pointed out the great impropriety of it. I also visited the other five, and they were in very little better condition.'

Examiner: 'What kind of huts were they?'

Sheridan: 'Huts made by themselves of straw and grass.'

Examiner: 'Is it not a fact that the islanders themselves prefer these huts?'

Sheridan: 'I have heard that they do because of their warmth, and I account for that by the islanders continually telling me they do not get sufficient blankets to keep them warm. I know something of this from my own knowledge, because I have examined the blankets and the single blanket I have seen some islanders have were the most inferior I have ever seen in my life. I did not believe it possible such a blanket could ever be manufactured.'

Examiner: 'Do you know of any other plantations where whipping is carried on?'

Sheridan: 'Yes.'

Examiner: '...Will you give us the facts?'

Sheridan: 'Yes, some islanders - I cannot tell the number - came to my place and complained of whipping. I examined the back of one man and found the weals of the whip and the skin cut right through across the muscle of the back. In one instance the skin was cut into the true flesh.'

Examiner: 'What did you do?'

Sheridan: 'I proceeded to the plantation and did precisely similar to what I have described in the other case. I mustered the islanders and went through the same ordeal. I pointed out the enormities of the offence, and cautioned both parties as to their future conduct.'

Examiner: 'Did the employer know about this?'

Sheridan: 'Yes, I am not certain though whether he said he did it, but I believe he said it was the overseer, and I suggested that he should be dismissed.'

Examiner: 'What is the name of the plantation?'

Sheridan: 'I name it, as I did before, with great reluctance. It was Magnolia, and I believe the owner is the Honorable Colonel Fielding who is in England.'

Examiner: 'Who is the manager?'

Sheridan: 'The manager is Mr Walter Boughey.'¹⁰

Colonel Fielding could not be blamed for this act of violence against the Magnolia islanders, he had, in fact, never visited the plantation and only came to Maryborough in 1881, five years after these events. The man responsible for the whipping was Walter Boughey, well liked in Maryborough, a respected sugar producer, he, however, suffered from ill health, and after a trip to England in 1881, he returned to the Magnolia plantation but resigned his position as manager in November 1883 and travelling to Victoria where he intended to invest in mining. He died in July 1885 at the age of forty-one years.

During a later interrogation by members of the select committee, Sheridan stated that employers were careful to offer islanders further employment after the expiry of their three year terms. Sheridan pointed out that the initial contracts signed under the Polynesian Labourers' Act stipulated that return passages to their homelands would be provided, but that when re-employed, the employers were not required to pay this extra expense. It was obviously in the employers' interests to have the labourers remain, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the initial passage fee paid to the ships' masters or owners varied up to around £10 or £12. However, the mortality rate among newly landed islanders was staggeringly high, so if a plantation owner paid for one hundred islanders and fifteen of them died within the first few months, then the owner would have lost a considerable amount of money. Newly arrived islanders were not trained to the fields and had to be 'broken in', so experienced



Typical huts constructed on the various plantations by the recruits.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 64761.

labourers, those who had served their time, were more desirable than raw recruits. Because of this some of the plantation owners and managers attempted to keep their time-expired labourers on the plantations by force, yet the practice was frowned upon, not only by people such as Sheridan and other civil libertarians or abolitionists, but also by the captains of the vessels, people such as Carl Satini, master of the schooner *Chance*, who, in a letter to Sheridan dated 12 June, 1876, pointed out certain recruiting problems which came about as a result of this practice. Satini claimed that time expired labourers who had been forcibly kept on the plantations were belligerent and openly hostile when they were eventually repatriated to their homelands. He said that it was especially dangerous for boats' crews to land the islanders on the beaches, as the islanders were invariably armed with cheap muskets and as soon as the boats' crews started to leave the beach they would be fired upon in revenge for the plantation owners having kept the islanders beyond the contracted time.¹¹ Sheridan added that after this letter was published the manager of the Maryborough Sugar Company's plantation went to the Maryborough wharf and accosted Satini for making such allegations. Yet the allegations were corroborated by another man, twenty-three years' old government agent James Langford Kirby, who stated that during the two years he had worked as a government agent he had returned sixty-one islanders in the schooner *Mystery*, ten in the *Flora* and eighty-seven in the *Sybil*. He added: 'Once when I landed 18 men at Api (Epi), one of the boys, when he got on shore, fired both barrels of his carbine at us.'¹²

One of the committee members then asked: 'Do you think that had anything to do with the treatment he had received in Queensland?'

Kirby replied:

It must have been so. It had nothing to do with the treatment on board. He had nothing there to do but wash his bunk and eat as much as he liked. He must have acted as he did for some real or imaginary wrong in the colony. I could see he was going to do it when we were landing him, for he was rushing about on the beach and ramming the bullets into his gun, and I could see his eyes glisten. The boat had landed three men, and when we pulled out twenty or thirty yards, he fired both barrels and the bullets went whistling by ... I may add that I fired at him in return and missed him, but some 150 of his countrymen fired at him and killed him on the spot, chopping him to pieces on the sand. I believe they did that for the sake of the trade, (items such as cloth, tobacco, tools, etc. which the islanders took with them when they returned to the islands) and for nothing else.¹³

During the select committee hearings, Sheridan stated that the government agents were too young and that one agent in particular, a man named Hawkins who had been appointed to the labour vessel *Chance*, had appeared before Sheridan (as water police magistrate) after being arrested in a state of intoxication.¹⁴ Sheridan added: 'I know of a very reprehensible practice that struck me, namely of Government Agents being sent who are intimate friends of the owners or in some way connected with them. I mentioned this in the case of Mr Hawkins and Captain Mortimer where they were the friends of the persons owning the vessel.'¹⁵



Islander labourers 1896. Source - John Oxley Library print number 22153.

At the end of the enquiry, Sheridan, who had been under considerable pressure from committee members to modify or tone down his allegations, rather courageously stated:

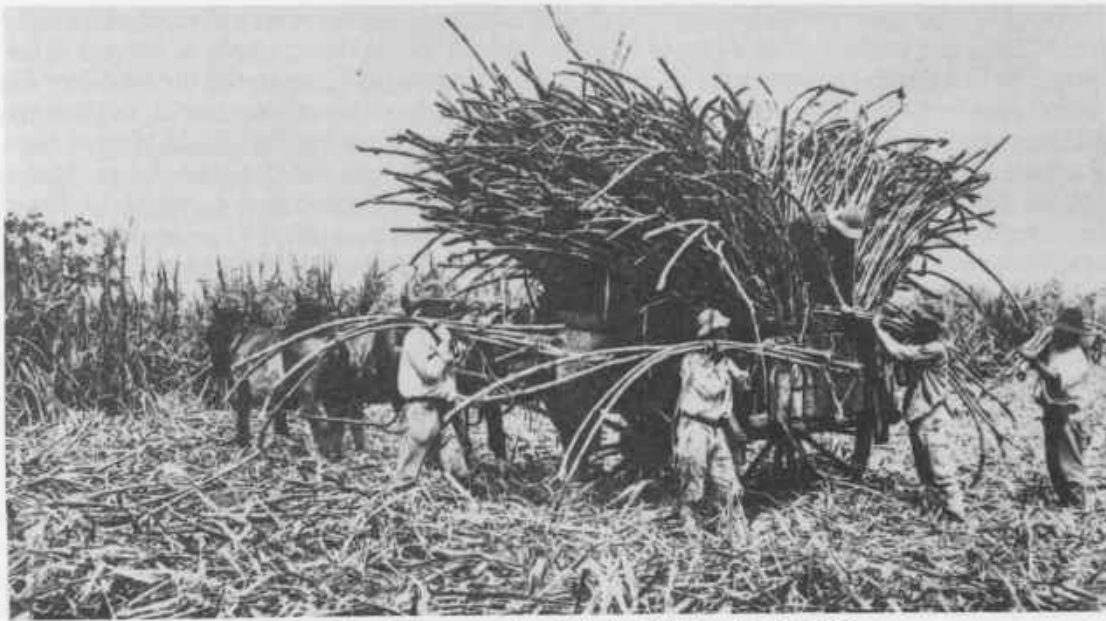
I adhere to my report in its integrity, and I will add this as my opinion on the whole subject - I fearlessly express it - namely, that the Polynesian trade is as much a slave trade as ever was perpetrated on the coast of Africa; that is to say, the Polynesians are obtained in the most questionable manner on the islands, brought to the colony and sold for what they will bring. I adhere to that, and I add it to my report, they are sold for what they will bring as a mercantile speculation ... I see no reason to modify a word. It is my opinion according to the dictates of my conscience.¹⁶

The final report of the select committee was critical of Sheridan, who immediately resigned as inspector of Polynesians and assistant immigration agent to Maryborough. In a number of letters to the Colonial Secretary's Office he accused the colonial secretary's staff of inefficiency and malpractice. In a final letter to the immigration office, Maryborough, also released to the press, Sheridan stated:

When I assumed office some fifteen months ago, I found that the Polynesian Labourers' Act had become almost a dead letter in this district. Kanakas were being illegally introduced, improperly employed, counterfeit bonds were being used for the due return of the islanders, who were being assaulted and otherwise ill-treated with impunity, even to the extent of being shamefully cheated of their scanty clothing. Since then, by convictions obtained in the police office, and otherwise exposing the illegal practices permitted to exist, I have caused the law to be respected and now the path of correct duty is plain and easy for my successor. All this I have done free of any consideration, fee, or reward. True, I have made for myself many bitter enemies, but I have always acted within the intent and meaning of the law.¹⁷

In recognition of his services Sheridan was awarded £100 by the Colonial Secretary's Office, and replaced by Charles C. Horrocks a former chief clerk at the Colonial Secretary's Office. Horrocks's salary was £400 per annum, with a further £40 as forage allowance.¹⁸

Horrocks was soon embroiled in another controversy. In August 1877 the schooner *Chance*, under the command of Captain Carl Satini, brought fifty-six time-expired islanders from the Herbert River region to Maryborough. The islanders were due to be returned to their homes and the ship had called at Maryborough to await its export licence which was to be issued from Brisbane. While in Maryborough Satini refused to allow the islanders to land in the town, even though they claimed they wanted to buy a variety of goods in the shops. There was evidently a conspiracy of sorts, for shortly afterwards the firm of Corser and Co., arranged to have the schooner *Stanley*, loaded with goods and positioned next to the *Chance*. The islanders were invited aboard so that they could purchase items such as muskets, calico, ammunition, powder, knives, axes, fishing lines, salad oil, (which was particularly popular) tobacco, percussion caps, tomahawks, clay pipes, shirts and trousers.



South Sea Island labourers at work in the Childers district 1896.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 63107.

However, shortly afterwards, Charles Horrocks received word that the islanders had been grossly overcharged for these items. He immediately went aboard the *Chance*, but the task of ascertaining the correct prices was beyond his limited knowledge of retail practices and profits, and he returned to shore where he recruited the services of businessman, William Southerden.

Southerden and Horrocks then returned to the vessel and examined every box owned by the returning islanders, gunpowder, sugar, tea and other items were carefully weighed, and each item valued. When the final figures had been completed Horrocks learned that all the purchased items were together valued at £410/1/5d, but the islanders had been charged a total of £543/10/- for them, making a gross overcharge of £134/5/7d, a full twenty-five per cent above normal retail profits. Southerden later made his report to Horrocks stating: 'I beg to report, having made a valuation as requested by you, of certain goods purchased on board the *Stanley* by return islanders ... the value is based upon the ordinary retail prices ruling in this district, exception, however, must be made in the item of coats ... these are all more or less damaged, being moth-eaten and riddled throughout with holes, and therefore have no fixed value.'¹⁹

Southerden had completed his task thoroughly; appended to the report was an itemized list of all the islanders who had purchased goods, the prices they had been charged for each item and the correct retail price

The licences for both the *Stanley* and *Chance* were delayed over the issue, but were finally released on 24 August that year, apparently with no punitive action being taken against Corser and Co.

By 1878, the practice of giving trade in exchange for islanders had created such moral indignation that on 5 January that year the office of the colonial secretary in Brisbane had issued a memorandum to all persons engaged in the Polynesian labour trade. The memorandum specifically prohibited the use of trade goods, and referred to a report written by the government agent of the labour schooner *Bobtail Nag*.

...As the coast and inland tribes are frequently at war with each other, all the prisoners taken on either sides are kept as slaves, or at once killed and eaten; and if kept as slaves, sold to the first ship that comes by. This may, or may not be the case, but I must confess that from observations, I have often thought it only too likely a supposition. Supposing that only in a few cases such was the fact, we should then be, to all intents and purposes, slaving. Well the slave is brought down to the coast, a labour vessel is lying at anchor close by. The owner of the slave, hearing that he can get a musket, knife etc for a man, who, to him is of little worth except for culinary purposes, tells his slave that he is to go to Queensland. Of course the unfortunate wretch is only too glad to go, for his life is not worth a day's purchase as a slave ... a musket or some knives and tobacco are at once given and the sale is completed. The slave gets into the boat and meekly sits down, whilst his former master triumphantly marches away, gloating over his wealth ... The South Sea Islanders are lawless, heartless and mercenary ... so many knives will buy a pig, so many pigs will buy a wife, and so many wives and so many pigs makes the possessor a great man and a chief.²⁰

Maryborough shopkeepers profited greatly from the islander trade. Islanders very often treated shopkeepers as their confidants and bankers. A shopkeeper would set apart a special room, usually at the rear of his store, which would be fitted with shelves to the ceiling. On these shelves would be stored the islanders' boxes in which were kept pieces of cloth, ornaments, tins of tobacco, matches, knives, tomahawks, candles, anything that could be of value or general use when once the labourers were returned to the islands. Most of these items were purchased from the storekeepers themselves who generally provided the storage free of charge in exchange for the business. It was not unusual for individual storekeepers to have hundreds of these boxes stored at any given time. In addition, the storekeepers would act as bankers, holding considerable sums of money in the names of their customers. The storekeepers would deposit these monies at the local banks, receiving interest on the sums, and in most cases they would retain this interest as their service charge. According to a report in the *Maryborough Chronicle* of 1906, there were instances of outright robbery and sometimes storekeepers with large amounts of islander money in their private accounts simply disappeared.²¹

Sources and Notes for Chapter Twenty.

1. M/C. 6 January, 1876.
2. Reproduced in M/C. 18 December, 1875.
3. M/C. 14 September, 1876.
4. M/C. *ibid.*
5. M/C. *ibid.*
6. M/C. 25 November, 1876.
7. M/C. *ibid.*
8. M/C. 2 December, 1876.
9. M/C. *ibid.*
10. M/C. *ibid.*
11. M/C. 16 December, 1876.
12. M/C. 23 December, 1876.
13. M/C. *ibid.*
14. M/C. 9 December, 1876.
15. M/C. *ibid.*
16. M/C. 23 December, 1876.
17. Sheridan letter of 10 April, 1877, M/C. 10 July, 1877.
18. See details of Sheridan's resignation and Horrocks's appointment in Col/Sec, *Resignation of Mr Sheridan of the Office of Polynesians*. Return of an order made by the Honourable the Legislative Assembly of Queensland dated 12 June, 1877 and printed 26 June, 1877, QSA.
19. Col Sec. *Case of the Schooner Chance*. Legislative Assembly, printed 12 September, 1877, number 13, Page 5, QSA.
20. M/C. 19 January, 1878.
21. M/C. 4 January, 1906.

Chapter Twenty-one.

Racism, Riots and Crime.

The policy of importing island labour resulted in periodical racial tensions through the colony at various centres where there were high concentrations of labourers. Islander disturbances and riots were used by the abolitionists as a tool for their cause. In 1876 there were outbreaks of racial violence in Maryborough and Mackay. The islanders were disarmed and a proposal made to keep them from the towns to prevent clashes with aboriginal people. Feelings were running high. For example, in February 1876, Reuben Hynes was arrested in Adelaide Street Maryborough for creating an anti-islander disturbance. Precise details of the incident are difficult to ascertain, but during the police court hearing on Monday 14 February that year, the arresting officers claimed that Hynes had attacked three islander labourers for no apparent reason and that he had been calling: 'Down with the bloody coolies ... roll up and put the bloody coolies out of town ... roll up and we will hunt the bloody niggers out of town.'¹

However, witnesses to the event refuted the police statements, whether they were sympathetic to Hynes and his cause is not clear, but at least three witnesses stated that Hynes had not been using foul language or creating a disturbance. The police magistrate, R.B. Sheridan, at the conclusion of the hearing, expressed regret that such scenes should have disgraced Maryborough, and fined Hynes ten shillings or eighteen hours in the lock-up.²

There was also a strengthening feeling of alarm over the arming of islanders and their numbers in the region, numbers, which many thought were so great that the islanders, armed with muskets, cane knives and tomahawks, could at any time stage a revolt similar to those which had taken place in the sugar growing, slave owning colonies of the West Indies. As early as 1873, one correspondent to the *Maryborough Chronicle* had written:

I wish to draw your attention to the one phase of the system which seems to have escaped general notice. These semi-savages, at their present rate of egress, will ere long, outnumber the white population. I believe on many of the plantations such is already the case. Now these men, having learned nothing of civilization except its worst traits, well primed with new rum, may be seen patrolling the roads in the vicinity of the town of Maryborough in parties of ten or a dozen, armed with muskets, long, formidable looking knives and hatchets. Suppose these 'children of the sun' were to muster only a hundred strong, maddened by drink or by fancied or real wrong, and thus armed were to attack even the city of Maryborough itself, not to speak of the outlying and scattered districts, how would the authorities meet and quell them? ... Hundreds of these savages are quietly allowed to arm themselves and to acquire a power which, it is feared, they will not be slow to abuse when once they find their own strength. Every day these islanders are becoming more audacious, and even in the broad day, it is no longer safe for a female to be alone on the south side of the river. No longer since than today, a female was grossly insulted by one of their number at the Prince's ferry, to what lengths he would have gone is hard to say had he not been scared away by the approach of a white man. It is surely high time the authorities took the matter in hand ... the day is not far distant when we, in our turn, shall be compelled to arm in the defence of our property and the honour of our wives and daughters.³

Of course, this correspondent's fears were ill-founded and there never was any wide-scale islander revolt against white authority in the Maryborough region, although there were certainly cases of individual assault and even murder.

The islander crime rate was never high, but certain criminal cases served to heighten public vilification of the entire system. One such case occurred in Maryborough in 1876.

The case concerned the attack on a woman named Annie McBryde by two labourers, Tommy and George, both of whom reportedly came from the Sandwich Islands and were employed at Eatonvale plantation.

Tommy evidently had a reputation for trouble and was a habitual drinker, George, on the other hand, seemed harmless and had never before been in trouble with the law.

On the night of 18 November, 1876, Tommy had been drinking heavily. He somehow talked George into accompanying him to the house of John and Annie McBryde, knowing that John McBryde - who was a horse-handler working at Eatonvale - would be away for the night.

Annie McBryde had been married for four years, she had two young children, one aged six months, the other two years. The house in which they lived on Lindah Road Maryborough was a small two-roomed cottage, one room served as a kitchen, the other as a bedroom.

John McBryde had spent the weekend with his family, and after supper on Sunday he returned to the plantation where he was required for duty. According to statements made later in court, Annie then cleaned the dishes, put her children to bed, and at nine p.m. she also retired.

At midnight she was suddenly awakened by the sound of the back door being forced open. The door was locked by placing a strong pole against it, the end of which was wedged against the wall. In the darkness Annie McBryde fumbled for a box of matches she always kept under her pillow, she struck a match as the door was being forced ajar. From beneath her mosquito net she could see little. She called: 'Who's there, I have a pistol?' As she reached for a candle, a dark form loomed before her and before she could cry out she was struck a blow across her head with a tomahawk.

When she finally recovered consciousness Annie McBryde discovered that she had been dragged from her bed into the deserted street. Her clothing had been partially removed, she had been raped and mutilated. Her jaw was broken, so too her arm and collarbone, her face and neck were badly cut and bruised and she was bleeding heavily. As her attackers fled towards a nearby creek Mrs McBryde pulled herself to her feet and staggered more than half a mile to the house of her father, Lewis Jackson. Jackson later testified that his daughter had been covered in blood and he had only been able to recognize her when she had spoken to him and he had recognized her voice.⁴ Doctor John Joseph Power was sent for and he arrived the following morning. Annie was then conveyed to the hospital. From her hospital bed she made a statement for the police, yet it was of little help in identifying her attackers. All she could say with certainty was that she had seen just one man, that he had been dark-skinned, and while in a state of semi-consciousness she had realized that the man was raping her.

Tommy and George may well have evaded justice, however, upon examining the scene of the crime the following morning, John McBryde discovered an off-white felt hat with two distinctive holes in its rim. The hat belonged to George, and after preliminary enquiries both George and Tommy were arrested. The newspapers later reported: 'The police have succeeded in capturing two South Sea Islanders named Tommy and George as the suspected perpetrators of the outrage on Mrs McBryde. They have been lodged in the lock-up and remanded for eight days. The police are said to be in possession of a very strong piece of convicting evidence. Mrs McBryde is considered by her medical attendants to be almost out of danger.' An official enquiry took place soon afterwards, which recommended that the two men go on trial in Brisbane. Yet the evidence presented at the trial was both confusing and conflicting. According to contemporary reports there was a third labourer involved in the affair, an islander named Captain Cook, who had been present with the two offenders at their dinner on the night of the attack. Tommy later stated that it was Cook, and not he, who had gone with George to the house of Annie McBryde, yet a witness who had seen the two men walking from the plantation that night towards Mrs McBryde's house, positively identified the men as being Tommy and George. Naturally, Captain Cook denied all knowledge of the affair. The case was further confused when it was discovered that all three men had the habit of wearing each other's clothing; the damning white hat may not have belonged to George, as it was later stated that, although Captain Cook had that night been wearing a scotch cap, he was also known to sometimes wear a white hat with a hole in its rim.

George stuck to his statement that the islander who had accompanied him to Mrs McBryde's was definitely Tommy, this, plus the evidence of the witness who had seen both men, was sufficient for a conviction.

In May 1877 the two men were found guilty of rape and attempted murder and sentenced to death. At the conclusion of the trial Judge Lilley stated: 'Tommy and George, you have been found guilty of the crime of rape under the most cruel circumstances I have ever known. To two men who could do such a cruel and cowardly deed, anything I could say would be useless ... I give you no hope of mercy ... you must die.'

As an example to other South Sea Islanders, the Queensland executive council decided that the execution should be a public one, and that the criminals and a portable gallows be taken from Brisbane to Maryborough. It was a somewhat rash decision. The islanders were a very close-knit community and they displayed great resentment towards the impending deaths of their brother labourers.

The gallows was erected in the yard of the police pound, on the present site of the Maryborough city hall - approximately where the stage is now located.⁵

Six hundred islanders were gathered from all the surrounding plantations and stations, they were hostile and bitter, and at the last moment it was decided to reverse the executive council's decision for a public hanging - the authorities fearing that a riot might take place. A screen of black calico or hessian was hastily erected around the gallows, and only six islander labourers were allowed to witness the death scene.

The date was 18 May, 1877. The morning was cold and overcast with a light drizzle of rain drifting over the river and town. Executioner John Hutton, a former convict who had once been a lamp trimmer at Brisbane gaol, and who always displayed a remarkable enthusiasm for his work, had been preparing the portable gallows. The black contraption had been tested and was ready. Hutton moved through the rain towards the prison cells, he was short and powerfully built - as official executioner he was also the public scourger, and many convicted criminals had suffered under his lash.

George was waiting to face death calmly and with some degree of courage. A minister of religion, Reverend Thomas Holme, had taught him a simple prayer: 'Lord have mercy upon my soul,' and the condemned man was muttering this again and again to himself. He confessed his crime to Holme and stated that he was not afraid to die. Both condemned men refused to eat their last breakfast, Tommy was almost delirious with fear, he had thrown himself onto the floor of his cell and refused to move. Both men were given a tot of brandy which they quickly drank.

At eight a.m. exactly a blacksmith appeared and struck off their leg and hand irons. Hutton moved forward and pinioned their arms with strong manila ropes. George stepped from his cell into the wet police yard. He hesitated for several seconds at the door and cast a glance around at the rows of armed police and public officials. When he caught sight of the six islander witnesses he broke into tears, but said nothing, simply shaking his head with remorse. The gaoler touched him lightly on the arm. George recovered his composure and hurried to the foot of the gallows. He paused again, looked around, shook hands as well as he could with the gaoler, and walked firmly up the narrow steps to the scaffold platform.

However, Tommy's final moments were somewhat less stoic, he had already made several unsuccessful attempts to strangle himself, and when Hutton came for him he refused to move from the floor of his cell. Four aboriginal men were recruited and Tommy was physically carried to the gallows. Still refusing to stand, he was laid on the platform, just above the drop. Hutton quickly drew ropes and white caps over the faces of his victims, and at a nod from the under-sheriff, he drew the trap's bolt.

George died instantly, but Tommy's end was not an easy one. By lying on the trap, instead of standing, his body had not fallen the required length necessary to cleanly break his neck. For a full minute after the bolt had been drawn he swayed from side to side, twitching and groaning as he strangled to death.

The examining medical officer pronounced that life was extinct only after half an hour had lapsed, he also wanted to remove the heads of the executed men for scientific examination, but the under-sheriff refused this request. The bodies were placed into rough coffins before being taken to the Maryborough cemetery and buried in a section reserved for pagans. Today the graves remain unmarked.⁶

Hutton, the man who had executed Tommy and George, was a curious character. During the 1850s he was convicted and sentenced to five years' imprisonment for a crime which today is not known. He was a 'duty' prisoner, his daily work being the lighting of the lamps and extinguishing them in the mornings. The other prisoners called him 'Old Jack the Lamplighter'. However, Hutton had a strange fascination for the criminal executions which occasionally occurred within the walls of the prison, and upon the expiration of his own sentence, he was, by his own request, appointed public executioner on 1 April, 1862, at a salary of £118 per year. He seems to have prided himself on the perfection with which he could 'work off' the victims, and it was said that after each execution he would invite the gaol officials to join him in a glass of spirits. On these occasions, no greater compliment could be paid to him than to tell him that the execution had been well carried out. To this compliment Hutton would always reply:

'Yes a very successful execution, about the best I have done yet.'

However, the grisly tasks were not always carried out with expertise. In 1879 a German named Joseph Muller was executed by Hutton, and when the bolt was drawn from the scaffold the victim was decapitated by the drop. Gaol officials blamed Hutton for allowing too long a drop and using a rope which was too thin, but Hutton refuted this statement, claiming that Muller had lived too well on gaol fare and had not taken sufficient exercise for the fortnight prior to his execution, thus his added weight had caused the problem. There was a minor furore in the gaol over the accident, and, totally exasperated, Hutton strongly stated: 'Ain't I paid for killing the men, and ain't this man dead? What more do you want?'

The system of flogging was in use at this time in Brisbane gaol and Hutton refused to act as official flagellator without an increase of pay. He also feared that the victims of the lash would someday seek revenge on him, and in order to disguise himself he requested permission from prison authorities to mask himself when carrying out flogging sentences.

Because of his advanced age Hutton finally requested to be pensioned off, and in 1885 he was given a superannuation of £57 per year for the rest of his life. He lived for just two more years, dying in 1887.⁷

When two other islanders, Mi Orie and Narasemai, were to be executed in Brisbane for the murder of a man at Kolan in 1895, there was widespread belief that the executions should have been carried out at the scene of the crime and that a large group of islanders be gathered to watch the punishment.⁸ The executive council decided however, that the men would be executed in Boggo Road gaol, and a group of fourteen islanders from Maryborough, Bundaberg, Mackay and Childers were taken to Brisbane to witness the hangings. One of the islanders actually paid his own passage from Fairymead plantation.⁹

In April 1877, a girl of fourteen years named R. Nolan was walking towards her home, a modest slab hut on the Maryborough Sugar Company's road, when she was confronted by a large islander who offered her money for an immoral act. The girl refused and attempted to get away but the islander grasped her and began to pull her into the nearby scrub. However, she managed to escape when the islander heard a horseman approaching. The girl ran to her parents and her father, P. Nolan, on finding a number of islanders walking through his property, ordered them away. The islanders took this as a great insult and swore revenge. Mr Nolan was working with a road party on the Saltwater Creek Road, and was away all week. On Sunday 30 April, 1877, a group of islanders armed with muskets approached the small hut. Mrs Nolan, seeing them on the road, quickly ordered her six children into the hut. The doors, all made of stout ironbark, and the shutters, were all closed and bolted. Shouting abuse and stating that they had come with the intention of killing Mr Nolan, the islanders launched themselves against the house. They attempted to chop down the doors and shutters but the building had been so well constructed that their attempts proved unsuccessful. The unexpected arrival of a son, Peter Nolan, disturbed the assault. Seeing what was happening, Peter turned his horse and, with bullets whistling after him, sped into town for assistance. The islanders went into the fowl-house and killed all the chickens, they mauled and left two dogs for dead and unsuccessfully attempted to catch and kill several pigs. A group of police and volunteer civilians quickly arrived at the scene to put down the riot, but the islanders had disappeared into the scrub. They were tracked and several hours later twelve of them were arrested. These men all worked for the Maryborough Sugar Company.¹⁰

Some of the islanders, unable to withstand the harsh conditions imposed upon them in Queensland, became insane. Many found great difficulty in assimilating themselves into the strange community they found in their new environment, these were reserved men who worked quietly and waited patiently to return to their homelands. One of these men was something of a curiosity, as a correspondent to the *Maryborough Chronicle* later recalled: 'There was a freak Kanaka, an albino, white with pink eyes and reddish tawny hair. He was very shy but nevertheless he could often be seen in the Maryborough streets.'¹¹

During the years of the islander labour trade, approximately sixty-two thousand workers were brought to Australia. Promises to return them were found to be financially impractical, and those labourers who *had* volunteered for the work with promises that they were to be returned within twelve months, sometimes found their contracts extended to three years and then indefinitely.

In January 1876 a new Liberal government was formed under Premier George Thorn. Even so it was another four years before a new Polynesian Labourers' Act was passed which stipulated better working conditions for the islanders, more clothes and food and hospitalization for the sick.

On 12 February, 1880, the Polynesian inspector at Maryborough, Mr H.R. Buttenshaw, wrote a bitter report to his superior, Ralph Gore, the immigration agent in Brisbane. Buttenshaw's report claimed that the mortality rate on the plantations of Yengarie, Yerra Yerra and Irrawarra, belonging to Robert Cran, was exceedingly high. Buttenshaw wrote that he had recently visited Yerra Yerra and Irrawarra, and that he had found sixty islanders ill with dysentery and that soon afterwards two of them had died. He added that enquiries over these events would have been useless, but he recommended that, '...until the death rate has been reduced to a reasonable limit, and kept so, no further islanders (should) be allowed to be indented to this firm. (This) would, I believe, check the evil.'¹² Buttenshaw added that most of the islanders on the plantations were boys, 'some mere children,' and that because of this the mortality rate was increased.¹³

On 10 March that year this damning report was sent to the Colonial Secretary's Office, with the advice that twenty-five islanders had died on Cran's properties since 1 January, i.e., in a little over two months.¹⁴



Island labourers at work in the sugar cane fields. Source - John Oxley Library print number 70213.

On 3 April the colonial secretary ordered two doctors, John Thompson and C.J. Hill-Wray, to investigate the abnormally high death rate on Cran's properties. Thompson and Hill-Wray immediately boarded a steamer for Maryborough to begin their investigations. In order to be fair they decided that they should also inspect, and report upon, several other plantations in the region, namely, *lindah*, *Eatonvale*, *Antigua*, *Ferney*, *Magnolia*, *Alpha* and *Nerada*. There were, at this time, 1340 islanders working on the various plantations in the Maryborough region, and the two doctors inspected about six hundred of these. They also inspected several ships, including the *Sibyl*, with eighty-one newly arrived islanders and the *Janet Stewart* with one hundred and eight. Of these, two islanders on the *Sibyl*, and twenty-nine on the *Janet Stewart* were too young and were rejected by the doctors.¹⁵

The doctors stated that on some plantations islanders would willingly speak with them, while on others, some of the recruits were morose, sullen, silent, and feared to speak when other white men were present.¹⁶

The working hours were considered as being too long, averaging ten hours per day, and certainly too long for newly arrived recruits who were unused to working manually for lengthy periods. The greatest mortality was on plantations where there was a limited number of islanders for a large number of acres, thus dramatically increasing the individual work load. Accommodation on the plantations varied. At *Yengarie* it was considered as being very bad, with twelve grass huts and three slab houses built in a small enclosure through which ran an offensive drain. *Yerra Yerra*'s accommodation of twenty-two well constructed grass huts was considered very good. The water supplies on the plantations also varied. At *Yengarie* it was good, being supplied from a rain-water tank, but on *Yerra Yerra* it was very poor, all drinking water coming from a stagnant water hole fed by surface drainage from the fields. *Irrawarra* too fared poorly in this respect, the water coming from a reservoir which was also fed by drainage from the fields. All other plantation water supplies were considered adequate or good, with the exception of *Nerada* which was supplied from a dam fed by field drainage.

The death rate on Cran's three properties for five and a half years from 1875 to 1880, had totalled one hundred and nine islanders.¹⁷

Food seemed to be adequate on most plantations, but the diet was monotonous; bread, beef, potatoes, or rice and thin watery soup. The doctors recommended that this diet be varied, adding such items as mutton and fish, of which the islanders were particularly fond. It was also later stated in the final report's analysis, that on small plantations and farms, islanders seemed to be given the same food and in generally the same quantities as their employers. Yet on the larger plantations such as *Yengarie*, they received only what was allowed under law, and sometimes less.¹⁸

In conclusion, Doctors Thompson and Hill-Wray reported that in their opinion the excessive death rate on Cran's properties was caused from, '...poor feeding, bad water, overwork and the absence of proper care when sick.'¹⁹

Cran, of course, quickly denied these accusations, stating that the enquiry had been a hurried one and that no precautions had been taken by the doctors to ensure that their information had come from reliable sources.²⁰

Yet the deaths continued at an alarming rate, even after the introduction of the 1880 Polynesian Labourers' Act which stipulated better working conditions and the provision of greater medical care for the islanders. The act stated that first class cabin space should be provided for the government agent aboard labour vessels, a separate cabin space should be provided for women recruits, the ships should be painted white with a black band at least six inches wide running fore and aft on both sides of the vessel, and that when recruiting all ships would have to carry a black ball not less than eighteen inches in diameter at the mainmast head. Other regulations provided for better checks on the qualifications of masters and government agents, the banning of firearms, ammunition and alcohol as trade goods and forbidding the use of islander accommodation space as ships' storage.²¹

Despite these stringent regulations the deaths and ill-treatment continued. The death rate in Maryborough was so great, in fact, that the *Maryborough Chronicle* editor was sufficiently alarmed to write: 'The continued high rate of mortality amongst the Polynesians at the Maryborough hospital suggests the question if the new Polynesian Labourers' Act is yet brought into active operation in the Maryborough district.'²²

Yet the annual report of the Department of Pacific Island Immigration for 1888 listed the mortality rates for each region. Maryborough's rate was remarkably low compared with other centres, having experienced just thirty-eight deaths. The two highest centres were Bundaberg with one hundred and ninety-three deaths and Mackay with one hundred and twelve.²³ This, of course, had not always been the case. Official returns reveal that in 1873, forty-four islanders had died in the Maryborough district. The following year this had risen to sixty-four and a year later the figure had reached a staggering one hundred and seventy-seven.²⁴

In April 1880, a Maryborough resident writing in the *Chronicle* claimed:

The great mortality amongst them chiefly occurs in those who have never left the islands before ... those brought between April and August are more liable to dysentery brought on by the cold weather ... In regard to animal food, after the first six months a pound of meat is none too much for them with the labour they have to perform. On some plantations the first bell rings at five in the morning sharp, to turn out for breakfast which, in most cases, is a lump of dry bread with tea often so hot that the boys cannot drink it before the bell again rings calling them to work, many of them carrying their bit of bread in their hands. Then they have to work until 12 o'clock (which is too long) when the dinner consists of bread and salt beef, generally the muscles, belly, flank and necks of the beast; when those parts of beef have been well boiled - their allowance is not large, many of them will throw it away, 'altogether too salt,' and during the summer months it is often bad when they most require it ... on one plantation I have heard the bell calling them for breakfast at half past four in the morning, and then to work at five, working for seven hours on their bit of bread before their next meal - enough to make them sick.²⁵

In August 1880, an unnamed planter wrote to the *North British Daily Mail* in Glasgow, and a copy of his letter was later reproduced in the *Maryborough Chronicle*:

Sir, I am employing between thirty and forty Kanakas on one of my stations in place of white men, and will always continue to do so while I can get them. In the first place they are cheap, and in the next place I can abuse and knock them about just as I please. If one dies, all I have to do is to report it to the nearest police magistrate and there is an end to it. There is no enquiry made of how he died or was perhaps killed. Once in the bush they are absolutely at my mercy as are my horses and dogs. Indeed more so as it would be a loss to me to kill a horse, but none whatever to beat a South Sea nigger to death. The only drawback to the thing is that I cannot get overseers quite brutal enough, they have not the scientific cruelty requisite to get all the work possible out of a nigger. However, I intend to send to Cuba for a couple of properly trained slave drivers and no doubt others will soon follow my example. So that in a few years I hope to see Queensland in the same happy condition and the paradise for slave owners that the West Indies and Southern states of America were before the maddening abolitionists got fussing about.

We have a great advantage here over those places, as the niggers cost us next to nothing and we can afford to use them up.

I could write a good deal more on the subject but I see a Kanaka leaning on his spade instead of working so I will have to go and touch him up a bit with the stock-whip.²⁶



Islanders at work. Source - John Oxley Library print number 72894.

Perhaps the worst case of islander criminality in the Maryborough region was that of the killing of Mr and Mrs E.L. Jarvis at their dairy farm, a property called Gbobaregore in east Maryborough, on 29 April, 1881. The perpetrator of the crime was never found, although it was widely believed by investigating authorities that the murder had been committed by a South Sea Islander.

Mr Jarvis was a forty-two years' old farmer, well liked and respected in Maryborough, his wife, formerly Miss Peattie, was just twenty-seven at the time of her death. The couple had been married for seven years.

On Friday 29 April the couple drove their spring cart into Maryborough to sell farm produce and to do some shopping. Just after dark they returned to their farm along a narrow and little used track. The ill-fated pair were alone that night, they had no children, and friends who had been invited to the farm for the evening had declined the offer saying they had another engagement.

The following morning a young man named Wearin, the son of a local saddler, arrived at the house. He and Jarvis had arranged to do some business together. However, upon arriving at the gate of the house he was met by a horrifying sight. Lying in a wide pool of blood was Mrs Jarvis, her head almost severed from her body. Approximately ninety yards to the right of the body stood the spring cart with the horse still in harness, one of the wheels was caught in a small tree. In the cart, lying beneath the seat, was the body of Mr Jarvis, also covered with blood. Wearin rode quickly to the nearest farm to raise the alarm and shortly afterwards Inspector S.J. Lloyd, Constable John Amies, Constable Fetherstone and an aboriginal tracker arrived at the scene.

The tracker soon discovered that behind a large tree, approximately twenty five yards from the gate of the house, was a flattened patch of grass where someone had rested and where a piece of bread had been eaten, the crumbs were evident in the grass. Closer to the gate was a set of footprints, clearly showing that the killer had worn no shoes. Jarvis had been struck twice with a tomahawk, the first blow inflicted a severe scalp wound and the second blow killed him. There were traces of a struggle, erratic imprints from the wheels of the spring cart and several pools of blood. Mrs Jarvis had evidently attempted to escape, a savage tomahawk chop on a fence rail indicated that she had ducked beneath it while being chased by her killer. She was lying close by with her throat cut; her parasol, which she had used in an effort to defend herself, was still clutched in her hand. Having killed the couple the murderer stole a few items from the spring cart and fled. The real motive for the killing was not apparent. Mrs Jarvis had not been raped and in Mr Jarvis's pockets police found more than £3 and a valuable watch. Also left untouched in the cart were a sack of bran, a basket of meat, and several packages of goods purchased in town on the day of the killings.

Further investigations revealed that a slab of the Jarvis home had been prised open with a tomahawk and several items stolen, including a sharp carving knife, a butcher's knife, a pepper-coloured tweed coat, Mrs Jarvis's sealskin jacket, an oilskin coat, a white counterpane, and a small compass which had been standing before a clock in the bedroom. Some rope had also been cut from the clothes line. Investigations threw suspicion on a South Sea Islander named Jimmy who was later described in the press as '...an eccentric Mallicolo (Malekula)

Islander who had run away from Magnolia plantation two days before the killings.' This man had stolen a small boat and intended sailing it to Bundaberg to see his brother. He had also stolen a gun, some cartridges and a pair of newly-cleaned boots. These boots - apparently abandoned by the islander - were later discovered by Constable Amies on a track between the Jarvis home and the place where the boat had been moored. The stolen boat was later seen making out to sea with a gray shawl or blanket being used as a sail, and despite an intensive police search from the mouth of the Mary River to Keppel Bay, no trace of the man or his boat was ever discovered. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported:

Once on the trackless sea ... he could, although untutored in navigation and ignorant of the devices of the police, almost defy capture, for only by the mere chance of some passing vessel almost running him down could his small craft be discerned amid the heaving waves. It is now almost beyond doubt that the assassin has lost his own life before this. When he cleared the Mary River on Saturday last, his stock of provisions was the scantiest, and even if he escaped the perils of the sea, he must soon starve. The heavy weather which sprang up on that night and has continued ever since ... precludes all possibility of the Kanaka's boat resisting its force, and leads to the conclusion that he has either been drowned, or, as is more probable, received a deserved fate in the shark's mouth.²⁷

News correspondents called for the disarming of all islanders and stated that with more than two thousand islanders working in the Maryborough region, it had been a miracle that frequent killings had not taken place. The press claimed:

Our black brother from the South Seas, as the recent tragic event forcibly indicates, places as much value, perhaps less, on the life of a white man as the European places on his, and, as with criminal classes of our own nation, it is probably merely the fear of the law which prevents every little personal affront endured by an islander being avenged with blood.²⁸

At the subsequent magisterial enquiry witnesses stated that an islander resembling the description of Jimmy had been seen in the vicinity of the Jarvis home on the day of the attack, and Mrs Jarvis's sister stated that Mrs Jarvis had told her an islander, asking for food, had called at the house that morning. Henry Gibbs, a shop assistant working for the retail business of Stuparts, stated that he had sold a grey striped shawl to Mrs Jarvis on the morning of the attack.²⁹ The shawl may possibly have been used as a july sail by Jimmy.

George Groundwater, a government pilot, declared that he had seen the row-boat tied to a tree on the right bank of the Mary River close to the Jarvis home. Peter Hardie, the lighthouse keeper on Woody Island, stated that he had seen the boat heading for the open sea, the boat had been manned by one person, a South Sea Islander wearing dark trousers, a crimean shirt and a cap. He said that he had hailed the boat but was ignored. At sundown that evening the wind had commenced to blow from the south-east and increased to gale force which had then blown for three days. George Groundwater added: 'I do not think a small boat could have lived.'³⁰ It seemed reasonable to suppose that Jimmy's small boat had been swamped, for although a close watch was kept for him, especially in the Bundaberg region, he was never seen again.

It is also, perhaps, interesting to note how the law reacted when prominent members of the Maryborough community were brought before the Police Court for breaches of the Polynesian Labourers' Act. On 1 July, 1881, Robert Cran was brought before William Southerden and John Purser accused of having withheld a sum of money and for attempting to deceive the inspector of Polynesians into believing that an islander was still alive when in fact he had died some time previously.

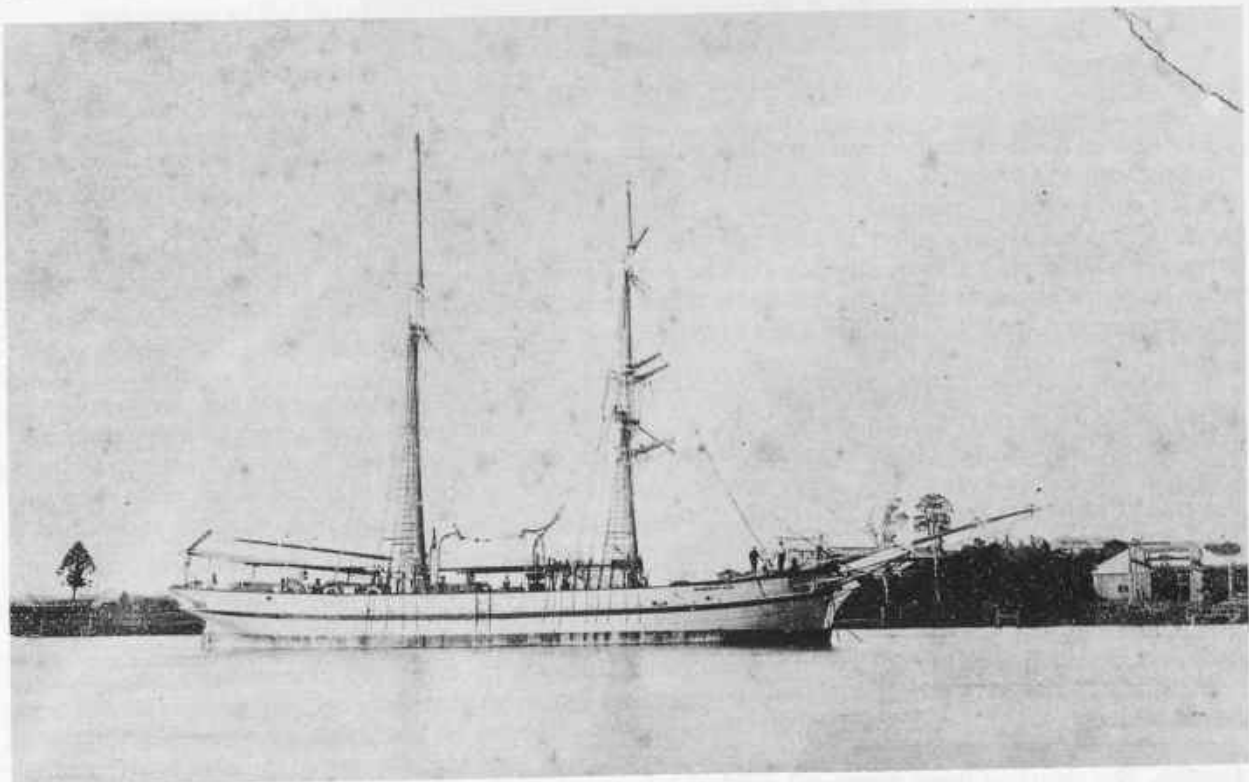
According to a return provided by Cran, the islander, a man named Mulburra, was still alive and working at Yerra Yerra plantation. However, one of Cran's employees, Maurice Lewis, had previously reported that Mulburra had died of consumption on 16 April, 1881. The wages owing to the islander were calculated at £14 which Cran evidently thought he would retain. Cran was found guilty of the offence and fined just one shilling. Before his death, Mulburra had made a statement, saying that he wanted his wife, who was also working for Cran, to receive the money owed to him.³¹

The role of inspector of Polynesians was no easy task. Men who undertook those responsibilities found themselves having to control a careful set of balancing manoeuvres. One of the more successful was Richard Henry Mant Hall. Hall was the eldest son of Captain R. Morgan Hall of the 48th and 13th Light Infantry, and the eldest nephew of Sir Benjamin Hall, Lord Llanover. He came to Queensland around 1870 and worked at Eatonvale plantation and later at Nerada and Magnolia. He opened his own plantation, Kalbar, near Bundaberg, but remained there only a few months before returning to Maryborough as Polynesian inspector. He resigned this position in May 1883, and reputedly lost a great deal of money to an embezzler in England. He married in 1882 but several years later he severely injured his spine while boring for water. The injury left him paralysed and he died at the Victoria private hospital, Brisbane, on 13 September, 1903.³²

Even as late as the 1880s, the difficulties and horrors of the recruiting system were continuing unabated. In July 1881 the labour schooner *Roderick Dhu* left Maryborough for the islands, the vessel was carrying seventy-five returning time-expired workers to their various island homes. The ship was under the command of William Lambert Lynn who later testified at the Maryborough Police Court that as soon as the schooner had cleared the Mary River an islander who had just died of consumption had to be taken to Fraser Island for burial. While the body was being interred another islander, a man named Taby Lip, began running wild over the vessel with a tomahawk in his hand. He attacked one islander, a man named Palmer, severely wounding him in the rump. He attempted to kill one of the sick islanders as he lay in a bunk but the captain threw an un-loaded musket at him and prevented the killing. Taby Lip immediately threw the musket back at Captain Lynn before dashing for'ard. The government agent, the mate, Samuel Thomas, and the captain, all armed themselves - the captain with a revolver and short sword, the agent with a rifle, the mate with a revolver. They found Taby Lip crouched on a sack of potatoes near the pump-well, his tomahawk raised. In an attempt to frighten him into surrendering, several shots were fired above his head. The captain called upon him to hand over his weapon and to stop fighting. Taby Lip refused and attempted to strike the captain. A shot rang out and the islander fell dead with a bullet in his chest. The government agent called out in alarm: 'I did not mean to shoot him, I meant to shoot his arm off.'³³ The body was sewn into a blanket and taken ashore to be buried with the other dead islander.

On 4 August that year the schooner arrived at Tanna (Tana) in the New Hebrides group, several returning workers were landed and a number of recruits came aboard the vessel. Two days later the ship left this port and travelled north to the small island of Paama, situated between Ambrim and Epi. Several returning islanders were landed with their boxes of treasured possessions on the beach near their village. However, as the ship's boats were being pushed off the beach the crews heard several shots and later discovered that the returning men had been murdered and their boxes looted. During that day a canoe filled with islanders came towards the ship and offered for sale a roasted human leg and arm which they said belonged to two of the men landed that morning.³⁴

After this event the *Roderick Dhu* proceeded to the island of Aoba (Oba, New Hebrides) where they were met with a shower of arrows. At Mallicolo (Malekula, also in the New Hebrides group), shortly afterwards, they were greeted with a running fire of musketry. The ship then went on to Api (Epi, New Hebrides) where they met another Maryborough schooner, the *Helena*. The master of that vessel reported that they too had recently landed islanders at Tonoa (Tongoa, south of Epi) and that the men had immediately been killed, their bodies had later been discovered by boats' crews and buried at sea. While men from the *Helena* were ashore recruiting, those recruits already on board had rioted in an attempt to take the ship and loot her. The riot was violently put down and three of the islanders had been killed.³⁵



The labour vessel *Roderick Dhu*. Source - John Oxley Library print number 42183.

At the subsequent enquiry into the killing of Taby Lip, held after the ship's return to Maryborough, it was discovered that while in Maryborough Lip had been under medical care because he was known to have been insane. The Polynesian inspector, Thomas Boles Smyth, stated that Taby Lip had been brought to the ship from the 'Lunatic Reception House.' Later testifying in Maryborough, Doctor John Joseph Power stated that in his opinion Taby Lip had been insane but not violent, adding, '...we have never sent any Polynesians away when they were dangerous, but we have sent many away that were insane.'³⁶

The government agent was charged with the killing of Taby Lip, but as '...no true bill was filed,' he was discharged at the criminal sittings of the Supreme Court in April 1883.³⁷



Dr. John Joseph Power. Source - Moya Adams

John Power, the doctor who testified on this occasion, was one of Maryborough's earliest and most highly respected medical practitioners. Born at Gayndah in 1848, his father was one of the business pioneers of the Burnett and one of the founders of the firm of Power and Connolly at Gayndah. As a child John Power was taken to England by his mother, in company with his brothers and sister, so that they could benefit from a private education. He finally qualified as a doctor and later worked in hospitals in London and Paris for three years before returning to spend the remainder of his life in the Wide Bay region. He contracted typhoid fever at Gympie in late April 1886 and died a week later.³⁸

As we have seen, the landing of time-expired labourers was often extremely dangerous and was an operation which had to be handled with the utmost care. All too often the returning islanders were attacked and killed. Late in 1882, the schooner *Eliza Mary* attempted to land a number of former Maryborough labourers at Tonoa (Tonga), however, a particularly bloody inter-tribal war was being prosecuted on the island at that time and the former labourers refused to be landed. Their only choice was to re-engage as workers and return to Maryborough.³⁹

One of the problems facing recruiters was the islanders' practice of sometimes volunteering as a family group. These groups often included pre-pubescent girls and boys, who, under the Polynesian Labourers' Act, could not be legally recruited. However, when government agents attempted to send the young would-be recruits ashore, the entire family would usually also wish to go, so in some instances the agents were reluctantly forced to take the entire family knowing that when the ship arrived at the Maryborough wharf the immigration agent would refuse to have the young recruits landed and they would be returned to the islands without their families. The return of these distressed children was a cause of great resentment among the islanders and many of the attacks on ships were said to have resulted from this practice.⁴⁰

In January 1883 two islander women arrived at Maryborough with babies in their arms. Immigration officials were perplexed, as this was an entirely new experience for them. The *Chronicle* reported:

Red tape being in the Immigration Department of an uncommonly knotty character ... after a grave application to the Act ... it was decided that in order to keep a correct daily tally of all Kanakas imported hither, the babies must be treated as 'labourers', inasmuch as the Act makes no mention of babies. Accordingly the little dears must be formally engaged by the planter who takes the mothers, must sign the proscribed agreement, and be entitled to the full wages of a labourer.⁴¹

By this time South Sea Islanders were becoming used to seeing recruiting vessels plying their shores in search of recruits, and the price of labour was steadily rising. No longer was it possible to obtain labourers for a mere bag of beads or a new bags of tools and tobacco. Village chiefs were demanding cash for their men and women, the price being £2 for each recruit. According to Captain Louitt of the labour schooner *Ethel*, some ships working for the Fiji sugar trade were using forged coins to obtain their recruits. During a visit of the *Ethel* to the New Hebrides in 1883, several islanders had come aboard and offered to buy tobacco and other goods with the base coins. Louitt candidly told them that the coins were worthless. This news resulted in the islanders becoming extremely angry and they swore revenge.⁴²

Details of the voyages were usually supplied to the immigration office or the press - depending upon what had actually occurred during the trip. Many voyages were certainly cloaked in secrecy. For example, in August 1883 the *Roderick Dhu* under Captain Turner returned to Maryborough, but Turner refused to speak with the press and blocked every move made to view the ship's log.⁴³

As it became increasingly more difficult to obtain islander labour, planters all along the eastern coast of Queensland began to talk in terms of importing Indian, Sinhalese or Chinese labour. This at a time when there was strong public resentment against Asians and particularly against the growing numbers of Chinese in the colony. The *Maryborough Chronicle* was moved to report:

The supply of field hands runs shorter every year, and there is danger of the more objectionable Indian or Chinese labor being forced, under the plea of necessity, on the unsuspecting white population. Already there are seen in the north, sporadic symptoms of a tendency in that direction, and there is no telling how far it may proceed.

Under such conditions, it is both consistent and natural that the stoutest advocate for the maintenance of the European character of the community should nevertheless take to heart the homely saying, 'Better the devil you know than the devil you don't know.' Better stick to the oceanic cannibal with his easy-going pace, his unseasonable whims and fancies and his perilous taste for cheap guns and coarse ammunition, than to open a wider door to the wily, sneaking, unwholesome Asiatic who, either panders to a superstition that wholly cuts him off from fellowship with other races, or lives in an atmosphere of intrigue, gambling and opium. If we must have brown or black labour, let it be that of races who can be admitted to our intercourse with the least fear of moral contamination. The South Sea Islander is so far beneath us in the scale of social development that there is no more risk of his ever becoming an integral part of the community than of our own aborigines.⁴⁴

Some planters firmly believed that the alternative to islander or the somewhat more expensive white labour would be a return to the concept of Sinhalese workers. Men brought willingly under contract terms to replace the South Sea Islanders. Yet this would only have been replacing one antiquated and inhumane system with another - and there were serious detractors of the concept. For example, in November 1882 a local Sinhalese commission agent was planning to bring a trial consignment of workers to Maryborough. Approximately one hundred and fifty abolitionists and civil-rights campaigners in Maryborough were so incensed at this news that they paraded through the streets of Maryborough with an effigy of the Sinhalese agent borne on a horse. They also carried placards bearing anti-Sinhalese slogans. Finally the procession stopped at the ninety-acre reserve, and before a large gathering of people the effigy of the Sinhalese agent was burned. The irony of the situation was that the horse which had borne the effigy had been hired from the Sinhalese agent himself.⁴⁵

Sources and Notes for Chapter Twenty-one.

1. M/C. 5 February, 1876.
2. M/C. *ibid.*
3. M/C. 11 March, 1873.
4. M/C. 14 December, 1876.
5. M/C. 10 September, 1960, p 1.
6. For full details on this event see M/C. 21 November, 23 November, 14 December, 16 December, 1876; 21 April, 24 April, 8 May, 19 May, 1877. The executed men were buried by funeral director William Kirk in graves number H 211 and H 210. (Cemetery records).
7. M/C. 30 May, 1897.
8. M/C. 22 April, 1895.
9. M/C. 21 May, 1895.
10. M/C. 1 May, 1877.
11. M/C. 15 March, 1941 p 8.
12. QVP February, 1880, p 413.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.* p 414.
16. *Ibid.* p 415.
17. *Ibid.* p 422. See appendices for full details of inspection.
18. *Ibid.* p 427.
19. *Ibid.* p 417.
20. *Ibid.* p 409.
21. M/C. 21 April, 1884.
22. M/C. 20 January, 1881.
23. Pacific Island Immigration Report, Brisbane 20 February, 1889. QSA.
24. Part return made to the Legislative Assembly, 30 April, 1878, QSA.
25. M/C. 20 April, 1880.
26. M/C. 14 October, 1880.
27. M/C. 7 May, 1881.
28. M/C. 12 May, 1881.
29. M/C. 4 June, 1881.
30. M/C. 7 June, 1881.
31. M/C. 2 July, 1881.
32. M/C. 22 September, 1903.
33. M/C. 24 November, 1882.
34. M/C. 30 October, 1882.
35. M/C. *ibid.* 1882.
36. M/C. 25 November, 1882.
37. M/C. 28 April, 1883.
38. M/C. 6 March, 1886.
39. M/C. 16 January, 1883.
40. M/C. 4 May, 1883.
41. M/C. 20 January, 1883.
42. M/C. 15 September, 1883.
43. M/C. 20 August, 1883.
44. M/C. 13 April, 1883.
45. M/C. 12 November, 1932, p 3.

Chapter Twenty-two.

Massacre on the Young Dick.

The *Young Dick*, a Maryborough vessel, was well known in the region and had carried out recruiting missions to the South Seas since July 1884. The *Young Dick* had been built for Cass and Co. on the Humber in 1869 and used as a trader around various British and European ports. Why she was brought to Australia is not recorded, but in May 1884 she was purchased from John Jackson and George Greenwood (each owned thirty-two shares in the vessel) by Captain John Hugh Rogers, master mariner of Maryborough, who employed the Maryborough firm of Noakes and Co. as the managing agents.¹ The operations of the *Young Dick* as a labour recruiter were to be fairly brief, entering the trade for the first time in July 1884, she was lost with all hands just two years later.

Rogers was an Irishman whose family lived at Rutland Island, parish of Templecrone, county of Doonegal.²

Apart from a bloody altercation between Rogers and his boatswain during the vessel's first South Sea Islands voyage, the early recruiting voyages of the *Young Dick* were unremarkable, although Captain Rogers and his crew were cautious and aware of the dangers they faced each time they sailed to the islands. For example on 25 September, 1884 the vessel left on a recruiting mission in company with the *Roderick Dhu*. The *Young Dick* was carrying just four time-expired labourers returning to their homelands. The voyage was relatively uneventful, difficulties were experienced in obtaining recruits as the Polynesian Labourers' Act of 1880 had stipulated that the recruits were not to be allowed to obtain firearms at the expiration of their work terms. This rule did much to discourage potential recruits, as many of them volunteered for just that purpose. During this voyage Captain Rogers was informed that a slaughter had taken place on a small island near Mallicolo (Malekula). It seems that a German trader and another man, a British subject from Liverpool, had set up a trading post for a German firm. Part of their stock was a large collection of firearms. The German had been lured away from the post and killed. The islanders then attacked the small settlement, killing everyone, including all the men who had been working for the traders. They then made off with the contents of the store. Captain Rogers and his crew sailed to the island to see if there was anything they could do. He and his men found only the German '...rammed into a hole,' and the entire camp destroyed. The German trader was buried, and Rogers continued with his recruiting trip, finally landing one hundred and one islanders at Maryborough on 12 January, 1885.³ Yet the killings at Mallicolo should have sounded a warning to Rogers which may have prevented the tragedy that followed.

On 2 June, 1886, the *Young Dick* arrived once more at the port of Maryborough. Its usually immaculate wooden decking was stained with blood, there were bullet holes in the sails and planking and savage tomahawk chops were evident in much of the ship's superstructure. With her the *Young Dick* brought to Queensland a tragic account of murder and betrayal.

The schooner had originally left Brisbane on 7 April, 1886, under the command of Captain Rogers. Its crew included Charles Marr as first mate, John Hornidge as second mate and recruiter, and several other hands including able seamen, a carpenter, a cook, and a Polynesian boat's crew. The position of government agent was filled by the aristocratic Charles Home Popham-Popham.

Their first landfall was made on 24 April at Guadalcanal but as the recruiting seemed to be of little promise, Rogers took the vessel to Mabo (Mappo), on the eastern side of the southern extremity of Malaita Island in the Solomon group.

At 6.15 a.m. on Sunday 2 May, John Hornidge went ashore with a boat's crew in order to offer trade goods for labourers. In addition to the armed boat's crew, Hornidge was accompanied by an interpreter named Radi, a man who spoke reasonable English - having himself been a labourer in Fiji for three years. On reaching the beach near the village of Roas they found an islander waiting for them, a man who stated that there were many others waiting to be recruited up at his village.

The man invited Hornidge up to the village which was situated a hundred yards or so from the beach. The village chief, he said, was named Tara-koke. The country here was dense thickly-wooded rain-forest. As they neared the village, well out of sight of the boat's crew, Radi and the other islander raised their tomahawks and attacked Hornidge with sudden and totally unexpected ferocity. The recruiter was knocked to the ground, blood flowing freely from several wounds. However, he managed to get away and rushed through the undergrowth to the beach, calling for help as he did so. The boat's crew fired a few random shots into the scrub as Hornidge limped down the beach and into the boat. He was suffering from a wound to the nape of his neck which had exposed the vertebrae, another wound on the back of his right shoulder, another which had badly cut the muscles of his left side - almost exposing the ribs, and a fourth wound on the right side of his spine.⁴

The reason for the attack seems to have been revenge. After the completion of his work contract in Fiji and his return to the islands, Radi had evidently been taunted by his fellow villagers for being too friendly with the white men. The attack on Hornidge was an attempt to prove his loyalty to the village, and also in revenge for the kidnapping several years previously of the village chief, a man named Mahu, who had later died at Fiji.⁵

Upon returning to the schooner the *Young Dick* immediately weighed anchor and proceeded to Port Adam where another labour schooner, the *Meg Merrilees* was at anchor. The government agent of that vessel, a man with some basic medical skills, boarded the *Young Dick* and for several days doctored the injured man.

On 6 May the naval corvette *H.M.S. Opal*, under the command of Captain A.T. Brooke, arrived at Port Adam and its surgeon, R.W. Brereton, boarded the *Young Dick* to give medical assistance to the wounded man. Hornidge was subsequently transferred to the *Opal*. He was landed from another naval vessel at Townsville several weeks later and finally recovered from his injuries.

After the arrival of *H.M.S. Opal*, an investigation was held concerning the attack. In retaliation *H.M.S. Opal* towed the *Young Dick* around to Mabo and bombarded the vicinity of the village with a barrage of nineteen shells, apparently without inflicting any damage beyond felling a few coconut trees.

Captain Brooke later reported to his superior, Rear Admiral Tyron, commander-in-chief of the Australian Station:

After carefully weighing and considering the facts of this case, I could not but believe that the attempt on this man's life was one of a most treacherous and cruel nature. The man Radi had been at Fiji for three years, spoke English, and had been three days on board the *Young Dick* as interpreter, and was evidently only waiting his chance to kill a white man to get a head ... By his friendliness to the man Hornidge, he unfortunately put him off his guard, and enticed him a few yards from the boat. I feel sure that there was no provocation given at the time.

Taking all these facts into careful consideration, I came to the conclusion that this was a case that it was necessary to inflict punishment by an act of war; that it was impossible to expect, under the circumstances, to have it tried at any time by any civilized tribunal, and that it was of a nature to demand punishment. Accordingly ... I weighed on the morning of the 8th May from Port Adam, taking the schooner *Young Dick* in tow, and anchored both vessels in the bay opposite Tara-koke's village. I considered by having the schooner with me it would impress on the natives around more forcibly the object of my visit.

The country around all this part of Malayta (sic) is one dense, high and thick forest, and no house or village could be seen from the ship; but I had the position of the village where this tribe lived clearly pointed out by some recruits on board the *Young Dick* ...

I feel sure I hit upon the right spot, and fired some well-directed shell at the place, and as the country was so impenetrable, and neither canoes or cocoa-nuts to be seen, I considered it prudent not to land any men, but thought that this mode of punishing them would meet the case ... I (later) heard that the visit of the man-of-war, and her subsequent movements, so soon after the attack on this man, (Hornidge) has impressed and astonished the natives all round very much.⁶

After this attack the *Young Dick* then sailed up the coast of Malaita, obtaining several recruits at various places including the two islands of the North and South Sisters where one of the boat's crew was wounded in the arm with an arrow fired from the shore. The following day the ship travelled farther north to Aiyo, obtaining another recruit. They finally arrived at Sinarango (Port Diamond) on the evening of 19 May.

Anchoring several hundred yards from shore, Captain Rogers then left the vessel with two boats in order to recruit islanders. He spoke to several men on the beach but they refused to be recruited and Rogers returned to the ship for the night.

At nine thirty a.m. the following day, Rogers returned ashore with two boats and their crews. It was a cool day, rain was falling steadily as Rogers and his men made for the shore.

Popham, the government agent, was sick that day and decided not to go with them. This unfortunate decision was, for him, a death sentence.

Rogers' boats were hardly out of sight when a canoe carrying six islanders came alongside the schooner and invited all the white men ashore. The islanders stated there was a boy on the beach who was willing to be recruited. Popham told the occupants of the boat to fetch the boy and he would be recruited aboard the ship.

The canoe left, returning half an hour later with five islanders including the boy and the chief of the village. The chief was to receive trade goods in exchange for the young labourer. Popham invited them all aboard.

While the chief, accompanied by the first mate, Charles Marr, was examining a display of trade goods in the deck-house, the boy was with Popham in an adjoining cabin. Popham, pen in hand, was in the process of filling in the standard recruiting contract. Meanwhile, several dozen boats had come alongside loaded with yams, coconuts and other foods. Before the crew realized what was happening there were fifty or sixty islanders around the ship, all calling for trade. They seemed innocent enough, even friendly, but hidden in the folds of sail-cloth or under baskets of goods was a murderous array of weapons.

Aboard the vessel at this time were several men. Popham, the government agent, still in his cabin, Charles Marr, bargaining with the chief, Harry Merlin, the cook, was on deck watching the crowds, Beirr (also reported as Bean) the carpenter was in the deck-house guarding the trade goods, Lagerblom the sail-maker was standing on the forward deck, a seaman named Bash (also reported as Bust) - the man who had previously been wounded by an arrow at the Sisters Islands - was also on deck, and able seaman Thomas Crittenden was asleep in the forecabin mess.

For several minutes all was calm. Many of the islanders were now actually standing on the deck, their arms filled with fruits and vegetables.

The chief, turning abruptly sullen, demanded a further two tomahawks from Marr as trade price for the boy. Marr gently refused and began to close the trade room door. The chief immediately let out a piercing yell which was quickly taken up by the dozens of islanders now swarming over the bulwarks. The fruit and coconuts had been discarded and their hands were filled with knives and tomahawks.

Marr was seized by the chief and two other islanders, one of whom took the mate's thumb between his teeth and almost bit it off. Marr was fortunately standing in the recess of the doorway with his attackers in front of him. He freed his right hand and gave the chief a punch in the face sending him reeling. He then ran into the cabin and grasped his loaded revolver. He fired two shots and two of his attackers fell dead. Marr then began shooting at the crowded islanders on the port side of the deck-house, many of whom were in the process of cutting up the cook and carpenter. Amid the cries of the dying and the screams of the islanders, Marr heard Popham calling desperately from his cabin: 'Murder,' he shouted as the islanders crowded into the tiny room, and even as his head received the first of the tomahawk blows, he was still calling, 'murder...murder...murder,' until he was finally silenced.

Charles Marr's revolver was quickly out of ammunition and he ran through the low hatchway into his cabin for a Snider rifle before jumping across to the trade room in search of cartridges. He then continued to fire into the mass of men before him. Marr later stated:

I went into my own room and half closed the door, picked up my Snider, and seeing a native coming with a tomahawk, I fired at him and he reeled back and fell into the water; was loading again when I saw a nigger trying to hit me with a tomahawk through the window, only had one cartridge left, and the stock of cartridges was in the boatswain's room, as quick as I could I stepped across to where the ammunition was and shut the door, leaving sufficient space to fire through, fired one more shot and then the breach of the rifle jammed and I could not use it again.⁷

Able seaman Crittenden was awakened by the screams of the horde and the sudden crack of Marr's revolver. Dressed only in a singlet he scrambled up the ladder from his forecabin bunk, saw the massacre in progress and immediately returned to his bunk. He then grasped a revolver and climbed on deck.

Crittenden later stated:

...(There were) three or four kanakas scuffling with the sail-maker, don't know his name, had nothing on but a singlet, went below to my bunk and got my revolver, went on deck again going along the port side of the vessel, the scuffle was taking place on the starboard side, saw no white men this time, as soon as I got as far as the galley, one of the natives tried to stop me, jumping in front of me; I shot him; then went as far as the Government Agent's cabin, which is on deck, the natives, about a couple of dozen, were coming to me from all sides, shot those that were nearest to me, could hear the dull thuds hit as if they were tomahawking the white men.⁸

However, the seaman was soon outnumbered as the islanders fell upon him clutching at his revolver and his singlet which tore away leaving him completely naked. Yet Crittenden managed to free himself and leapt down into the forecabin where he quickly pulled on a pair of trousers, filled his pockets with cartridges, grasped a Snider rifle, and returned to the fray. On reaching the deck the islanders scattered under his fire. He ran to the foremast, climbed into the rigging and settled into the topsail-yard from where he commenced to pour bullets into the mass of islanders below.

Apart from the wounded sailor, Bash, who was also using a Snider rifle - evidently with some precision - Marr in his cabin and Crittenden in the rigging, there was only one other person aboard the schooner willing and capable of carrying on the fight. This was one of fourteen islander recruits who had come aboard from other islands at the beginning of the voyage. Instead of cowering in the hold, as were the thirteen other labourers, this man had climbed to the upper deck and was now swinging a heavy club about him. However, he was vastly outnumbered and although Crittenden did what he could to aid him from above, within a few minutes this man too was dead.

For several minutes the position remained static. Marr's gun had jammed and he was therefore incapable of continuing the fight. High above the deck Crittenden was still firing as the islanders rioted over the ship. But suddenly it ended. Unable to reach Crittenden in the rigging and having suffered severe losses, the islanders jumped overboard, some manning the canoes and others simply swimming for the shore. They timed their retreat perfectly. Crittenden had just two cartridges left in his pockets.

After a few minutes Crittenden loaded his penultimate bullet into the breech and climbed warily from the topsail yard to the deck. Bash kept firing over both port and starboard sides to prevent the islanders returning to the ship. Crittenden later stated that the scuppers at this time were literally running with blood. As he walked aft a voice came to him from one of the cabins. 'Is that you Tom?'

'Yes,' the sailor replied, recognizing Marr's voice. 'You can come out now.'⁹

Together the two men searched the ship for survivors and to ensure there were no more islanders aboard. In the government agent's cabin Marr found Popham lying in a pool of his own blood. His head was so terribly mutilated that even his teeth had been chopped from his mouth and lay scattered about the cabin. Beside him was a labour agreement form lying in a pool of blood.

The scene in the cabin was later described in the press: 'Above the cabin door are the deep marks of tomahawks. On his bed the mate Marr found stains of blood which had come from the tomahawk slashed at him through his port-hole and which had just come fresh from butchering the cook and carpenter.'¹⁰

Warily the two men continued their search. The sail-maker, Lagerblom, was found lying just inside the captain's cabin. He was barely alive and only semi-conscious. His wounds were savage, bearing evidence of repeated tomahawk blows. One of his arms was cut completely off and his skull had been cleft so deeply that the two sailors could see his brains. He survived for only a few minutes, muttered something about his watch and his mother, and died.¹¹

In the dining saloon Merlin the cook and Beirr the carpenter were both dead, their faces unrecognizable, brains splattered over the floor. The thirteen recruits who had cowered in the hold during the fracas were now brought topside and told to guard against any further attacks while Crittenden went aft to make the ensign fast to the fore truck as a signal for help to Captain Rogers. Marr ordered Bash to man the starboard cathead and to fire his rifle at regular intervals in an attempt to attract Captain Rogers' attention.

Soon afterwards he went to the deck-house for a pair of binoculars, as he did so he noticed that the curtain over the door-way to Popham's cabin had been drawn back. He looked again at Popham's mutilated body and then noticed a movement near the curtain. Looking more closely he saw an islander crouched behind the curtain, a tomahawk in his hand. Marr later testified:

... (I) saw a native crouching behind the door screen with a tomahawk; (I) laid hold of him by the wrist to pull him out but he was too greasy and drew back into the corner again, I then caught him by the hair but was unable to drag him out; sung out to Crittenden 'There's another of the natives down here with a tomahawk in his hand,' he came down and shot him dead.¹²

The captain was by now returning to the ship having had no success on his recruiting mission. When he saw the distress signal he quickly ordered his men to '...row for their lives.'

Upon arrival at the schooner he could see only Marr and Crittenden standing together on the starboard side. He called from the boat, wanting to know why Crittenden had raised a distress signal.

'Come aboard captain,' Marr replied. 'We are the only white men left.'

While the recruits continued to watch for any signs of further attack, the captain and what remained of his crew made ready to sail. The bodies of the slain crew-men were sewn into sail-cloth for burial at sea, the dead islanders were simply dropped over the side.

Thirteen days later the ravaged ship sailed into Hervey Bay and anchored at Woody Island. At Maryborough a reporter, having received information of the attack from the telegraph station on Woody Island, was waiting for them at the wharf. Within hours the story of the disaster was spreading rapidly around the town.

The precise reasons for the attack on the *Young Dick* have never been fully established, although, shortly after the arrival of the vessel at Maryborough a brief enquiry was held before the police magistrate, H.R. Buttenshaw. How many islanders had been killed during the attack was also something of a mystery. In revenge for these deaths the chiefs and the people of Sinarango later offered a reward of one hundred thousand porpoise teeth for the capture of the ship and a lesser amount for the head of a white man. In 1888 T.S. Armstrong, the government agent of the labour vessel *Ariel* (out of Bundaberg) was killed and decapitated by the Manaoba people who, travelling in a war canoe, took his head down the coast to Sinarango and claimed the reward.¹³

The *Young Dick* was destined for further tragedy. Two months later while returning islanders to New Britain and New Ireland she suddenly went missing in a storm.¹⁴ Scraps of flotsam were found on north Queensland beaches, including a piece of board with some lettering on it which the owners later identified as belonging to the ship. In December that year a small raft was discovered by a man named Alexander Carstairs, a bêche-de-mer fisherman at the South Bernard Islands. Examination of the raft seemed to indicate that it had been constructed on a coral reef, as the bottom was indented with the marks of sharp stones or coral. The raft, constructed of three airtight casks firmly lashed with rope to two pine spars, was flying the internationally designated flag N.C., indicating 'in distress, want assistance'. Carstairs also reported seeing the body of an islander, 'or person of colour,' floating on the shore of Hinchinbrook Island.¹⁵ However, the date of this sighting is not recorded. Some clothing and casks were recovered, and also some preserved fruit cases which were sent to Maryborough and identified by members of the firm W. Young and Co., the suppliers who had arranged for the *Young Dick's* stores. The true fate of the *Young Dick* remains a mystery, some of the crew evidently survived the sinking long enough to have constructed the raft, but those people were never found alive. Captain Rogers, the *Young Dick*, its crew and a total of one hundred and seventeen labourers (113 returning islanders, two rejects, a criminal and a runaway) were never seen again.¹⁶

Sources and Notes for Chapter Twenty-two.

1. Lloyd's Register.
2. File number 4936, J.H. Rogers, QSA SCT/P 148.
3. M/C. 13 January, 1885.
4. Staff Surgeon R.W. Brereton to Captain A.T. Brooke of *H.M.S. Opal*, 7 May, 1886, enclosure to number 6, Brooke's despatch of 8 May, 1886 to Rear Admiral Tryon. QSA GOV/N 5, p 114.
5. R.B. Cummings to Captain A.T. Brooke, dated 7 May, 1886, enclosure 5 in Brooke's despatch of 8 May, 1886 to Rear Admiral Tryon, QSA GOV/N 5, p 114.
6. Brooke to Tryon, 8 May, 1886, QSA GOV/N 5, pp 112-113.
7. M/C. 9 June, 1886.
8. M/C. 8 June, 1886.
9. M/C. *ibid*.
10. M/C. *ibid*.
11. M/C. *ibid*.
12. M/C. 9 June, 1886.
13. Scarr, Deryck, *Recruits and Recruiters*. Journal of Pacific History, Vol. 2 1967, p 14.
14. M/C. 24 August, 1886.
15. M/C. 9 December, 1886.
16. For further details on the massacre of the *Young Dick's* crew, and specifically the testimonies given by Crittenden and Marr, see, M/C. 3 June, 1886, 8 June, 1886, 9 June, 1886, 24 August, 1886, 9 December, 1886, and 19 July, 1887. See also, *The Young Dick* by Wilfred Fowler, Queensland Heritage, Vol. 2, number 1, November, 1969, pp 23-35).

Chapter Twenty-three.

Deeper into Mayhem.

Shortly after the killings on the *Young Dick* there occurred another massacre of a Maryborough ship's crew in the South Seas. The ship, *Janet Stewart* was owned by E.K. Rutledge, Richard Wetheron Netterfield, F.H. Palmer and Kate Powell. The vessel had left Mackay in September 1881, and by 12 February the following year they were anchored off Malaita. The skipper, Captain S.R. Thomas, and the second mate, left at 6 o'clock that morning with a boat's crew, taking with them almost the entire stock of ship's rifles, numbering some seven weapons. The testimony of Gustave Germain, an able seaman on board at the time, makes interesting reading:

...about seven o'clock saw niggers coming from a small island off Malata (sic), they came in canoes, every canoe chock full of niggers, they came on board and in no time the deck was crowded. At about 8 o'clock, when the cook sang out breakfast, the niggers made an attack on us. I was forward, they came on me, 4 or 5 of them. I drew my knife and struck one of them, and jumped down the forecastle where I found Patersen, a seaman, sick in his bunk. I said, 'Come down in the chain locker with me, everybody is being killed on deck,' he would not come with me, he said, 'The niggers will not harm me.' I went down into the chain locker by myself. Chain locker is under the forecastle, it is used to stow away the anchor chain. When down there I heard steps of some 4 or 5 niggers coming down the hatchway, heard one nigger say in English to Patersen, 'You old fool, what are you doing in your bunk all the time? Go on deck.' Patersen said he was sick, the nigger then said, 'Go on shore and we will give you some medicine.' ... Afterwards heard the nigger tell Patersen that if he did not get up and go on deck, they would kill him. I heard Patersen go on deck, then heard blows of tomahawks and then heard a body fall on deck. I did not hear anything more, niggers were shouting and dancing on deck.¹

After this attack on the ship's crew, the islanders left for shore, but returned shortly afterwards with the evident intention of sacking and burning the vessel. A search was made for any crew members who may have survived the killings, and Germain, in the chain locker, was terrified as the hatch to the locker was opened. However, the seaman was not seen as he was hidden behind a wooden board. Later he could smell kerosene and heard the islanders pouring fuel on the decks. Soon afterwards he also heard the sound of the captain's voice and he came from below to discover that the islanders had fled after firing the ship. The flames were extinguished but evidently the damage was severe as Captain Thomas decided to abandon the ship. What happened next is still something of a mystery. Germain gave the impression in his later testimony that the *Janet Stewart* may still have been sea-worthy, despite the damage done by the islanders. His evidence seemed to indicate that the captain and the second mate had conspired to burn the ship, the reasons for this were never made apparent other than a vague claim that it was an attempt to defraud the creditors of the ship's owners. In any case, the ship was somehow fired, by whom and why, was never discovered. The captain, second mate, Germain and the boat's crew took to the boats and sailed to Fiji where they finally arrived on 15 February.

Thomas and the second mate were eventually taken back to Australia aboard the schooner *Isabel*, but as Germain could not afford to pay the £10 passage money, he was left to fend for himself in Fiji until rescued by a Royal Naval vessel, *H.M.S. Diamond*.² Captain Thomas was later charged with setting fire to the *Janet Stewart*, but because of the lack of evidence, all charges were eventually dropped at the criminal sittings which took place at Maryborough in April 1883.³

But perhaps one of the most wilful and abhorrent episodes of the South Sea Islander trade at Maryborough was the deliberate recruiting of two tribal slaves and their subsequent murder by the crew of the schooner *Alfred Vittery* in October 1883.

This case is an interesting one, for it demonstrates that government agents were certainly lax and sometimes criminally so when selecting recruits, and some of them had few scruples when it came to obtaining the required number of recruits.

The *Alfred Vittery* left Maryborough in September 1883. On 3 October that year the ship was at Malaita in the Solomons loading recruits. A village chief named Pasoollier, had brought two men to the beach so they could be recruited - Toolah, aged twenty-five years and Keyola, aged thirty-six. The ship's captain, Frederick Boore, gave the chief two muskets, two tomahawks, two long knives, two small knives, four fathoms of calico, twenty sticks of tobacco, twenty clay pipes, two lbs of shot, two lbs of beads, two jew's harps, two mouth organs, two magnifying glasses, two boxes of caps and two tins of gunpowder for the muskets, in payment for the two recruits.⁴

Even the government agent, Robert Freeman, later admitted that these men did not seem to be of the same tribe, and that they looked to be men from the bush. Both men were exceedingly frightened and in a terrible state of malnutrition. Despite this and the rather obvious implications that both men were slaves captured during inter-tribal fighting, Freeman decided that they were 'willing' recruits and took them on board the *Alfred Vittery*. The chief, for some unknown reason, also came aboard at this time. The captain, seeing that the recruits were extremely emaciated, ordered the cook, Christian Johansen, to give them some food. Johansen gave them salt beef and bread but the two men could only eat a little of the meal. All that day Toolah and Keyola were allowed to remain on deck with a group of other recruits. At sunset they took a blanket each and went below to where a number of bunks lined the bulkheads of the recruit accommodation. The following morning one of the two frightened islanders urinated on his bunk and the other men started to laugh at him. An altercation immediately took place, Toolah and Keyola, armed themselves, one with a bow and arrow, the other with a trade knife, and a fight immediately commenced with the other recruits.

The conflict quickly drew the attention of the captain, government agent and crew, most of whom rushed to arm themselves with Snider rifles and revolvers. The captain shouted: 'We will have to use firearms to those boys directly.'⁵

Armed sailors surrounded the main hatch, another went aft and down into the women's compartment to cover the fight through the gratings. In the hold the two recruits now broke open a crew locker, piled blankets against the bulkhead, poured oil over the blankets, and using a box of matches, attempted to fire the ship. The attempt proved unsuccessful when a wind blew out the match. Someone - presumably the captain - ordered that firing should commence, and a volley of shots rang out. According to testimony given by several witnesses at the subsequent trial, the firing lasted for about twenty minutes. Finally, when the shooting died down, a number of sailors went below. Toolah and Keyola had both been hit. Keyola was dead in a bunk, Toolah was wounded and also lying in a bunk. One of the sailors grasped each of them by the arm and pulled them to the deck, other islander recruits then lifted them on to the upper deck where they were placed together on the port side near the mast. According to one of the witnesses at the subsequent trial, the chief, who was still aboard, when he realized that the two men had been shot, '...did a sort of war dance around the hatchway and seemed very pleased,'⁶ Toolah was lying on his belly, he groaned and lifted his head to look around him. He looked directly at the chief, groaned again and rested his head on the bloodied deck. The captain then ordered that both men should immediately be buried at sea. Gunny sacks were brought and filled with stone ballast. These sacks were then tied to the men's ankles. The first to go over the side was Keyola, the sailors passing his body through a hole in the ship's bulwarks. They then lifted Toolah to the hole, his heart was still pumping, his chest rising and falling as he breathed - although he was covered with blood. One of the sailors, a man named Robert Grimes, lifted his revolver and shot him in the head. The body was then tipped into the sea.

Upon the ship's return to Maryborough the captain's log was handed over to Mr G.H. Burn, the shipping master, and the entry concerning the incident was pointed out to him. Burn read: '...8.30 a.m., when loosening sail, my attention was drawn to a noise and I found two maniacs below fighting and armed, both out of their mind, and after trying to get them up the whole morning, we had to shoot them. They were well known characters on shore, and had killed many boys (islanders), and on being caught, were only saved from being tomahawked by being sent on board as recruits in exchange for presents.'⁷

Government agent Robert Freeman also stated:

After two hours trying to get the maniacs up, and when they were going to fire the vessel, the captain said we must do something, all the white men were armed, several shots were fired, it was about half an hour between the first and last shot; the bodies were then brought up; one was dead and put over the side, and the other died soon afterwards ... Robert Grimes shot the dying one in the head.⁸

Captain Frederick Boore, the government agent - Robert Freeman, and three crew members, Alexander Jessamine, John Poro and Robert Grimes were arrested and taken to the Maryborough lock-up where they were charged with murder on the high seas. A sixth man, crew member William Bruce Merrie, was also later charged. Captain Boore claimed that he had never ordered anyone to commence shooting and Robert Grimes, who had administered the *coup-de-grâce* to Toolah, stated: 'Well the boy was alive, but I only did what the government man told me.'⁹

During the preliminary hearings, one man, Charles Chapman, the first mate aboard the *Alfred Vittery*, who had not participated in the killing, stated that he had attempted to go down into the hold to pacify the two islanders but he had only managed to go so far down the ladder before he was dragged up again by another crew member. However, he stated that the two islanders were both huddled together on a bunk, very frightened, and they had done nothing to harm Chapman as he stood on the ladder.¹⁰

The Maryborough hearings ended on 22 November and the defendants were committed to stand trial at the criminal sittings of the Supreme Court in Brisbane.¹¹

Finally, the only man to be convicted was Robert Grimes, primarily because of the cold-blooded killing of Toolah. Captain Boore and the remainder of his acquitted crew returned to Maryborough on 4 April, 1884, but according to a report in the *Maryborough Chronicle*, they were later debarred by the government from employment in the Polynesian labour trade.¹²

Interestingly, while the trial was taking place, the *Alfred Vittery* was at sea once again - now under the command of Captain Rasmussen with a government agent named Hornbrook. The ship left Maryborough on 26 November, 1884 and sailed to the same harbour where Toolah and Keyola had been killed. Rasmussen interrogated one of the village chiefs, a man named Iny Iny, who stated that another chief, whom he named as Qui-su-lia, had been the instigator of the trouble. The *Alfred Vittery* continued with its recruiting voyage but her luck finally ran out when she was wrecked on a reef at the Caen (Kann) Islands. Captain Rasmussen managed to get the crew and recruits ashore where he set up a stockade. They were finally rescued by the schooner *Lochiel* under the command of Captain Evans. Evans offered to take them on board and to land the recruits at Mackay at a cost of £16 per head. Rasmussen refused and the *Lochiel* sailed away. The following day the *Lochiel* returned and the two captains finally negotiated a price of £13 per head plus all the salvage from the ill-fated *Alfred Vittery*. This salvage consisted of, '... three boats, two chronometers, a stand of arms and ammunition, one ton of rice, five hundredweight of bread, five hundredweight of flour, beads, trade goods and small stores.'¹³

Another ill-fated labour vessel regularly bringing recruits to Maryborough was the schooner *Stanley*, owned by E.B.C. Corser, Richard Wetheron Netterfield, and F.H. Palmer.

The *Stanley* had left the government wharf Maryborough at 3.30 on the afternoon of 31 March, 1883, for a recruiting trip to the islands. The crew of the vessel included the first mate, William Connell, the second mate, Sydney Gerrans, a French cook named Daniel Moussue and several able seamen including George Adams, Edward Austin, Francis Rowan and Frank Chaillon. The crew also consisted of eight islanders, listed as ordinary seamen but really used mainly as boats' crews.¹⁴

With Captain Joseph Griffith Davies in command and William Anastasias McMurdo as government agent, the *Stanley* landed at the Louisiade Archipelago where, despite the peaceful attitude of the islanders, (many of whom seemed to be suffering from some kind of skin disease) no recruits were obtained. Davies wished to take some of the islanders but McMurdo warned him that as the men were obviously ill they would not be passed by the medical authorities in Maryborough. The men returned to the boat, Davies openly hostile towards McMurdo. The government agent's log reveals the subsequent conversation between Davies and McMurdo as they travelled back to the ship.

Davies: 'I hope you're not going to make trouble, mister.'

McMurdo: 'Trouble? Kindly be more precise, sir.'

Davies: 'We'll get on better if you don't talk too much law to me - you've got to be practical in this line of business.'

McMurdo: 'Captain Davies, you're new to the labour trade and maybe you don't know much about me.'

Davies: 'I've heard plenty.'

McMurdo: 'Then you know that I'll not exceed what I regard as my duty but make no mistake, sir, I'll not fall short of it and it's just as well there should be no misunderstanding about this.'¹⁵

The ship departed the island and after experiencing extremely rough weather anchored several days later off the Laughlan (Nada) group of islands. These islands formed a coral lagoon approximately three miles wide. McMurdo was sent ashore to bring the king of Tabataba (Tibitab) Island to the ship, a man he had known for fourteen years. Meanwhile, a German copra and shell trader named Carl Tetzlaff (known generally as German Charlie) came to the ship from his trading post on the nearby island of Bugalun (Bukulan). He received a somewhat frosty reception from Captain Davies, but as the German's supplies were low - no ship having visited the islands for approximately a year - Davies allowed him to purchase a quantity of stores and some liquor. When he left the *Stanley* Tetzlaff was quite drunk.

Over the following few days thirteen recruits were signed on and paid for with axes, tobacco, turkey, red twill, beads and jew's harps. The recruits were allowed to remain on shore so that they might bid their families and friends farewell. However, Tetzlaff, loth to lose his workers, allegedly persuaded these recruits not to

return to the ship the following morning. When Davies realized that the men had deserted he and the government agent - accompanied by an armed party - rowed ashore in several boats. As they were about to land a shot was fired at them from shore. Despite this the punitive party landed, captured two of the absconding islanders, burned the village huts and some store-sheds belonging to the trader and destroyed a quantity of copra. The vessel then sailed to a variety of destinations, including the Woodlark Islands, forty miles west of the Laughlans, where no recruits were forthcoming, New Britain, two hundred and fifty miles to the north-west where they were greeted by sullen islanders, and finally the Duke of York Islands where there were a number of seemingly willing recruits. Here, however, the government agent had difficulty understanding the islanders' dialect and the ship returned to New Britain for interpreters. Over the following four weeks a full consignment was subsequently obtained from various islands along the long coastal stretch of New Ireland.

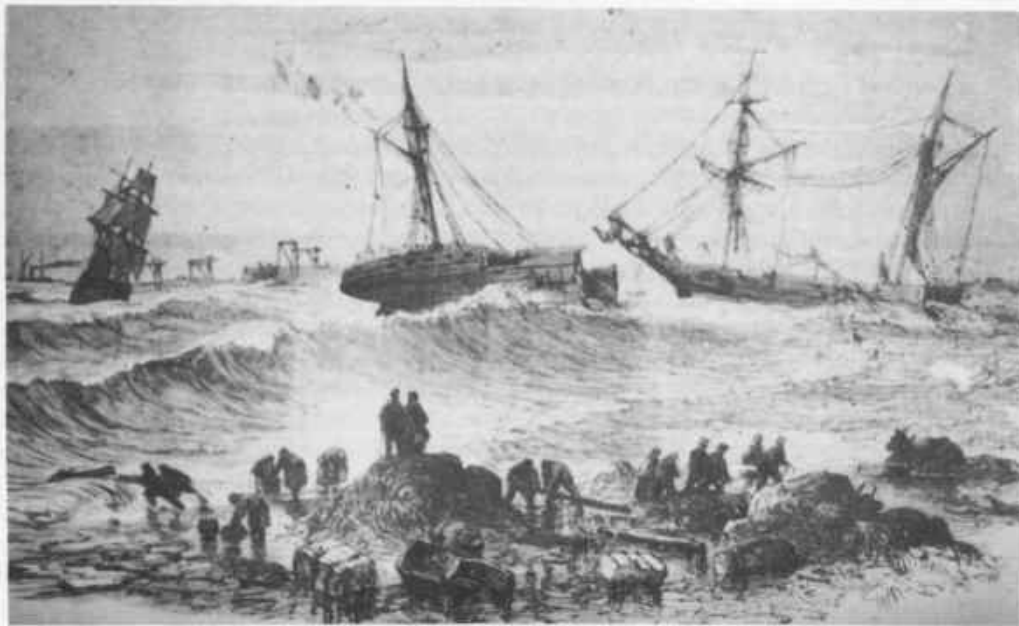
The relationship between McMurdo and Davies was by now becoming ever more tense. McMurdo was hostile towards Davies for his questionable recruiting practices, claiming that Davies had attempted to obtain recruits who did not know where they were going or for how long. During an angry exchange of words Davies lost his temper and incautiously taunted McMurdo, telling him there were three men on board who had been recruited without fully understanding their contractual obligations and that they had come aboard without McMurdo realizing the true circumstances of their recruitment. McMurdo quickly investigated and discovered that there were, in fact, six such recruits. He wrote a formal complaint to Davies demanding that the men be returned to their island and stating that he had cancelled their agreements. He warned that a copy of the letter would be given to the authorities after the ship returned to Maryborough.¹⁶ For the following day nothing more was said about the matter, but that evening while the men were at supper together Davies suddenly told McMurdo that he had no intention of landing the recruits. McMurdo warned the captain that he would face criminal charges and that the recruits would have to be repatriated at the expense of the ship's owners. Finally, reluctantly, on 31 May, Davies agreed to return the men. The recruits were subsequently placed aboard a boat and with Davies in charge were returned to shore, although the landing place was approximately five miles from where they had been recruited. As McMurdo - following in a second boat - came closer to the site, he heard gunfire from the beach and assumed that the men had landed among hostile natives and had been killed. He remonstrated with Davies who told him that it was '...impossible to please him.'¹⁷

The supply of fresh water was now becoming dangerously low and McMurdo forced Davies to call at Port Poraslin (Kambotorosch Harbour, near Wallis Island) in order to take on a supply of firewood and water. On the 4th and 5th of June supplies were taken aboard, and while this was taking place one of the recruits deserted. A boat was sent to Wallis Island to look for him but he was never recovered.

Over the following three weeks, as the ship sailed for the Solomon Islands, the supply of yams became exhausted and the islanders refused to eat the rice which was served to them. McMurdo attempted a number of methods including sweetening the rice, mixing it with meat and even mincing the meat and rice together. Finally he was forced to take a cane to the recruits before they would agree to eat the food. Some of them attempted to bribe him with a clam-shell armband as an inducement to be returned to their island, yet they had been legally recruited, had signed a contract, and there was nothing he could do for them.

On 1 July, 1883, when the ship was east-north-east of the Indispensable Reefs, the weather suddenly turned foul. The wind increased dramatically and the night sky was lit with striking flashes of lightning. The foretopsail and cap sails were taken in, and all light sails were lowered. Driven before this powerful storm, the ship edged closer to the reef as the winds increased in violence. Suddenly breakers were seen ahead of the ship - a luminous wash in the darkness of the night. The helm was put hard to port but it was already too late. Within moments the vessel struck the rocks and lay over on its starboard beam. Frightened islander recruits, believing that the ship would quickly sink, rushed from below. During the scramble one of them was killed. All sails were taken in but as the night was completely dark nothing more could be done until the following morning. When dawn broke Captain Davies ordered that the fore and main masts were to be cut away and that a raft be constructed as the reef was entirely submerged - even at low tide. While this was being done Davies supervised repairs to the whale-boat which had been extensively damaged when the ship had struck. When all this work had been completed a consultation was held and it was decided that the captain should take the whale-boat with a small crew and endeavour to seek help at the nearest island.

On 7 July Davies and his boat's crew left for Makira Bay at San Cristoval, one hundred and fifty miles distant, which he reached three days later. Here no help was at hand, and leaving his exhausted men in a clean hut provided by Tai, the chief of Makira, Davies commenced a difficult journey. Guided by an islander, he travelled across the island and then by canoe to the island of Ugi. At Ugi Davies met with Captain Stephens, a trader who looked after a coal dump and supply depot for British naval vessels. Stephens told him that there were no ships in the vicinity and that it would be at least a year before one called at the port. He advised Davies to go to Santa Anna at the southern tip of San Cristoval, and using a native runner Davies sent a message to his men for them to bring the ship's boat around the island to Ugi.



An artist's impression of the wrecking of the labour vessel Stanley.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 97138.

After rowing for two days the crew arrived at Ugi. There was an altercation between Davies and his men, Davies wishing to leave immediately but the men complaining that after rowing for so long they needed a period of rest. Davies, calling them all 'lily-livered,' finally relented.

Two days after leaving Ugi they arrived at Santa Anna where they found a fifty-ton cutter, the *Minnie May* and a house occupied by an American trader named Captain McDonald, his daughter a half caste girl of seventeen years, and an older man named Charlie Sproul who carried out general duties in return for food and accommodation.

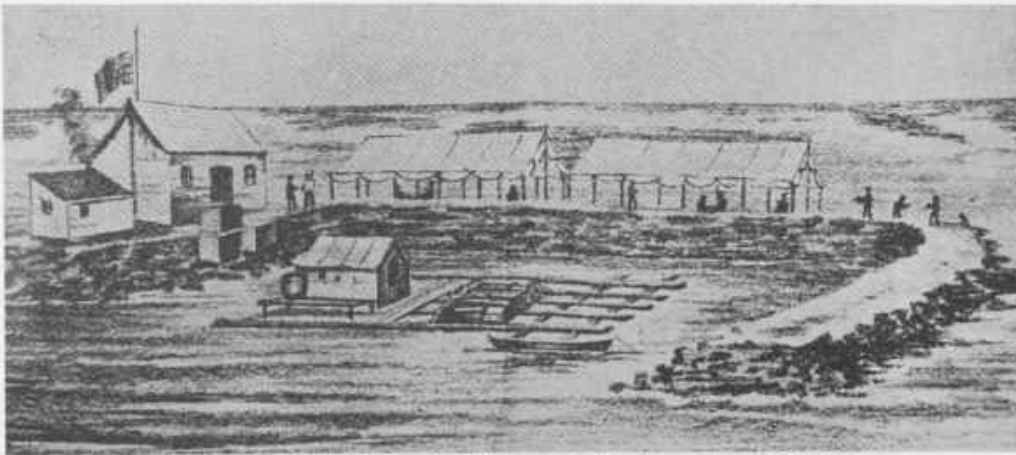
Three days later Davies and McDonald took the *Minnie May* to the reef in an attempt to rescue the remaining stranded crewmen and the recruits, however, the seas were too rough and McDonald was forced to return to Santa Anna.

Meanwhile, on the reef, the government agent, William McMurdo, was struggling to keep himself and those under his command alive. It was no easy task, and it soon became evident to McMurdo that he would have to maintain the strictest form of discipline if he and his party were to survive.

McMurdo was an interesting and courageous man. Humourless and particularly conscientious, he feared nothing and was a firm believer in the power of the law and of righteousness. His left leg was deformed, the result of osteomyelitis, and the islanders called him 'One Leg'. Despite this disability he was an extremely tough character who was capable of enduring severe hardships.

Working under particularly difficult conditions, he and the remainder of the stranded men laboured to build a coral platform above the high tide level. When this first construction was completed, and as the ship steadily broke up under the pounding waves, timbers were salvaged and rough huts constructed. There was no immediate shortage of food, the ship's supplies were landed on the reef and carefully stored on the new constructions above the high tide mark. Yet these supplies had to be strictly rationed. McMurdo had no idea how long they would be stranded on the reef and he imposed a careful diet scale on the men. This led to many instances of pilfering which McMurdo had no hesitation in punishing with the cat-o'-nine tails. One of the islanders was whipped so badly that within hours he died. Two others died soon afterwards. McMurdo had no way of knowing that many people from the coastal New Guinea region suffered from malaria and that corporal punishment inflicted on such sufferers generally resulted in the rupture of the malaria-enlarged spleen, thus causing death.

When the *Minnie May* suddenly appeared at the edge of the reef all the stranded men thought they had been saved. Yet it soon became obvious that the cutter could come no closer, McMurdo valiantly endeavoured to reach the rescue vessel aboard the raft, but almost died in the attempt. The *Minnie May* immediately returned to Santa Anna.



Artist's impression of the breakwater shelter erected by the survivors of the labour vessel *Stanley*. Reference C.O. 225/15 at folio 415, Public Record Office, London.

Several days later the schooner *Venture* arrived at the harbour and it was arranged for the *Venture* to take off the stranded men. The skipper of the *Venture*, Captain Woltsch, at first refused to aid in the rescue until promised payment of £12 for each islander he landed in Queensland. He later boasted that it was the most profitable trip he had ever undertaken.

The rescue operation was eventually carried out, eight weeks after the wrecking of the *Stanley*, and the shipwrecked sailors and recruits were soon afterwards landed at Brisbane.

McMurdo and Davies were almost immediately arrested and charged with the kidnapping of two islanders at the Laughlan Islands. Yet before these charges could be heard in court the two men were sent to Fiji where the German trader Carl Tetzlaff had brought a complaint against them for the destruction of his huts and copra. The high commissioner at Fiji, Sir William Des Voeux, sentenced them to three months' imprisonment, but after reading McMurdo's log of the weeks he had spent on the Indispensable Reefs he finally ordered their release and even instigated a subscription for them. The German trader was eventually awarded a substantial indemnity by the Queensland government in payment for his destroyed property.¹⁸

The animosity usually inherent between the captain of a labour vessel and its government agent was a continuing problem for the courts. In 1883 charges were brought by the government agent of the labour schooner *Sybil*, against its master, Captain MacIntosh. (Later reported in the press as Captain R. MacIntyre - see M/C. 21 December, 1883).

The government agent, educated and articulate George de Lautour, (who had once worked as a butcher on the Cape River gold diggings,¹⁹) claimed that conditions aboard the schooner were appalling, that there had been no discipline, crew members were often drunk and that he had been offered bribes to overlook dubious recruiting methods.

During the official enquiry held at Maryborough on 19 December that year, de Lautour testified that on 27 September he had been employed as government agent aboard the *Sybil* and he had first seen the captain under the influence of alcohol on 10 October, three days before their arrival at Aneityum. (Aneityum, also Anatom, at the southern tip of the New Hebrides). He said that thereafter the captain was almost continually intoxicated, crew members too were frequently in various states of intoxication and the mate, R.D. White, was in the habit of going ashore to drink. On one occasion he had gone to visit a German vessel in Havannah harbour and had made a nuisance of himself with the women on board. The government agent had complained to the captain but no action had been taken. De Lautour stated that he believed the alcohol placed aboard for the voyage amounted to ten gallons of rum, ten gallons of whisky, a case of beer and a case of brandy. The agent also complained that the food provided on the ship was inedible, stating that he, '...had cause to complain of the cooking about the 26th October; everything in connection with the food was so beastly dirty that one could get nothing to eat, and the food was being wasted to a very great extent. It was a fact that in laying the table, the cook would come in with his hands all covered with blood after killing a pig or the like.'²⁰

De Lautour added that another cook had been appointed but his cooking was evidently so poor that even the captain berated him - the original cook, for some unexplained reason, by now having been placed in irons. Several men at Havannah stated that they would have volunteered to act as cook, but there was too much drinking and trouble on board the vessel. Shortly afterwards, while recruiting at Tanna (Tana), several young



Recruits aboard a South Sea Islander labour vessel.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 103470.

islander boys were brought on board but de Lautour refused to have them recruited because of their age. De Lautour described them as being, 'mere children'.²¹ According to de Lautour, the captain then asked him if the shipping agents, Graham and Co., had informed him that if the ship returned to Maryborough with a full consignment of labourers, de Lautour would receive from Graham and Co., a bribe of £50.²²

De Lautour also complained of having his personal papers rifled by some unknown member of the crew and said that the ship was not seaworthy. He added that the main boom was rotten and had broken in a modest breeze. He also said that on 9 October the ship had sprung a leak, the decks leaked excessively, the pumping gear was out of order, the wheel was in bits and lashed with twine, the bulwarks were rotten and there were no proper hatches on board in case of a hurricane or heavy seas.

De Lautour's claims were corroborated by Captain H. Turner, a former skipper of the *Sybil*, who, during the enquiry, stated that he would not sail on board the vessel again until substantial repairs had been carried out. He claimed that the hull was sound but that the spars were made of cheap Maryborough pine and would not last. He too added that some of the decks were rotten.

De Lautour's personal accommodation on the *Sybil* was certainly below the standard prescribed by the 1880 Pacific Island Labourers' Act. He later described this accommodation for the magisterial enquiry:

The accommodation (bunk) provided for me on board as government agent was six feet long, two feet broad, and fourteen inches high, and I was obliged to always lie on my back. My clothes I had to keep in the boys' (islanders') compartment, and the boys were not on board two days before mumps broke out among them from exposure to the wet, as every drop that came on deck went through down below.²³

By now, however, de Lautour had had enough. Returning to Havannah harbour, he informed the captain, in writing, that he intended leaving the ship.

During the subsequent enquiry which was held at Maryborough, the captain, R. MacIntosh, refuted all the allegations and made a few allegations of his own, namely that it was de Lautour who had been drinking heavily, that de Lautour had been responsible for the poor quality of the food because he was always complaining; that Graham and Co. had not offered any bribes and that de Lautour had been guilty of illegal recruiting methods.

De Lautour did not sail in the *Sybil* again. During an adjournment from the enquiry he was injured aboard the steamer *Ceratodus* while that vessel was conducting a fishing trip to Pialba. De Lautour was in the act of lighting a New Year's Chinese candle when the firework unexpectedly exploded. He suffered a dislocated finger and burns to his face and eye. He was taken to the Maryborough hospital where his condition was described as being 'satisfactory'.²⁴

After his recovery de Lautour's next berth seems to have been aboard the schooner *Jessie Kelly*, under the command of Captain Brixstone, but this too was an unfortunate appointment. The vessel arrived in Nouméa on 15 March, 1884 and was later described as being in a 'distressed state'. On board at this time were ninety returning islanders. A survey of the vessel was carried out by port authorities and, according to a report published a month later, the ship was condemned as being unsafe.²⁵ The islanders were taken on board the French schooner *Ernestine* for return to their islands, and the *Jessie Kelly* was sailed back to Sydney for repairs.²⁶ Yet when she returned George de Lautour was not on board, and, over the following months, the rumours were widely circulating in Maryborough - much to the anxiety of his young son - that de Lautour had been killed, or was lost, or that he was dying somewhere in the South Sea Islands.

Believing that he was dead, de Lautour's son had been housed by friends and was being well looked after. However, in August 1884 the missing government agent suddenly reappeared in Maryborough. A letter, written by de Lautour to the commanding officer of the rescue ship, *H.M.S. Miranda*, gives a brief description of his adventures during the time that he was in the islands:

Aoba, (Oba, New Hebrides) Mount Merahai,

9th July, 1884.

My Dear Captain Thomas,

I was glad when some boys came and told me this morning that a ship was in sight and coming around the north end of the island. The *Borough Belle*, *Sibyl*, *Marie Flora* and the *Ernestine*, have all passed here going north, your vessel being the first from the north. A short account of my rambles since I saw you in Maryborough may interest you. You will have heard in Havannah Harbour about the *Jessie Kelly*, whose bottom nearly fell out near the Bampton Reefs, and we had to put into Nouméa 14 days from Mackay. Here, the vessel was condemned, and the authorities refused to allow the return boys to proceed in her. I had 98 ½ return labourers on board. Another vessel, the *Ernestine*, was chartered in Nouméa to convey these boys to their homes, and I had to accompany them to see them properly landed (according to the) Labour Act 1880. All went well to Havannah Harbour. I had been ailing myself for some time, and was very ill here but had not time to lay up. Off the island of Sacone, where I had landed 38 ½ boys, we got a terrible hurricane, stripping the vessel of sails, stays, boats etc. I had then 21 returns on board for Malo and Santo, and everyone was battered down for three days and three nights. The man at the wheel died from sheer fright ... I was at death's door, having low fever and congestion of the lungs. The fourth morning the hurricane abated and the atmosphere was clear. We sighted land which proved to be the island of Sepori (we must have been thrown 100 miles off course in a straight line), on the 5th morning ... I had the hatches taken off and the 21 returns who were, before the hurricane, fine, fat, healthy fellows, were worn to shadows from the fright and had to be carried up on deck. After the hurricane commenced, these poor fellows (I had 3 Santo women amongst them) clung to me and begged me not to lose them in the salt-water, it was a terrible time and I never dreamt for a second that any of us would live to tell the tale. Captain Faber told me on the fourth morning that we might prepare for the worst, but I think we were all prepared for that after the first day. On the afternoon of the fifth day we sighted the brigantine *Emily*, and hoisted distress signals. She came towards us, and I got on board somehow and explained matters to Captain McDougall and he kindly offered to land my 21 returns for me as he was going to those islands to recruit, and advised me to stop on board his vessel. Had I not done so, two more days would have seen me over the side with a weight to my feet. Thanks to the kindness of those on board the *Emily*, in a

month's time I had partly recovered my strength and we were now at the island of Aoba. The *Emily* intended to go to the Solomons to recruit, and, as I had no wish to go to the Solomons, and I was anxious to return to Queensland, the copra makers at Wallaha on Aoba told me that a vessel was expected from Nouméa in two days. This was a grand chance for me to get home so I elected to stop here, having made arrangements with the copra makers to feed me. I found, after the *Emily* had gone, that these people had no tucker and were living on yams and fish, also, that there was every prospect that one of them, a Nouméan jail-bird, being murdered by the natives, as this brute had been ravishing some of the natives' women. So I took my odds and ends, (I had lost everything but my two tin despatch boxes in the hurricane), and went inland 4 miles to the hill tribes where there was a powerful chief. Through an interpreter, I explained to him how I was situated, and asked him if he would let me stop till a vessel came so that I could get away. He gave me a house to myself, told off two boys to look after me, and he and his people treated me with the greatest kindness. My two days turned out to be two months. I felt my solitude terribly at times, but I have not met with greater kindness amongst my own people ... I was admitted to all their sing-sings, in one sing-sing there were over 1000 people present, but some of their plays are very obscene. When I told them I was coming away in your ship, the old, the young, the maimed, hurt and blind, cried like little children, and didn't like me leaving at all. I went on board the *Sybil* as she was passing. The captain refused point blank to let me have any supplies as the chiefs tabooed the vessel and would not let any of the boys go away in her. Whilst on the island I was admitted to sing-sings that no white man has ever seen before. I walked about a great deal, would be away for a day at a time sleeping in some village and returning next day. At last my boots got worn out and I had to stop at home. Hundreds of people came to see me from all parts, always bringing presents of yams, taro, pigs or fowls. The want of water I felt very much at first, as there is no water where I was, cocoanut milk taking its place, and after a while I felt it a very good substitute. I am glad Her Majesty's ship *Miranda* has come, as the natives will be able to get some of their grievances put straight. They are very anxious to get this Nouméan jail-bird previously mentioned ... They cannot be blamed if they make roast beef of him.²⁷

What became of de Lautour after this is difficult to accurately ascertain. With his son he evidently returned to the islands, drawn there by his great love of the region and his evident respect for the people. In 1887 he wrote a lengthy letter to the editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier*, describing in detail his life among the island people and even telling of the death of a great chief - presumably the one referred to in his earlier correspondence. De Lautour wrote that the chief had died of an internal haemorrhage and that two of his eleven wives had immediately committed suicide by tying tight cords around their throats and strangling themselves.²⁸ It is known, however, that de Lautour settled on a small island near Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides, where he operated a modest plantation.²⁹

The labour schooner *Sybil*, aboard which de Lautour first came to prominence in Maryborough, was later wrecked in South-West Bay, Mallicolo (Malekula). The ship had left Maryborough on 10 December, 1886, under the command of a Captain Callander. She carried aboard eighty-four time-expired labourers and eleven Europeans. The voyage to the islands was rather slow, owing to strong head-winds, and the schooner did not arrive at its destination of Port Resolution in Tanna (Tana) until 24 December. The next day, being Christmas, all recruiting was suspended and the crew and islanders enjoyed a day of sports with the ship dressed in flags and bunting. It was a festive day, the men and islander women of the *Sybil* held boat and canoe races, and that evening enjoyed a typical Christmas dinner. On Boxing Day the task of recruiting commenced. They had obtained only fourteen labourers when the weather turned suddenly foul and the captain decided to leave the unprotected shores of Tanna and run before the wind for Erromango (Eromanga) and Api (Epi, south-east of Malekula) where they had to drop off returning islanders. It was while they were anchored some distance off-shore at Api that an important chief died on a small island close to the anchorage. Knowing the often barbarous customs of the islanders, the government agent of the *Sybil*, Mr E.F. Hely, ordered that no food should be brought aboard, as local superstition could have laid blame for the chief's death on the visit of the ship. If this was the case, then it was likely that poisoned food would be sent aboard in retaliation for the chief's death. The caution, however, was not heeded by one young recruit who brought aboard a small store of coconuts for his voyage to Queensland. After eating one he died in agony just a few hours later.

Leaving Api, the schooner proceeded to the notorious island of Paama and then west to Mallicolo (Malekula), anchoring in South-West Bay. It was to be the ship's final resting place.

Native food at the time was fairly scarce in the island group - except at Mallicolo - so Captain Callander decided to stock up on yams for the recruits and to fill his water tanks. Soon afterwards it began to rain, heavy winds came roaring into the bay and the *Sybil* could do nothing but wait out the rising storm. They waited for two days and on the evening of the third day the gale intensified. Both anchors were already out and the

Captain ordered the main chain to be paid out in a desperate attempt to stabilize the ship and to prevent the vessel being crowded up onto a jagged reef which protected the anchorage.

As the hours passed so the storm intensified. The anchors dragged and soon afterwards the ship struck hard on the rocks, smashing the aft cabin. The chains were slipped and the ship was dashed right inside the reef. In an effort to stabilize the schooner the masts were cut away but it was too late, the ship was clearly doomed.

On deck there was great confusion. One woman, a returning islander, had her young child torn from her arms by the fury of the sea. Her cries, the mate later recorded, were heartrending, and she had to be forcibly prevented from throwing herself overboard after her child. Another woman was flung to the lee side of the ship and although she had her child held tightly in her arms, it was suffocated before she could be rescued. A Santo Island man was washed into the hold where he drowned. The stormy night, lit only by the ethereal glow from a few remaining ship's lanterns, was a scene of terror. Finally, the storm began to ease and as dawn broke a boat was lowered to ferry the surviving passengers and crew to the shore. By 6 a.m. all were landed safely but they were in a miserable condition, most were soaked, many quite naked and all were desperately hungry and tired.

After some hours the rain finally cleared. A few fires were lit and a temporary camp formed. The local islanders brought the survivors some coconuts, yams and cooked meats. All that had been saved from the wreck included a few wet blankets, two Snider rifles and some damp powder and shot. The weapons were brought primarily for protection should the islanders attack, however, the survivors were in no danger, the islanders actually helped to build a protective fence around their camp and continued to supply them with food. A few days later Captain Callander, an able seaman named J. Maran and a boat's crew, left in a small open boat in an effort to reach Port Sandwich where they could expect assistance from the missionaries. In fact they were fortunate. When they finally arrived at the anchorage - some fifty miles from the scene of the wreck - there was a French schooner, the *Lula*, anchored in the bay. Eleven days later the survivors were taken aboard the *Lula* and conveyed south to Nouméa in New Caledonia where they finally gained passage to Australia aboard the steamer *Victoria*.³⁰

The laws requiring that a government agent be aboard each vessel were strictly adhered to by most of the recruiting vessels. They had little choice if they wished to legally land the recruits at a port. If anything happened to the agent during the voyage, then by law the recruiting had to be immediately terminated.

For example, in March 1884 the labour schooner *Stormbird* under the command of Captain John Augustus Paesch left Maryborough with forty-three returning islanders. Acting as government agent was William Wallace who had recently bade farewell to his wife and seven children, little realizing that he would never see them again.

Shortly after the vessel departed, Wallace began to show signs of becoming feverish. He soon slipped into a delirium and apparently, '...went completely out of his mind.' The captain ordered that a watch should be kept over him in his cabin, and on 1 April the man who was watching him reported that: 'Mr Wallace appeared to have dropped off into a nice sleep.'³¹ As the weather was foul the man was ordered on deck with the other crew members. Several hours later he returned to the government agent's cabin and noticed that the agent had taken on a strange appearance. He reported this to the captain who went to the cabin to check on the sick man and soon afterwards announced that Wallace was dead. The body was buried at sea at noon on the same day, and, as there was now no agent on board, the entire voyage had to be aborted. Captain Paesch had the ship put about, and, as the wind was against them, it took eight days to beat back to Maryborough for another government agent.³²

The sudden return of a ship because of the death or injury of a government agent was, however, an infrequent occurrence. In November 1888 the schooner *Eliza Mary*, agented by Graham and Co. of Maryborough, arrived unexpectedly at Brisbane after an absence of only seven weeks. A typical cruise usually lasted anything from three to six months. It was soon discovered that the government agent, Mr A. Cecil, had been wounded by the islanders at Paama in the New Hebrides, and all recruiting had been aborted.³³

Paama, like Mallicolo, (Malekula) was one of the islands inhabited by particularly fierce people. They obtained weapons from recruiting, especially from the labour schooners of France, and from German and American traders and copra dealers. For the price of six months' work with a copra dealer they would be paid a Snider rifle and twenty rounds of cartridges. The men of the islands were almost all armed and recruiting there was an extremely hazardous business. The attack on the *Eliza Mary* was well planned and seamen in the two recruiting boats who had gone ashore to recruit a man and his wife later stated that approximately five hundred shots had been fired at them from both ends of the bay, and that they had been lucky to survive.³⁴

The following year one of Maryborough's most successful recruiting vessels, the *Roderick Dhu*, under the command of Captain John Augustus Paesch, returned from a four months' cruise to the South Seas, bringing the news that while at Api, (Epi) the traders there had warned Paesch that the islanders at Paama were, waiting to attack the next Queensland labour vessel to arrive at their shores, adding that they would, '...make Paama stink with the bodies of white men.'³⁵ Courageously - and perhaps a little foolishly - Captain Paesch was determined to attempt recruiting at Paama, however, although the government agent, Douglas Rennie, reported seeing all the islanders liberally supplied with weapons, no attack was made on the recruiting boats.³⁶

Disturbances and Politics.

In January 1885 a riot took place in Childers during which the police were surrounded by an angry mob of more than one hundred islanders wielding stones, spears and iron bars. White men who went to the assistance of the police were attacked and had to beat a hasty retreat. At least one shot was fired by the police and the situation rapidly came under control. Seven islanders were arrested and taken to the lock-up, two of the white men were injured, one received a blow to the mouth with an iron bar, the other was struck a glancing blow on the hip with a spear.³⁷

In February 1885 a man named William Greed, twenty-one years of age, was charged with murdering an islander at Kilkivan, however, when Greed, a, '...navvy on the Kilkivan railway works,' was brought before the Supreme Court on Friday 1 May, 1885, he was almost immediately discharged. Before the trial the *Maryborough Chronicle* had lamented: '...We learn with undoubted authority that several of Greed's mates witnessed the murder and decline to give any information or evidence forsooth the victim has a black skin. This being the case the police should arrest these unwilling witnesses also, as accessories after the fact.'³⁸

Meanwhile, in Maryborough, islander disturbances were continuing. These were considered by some as amusing, by others as a very real danger to life and property, as the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported in 1885:

During the last half-dozen Sundays, life in the bush just outside town has been rendered a little sensational by what we understand is a long standing feud between two large bodies of kanakas who recruit their forces from various parts of the district. Sunday being their day of liberty, the kanakas employ it to open tribal differences on an extensive scale. A pitched battle between two opposing armies, of about a hundred each, was fought several Sundays ago in the Tinana division, in which spears, arrows and other native weapons beside tomahawks were used with such effect that several of the dusky combatants sustained honourable wounds, one of them receiving no less than six arrows which gave him quite a porcupinal appearance until they were, not without difficulty, withdrawn.³⁹

The reporter went on to claim that on subsequent Sundays there were large warlike musters of islanders who conducted manoeuvres with an evident knowledge of military tactics. The reporter described one particular Sunday when a group of islanders was drawn up in the bush about half a mile from the Polynesian hospital (on Lindah Road), with a large number skirmishing along the road in search of the opposing enemy - all, 'armed to the teeth.' The police were soon on the scene, and - rather courageously placing themselves between the belligerents - ordered them to disperse, after which peace was temporarily restored.⁴⁰

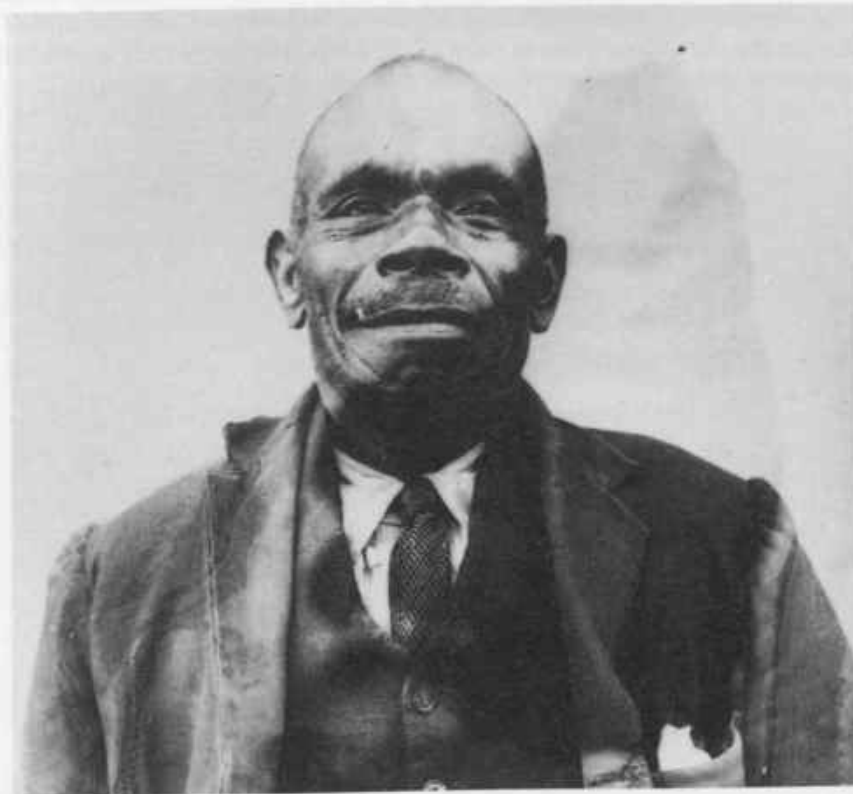
Yet islander aggression - threatened and real - continued in Maryborough. On 17 February, 1890, two islanders, Harry Tabaa and Harry Santo were brought before Police Magistrate G.L. Lukin on a charge of attempting to murder a police officer, Constable Henry Slade, with a bow and arrow. A few days previously, Constable Slade, dressed in civilian clothes and mounted on a horse, was returning to Maryborough on the Yengarie Road when he suddenly came upon a group of islanders who quickly spread themselves across the road. One of these men, Harry Tabaa, threw up his arms and began abusing Slade, threatening to shoot him. He took a bow from another of the islanders and fitted an arrow tipped with sharpened steel. Slade's horse swerved and bolted as Tabaa let fly and the arrow flew harmlessly past. Slade recovered control of his horse, the islanders chasing after him and shouting that they would murder him. Slade calmly dismounted and faced the islanders as they ran threateningly towards him. Tabaa was fitting another arrow to the bow. Slade drew his service revolver and stated: 'Put that down, put that down or else I'll send a bullet through you every one.'⁴¹ Two other Maryborough residents, John Byrne and William Anderson, who were close by at the time, assisted the constable in arresting the islanders, who, after a brief struggle, offered no further resistance. Remanded to stand trial at the April sittings of the Central District Court, neither islander had a defence lawyer and the judge stated that a government agent - who happened to be in the court at the time - should act as defence council. The agent reluctantly agreed and was given fifteen minutes to read the depositions. Not surprisingly, both defendants were found guilty and sentenced to two months' imprisonment with hard labour in Brisbane gaol.⁴²



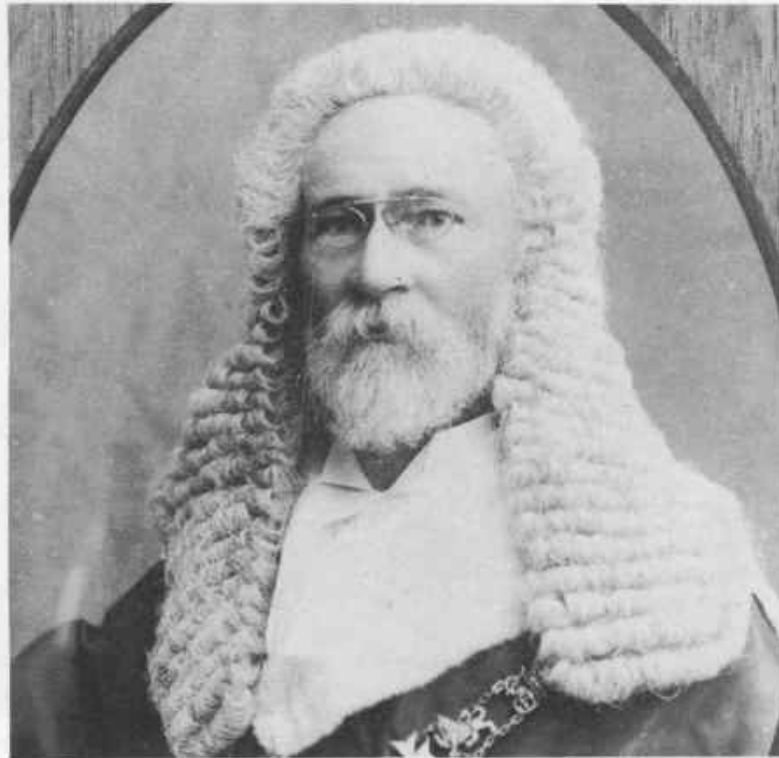
Loading sugar cane onto a barge, 1896. Source - John Oxley Library print number 22154.

Other islander disturbances continued to infrequently occur. A fracas occurred at Childers in July 1894 during which a police constable was assaulted. At Bundaberg one labourer was killed and four others seriously wounded during a tribal feud which had involved more than one hundred islanders.⁴³

Eventually the South Sea Islands labour question became a hotbed of political debate and argument, and the government's stability depended upon the public's attitude to the system.



Portrait of a South Sea Islander.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 141622.



Sir Samuel Walker Griffith. Premier of Queensland 13 November 1883 to 13 June 1888, and again from 12 August 1890 to 27 March 1893.
Source - John Oxley Library number 60308.

In 1883 Sir Samuel Griffith took over as premier, winning the election largely as a result of the damning labour issue, and a commission of enquiry was formed to investigate the problem.

As the numbers of recruits lessened, so the sugar plantation owners became more desperate. In August 1884, a deputation of planters from Maryborough, Isis, Bundaberg, Mackay and Townsville, took their grievances to Premier Griffith, claiming that labour vessels were all too often returning to ports with only a few recruits and that the short supply of labourers was causing great difficulty in the sugar industry. The planters insisted that the recruiting of labour should be taken out of private hands and placed under the auspices of the government. Griffith, however, was adamant that the government would undertake no such responsibility. He told the planters that the use of South Sea Islanders had always been considered only a temporary expedient, and that in the long term he and his government wanted white men to replace island labour in the cane fields. He promised to do everything in his power to increase the immigration program from Britain and Europe.⁴⁴

But the entire sugar industry was forced into a quandary of its own making. In those formative years there was little in the way of mechanisation and growing sugar cane was a time-consuming and labour-intensive business.

The entire industry was geared to a system of cheap labour. Without it sugar prices would have soared making them uncompetitive against the prices in Fiji, Mauritius or the West Indies. Planters claimed that they would become bankrupt, the mills would close and many of the flourishing ports such as Maryborough or Bundaberg would shrivel and die as the cane fields returned to wilderness. The planters stated that they would never allow this to happen.

Yet there was now strong opposition to the labour practices and abolitionists were demanding that all islanders be returned to their homes - that the sugar industry should attempt to survive on white labour alone.

Planters could now only agonize over the future of their industry, they saw no way of replacing islander labour with white employees, the equation simply did not work, nor, they surmised, could it ever work with sugar production being such an internationally competitive industry.

In 1884 labourers were restricted under the Polynesian Labourers' Act to agricultural work and a royal commission was appointed to investigate the methods and operation of recruiting from New Guinea and adjacent waters.

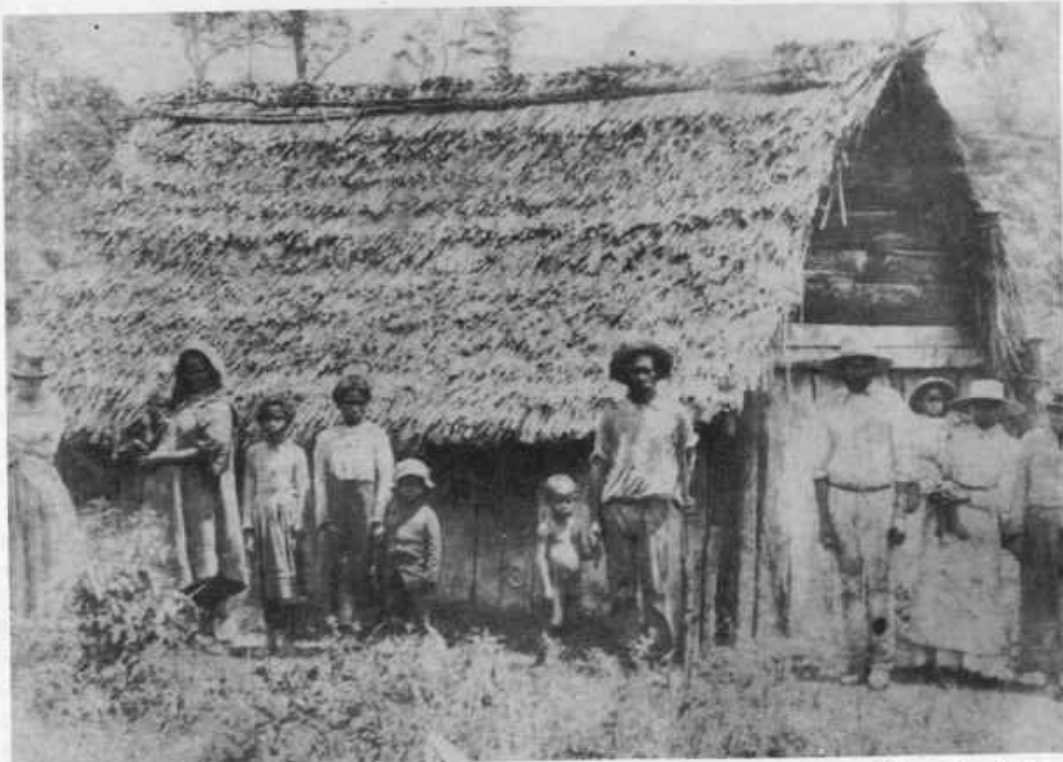
Shortly after the royal commission's findings were made public, the *Times* of London, one of the world's leading newspapers, thoroughly castigated those who attempted to profit from the often unholy practices of the labour system. The *Times* journalist wrote:

...This want (of labour) is supplied by the importation of men from an inferior race, and, for Queensland, these are found among the inhabitants (of) the South Pacific Islands. But here comes in the almost insoluble difficulty of reconciling the claims of commerce with the claims of morality ... the planter ... like the French planter of Réunion, is driven into all kinds of cruel expedients in supplying himself with the labour that he requires. On the one side we have cupidity and cunning, veiling themselves under the specious name of 'the interests of the colony,' and on the other side we have weakness and impenetrable ignorance. Under such circumstances the planter caste in Queensland, like its counterpart in the old slave states of America, develops a moral standard of its own, and the public opinion of the caste winks at the 'painful incidents' of the labour traffic ... It is not pleasant to learn that in the opinion of the Royal Commission, the history of the cruise of a colonial ship is, 'one long record of deceit, cruel treachery, deliberate kidnapping, and cold-blooded murder.' It is scarcely more so to find that life on the plantations is made so intolerable to these unfortunate labourers, that the death rate amounts to 20, 25, or 30 per cent in the year.⁴⁵

The correspondent went on to discuss the inappropriateness of political moves then being made to create a separate state where indentured labourers would form the permanent nucleus of the work-force. The *Times* report ended:

England cannot allow the growth of a slave state, and this would be nothing less among her colonies ... It would be scandalous if, now at all times, when we have just annexed a quarter of New Guinea, and when we have warned off other European nations from interfering with our prospects in the South Pacific, we should offer to the world the spectacle of a people which cannot organise its colonies except on the basis of slave labour, and of a labour market supplied by means of a traffic that covers the fairest regions of the earth with misery and wretchedness.⁴⁶

Planters in Maryborough feared a repetition of a practice which seemed prevalent in the sugar growing regions surrounding Mackay at this time. Self-appointed inspectors, (informants) were making the rounds of the sugar plantations and questioning islanders about conditions, work loads, pay and food quality in an effort to have the planters brought before the magisterial bench on charges under the Polynesian Labourers' Act. According to contemporary press reports, half the fines imposed on the planters were quietly given to the informants. Although there does not seem to be any evidence or even any indication that this type of operation was ever practiced in the Maryborough region.⁴⁷



South Sea Islanders and a typical hut in the cane-fields. Source - John Oxley Library print number 4795.



South Sea Islanders hoeing the cane-field. Source - John Oxley Library print number 16956.

But reports such as this did much to swing public favour against the labour trade, although public squabbles between planters over payment for the transferral of labourers was broadly seen as acknowledgment that the practice was indeed a kind of slavery and that the labourers were 'owned' by the planters. In September 1885, just a few months after the *Times* report, E.T. Aldridge and the Cran brothers were involved in a District Court case over a dispute concerning the amount which had to be paid for forty-nine labourers then working for Aldridge. The labourers had been purchased by the Cran brothers for an agreed sum of £570/4/6d. The dispute was over the wages then owed to the men which Aldridge claimed were over and above this price. The Cran brothers claimed that this had not been a part of the bargain. The jury found for the Cran brothers, but such a public display of the blatant marketing of human beings was grist to the mill for the anti-slavery movement.⁴⁸

Under pressure from the planters the Queensland government appointed two agents, one for Germany and one for Scandinavia, to solicit labourers for the cane-fields from those regions. However, even this move attracted its detractors, especially among the German community then living in Queensland, many members of which believed that it would be degrading for their countrymen to come to a strange land to take the place of the much maligned and socially detested coloured labourers.

In September 1885, a German resident named P. Meissner wrote to various publications stating that such a practice would be a disgrace and that German people who came to Queensland would not be suitable for such harsh tropical and sub-tropical conditions. He claimed:

These gentlemen (the agents) are authorized to bring emigrants to this colony, not free, however, but, as it were, purchased, since they must bind themselves to work at some place fixed by the agent for ten marks (shillings) a week ... besides this you have to work twelve hours a day in tropical heat and in a very changeable climate where even a black, who is accustomed to privations and heat, often gives in. The mortality among these is so high as often to terrify the planters since they have to pay 500 marks passage money for each Kanaka, (and) consequently seek to get as much work as possible out of him ... As regards to the heat generally, it is bearable enough, but in the cane-field it is intolerable, because the cane is planted quite close together and attains a height of 6 to 8 feet, so that not a breath of air can penetrate. One more question. What position would the cheap immigrants occupy in relation to the present working population of Australia? I anticipate a continuous struggle. In saying this I am justified by a certain knowledge that this special class of immigrants would, in English eyes, be regarded merely as intruders, whose office it is to lower wages and fill the place of the 'niggers' ... Do not permit yourselves to be allured by doubtful and fraudulent expectations held out to you by the agents and possibly by certain unscrupulous newspaper reports to exchange, (otherwise than as free men) your fair home for a land of which you are ignorant, and whose language you do not know ... Once bound down to work on sugar estates in Queensland, nothing can release you from your engagement, and I am convinced that many will bitterly rue having left their fatherland and having come out here to risk their health and perhaps their life itself for the sake of a handful of capitalists who desire nothing more warmly than to exchange their black slaves for white.⁴⁹

Announcement of the impending ban on importation caused a furore among Queensland planters. Shortly afterwards Peter O'Kelly of Ferney plantation roundly denounced the government, claiming that if the system had operated as it should have done - legally - then there would have been no need to abolish it. O'Kelly claimed that government agents had often been appointed as political favours, especially for '...doing dirty work at elections.' O'Kelly stated that he had seen agents who, '...could only inspire contempt instead of respect for the law they were appointed to administer.' He added that the employers of islanders were powerless to remedy the evil, claiming that the only thing planters could then do was to put up with the deprivation of labour and calmly await their own ruin. O'Kelly ended his rather lengthy discourse on the evils of islander abolition with a rather bleak description of Maryborough and the surrounding district:

The banks of the Mary were once studded in all parts with thriving little homesteads and nicely cultivated farms. Indeed, so flourishing was everything that it was a real treat to go along the river in a boat, but now everything is in a state of decay - the houses tumbling to pieces and the farms overgrown with weeds. And this state has been brought about principally by the dearth of white labour ... the only signs of progress to be seen for a distance of over thirty miles of this river are the cane-fields and the factories, but between these plantations are long ugly gaps of deserted farms and tumbledown slab humpies.⁵⁰

O'Kelly added to his comments shortly afterwards, stating that, '...there is no foundation for the statement of the honourable member, who said in the House during the passing of the present Bill, that the Kanaka was worked to death on the plantations of Maryborough.'⁵¹

Shortly afterwards a small deputation of Maryborough men, headed by Peter O'Kelly and Robert Cran, presented themselves to the Queensland premier and made a series of formal complaints concerning the 1885 bill. The premier was patient but firm, little or nothing would change in the bill as a result of the deputation.⁵²

Yet despite the gloomy descriptions of the Maryborough region and the forecasts of impending doom by people such as O'Kelly, the sugar industry in the area was actually progressing somewhat better than expected under the difficult circumstances then being experienced. Official statistics of the industry released in 1886, revealed that the crop of the previous year had topped 4000 tons, compared to just 1400 tons for the year before. 4500 acres in the Maryborough district were under cane, and twenty-six of the twenty-seven crushing mills were sending their juice to Yengarie.⁵³

In November 1885 an amendment to the Pacific Islanders Labourers' Act was passed. The act stipulated that after December 1890 no further licences to import islanders would be granted. This act caused the recruiters to become besieged with requests for recruits. The planters were determined to fill their fields with workers before the act came into force. As a result islanders were even harder to obtain.

In 1888, one planter wrote:

The men who have made money at sugar are those who have sold out at high prices. While the price of sugar during the last five years has fallen from £34 to £24 per ton, the price of Kanaka labour has risen from about £30 per annum per head to about £45. The proportion of white men employed to Kanakas is usually about 1 to 4. Abolish the Kanaka, and even though you flooded the place with white labour, bringing the wage down to 12/- a week, a sufficiency of labour at such critical times as frost, flood or fire, could not be depended upon in order to take the crop off profitably, even admitted that white men could do the work during the hot months of December, January and February when they are most needed. It is not likely that they would submit to this reduction in wage, and they would seize on such an emergency as a fitting time to strike for higher wages. To sue for breach of contract would be poor compensation for the loss of a crop ... Do not think that I flatter myself with one particle of hope that anything which I have said will find an echo in the heart of the Queensland public, or strike a chord of sympathy for the planter. It is now only a matter of a year or two when sugar growing upon the Mary River must cease. You have only to run up between Tiaro and Maryborough to witness the sense of desolation. Tinana Creek is a place of the past, as far as sugar is concerned. This is due not so much to the fall in sugar, as the increased cost of the Kanaka.⁵⁴

The planter made a forceful and accurate point. During seven months of the year it was necessary to carry only approximately one third of the labour force which would be required at harvest time. Planters claimed that islander labour was not cheap labour, as it was often the case that the islanders could not be kept gainfully employed during the slow months. Planter Angus Gibson on 16 November, 1888, wrote: 'Take my case for argument's sake. I require 300 men during five months of the crushing season to cut load and cart cane and do all the other mill work. 100 of these would meet my requirements in the off season. Can I afford to keep 200 (white workers) for seven months?'⁵⁵

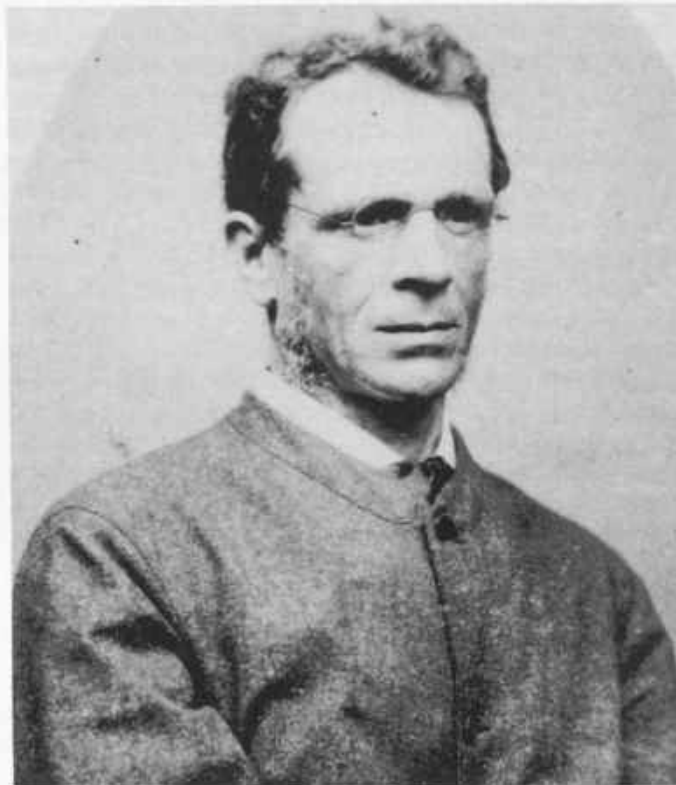


The next generation of labourers in the sugar cane fields, 1897. Source - John Oxley Library print number 142325.

In 1892 Griffith issued a political manifesto which reversed his decision to ban the labour trade, giving the traffic a new lease of life. By the 1890s a whole new generation of island labourers lived on the plantations. These were the children of those who had been recruited, and who had not returned.

One man who had taken up the sword in opposition to the system was William Brookes, a Queensland parliamentarian and fervent abolitionist.

Brookes was the son of a Manchester shoe shop owner. He came to Australia after being accused of paying too much attention to a girl thirteen years of age, the daughter of a Wesleyan religious couple. Brookes landed in Brisbane and prospered in the ironmongery trade. He was a fluent and powerful speaker and in 1864 he was



*William Brookes, parliamentarian and ardent abolitionist.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 9458.*

elected to the Legislative Assembly where he was often involved in heated debates over controversial social issues. Brookes wanted to end the islander labour trade and would use the publicity generated from incidents such as the *Dancing Wave* and *Young Dick* massacres to further his argument that the trade was obscene and should be immediately halted. His arguments for abolition gained little ground until he was elected to Griffith's government in 1883. He died in 1898.

The courts, when dealing with islander offenders took little consideration of the fact that the labourers could rarely speak very much English and could never afford to employ competent defence lawyers. Runaways were often severely punished by the overseers themselves. With regard to more serious cases, exact figures are not known, but at least thirteen islanders were sent to the gallows in Queensland, including two islanders executed on the same day in May 1895, Narasemai and Mi Orie. Sayer was executed the following month, Wandee in 1901, Ori Fauge, seven months later, Sow Too Low in January 1903, Charlie in April 1905 and Twadiga in May the following year. All these and several other death sentences had been confirmed by the Queensland executive, despite the fact that in many cases the offences committed had been the result of frustrations caused by appalling living and working conditions, the lack of islander women, and sometimes, the brutality of overseers.⁵⁶

Sources and Notes for Chapter Twenty-three.

1. M/C. 14 November, 1882.
2. M/C. *ibid.*
3. M/C. 28 April, 1883.
4. M/C. 21 November, 1883.
5. M/C. 13 November, 1883.
6. M/C. 29 March, 1884.
7. M/C. 13 November, 1883.
8. M/C. *ibid.*
9. M/C. *ibid.*
10. M/C. 23 November, 1883.
11. M/C. *ibid.*
12. M/C. 5 April, 1884.
13. M/C. 26 March, 1884.
14. Ship's articles, 28 March, 1883, OL.
15. Conversation recorded in log entries and subsequent depositions QSA.
16. Government agent's log, QSA.
17. *Ibid.*
18. M/C. 17 September, 1883. For a full account of the voyage of the *Stanley*, See Wilfred Fowler's *McMurdo of the Schooner Stanley*, (in two parts) Queensland Heritage, Vol. 1, Number 8 May, 1968, pp 3-15 and Queensland Heritage Vol. 1, Number 9 November, 1968 pp 12-25.
19. M/C. 20 January, 1887, p 3
20. M/C. 20 December, 1883.
21. M/C. *ibid.*
22. M/C. *ibid.*
23. M/C. *ibid.*
24. M/C. 27 December, 1883.
25. M/C. 4 April, 1884.
26. M/C. *ibid.*
27. M/C. 4 August, 1884. See Colonial Secretary's Office in-letter number 3330 of 1884, Queensland State Archives COL 3891 and also a letter to the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle*, 23 September, 1884, p 3, written by E.B. Heath which described the events surrounding this voyage of the *Jessie Kelly* and contradicted many of de Lautour's statements. Heath also claimed that de Lautour had not written his letter from Aoba, stating that it had really been, '...written at the Custom House Hotel, Maryborough in the month of August, 1884.'
28. M/C. 20 January, 1887, p 3.
29. QSA, COL/A 398, in-letter 5704 of 1884. See also de Lautour's public address delivered at the Albert Hall Brisbane in September, 1884 a transcript of which was published in M/C. 19 September, 1884, p 3.
30. M/C. 22 March, 1887.
31. M/C. 12 April, 1884
32. M/C. *ibid.*

33. M/C. 30 November, 1888.
34. M/C. *ibid*.
35. M/C. 13 May, 1889.
36. M/C. *ibid*.
37. M/C. 8 January, 1885.
38. M/C. 28 February, 1885, p 2, and 2 May, 1885, p 2.
39. M/C. 23 March, 1885.
40. M/C. *ibid*.
41. M/C. 18 February, 1890.
42. M/C. 11 April, 1890.
43. M/C. 16 July, 1894, p 2 and M/C. 17 July, 1894, p 2.
44. M/C. 23 August, 1884.
45. Reproduced in M/C. 13 August, 1885.
46. *Ibid*.
47. M/C. 25 July, 1885.
48. M/C. 10 September, 1885.
49. M/C. 15 September, 1885.
50. M/C. 16 October, 1885.
51. M/C. 19 October, 1885.
52. M/C. 23 October, 1885.
53. M/C. 20 April, 1886.
54. M/C. 17 November, 1888.
55. M/C. 20 November, 1888.
56. For further details on these cases see, Sayer, M/C. 23 July 1895, Narasemai, M/C. 20 April, 22 April, 21 May, 1895. Ori Faugh, M/C. 1 November, 4 December, 1901. Sow Too Low, M/C. 23 June, 1903. Charlie, M/C. 15 April, 18 April, 1905. Twadiga, M/C. 15 May, 1906, and prisoners' records, Queensland Premier's Department.

Chapter Twenty-four.

The Polynesian Hospital and Community Care.

As we have seen, illnesses among the islander population were common, and when illness struck, the labourers were cared for in a variety of ways, depending upon their employers' policies on the issue. Few of the medical policies, if any, were effective or sufficient. During the early years of the system central Polynesian hospitals were non-existent and the quality of care in private 'hospitals' on the various plantations ranged from poor to disgraceful. Many doctors refused to treat islanders and the standards of hygiene often led to serious epidemics such as the 1875 measles outbreak in Maryborough which killed three hundred and seventy-eight islanders.¹

The Maryborough Hospital Board, initially at least, refused to have islanders treated at the hospital, claiming there was accommodation for only the white race, and so, under the terms of the 1880 Polynesian Labourers' Act which stipulated a levy of ten shillings per head for every 'boy' employed, a Polynesian hospital was established at Lindah Road in 1883. This hospital was, it seems, a modest affair, consisting of a single ward, a dispensary, a store, stables for at least three horses and a house for the resident doctor. Funding came from the planters and the government.²

The first medical officer of the hospital was a man named Doctor Charles H. Clarkson, who took possession of the building on 9 November, 1883. Clarkson had spent several years during the 1870s as a minister in the Fijian court of King Cakobau. Two weeks after taking office in Maryborough he wrote a report to the colonial secretary, giving an account of the building and his recommendations for transforming it into an efficient hospital. Clarkson wrote:

I have the honor to report that on the 9th inst. I was placed in possession of this Building in accordance with your instructions to the Inspector of Pacific Islanders Maryborough. In accordance with your further instructions to me I beg to submit a report as to requisites for this building and grounds and the necessary furniture for Hospital purposes.

The Buildings are surrounded with a thick growth of timber. This could be cleared at a small expense as the value of the firewood would pay the labour. I would suggest that Mr Smyth be empowered to call for tenders on this basis or to employ six Kanakas to clear as much as may be requisite. The Reserve ... moreover, as it abutts (sic) on three lines of road, will require a two rail fence - the expense of which would be about 4/- a rod. A picket or light galvanized iron fence dividing the house from the main buildings is also essential as also a trelliswork round portions of the verandah so as to ensure the necessary degree of privacy.

As regards the water storage it is at present totally inadequate to the supply requisite for the probable number of patients. There are eight tanks storing 6400 gallons. The overflow from these at present runs under the building and is wasted being moreover detrimental to the health of the inmates. An underground tank to hold 16000 gallons could be made at a cost of about £70. It would be far preferable however, to connect with the main from the waterworks. I have ascertained that the cost of a one-inch pipe laid from the main about a mile and a half distant would be about £180 per mile. This is almost essential as in case of fire there are no means of extinction available - from the character of the soil it is unlikely that water would be obtained by sinking.

There are also required to be placed at a distance from the Building.

1. Washing Shed
2. Four stalled Stable and Shed
3. Dead house with Zinc and Iron lined table.

I would also suggest the advisability of having the building protected against lightning.

After consultation with Dr Sugden who has hitherto had charge of sick Polynesians, I am strongly of opinion that it will be necessary in cases of required Isolation (from violence or Contagion) to have more separte (sic) rooms than at present exist for this purpose. I would suggest that one of the long wards be subdivided by two 12 feet high partitions into three compartments, two of these being again subdivided. This would provide one large room for surgery, office etc and would leave 4 small wards for women and cases requiring special restraint or watching. A small space should also be railed off the verandah and fitted with shelves for lavatory and a bath.

As to the required staff for the Hospital I would suggest that at present there are requisite.

1. One married European Wardsman - wife to superintend domestic arrangement and man to be responsible for daily distributions of stores and the carrying out instructions as to the general management and preservation of cleanliness and order.

Salary with quarters and rations £70.

2. One single European Wardsman as general assistant at 20 shillings per week and rations.

3. Three Kanaka Wardsmen at 10 shillings to 12/6d a week and rations.

To be employed as necessary in nursing, giving assistance in cooking and washing - cleaning etc and general work on the grounds.

I have pending your approval placed a single man James Scott aged 24 years in charge of this Building to act as Assistant Wardsman. Mr Smyth also engaged a Polynesian to assist him in cutting firewood cleaning etc so as to have all things ready.

As regards the plans on which the Institution may be best worked I have consulted with several gentlemen likely to have a knowledge of the subject.

Although the Act merely specifies that sick labourers should be sent to the Hospital, it seems probable that considerable expense would be saved to the Government as well as benefit be conferred both on the Planters and the Polynesians themselves, if, at stated times, visits were paid to certain central plantations so as to treat minor cases which though requiring advice it would be unnecessary to make indoor patients of. This plan would also give the Medical Officer the opportunity of advising on various points as to hygiene, poor dwellings etc which should materially reduce the amount of sickness in the District.

There are some plantations which would be contributors to the fund but are situated at a considerable distance by road. They are however, easily reached by rail and I would suggest that considerable expense and time would be saved if a Railway pass were granted to the Medical Officer. I would further beg to draw your attention to the necessity for the reservation of a piece of land as a Cemetery (sic). The Maryboro' general Cemetery (sic) being six miles distant - I would further request that I may receive early instructions as to the method in which the Hospital accounts should be kept and the necessary authority for incurring urgent expenditure.

I have under separate (sic) cover forwarded salary vouchers to the end of December based on above basis.

On the 17th inst. I took in four urgent cases and Mr Smyth has advertised the Hospital as open for reception of patients from this date. He has also accepted tenders for clearing and fencing the former at £4 an acre the latter at 4/6d per rod, both being reasonable prices.

I have made arrangements for the supply of milk, bread and meat at current prices until the end of the year, while the groceries are supplied by the Immigration Service contractors in town at current rate.

This locality is so isolated that a horse and cart is an absolute necessity as the only means of getting stores, letters etc from town between 4 & 5 miles distant.

I have therefore requested Mr Micklethwaite, Livery Stable Keeper, to look out for a suitable equipment - placing the outside limit at £40. In the meantime I have purchased from him a pony at £7/10/- with the understanding that the price should be allowed on his return in lieu of the horse to be purchased - for my own use I have hired a horse and buggy at 40/- a week which I shall need for purely official work till the end of the year. At that time I shall have my own horses down and will apply as mentioned to you for forage allowance.

Awaiting your further instructions.³

In February the following year Clarkson reported that the number of patients at the hospital was increasing dramatically due to, '...the prevalence of typhoid and dysentery.'⁴

By this time the internal alterations to the wards had almost been completed, but the erection of the stable, the 'dead house' and various internal fittings had not been finished.

Clarkson described the carpenter as a 'first class tradesman and doing profitable work.' He said that the senior and assistant wardsmen were proving satisfactory and adapting themselves for their posts, adding: 'I have exercised a discretion in the matter of their rations. Their work is always harassing often disagreeable and detrimental to health and I thought it advisable to allow a more mixed diet than the ordinary beef - flour, tea and sugar ration would give.'⁵

At this time there was a daily average of twenty-five patients. Three white men and four islanders had been employed as wardsmen.⁶

Clarkson's monthly return for January 1884 reveals:

Patients remaining in hospital December 31st 1883:	17.
Admitted during month of January 1884:	56.
Total number under treatment January 1st to 31st:	73.
Discharged well:	41.
Died:	5.
(3 males one female one infant).	
Remaining in hospital under treatment on 31st January 1884:	27. ⁷

By April Clarkson claimed that there had been, '...a large increase in the number of admissions as well as a comparatively high death rate.'⁸ Clarkson stated that this had been caused through the prevalence of dysentery and malaria fever. During the previous month, eight islanders had died at the hospital.⁹

Clarkson was later transferred to the Polynesian hospital at Mackay, taking up his post there in April 1884. He was succeeded by Doctor J. Raphael Joseph.

By 1886 there was considerable friction between the medical officer and the hospital committee, so much so, in fact - primarily due to over-expenditure - that the entire committee decided to resign en-masse, immediately tendering their resignations to the colonial secretary. Committee member R.M. Hyne, claimed:

... You will see Sir that it is not one alone but the whole body of Committee now are thoroughly in earnest and that after very careful consideration I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to continue to act in that capacity with honor to ourselves and credit to the institution...¹⁰

Peter O'Kelly was more informative claiming:

I have the honor to inform you that having been on the Managing Committee of the Hospital for Pacific Islanders at Maryborough for nearly two years I am forced to the avowal that with the limited power vested in the Committee they have been unable to effect but little good for that Institution.

I am also of the opinion that until the power of appointing and removing the officials including the Resident Surgeon is vested in the Committee there will be extravagant clashing of authority and rows.

The Funds of the Institution are being wasted upon objects that are neither conducive to the benefit of the Patients nor contemplated by the Legislature, and the Medical Officer has disregarded the remonstrances of the Committee in regard to such matters.

Under present circumstances I consider the existence of the Committee a mockery and a waste of time and I therefore beg to tender my resignation.¹¹

In a letter to the colonial secretary O'Kelly later added:

A carpenter at the rate of over £125 a year is engaged in the erection of a range of Buildings comprising Stable, Coach house, Wash-house, Bath, as well as an ornamental paling Fence around the Doctor's residence all for the sole use and benefit of that office.

A youth is employed as gardener at a salary on a cost of £54 a year growing fresh vegetables but for whose benefit it is not very clear.

The number of both white and Kanaka officials and servants is far in excess of what would suffice under anything like economical management.

That on the Committee remonstrating against this excessive outlay the Doctor agreed to reduce the whole cost of management by about £260 a year without in anyway impairing the efficiency of the Hospital but that instead of the promised reduction the rate of expenditure for the last month was greater than ever.

I may add in conclusion that I consider the management wasteful...¹²

As basic as this hospital may have been, as we have seen from the above reports, it was certainly an expensive operation for the government. A summary of expenditure and revenue for the years 1883 to 1887 reveals that a total of £9185/9/11d had been expended on the hospital, including its construction, while the income from the Pacific Islanders' Fund for the same period had been just £2823/0/8d, leaving a deficit of £6362/9/3d.¹³

Criticism of the Polynesian hospital continued unabated. In March 1886 the resident doctor, J. Raphael Joseph, was brought before a board of enquiry and charged with five offences concerning the running of the hospital. Firstly, that the night wardsman, Charles Brown Moore - on a salary of almost £100 per year - was actually used as a gardener in the doctor's private garden, and that an islander, on a salary of ten shillings a week, performed the function of night wardsman. Secondly, that the death rate among the patients was falsified to make the numbers appear less than they actually were. Thirdly, that a groom named James Kimber was logged in the pay book as receiving a salary of £1 per week when in reality he received only ten shillings, fourthly, that the surgeon often neglected his patients for up to a week, that a wardsman had to do the doctor's work, and finally, that the doctor was in the habit of taking items from the hospital store, including food, soap, kerosene, vegetables and, 'loaf sugar' for his private use.

The enquiry was half-hearted and inconclusive but it did make the point that the doctor was abusing his position. James Harkness, the senior wardsman responsible for keeping the stores, testified that islanders who were not sick were sometimes admitted to the hospital and that these men were then placed to work in the doctor's garden. Harkness added that he had frequently been instructed by Doctor Joseph to supply the doctor's residence with soap, rice, potatoes, bread, vegetables, sugar and kerosene. Harkness stated:

I believe I have given him everything, one loaf at a time, but not very often. Perhaps four or five pounds of rice once a month, have given him as much as ten and twelve pounds of soap at a time, as they required it at the house, sometimes it was taken without asking. Have given potatoes up to a stone at a time, and vegetables in large or smaller quantities once or twice a week. In kerosene, one to two tins a month were given.¹⁴

The supply of official stores to the doctor's residence was obviously a cause of some concern to Harkness, and he admitted during the enquiry that he and the doctor had had a dispute over the issue. This dispute had led Harkness to the practice of keeping a record of some of the stores taken by the doctor, and he told the enquiry the precise number of tins of kerosene used and how much loaf sugar and fruit had been taken. The loaf sugar had originally been ordered by the doctor for the hospital store, although the hospital staff had no use for it, having sufficient quantities of the coarse ration sugar, standard fare among the islanders.

Doctor Joseph indignantly defended himself, claiming that it had been the practice of his predecessor, Doctor Charles H. Clarkson, to have lighting and firewood supplied by the hospital, and that such a practice was perfectly above board. He admitted that he had sometimes taken vegetables, but qualified the admission by adding that vegetables had sometimes been taken from his own garden for hospital use. When questioned about the soap the doctor stated, '...the soap I received was carbolic soap, which is a disinfectant that I had for scrubbing the house with to keep away infection as our residence is only fifty-six feet away from the hospital, and we had many cases of fever in the hospital.'¹⁵

The enquiry only proved that the hospital was being run inefficiently and that serious steps would have to be taken to bring it into line with modern practices.

On 31 December, 1888, just two and a half years later, the hospital was closed, primarily for economic reasons. Costs were escalating and the government and planters seemed incapable of holding them down. The cost per patient per annum at the Polynesian hospital in 1885 had been calculated to be an average of £80, far less than the Mackay Polynesian hospital at £135, but still too much, and costs were escalating every year.¹⁶ In six years of operations the Polynesian hospital at Maryborough had cost the government a staggering £7,223 in everyday expenses.¹⁷

In January 1889 a public meeting was held in the Maryborough School of Arts to discuss what methods of medical treatment for islanders should be adopted now that the hospital had recently ceased to function. The discussion centred around the costs of continuing with the existing - although defunct - hospital complex. It seemed likely that it would have been less expensive to move a part of the Polynesian hospital to the general hospital and to pay the general hospital administration an agreed fee - around 1/6d per head per day - for Polynesian care. However, it was clearly presented at the meeting that, '...it was not the wish of the Maryborough people to have the coolies mixed with the whites, and it was therefore necessary to have a separate ward.'¹⁸ After this date all Polynesian care was administered from the general hospital.¹⁹

Funding for the care of islanders was always a difficult and contentious issue. In 1890 a mission for the islanders was established in Maryborough under the control of Reverend C. Christensen and his wife, but despite an initial reasonable amount of public acceptance, nine months after its establishment only £50 had been subscribed to its maintenance by the people of Maryborough - and £10 of this had come from one single anonymous donation. Christensen was philosophic over the poor level of support, genuinely thanking those who had given money and stating that he was in strong opposition to the widespread feeling that the islanders themselves should be the ones paying for the maintenance of the mission. He stated:

Where in the history of heathen missions has it been known that the heathens themselves have been asked to pay for their instruction in Christianity? Where is the power of our religious convictions? Where is the proof of our faith in Christ as the truth, if a town that is dissatisfied with being called a country village, with its many churches and still more numerous hotels, cannot afford to support such a little mission effort? Shall I initiate the heathens ... by telling them that the Christian Maryborough cannot afford to care for the salvation of their souls? No, I would rather sell my last chair than do that.²⁰

Yet despite this lack of support, Christensen's missionary work in Maryborough continued. The following year, at the annual meeting of the mission held in the mayor's rooms, it was revealed that *some* subscriptions had been received - after various planters had been solicited - one of these, James Cran, had donated three guineas.

Early in 1892 the mission had established a boarding house for the islanders. This was to be used when they visited the town on leave from the plantations. But operations such as this were expensive. After a series of meetings a number of Maryborough ladies became involved in canvassing the town for donations to the mission.

On the second anniversary of the opening of the mission, 12 November, 1892, a public social was held at the town hall, but owing to a heavy storm only a handful of white people attended. There were, however, about one hundred and thirty islanders present and, according to a press report, they all, 'enjoyed themselves.' Donations for the year totalled a little in excess of £122, but of this, almost £105 was expended on Christensen's salary.²¹

Christensen himself was vocal concerning the rights of the islander people and often presented his case through the press. This practice did much to harm his cause - principally with those planters and others who fully endorsed islander labour in the region. On one occasion early in 1892, Christensen's criticism of the planter classes and supporters of islander labour was so forceful that two of Christensen's own committee, G. Stupart and T.S. Warry, resigned from the committee in disgust. At around the same time Christensen, who usually visited every plantation in the region to check on conditions of the islanders, found himself barred at the gates of *lindah* plantation by the overseer, R.C. Harold, who, according to Christensen, stated: 'How dare you put a foot on this ground after your action in speaking in public and writing against black labour.'²² The overseer added that Christensen was not allowed to show himself at *lindah* again under any circumstances.²³

Christensen vehemently protested, saying that Cran himself had invited the missionary to visit the plantation. The overseer was alleged to have replied that such visits had nothing whatever to do with missionary work and that Christensen only went among the islanders on the plantations in order to sow the seeds of discontent. He ended: 'I am Mr Cran's representative, and what I say, I say in his name.'²⁴

The overseer himself refuted these allegations and shortly afterwards issued a statement damning Christensen's claims:

The facts of the case are simply these: That on Thursday night last (22 March, 1892) about 8.30 o'clock, I found two men prying about the boys' houses at *lindah*, the one was Christensen and the other declined to give me his name so under the circumstances I thought I was justified in sending them away, but I most emphatically deny that I stopped them in Mr Cran's name ... Quite the contrary, Mr Cran has always told me to give him (Christensen) every facility in my power, even to the feeding of his horse. My reasons for stopping him are two in number. First, the boys have been complaining to me for a long time of the continual begging and extracting of money

from them by Christensen. He has even got photos - his own and Mrs Christensen's - taken, and sold them by the hundred to the poor silly fellows at a very nice profit. Second, they don't want him for the way he has expressed himself in public against their coming to Queensland.²⁵

The unnamed man who had accompanied Christensen to Lindah was, in fact, a member of the mission's committee named Hopper Joplin who later backed Christensen's claims, adding: '...we were met by Mr Harold who greeted Mr Christensen with a torrent of abuse such as I have never heard heaped upon the head of a Christian minister.'²⁶

Christensen himself was visiting Brisbane at the time of this very public attack on his reputation, and only became aware of the mounting controversy when shown the press cuttings by a member of parliament. Writing from Brisbane, he added weight to Joplin's refutations stating that Harold had been drunk at the time of the incident and that the photographs he was alleged to have sold to the islanders were, in fact, portraits of the workers themselves which had been taken by a Maryborough photographer named Urry, and that far from making a profit on them, Christensen was out of pocket because he paid seven shillings and sixpence for some printing on the foot of each of the photographs.²⁷

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Chapter Twenty-five.

The Industry in Decline.

As the years moved on, despite the feelings of the sugar masters, the entire system of South Sea Islands labour was doomed by a rising tide of opposition. Yet still the farmers and planters fought for their right to continue employing islander labour.

In 1891, in an effort to prove that the concept of using white labour in the cane-fields was unworkable and (to the planters), quite intolerable, Robert Cran planned a careful strategy of events designed to bring forcefully home to the government that sugar planters could not rely on white workers and that attempting to do so would mean the end of the already troubled sugar industry. The plan - centred around his plantation Duncraggan, near Bundaberg - was a carefully orchestrated event involving the secretary of the Federated Wharf Labourers' Union in Maryborough, Mr William Halliwell Demaine.

Demaine claimed that on the night of 26 November, 1890, he had read a parliamentary debate concerning the immigration vote which stated that Robert Cran had appealed to the government for additional workers. Demaine believed that Cran had meant workers for the mill at Yengarie, and without further ado had despatched twelve men to Yengarie telling them that they would find work there. However, when they arrived these men found that no workers were required at Yengarie but that Cran wanted workers at Duncraggan. A group of men was dispatched to Duncraggan but when they arrived they were greeted with a certain degree of hostility by the plantation manager who refused to give them rations and who also informed them that they would have to work alongside islander labour and be able to keep up with them. These men had reportedly not eaten for about twenty-four hours yet they were set to work in the cane-fields alongside islanders who were physically fit and had recently eaten. After four hours of work more than half the union men could not keep up the pace and fell out, some of the white workers, however, despite their hunger, kept working until evening. Demaine later stated:

I am of the opinion, and I think the evidence here put forward will bear me out, that Mr Cran never wanted white men, his only object being to try to prove that coloured labor was necessary, and to do this he put as many obstructions in the way of the white men as possible, viz., by failing to provide proper sleeping accommodation, cooking etc, the refusal to provide rations for men who were absolutely penniless, the stipulation that the men should work alongside the Kanakas.¹

Cran, naturally, refuted the allegations, claiming that the men were from Brisbane and were known loafers. He had wanted Maryborough men, men he could rely upon. Yet the statements of the workers themselves were damning. John Kenna later claimed:

The only place to sleep in was an open shed, and we had to sleep on the mud floor which was covered with sugar cane tops. During the night it began to rain and we had to walk about until daylight as the floor was one huge puddle. We then commenced work and worked all that day and the following day to 9 a.m. At this time some of the men who had been working there told us we should not be paid until we finished the block ... We then went to Mr Cran and asked him if he would pay us when we had finished an acre so that we could pay for the rations we had obtained from town. He would not listen to us, alleging that he had to catch a train. We then went to Mr McGown, (the overseer), and put the question to him. He also refused to pay us, nor would he advance us rations; so, seeing we had neither money nor rations, we knocked off altogether. We worked for two days and cut near by an acre.²

In 1901 the federal government passed the Pacific Island Labourers' Act ordering recruiting to cease by 1904 and stipulating that repatriation should be completed by 1907. During the following years the practice of importing indentured labour drifted into decline. As anti-labour pressures increased so too was early mechanisation beginning to make an impression. Slowly, larger numbers of white workers were being brought onto the plantations to replace the islanders who were becoming increasingly more difficult to obtain.

Serious contemplation was now given to the importation of significant numbers of Italian immigrants. These men and women were seen as being slightly more socially acceptable than islanders, but not much so, yet they would provide a substantial pool of cheap labourers willing, it seemed, to work for wages far less than the white Australians were used to receiving. The Italian government, or more specifically, the Italian department of foreign affairs, conceded that moving large numbers of immigrants to Queensland was a desirable expedient, but Count D'Arco, the under secretary for foreign affairs, was quick to voice his concerns over the attitude of some Australian unionists who had claimed that the introduction of Italian labour would be detrimental to the

colony. Yet despite these reservations, D'Arco stated that, if the Queensland government were to guarantee certain special conditions, there was nothing to prevent the departure of around three hundred labourers from the northern provinces of Italy.³

Even the famous African explorer, H.M. Stanley, during a visit to Australia in December 1891, solidly backed the planters, stating for the press that indentured labour should certainly be used in the cane fields or in any other kind of tropical or semi-tropical production where white Australians could not compete with indentured labour, whether they be islanders, Malays or Chinese. Stanley used as an example the building of the Central and Southern Pacific Railways in the United States - built primarily by Chinese workers. He stated that the work could not have been done by white labourers alone.⁴

In April 1892 a special correspondent for the *Moreton Bay Courier* reported on the state of the sugar industry in the Maryborough region, drawing some startling comparisons between the early days of the industry along the banks of the Mary River and the depressed state of the region during early 1892. The reporter claimed:

In 1885 there were forty mills working and five distilleries. Today there are less than half the number of mills and the distilleries have gone. Hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of machinery and thousands of acres of land are idle, and the farmers find their position very different from what it was seven or eight years ago. Some people urge that the decrease in the sugar production to Maryborough is owing to the soil being worked out. The contention is wrong. I have seen splendid cane growing on land which has borne crops for thirty years, and to all appearances, is, with fair treatment, fit for another thirty years. There are, however, plain reasons for the decline in the industry. One is that in some cases machinery of a wrong description was employed, the management of the estates was bad, another is that sugar had decreased in price; but the last and principal reason is that the stoppage of the Polynesian labour destroyed confidence and planters were not inclined either to erect improved machinery or extend their cultivated areas in the face of the legislation. When the decision of the government of the day was given in favour of the stoppage of the Polynesian labour, most of the sugar-growers set to work to get out of the industry as quickly and with as little loss as possible. What has been the consequences? Hundreds of white men were sent to swell the ranks of the unemployed. In some cases cane growing and sugar manufacturing were continued, but the latter is now pretty well confined to Yengarie. Where are Magnolia, Antigua, Kirkcubbin, Eatonvale, and Nerada? In 1885 both sides of the Mary were under cane from Maryborough to the Tiaro landing, a distance of 25 miles. Some of the cane grown was sold to the central mills, the rest being crushed by small juice mills on the ground where it was grown and the product sent to Yengarie in punts. What is the position now? Three-fourths of the cane area has either gone out of cultivation or is under maize. All the big plantations are closed, the machinery being either under a caretaker or broken up and removed. And the maize and sweet potato growers - they, too are gone. When the plantations were deserted the small farmers had nothing to depend on but a few cows. The result is that the Mary as a farming district has gone down very much. There are a few small blocks under cane supplying Yengarie. Cran and Company are growing some good areas on their own account, and some of the juice mill owners still grow cane, and send the juice to the refinery. The cane-growers are still doing fairly well, but in no case are they carrying on without Kanaka labour.⁵

At about this time the labour schooner *Foam*, arrived at Maryborough after completing one of its trips to the islands. The case of the *Foam* is an interesting one, because soon afterwards the ship's government agent died under mysterious circumstances. Some believed he had committed suicide, others that he had shot himself accidentally. Rumours also abounded that he had been murdered. Two months later, the *Foam* was wrecked.

Under the command of Captain G. Norman, the *Foam* had left Maryborough on Saturday 8 October, 1892, in tow of the schooner *Muriel Bell*. Prior to leaving, an inspection had been made of the islanders' boxes to ensure that no weapons were being exported out of the country. In the box of one islander, a man named Willie Tanna, officials found a secret compartment which was broken open to reveal two rifles and twenty-three pounds of ammunition. The weapons were confiscated and the ship was allowed to proceed.⁶

They anchored off White Cliffs on 10 October, rated their chronometers and then sailed for the islands. A total of thirty-seven recruits were easily obtained by the *Foam's* recruiting crew, and when landing one return islander, a man named Jimmy Bobb, at Paama, a group of islanders swarmed onto the beach with muskets and rifles and shot him shortly after he stepped onto the beach. Subsequent enquiries ascertained that before leaving for Queensland several years previously, Jimmy had been responsible for 'some misdemeanour' and had been shot in revenge.

During this voyage a male child was born to one of the female returns, and while at Mallicolo (Malekula) the ship's boats were fired upon by islanders as they approached the beach. Having obtained all but three of their licensed number of recruits, the *Foam* returned to Maryborough, experiencing some heavy weather, and arriving at the wharf shortly after Christmas 1892.⁷

What exactly happened to Roger North, the government agent, after the arrival of the ship and up to the time when he was found shot dead in his room at the Custom House Hotel is difficult to ascertain. The skipper of the *Foam*, Captain Norman, later testified that North had been a pleasant man whose company he enjoyed. After the arrival of the ship at Maryborough, Norman and North had spent some time together. Norman later described North as being always rational and cheerful and never in a despondent mood. He had expressed a desire to act as government agent for the *Foam*'s next trip and had agreed to split the cost of a box of cigars with Norman. Norman also testified that North invariably carried a revolver with him, he was meticulous in the weapon's care and maintenance, and was careful in handling it.

A woman named Julia O'Neill had spoken to North on the night before his death and later testified that North had been rational and was planning a trip to Brisbane the following day. He had a travelling bag in his room but had not packed it, Mrs O'Neill had promised to help him pack it the following morning.

John Macalister, Maryborough's clerk of petty sessions, was a close friend of North's and had known him for eighteen years. He later testified that after the *Foam*'s return to Maryborough, North had spent some time with him, '...yarning on the verandah of the hotel.' Macalister backed up Norman's testimony that North had been cheerful and sober.

North's brother, William Roderick North, testified that there was nothing in Roger North's life which would lead him to suicide. He had recently been appointed as government agent for the *Foam*'s next trip and was very happy with the position. Another brother, Francis North, said much the same thing, adding that prior to his death North had visited him in Bundaberg and that North was the father of a nine years' old daughter to whom he had been devoted. The result of the enquiry was that North had accidentally shot himself.⁸

The *Foam* was wrecked at the end of her next labour recruiting voyage when she struck Myrmidon Reef, Magnetic Channel near Townsville on 3 February, 1893. Two days after the disaster the schooner *Christina Gollan* arrived at the scene. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported: 'After sending up one or two rockets and burning blue lights, a reply was returned from the *Foam* by means of flashlights.'⁹

A rescue party went aboard the stricken vessel and soon ascertained that the ship was doomed. She was well up on the reef and lying on her port side with two thirds of the structure lying underwater. The *Chronicle* continued:

The captain was very energetic and successful in his efforts to save the lives of everyone under his charge. All attempts to save any of the boys' luggage (for which most of them had worked for several years) were fruitless, and all that could be got off the ill-fated vessel were a few stores, the main boom and gaff. No fatalities were experienced during the wreck.¹⁰

Meanwhile, in Maryborough the disputes and controversy continued, riots and demonstrations occasionally occurred and altercations between members of the islander and white communities - although not frequent in the Maryborough region - did sometimes happen and were the cause of much public comment.

For example, on Boxing Day 1899, a melee took place opposite the Australian Hotel on the Gayndah Road. A cricket match was, at the time, in progress on the sports reserve, and during an interval in the game several spectators noticed that there seemed to be some kind of disturbance within the ranks of the islander men who had gathered to watch the match. The disturbance quickly turned into an ugly brawl and many of the white men present rushed closer to watch. This move was erroneously taken by the islanders as an act of aggression and they turned on the white men. One islander rushed towards a white spectator but was cleverly tripped and knocked unconscious. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

Other niggers now joined in and the fun became fast and furious. The young whites shot their fists straight out from the shoulder and landed four or five telling plugs to one impotent swipe in return, and thus the sweating mass surged around the corner like an ugly black cloud driven before a squall - and for a chain or two down Adelaide Street, until, finding that they stood no chance with their fists, the Kanakas began to wrench off palings and waddies and stones commenced to fly in dangerous proximity to the heads of the white men.¹¹

The savage affair ended quickly, but it served to demonstrate the delicate state of white/islander relations at that time.

Marriages between the islanders and white women were infrequent but they did occur. It was a regular complaint among the islanders that white women would have little or no social contact with them, regarding them as a grossly inferior and savage race. Islander women were very much in the minority among the islander people and, as a result, the islanders frequently resorted to the services of prostitutes, many of whom worked for local Chinese opium den owners.

When marriages between white women and islanders did occur, the difficulties facing the couples were enormous. The women faced censure and revulsion from their white contemporaries, they found difficulty in being accepted into the closely knit islander community and the husbands stood little or no chance at all of being accepted into the white community.

An example of this type of stormy and difficult relationship may be seen in the case of Charlie Louhambo and his white wife Jessie, who had married in Brisbane before arriving at Maryborough.

The couple kept a small boarding house in Adelaide Street Maryborough where islanders could stay when not at their plantations. However, it was a place of some ill-repute. Islanders who stayed there were frequently reported as being drunk and neighbours regularly complained of screaming and drunken fights on the premises. It seems clear from evidence presented by a local police officer, Sergeant Graham, who, after receiving numerous complaints had visited the residence on several occasions, that Mrs Louhambo herself was frequently drunk and would illegally supply alcohol to the islander men. On one occasion in February 1898 her husband was taken before Mr E. Morley, the police magistrate, on charges of being drunk and assaulting his wife. He was given two months' imprisonment in Brisbane gaol. The magistrate at the time remarked: 'The wretched drink was at the root of the whole affair, and it was shameful that people would supply these creatures with it.'¹²

Historian and early resident to the region G.R. Noakes, who himself had employed islanders, later recalled:

I have had much to do with kanakas and from time to time employed fairly large numbers of them. I can truthfully say that provided you treated them fairly and fed them well, you would have no trouble.

They appreciated kindly treatment and often confided their little troubles to their employers. I think you will be interested if I tell you about one or two who worked for me. The boy asked me to meet him one night as he wanted to talk to me. He was a married man and said he and his Mary (wife) wanted, '...to rub 'im out their agreement.' I told him he would have to see the Government Polynesian inspector. Quickly he replied: 'No, no! Not that fellow agreement alonga Government, but agreement alonga missionary.' He explained that he had just sold his Mary for one new shirt, a pair of boots which he couldn't wear and a bar of soap. He went to live in the single boys' hut and Tom, the buyer, took his place with Mary. No worry, no trouble. As easy as that!¹³



A South Sea Island labourer with his bride. Source - John Oxley Library print number 37936.

In May 1902, the labour schooner *Sybil* (also known as the *Sibyl*) was wrecked during a recruiting voyage. (Not to be confused with the *Sybil* which was wrecked in 1887).

The wrecking of the *Sybil* caused quite a legal wrangle in Maryborough, for its owner, Captain Agesilaus Tornaros, had left behind a will with some interesting conditions.

The *Sybil* had left Townsville for the islands on 11 January, 1902. On board were Tornaros, who had travelled from his home in Maryborough to join the ship at Townsville, Captain Barron, a government agent, and a crew of eighteen sailors. The Solomons were reached in February, and while cruising in Morow's Sound the ship ran upon a rock. She was floated off and although in a leaky condition was allegedly able to continue with the voyage. However, the ship and its entire crew were never seen again.

Twelve months later, in February 1903, an application was made in the Brisbane Supreme Court for probate of Tornaros's will. One of the stipulations of the will was that if either of his daughters were married at the time of his death they were to receive nothing.¹⁴ Probate was subsequently approved but in fact it was by no means certain that Tornaros was dead. Nothing more was heard of the event until 1905, three years after the ship had disappeared, when news began to circulate in the press that the remains of a ship had been found on the Indispensable Reefs (the same reefs which had sunk the schooner *Stanley*).

In October 1905 the bêche-de-mer schooner *Waiwera* with a crew of aboriginal seamen was at Cairns. The skipper, Captain David Thompson, secured a man named Scott as mate, and was showing Scott around the ship when he remarked that he had dredged up an anchor at the Indispensable Reefs. Scott, who had previously sailed aboard the *Sybil*, immediately recognized it as having belonged to the missing ship. Captain Thompson then said that the tops of the masts of a schooner could be seen above the water and the hull, silted with sand, was in a cove of rocks. Thompson had allegedly failed to report the discovery to the authorities because of his aboriginal crew. With such a crew he was reportedly forbidden by law to go outside the Great Barrier Reef, had he reported finding the wreck he would have had to answer some embarrassing questions about the operations of his ship. When news of this discovery became known, Tornaros's son, also a sea captain and skipper of the labour schooner *Roderick Dhu*, offered his services in an endeavour to locate the wreck and to ensure it was in fact the missing *Sybil* and that there were no survivors waiting to be rescued on the reef.¹⁵

Thompson later refuted many of the claims Scott attributed to him, stating that he had seen no masts and no hull but had only seen the anchors of a ship. He claimed that he had no fear of going beyond the Great Barrier Reef and had often done so with an aboriginal crew. In the end it was difficult to know who was telling the truth.¹⁶

However, many assumed that the wreck on the reefs was more likely to be the remains of the schooner *Stanley*, but experienced seamen quickly dispelled this theory, stating that the *Stanley* had been wrecked on the east of the north Indispensables, whereas the masts could be seen in a lagoon at the south-west corner of the south Indispensables. They also stated that - if indeed there had been masts visible above the water - then the masts and other remains of the *Stanley*, after twenty-two years in the sea, would have rotted away years previously.

One of Captain Agesilaus Tornaros's sons, Peter Tornaros, telegraphed Captain David Thompson, the man who had spotted the wreck, asking for further details. Thompson immediately replied:

I cannot give you the exact date as to when I saw the wreck on Indispensable reef ... but can remember it was in July 1904. There were two anchors on the reef and some chain and a lot of iron, but nothing to tell what ship it had been ... I was on the same reef five years ago and there was no wreck there then. It might be the *Sybil* and it might be some other vessel. I made a careful search for anything that might give me a clue to the name of the ship. By the size of the anchors I think the vessel must have been over 100 tons, but I never saw the *Sybil* when she was afloat, so I don't know what her tonnage was.¹⁷

From this and other information it seemed almost certain that the wreck was that of the *Sybil*. The anchors retrieved by Thompson were indication enough, but also of interest were the facts that the *Sybil* had been a ship of some one hundred and fifty tons register and she had carried a lot of old iron as ballast, a fact which would have accounted for the large amount of iron seen on the reef by Captain Thompson.

News of these revelations were being closely followed by many of the residents of Maryborough. The ship had been a Maryborough owned vessel and its crew were Maryborough men. There were many grieving families who prayed that the wreck was that of the *Sybil* and that the crew had managed to man the boats and

to escape to one of the closer islands, either Bellona or Rennell. The government was extremely reluctant to form and finance a search operation, especially so because the Indispensable Reefs were on the main shipping lanes and if there had been survivors to be rescued then the rescue would almost certainly have already been carried out. The acting premier, A.H. Barlow, advised William McWatters, who was acting on behalf of the relatives of the missing men, that in his opinion the reports were doubtful, to say the least. Barlow wrote:

...the psychological feat alleged to have been performed by Scott in recognising the anchor belonging to a vessel in which he had sailed some years previously, may, by some, be viewed as the outcome of perceptive faculties of an order impinging on genius. I am, with the kindest intentions, constrained to confess that to me it appears nothing more than mental vagary to which sailors are prone...¹⁸

Scott was furious and took the first opportunity to reply to Barlow's slanderous attack. A week later he stated that when he had gone aboard the *Waiwera* at Cairns he had seen three anchors lying on deck and these had seemed as if they had not belonged to the ship. He said to Captain Thompson:

'Where in goodness did you get so many anchors?'

Thompson had replied: 'You can get plenty of anchors on the reefs.'

Scott then said: 'There is one very like what I was shipmates with on the *Sybil*.'

Thompson was then alleged to have said: 'Yes, that's the vessel I think it belongs to. I was out not many months ago and got it. I was out there two years ago and there was no wreckage there then. I next went out about eight months after the vessel went missing, and I believe it is the one. There was a wreck with one mast standing, three anchors, a heap of chain and a ship's stove. She was lying in about twelve feet of water.'¹⁹

Scott added that he specifically recognized the anchor because while he had served on the *Sybil* he had cut a V-shaped piece on the corner of the ring-bolt so that a big link could be attached. He had recognized the cut at once and had no doubt that it was the same anchor. Scott stated that afterwards, Captain Thompson seemed reluctant to talk about the sighting of the wreck.

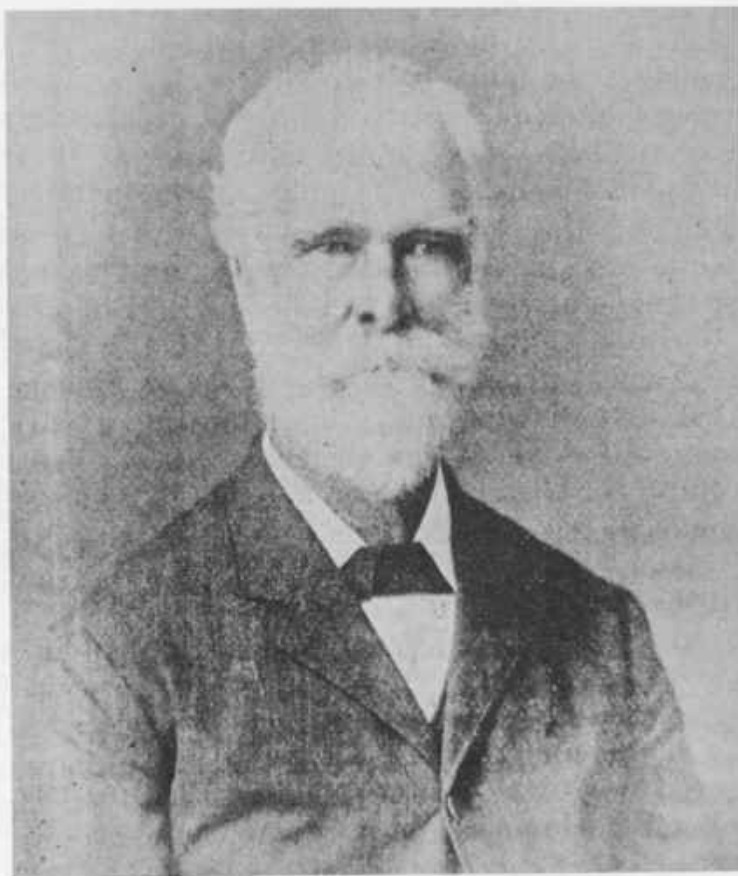
In February 1905, William McWatters, on behalf of the relatives of the missing men, wrote to the acting premier A.H. Barlow (in the absence of Premier Arthur Morgan), asking him to make arrangements for a vessel to be sent to the islands in search of survivors. In fact this had already been done, (at no cost to the Queensland government). In September the previous year the Melanesian mission steamer *Southern Cross* had called at both islands and had spoken to islanders regarding the missing men. They were told that no shipwrecked sailors had landed. The mystery ended on this note and no survivors were ever found.²⁰ Tornaros's son, Peter, later became skipper of the Papua government steamer. He died in Woolwoowin in September 1913.²¹

Little is actually known of either Agesilaus Tornaros or his sons, Peter and Jack, although one of Agesilaus's crew members aboard the *Sybil* was a man named J. (Toby) McGann. McGann, a Maryborough resident, was still alive in 1951 and he recalled that Agesilaus Tornaros's son Jack was also sailing on board the vessel and had survived an attack on his life while recruiting in the islands. McGann, stated:

A big Kanaka lured Jack Tonaros (sic) into the bush and attacked him with a long-handled axe, such as they used in battle. Tonaros was struck a murderous blow on the cheek. Had it connected properly, as was the intention of his assailant, he would have been beheaded. As it was his face was gashed from his mouth to his ear on one side, but he got away with his life. Back on board the *Sybil* rough and ready treatment was given to the injured man. The cook got out a needle and reel of white cotton and sewed up the gash, rubbing in carbolic oil to prevent infection. The wound soon healed, but from then until his death Jack Tonaros wore a beard to hide the scar.²²

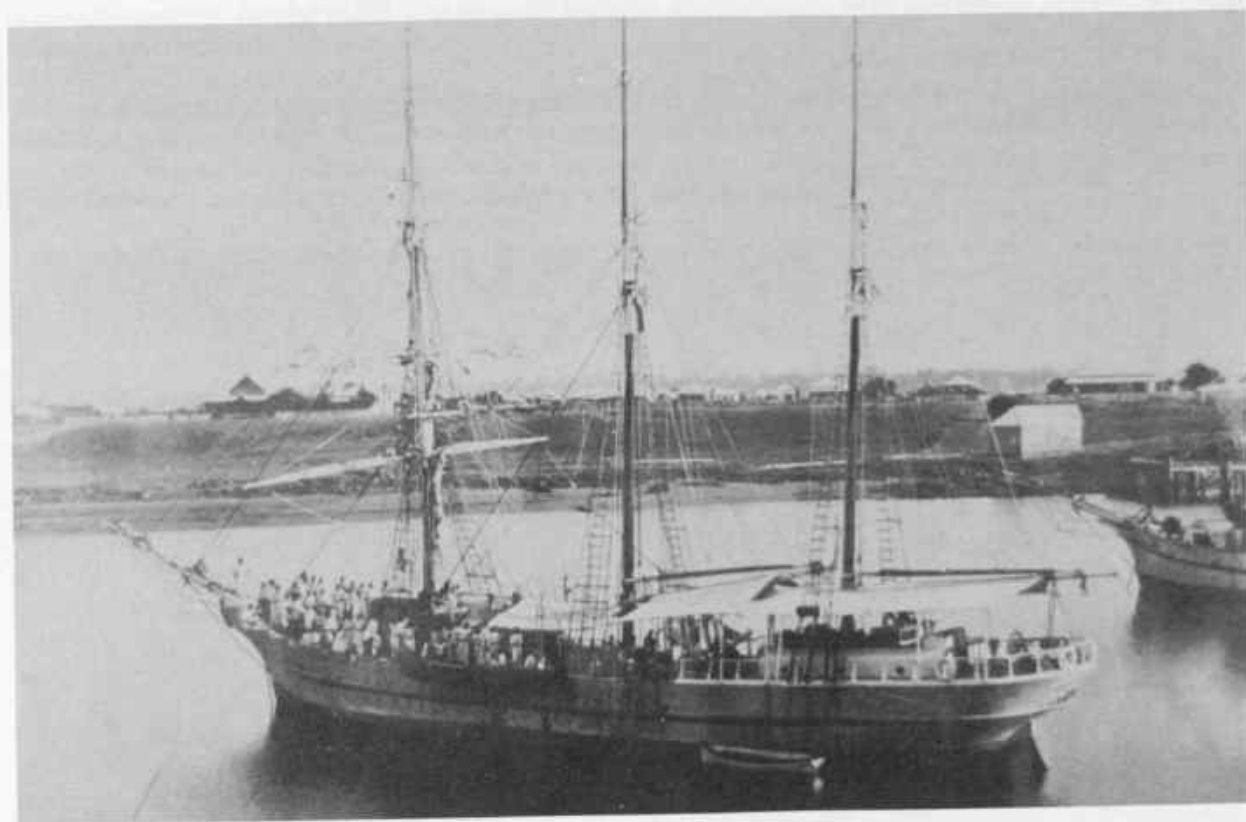
The attack was reported in the press after the *Sybil* returned to Mackay, the *Maryborough Chronicle* simply stated, '...there was only one unusual occurrence during the trip and that was at Malayta (Malaita) when a bushman in a hasty moment struck the recruiter J. Tornaros in the face with a tomahawk. No significance was attached to the assault.'²³

In November 1904 one of Maryborough's pioneer sugar planters, Peter O'Kelly suddenly died. O'Kelly, as we have seen, was a prominent figure in Maryborough's history and a solid advocate of islander labour. He had been born on 2 March, 1829 in Derry, Ireland, and was reputed to have belonged to a very old and prominent Galway family. He distinguished himself at school in two subjects, agriculture and chemistry, and after his education took up civil engineering. He worked for three years in general and railway surveying in the north of Ireland before deciding to emigrate to Australia. He landed at Melbourne aboard the ship *Donald McKay* in 1861, travelled to Brisbane in the same year and then overlanded to Maryborough, arriving on 1 January, 1862.



Maryborough sugar planter Peter O'Kelly.

Source - Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.



Labour vessel Sydney Belle loaded with labourers ca. 1895.

Source - Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

For a while O'Kelly followed his old profession of surveyor, but in 1870 he started general farming, moving into sugar-cane production in 1876 on his property, Ferney. He erected a large crushing mill and supplied juice in punts to Yengarie. According to his obituary in the *Maryborough Chronicle*, O'Kelly was one of the last sugar pioneers to abandon sugar-cane production and the central mill system when Yengarie was about to cease operations. After 1897 O'Kelly placed his property under grass and converted the plantation into a dairy farm. He was buried at the Maryborough cemetery on Monday 14 November, 1904.²⁴

O'Kelly's property Ferney was later purchased by John Samuel Farrar in about 1917. Born in Yorkshire, the son of a British cavalry officer, Farrar was very much the outback adventurer and pastoralist. One of his stations, Nutwood Downs in the Northern Territory, was eight hundred square miles in size. He was reported to have assisted Burke and Wills during their ill-fated expedition of 1860/61. Shortly after he and his family arrived in Maryborough, his wife was killed by a lamp explosion. Farrar was reportedly desolated by the loss of his wife and he died, a year after the accident, in November 1918.²⁵

The South Sea Islander labour trade in Maryborough officially lasted from November 1867 to October 1903. The last ship to bring islanders to Maryborough was the *Sydney Belle* which arrived at Maryborough on 20 October, 1903 with one hundred and twelve male and four female islanders.²⁶ Captain of the *Sydney Belle* was Rees Reynolds, the mate Joseph Hopkin, and the recruiter/bosun was J. Stevenson. The skipper was paid £8 for each time-expired labourer he returned to the islands and £20 for each he recruited. The government agent aboard the vessel was named Usher.²⁷

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3. M/C. 27 November, 1891.
4. M/C. 5 December, 1891.
5. Reproduced in M/C. 12 April, 1892.
6. Reproduced in M/C. 21 November, 1990, supplement p 34.
7. M/C. 30 December, 1892.
8. M/C. 24 January, 1893.
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11. M/C. 27 December, 1899.
12. M/C. 4 February, 1898.
13. M/C. 4 November, 1949, p 2.
14. M/C. 20 February, 1903.
15. M/C. 9 February, 1905.
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18. M/C. 1 March, 1905.
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21. M/C. 11 September, 1913.
22. M/C. 1 August, 1951, p 4.
23. M/C. 6 June, 1893, reproduced in M/C. 21 November, 1990, supplement p 35.
24. M/C. 14 November, 1904.
25. M/C. 19 November, 1918, p 6.
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27. For further details of this last voyage, see the reminiscences of one crew member, John Hansen, M/C. 4 October, 1958, p 2.

Chapter Twenty-six.

Deportation.

Widespread public opinion towards the end of the 19th century, as Australia moved towards Federation, was responsible for the growing demand for an Australia with a predominantly white population, a movement which led to what became generally known as the White Australia Policy - although the term itself never appeared in any state or federal legislation. The policy actually came into force with the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, and provided for a dictation test, given in English, which was used as an exclusory device, especially for people of non-European extraction. During 1902 and 1906, the number of departures from Australia actually exceeded the total number of arrivals, many of those departing were, of course, South Sea Islanders.¹

The problems of deporting South Sea Islanders were varied. For example, in many instances islander men had married aboriginal women. If the husband took his aboriginal wife to the islands she would almost certainly not be welcomed and in many instances may have been killed. Speaking from Brisbane, Reverend J. Thompson who had spent twenty-seven years among the islanders, stated in 1905 that to deport islanders was inhuman. He added: 'The federal government have picked upon the poor wretch who has no one to defend him. The Chinaman, Japanese and Hindus may do what they like, but the Kanaka, who does not compete in any way with the white man except in field labour, is deported. I call it cowardice.'²

Exemption certificates were issued to a small percentage of the seven thousand or so islanders who were to be deported. These people were mainly men and their wives who had managed to buy properties of their own and were thus exempt from the general deportation order.

The precise stipulations of the deportation order allowed islander men and women to remain in Australia if they had arrived in Australia prior to September 1879; were old or were suffering from some bodily infirmity; were married to an aboriginal or to an islander from an island other than their own; were registered holders of land acquired before 1906; or had resided continuously in Australia for more than twenty years. Islanders who had children who had been educated in state schools, and islanders who held unexpired leases over land, would be considered for residency upon application to the Polynesian Department.³

Work on sugar plantations was still available in Fiji, and the Fijian government had offered to pay the passages of any Queensland islander to Fiji, with an undertaking to return them to their own islands at the end of their Fijian contract period.⁴

The task of sending the remaining islanders back to their islands was a ponderous one. Shipping had to be found and paid for - by both the federal government and a trust fund set up by the Queensland government - and while the islanders were awaiting passage they had to earn a living. This was no easy task in a country where they were banned from working anywhere but in the cane-fields.



Islanders awaiting deportation in 1906. Source - John Oxley Library print number 30243.



Islanders prior to deportation, 1906. Source - John Oxley Library print number 70056.

Yet the majority of islanders, especially those who had spent many years in Queensland, were not poor. It was estimated at this time that by the end of 1906 the islanders awaiting deportation would have aggregate bank balances amounting to some £40,000, and it was reported that in Bundaberg alone, £10,000 was banked in islander accounts.⁵

The trust fund operated by the Queensland government was comprised of money which came from several sources. Originally the agents who recruited the islanders were forced by government legislation to pay £5 into the fund to cover the cost of the labourer's return passage. The price was later raised to £7 per head when the islanders decided to re-engage on the plantations. The second primary source of funding came from the monies owed to islanders who had died during the terms of their contracts. It was almost impossible to trace the relatives of deceased men on the islands, and when they could not be traced the money was taken into trust by the government.



The deportation of islanders was a highly controversial issue. Here islanders have been placed aboard ship ready to be returned to their islands in 1906. Source - John Oxley Library print number 70059.

The islanders themselves fought the deportation order as far as they were legally able. In October 1906 a test case was made of one islander who was ordered to be deported from Brisbane and the case went to the Supreme Court in an endeavour to prove that islanders were indeed as much Australians as white immigrants and that the Queensland government did not have the power to legally deport them. The subject of the test case was a man who had come to Queensland in 1897, had worked his three years' contract time and had then found employment for himself under standard working conditions. However, the court found that according to English law the deportation order was legal and ordered the islander to be sent home. A letter to the King, (Edward VII), appealing for justice, did not alter the deportation order.⁶

The following year a deputation of some fifty Malaita Islanders supported by around sixty men from other islands marched through Queen Street Brisbane to the government offices. They demanded their right to remain, citing the fact that Malaita was in a 'disturbed state' and that they feared being killed after landing. Later they marched on Government House with the same demands. The governor, Lord Chelmsford, listened to their pleas, promised to do what he could, but nothing eventuated to change the deportation order.⁷

Journalists and correspondents to the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* wrote scathing articles and letters condemning the deportation practice. One of Maryborough's most prolific social commentators was 'Justitia' who, in 1907, wrote:

Years have passed and engagement after engagement has been entered into and completed by the islander, who, having grown up in his environment (sic), is satisfied to end his days in Queensland to which he has given his manhood's best. Had he been forced to return home at the end of his first three years' term, he might then have had a chance. Many of his friends would have been still living, and there would at least have been mutual recognition, possibly some recognition of his rights also. Neither would he have forgotten his native methods of fighting ... But how very different is his situation, when, after ten, fifteen, twenty or even thirty years, he and his pitiful box are dumped together upon what is now, to him, a strange shore, inhabited by strangers who, even in his groping mind, are savages ... the latest accounts from the islands go to show that the repatriated Kanaka is meeting with a fate that many of us foretold awaited him. The tale told by one lady missionary alone accounts for quite a number done to death, and for this one we hear of by such channels, how many dozens, scores and hundreds shall we never hear of? What care we? We got his labour and we gave him religion (and vices) in exchange, but denied to him arms when we cast him - in our own religious way - naked in the sense of his utter defencelessness - among savage enemies who, on their part, can get modern weapons wherewith to slay him from the French and German traders ... Having got all the work possible out of him, we think it as well that he should reap the rich reward promised as soon as possible by getting clubbed or shot in the islands, and about the same time that we pocket the earthly return for his life's blood, his ears may be greeted with the celestial one ... Personally, we have no love for the Kanaka as an integral part of the Australian population, but having brought any animal into servitude, we would see to it, as a man, even as a heathen, that in his old age he was not by our order so placed as to be kicked to death. On the broad grounds of prevention of cruelty to animals, we should, as a civilized people, blush ... that we imported a savage, ignorant but trusting race of people for our own ends ... The holocaust of Queensland's Kanakas now proceeding, and yet to be carried to its bloody conclusion in the islands ... is forming about the darkest chapter in a new nation's history.⁸

Over the following years, as the new system of sugar bounties for white-labour-grown sugar was implemented, it became patiently but slowly obvious that the transition from foreign labour would be difficult but workable. In any event, mechanization was on the verge of being introduced. For example in February 1930, A.C. Howard the managing director of Austral Auto Cultivators, announced that his experiments with a sugar cane cultivator had proved so successful that a commercial cultivator would be available within two years.⁹

By 1937 Australia was producing sugar for just fourpence per pound. This was the fourth lowest production price in the world and was especially remarkable because Australia was then the only country to be producing sugar with white labour alone. By comparison, Britain was producing sugar in its colonies for 3.1 pence using sixty per cent of negro labour, the U.S. production cost was 3.4 pence with seventy per cent of negro labour and New Zealand's rate was 3.5 pence with one hundred per cent of islander labour.¹⁰

Of the islanders who had remained in Queensland their situation became ever more difficult. As they aged the state government instituted a meagre allowance of just five shillings per week, (£12 per year) and this was their only income. They were barred from working in the cane fields, and, in any case, by this time most of the original islanders were over seventy years of age. Pleas to the various governments from lobbyist groups such

as the Distressed Kanakas Relief Committee failed to move the bureaucrats over the issue, despite the fact that state government politicians had recently increased their own salaries from £500 to £650 per year.¹¹

Secretary of the Kanaka Relief Committee, Norman A. Campbell, wrote to the *Maryborough Chronicle* in March 1938:

When the Invalid and Old-age Pension Bill was recently before the House, the Hon. John Arthur Perkins said, 'I feel sure the pension legislation will be further improved, and there is room for improvement.' One regrets that he was not then aware of the sad plight of these stranded kanakas and we are sure he would have seized the opportunity of advocating an improvement in their condition.

When delivering his policy speech before the recent elections the Prime Minister declared that there was not a section of the Australian people who had not benefited through the existence of his government and policy. Unfortunately, for the last thirty years, our democratic governments have ignored their moral obligation to the South Sea Islanders who trusted their lives to the nation's integrity.

The Commonwealth owes a moral debt to the South Sea Islanders now marooned here, a debt of almost immeasurable gravity.

During the period of labour importation approximately one hundred and forty labour vessels arrived at the port carrying a total 11,387 males over sixteen years and 686 females over fourteen years. The ships bringing these recruits to Maryborough also brought a large number of coconuts from which confectionery was often manufactured.¹²

The smallest vessel employed on the labour routes was the sixty tons *Pacific*. This vessel brought sixty islanders to Maryborough on 6 May, 1878. The largest ship was the *Lady Belmore*, 254 tons, under the Command of Captain Currie, which completed three voyages to Maryborough between October 1880 and August 1881.¹³

The following brief chronology of events may aid researchers:

- 1863.** First Pacific Island labourers arrive aboard the *Don Juan* in Brisbane.
- 1868.** The Polynesian Labourers' Act is passed to control immigration practices.
- 1880.** The Pacific Island Labourers' Act is passed which places strict occupational restrictions on islanders. This act also tightens government supervision over recruiting methods and standards of treatment in the colony.
- 1884.** Islanders restricted by act to agricultural work. A royal commission is appointed to enquire into recruiting from New Guinea and adjacent waters.
- 1885.** Premier S.W. Griffith introduces a bill into state parliament to prevent recruiting licences being issued after 1890.
- 1892.** Griffith issues his political manifesto allowing recruiting to continue for a limited period under the Pacific Island Labourers' (Extension) Bill.
- 1901.** Upon Federation the new parliament passes the Pacific Islanders Labourers' Act, stipulating that recruiting has to end by 1904 and that repatriation must be completed by 1907. The Liberal Protectionist Party government under Australia's first prime minister, Edmund Barton, also passes the Immigration Restriction Act, providing strict immigration restrictions on anyone not of European descent.
- 1906.** An amendment to the 1901 Pacific Islanders Labourers' Act is introduced after the findings of a Queensland royal commission. This amendment permits larger numbers of islanders to remain in the country. Approximately two thousand five hundred finally remain.



White cane cutters finally replaced the South Sea Islanders. Albert Beddows' collection.

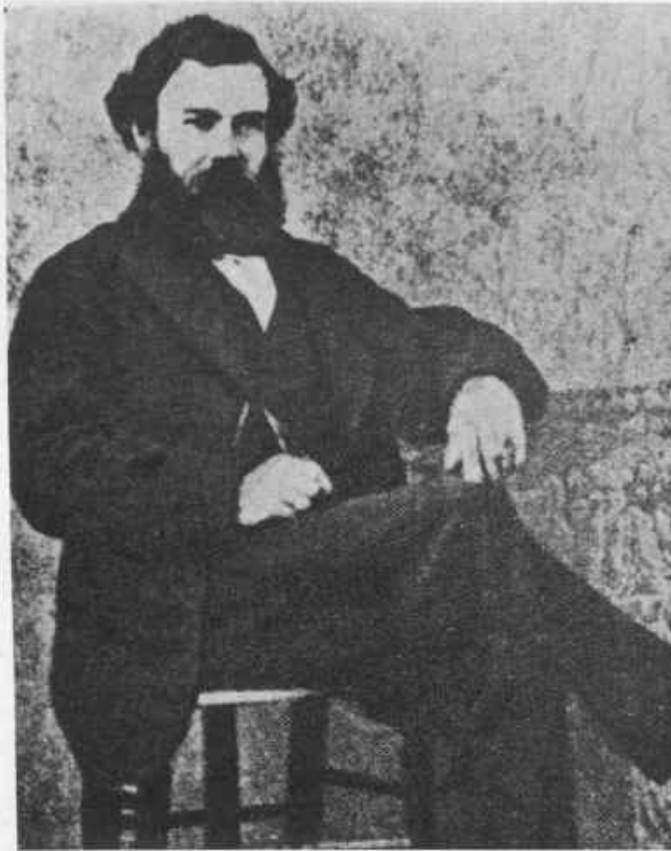


Cane harvesting, ca. 1930s. Albert Beddows' collection.

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11. M/C. 5 March, 1938, p 9.
12. M/C. 6 September, 1958, p 2.
13. M/C. 27 September, 1958, p 2. For further details, particularly on the political aspects of the policy of South Sea Islander deportation, see D. Wright's *The Expulsion of the Kanakas from Queensland*, Queensland Heritage, Volume 1 Number 10, May, 1969, pp 9-15.

Chapter Twenty-seven. The Gympie Gold-rush.



James Nash, the discoverer of gold at Gympie.
Source - Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

There is no doubt that the discovery of gold at Gympie by James Nash in October 1867 was an enormous fillip to the still embryonic township of Maryborough. Writing a year later, in October 1868, a journalist of the *Maryborough Chronicle* claimed:

In the early part of October 1867 the casual visitor to Maryborough would have been correct in stigmatising it as the dullest and most forlorn of villages. Its trade confined to the export of some sawn timber, tallow, hides and other products of a few industrial establishments in its vicinity, and to furnishing the neighbouring squatting stations with supplies - money transactions few and far between, and business generally depressed to its lowest ebb - despondence and apathy reigning supreme - there could be no more discouraging picture than our town presented little more than a year ago.¹

At the time of the Gympie gold-rush, the whole of Queensland was in a severely depressed economic state, unemployment was at extraordinarily high levels and the price of wool was plummeting downwards. After the 1866 bank crash most British funds dried up overnight, the squattocracy began feeling the affects of drought, massive debts, a declining price for wool, and rural expansion almost entirely ended. Construction on the railway line which had been planned to run between Ipswich and the Darling Downs ceased, throwing thousands of men out of work. There were riots in the streets of Brisbane and the Queensland government was on the verge of bankruptcy.

The continuing immigration policy was one of considerable political and social conflict. Many people believed that to bring immigrants to Queensland during such depressed economic times was detrimental to the colony in general and that such immigration should be at least slowed or possibly stopped until the economic structure of the colony improved. Immigrants arriving at the port of Maryborough were certainly disadvantaged at this time. Previous immigrants had arrived into a reasonably prosperous climate where work was plentiful and their labour was quickly utilized by eager employers. However, it was a situation destined not to last. When the 475 tons immigrant ship *Golden South* arrived at Hervey Bay with 450 immigrants in June 1866, there was very

little work in Maryborough for them. The engineer of roads had recently dismissed a large work-force because of a lack of government funding, and compared to the level of population, unemployment in the town was already exceedingly high.²

At the end of that month the situation was so severe that a public meeting was held at the Maryborough School of Arts building. The meeting - attended by around two hundred and fifty people - was convened by the mayor, Henry Palmer, to discuss the difficulties facing the unemployed and to petition the government to increase public works in the region so that labourers could gain employment. The mayor stated that it was of great concern to him personally to see men whom he knew to be hard working people going about the town seeking employment and receiving only negative results.³

But the golden age for Maryborough was about to dawn. The discovery of gold at Gympie entirely changed Maryborough's economic path and spelled such prosperity that, as a result, Maryborough grew very rapidly. The man responsible for changing the economic face of Queensland in 1867 was an English prospector named James Nash.

In October 1896, twenty-nine years after the discovery of gold at Gympie, James Nash gave a detailed account of that historic find. He wrote:

About the middle of August 1867, I left Nanango for Gladstone. I had been working some time in Nanango, there was nothing worth staying for, so I thought of going to Gladstone, trying all likely places on the way. I had nothing but my dish, pick and dog with me. I came by Mr Stanley's to Yabba, and there I stayed one night, starting again on Monday morning, reached an old sheep station at night, about twelve miles from Yabba, stayed there with two boys who were tailing cattle. I had been breaking quartz all day, while travelling down the range, and the boys seeing my dish asked if I was prospecting; they told me there had been some gold found at a place three miles from there called, I believe, Bella Creek. I tried it, and got colours in several places; then went to Brisbane by Imbil, where I bought a horse and rations; came back and tried the same creek in several places and only got a colour. I then left for Imbil; camped there a night with Rees Howel (who was running the mail from Maryborough to Brisbane) and Mr Lamb (manager of Imbil); left Imbil next morning, got to Denman's camp about 11 o'clock, saw a fire, boiled a billy and had dinner; just as I had finished Bob Whannel (who had arrived in Maryborough aboard the *Ariadne*) came up; he was hauling timber for Denman. I asked him to tell me where to cross the river (Mary), and he told me he would send a boy with me after dinner. I told him I had taken dinner, but he wanted me to have a drink of tea for friendship's sake. After he had dinner we all went to Denman's tent; he said he was an old digger from Victoria. I showed him the few specks from Bella Creek; he told me the Six-Mile Creek would be a likely place for gold. Mr Whannel sent a boy to show me the crossing; when I did cross I was searching for the track until the boy came looking for his bullocks; he put me on it and I reached Traveston that night, stayed there with Harry Best and a man named Ramsey, stockmen for Mr Powell. I left there next morning and got to the Six-Mile Creek, but not liking the look of it I did not try it at all, nor any other place, until travelling down what is now Caledonian Hill. Just at the end of where Mr T.J. Ferguson's garden now is, I tried a dish of dirt and got a speck in it; that half day and the next day I got an ounce and three dwts. On the second day I broke the hammer-headed pick I had and could do no more digging, so I went to Maryborough where I tried two banks and several stores, but could not sell the gold. (Times were so bad that they hardly knew what gold was like). At last I tried Mr Southerden a second time, and he allowed me £8 for it, £1 in money, and the rest in tools and rations. I then went back to try the place again, taking about 10 or 12 days for the journey both ways, and stay in Maryborough. When I got back I started digging in the same place, washing at the back of what is now the Tattersall's Hotel, but the water getting dirty, I went up the creek, near where the Gas-Works now is. While working the first dish there, I picked up gold beside me, in small pieces. I stayed on there. I had camped about where Mr Woodrow's store is now, but shifted further up the creek where I was working. I got seventy-five ounces in six days. And then started for Maryborough again. Camped at Curra station one night; helped to bury a blackboy next morning; then took five days to reach Maryborough. My horse knocked up near the Five-mile. I reached the punt (at Tinana) just at dark, and could not get the old horse on, so I left him, and carried my swag and saddle to the Sydney Hotel; took the first steamer to Brisbane. On board I met a young fellow named Malcolm, and we stayed together at the St. Patrick's Hotel. I told him I would be going into the bush back of Maryborough with horse, dray, and rations, that if he would like to come it would cost him nothing. I went then to Flavell Bros. (Brisbane jewellers) and sold the 75ozs. of gold. The Hon. W.H. Walsh, then member for Maryborough, was in the shop when I sold the gold. He asked me where I got it, I informed him that I got it up north,

meaning north of Brisbane not at the Palmer, as some say I told him. I bought a horse from Mr Redhead (farmer), and a dray from Kent's saleyard, and had a cradle made at the old Pimlico shop. I took steamer back to Maryborough, taking Malcolm with me, went to Travis's store for tarpaulin, rations, corn and chaff; then started for my camp. We took about nine days to get back, having to unload several times to cross creeks. Started work again, and waited nearly a fortnight for my brother John; I had left directions for him at the Sydney Hotel. I thought I would wait no longer for him but report the find, so I started at sundown from the camp, reached Tiaro at daylight, missing my brother on the way. As soon as I reached Maryborough I knew he had gone up, so I reported at once to Mr Sheridan, being told he was a P.M. (police magistrate), he sent Sergeant Ware to peg out the claim. With Sergeant Ware came Maurice and W. Walsh, Charles Brown, W. Leishman, and, I think, Mr J. Cartwright. A few days after the report nearly all the people had left Maryborough; then the rush took place. Mr Davidson (now Surveyor-General), then Land Commissioner in Maryborough, put the compass on my claim, and cut off a claim and a half at the bottom. Mr Denman has spread many false reports about the discovery of Gympie. I had never met him, until I called at the camp, when I could not find the crossing, and then did not have a meal with him, nor did I try the only place he told me would be likely to have gold in. Before I reported he passed one day, and wished to know how I was doing; I told him there was a little gold there, and offered him the dish, and pick to try his luck, but he said no he had bad luck in Victoria and would not go in for digging again, he had his timber to look after. I did not see him again 'till after the rush, and certainly did not have any rations from either Denman or Mr Powell nor did I ever try any dirt on Traveston as was asserted in *Figaro* some time ago. Mr A. Meston did not get any information from me about the discovery of Gympie, and the reports in his book *'The History of Queensland'*, are altogether incorrect. Before I reported there was lots of blacks passing; they wanted to know what I was doing, and I told them 'Looking for stuff same as another white man at Kilkivan,' (where they were getting copper). I knew one of the blacks named Miva Doctor (or king of Miva as he styled himself) who appeared to be boss, so they were friendly enough. James and Peter Graham were the first to have a store on the field.⁴

Details of the exact events concerning the discovery are difficult to accurately research. In later years, Alfred S. Austin, a frequent customer of the Queen's Hotel at Tiaro which Nash then owned, claimed that he succeeded in getting Nash to talk of those days, although Nash was a, '...very quiet, reticent man.' Quoting Nash, Austin stated that Nash had gone to the creek with his billy so that he could get water for some tea. Nash reportedly said: '...I saw gold plainly in the bed of the creek. I had no tea that night, but worked hard getting some rich gold.'⁵



R.J. Denman, who claimed to have told James Nash where to find gold at Gympie.

Reproduced with permission of Mrs Margaret White.

When Nash returned to Maryborough on 7 October, 1867, bringing with him about half a pound of gold. He reported his find firstly to Sergeant Richard Rogers Ware at the Maryborough police station, and then to the police magistrate, Richard Bingham Sheridan.

More than forty years later, Richard Ware, '...a venerable old gentleman of eighty years, crowned with snow white hair below which is set a pair of shrewd blue eyes,' arrived unexpectedly at the offices of a Brisbane

newspaper and relayed his version of the events on that historic day. Ware claimed that he had been busy in the office as Nash walked in, '...a sun-burned bearded man, who, with an air of considerable elation put down a canvas bag.' Ware said that he had opened the bag and discovered that it contained some seventy-five ounces of nuggets. Ware's account was reproduced in part in the *Maryborough Chronicle*, 16 October, 1908. It is certainly worth noting that there are conflicting accounts as to whom Nash first reported the find. Ware claimed that he had directed Nash to Sheridan, although Nash, in 1870, wrote that he reported first to Sheridan who ordered him to report to Ware.⁶

Shortly afterwards, Ware, then thirty-nine years of age, accompanied by Nash and several other Maryborough residents including C.E.S. Booker, Maurice Walsh and Alderman C. Faulkner, left town immediately to proceed to the diggings. Ware later claimed that during this first visit to the goldfield he discovered a nugget weighing fifty-seven ounces.⁷

On the 19th the party - minus Faulkner who had remained behind to, 'shepherd claims' - returned to Maryborough with one hundred and forty ounces of gold. At 4.30 that afternoon, opposite the Commercial Bank, an announcement was made to the people of Maryborough that a goldfield existed within easy distance. Eighty-three ounces of gold were lodged at the bank, along with a nugget weighing forty-one ounces and several coarse pieces of the precious metal. The stores of the town were almost immediately cleared of all kinds of tools, canvas, utensils and food.

At the police station, Sergeant Richard Ware had a stock of one hundred miners' rights forms. However, the station was inundated with men demanding the rights and stocks of the forms soon ran out so Ware resorted to writing them on blank sheets of paper. All that night he worked to deal with the scramble of men who waited impatiently at his office.⁸

By the middle of that week four hundred people were on the road to the diggings, many on foot, others on horseback or in drays. Proprietors of some of the larger businesses such as the Yengarie boiling down works and the Central Sugar Mills had to close their doors. An acting gold commissioner, William Davidson, was appointed, one storekeeper was said to have simply left his store in the hands of an assistant and left for the goldfield, and at least six members of the town council were either on the diggings or on their way there.⁹ The press later reported:

On Sunday Maryborough wore a deserted appearance. The clergymen who came to church found no congregation, a vessel that had put into port lay there untouched - the whole of the populace had got a bad attack of gold fever and had gone in search of the glinting metal.¹⁰

One man who played a small but interesting role in the discovery of Gympie's gold was William Walker, manager of the Maryborough branch of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney.

Walker had arrived in Maryborough on 20 January, 1866, as the newly appointed accountant to the bank. In March the following year he was appointed manager when his predecessor was transferred to Sydney. Walker later described Maryborough as being financially 'exceedingly dull,' and that business and financial prospects were very poor. However, Walker's expectations were to quickly change, for as he later recorded:

On 16 October, 1867, James Nash called at the Commercial Bank and asked particularly to see the manager, he would see nobody but the manager. I went out to the counter but he intimated that he wanted to see me privately. I called him into my office, where, without any remark, he drew from his pocket a bag, thumped it down on the table and said, 'I have discovered a goldfield and wish to deposit these 30 ounces for your safe-keeping.' I was so delighted to hear of such a discovery...¹¹

Walker later wrote that when the investigation party returned from the goldfield, some of the men pushed gold nuggets into his hand, many of them weighing from twenty to thirty ounces each. He said that soon afterwards steamers were arriving at the port two and three times each week, bringing hopeful diggers from all over the country and abroad. He added that many of these men had come with considerable financial backing, obviously intending to sink large sums of money into winning the gold at Gympie. Walker wrote that these men often awakened him at night - shortly after the steamers had arrived - so that they could deposit their funds with the bank before going to Gympie early the following morning.¹²

A few days later the *Maryborough Chronicle* published:

A gold fever rages in Maryborough. Under its influence the desk and counter have been deserted, the bricklayer has thrown down his trowel, the carpenter left his bench, the farmer has forsaken the field, the laborer his work, and with heavy swag on back, on foot, with pack-horse, with drays, all rush off to the newly discovered goldfield on the Mary River.¹³

Early pioneer immigrant Mrs J. McIntyre recalled:

Scarcely any men were left in the township of Maryborough. About three weeks after the rush started, Mr P.M. Bussey was asked to take up the first mail. He made great preparations and took the mails on pack horses along a bridle path through the bush with no mishap except that he missed the track now and again. He wanted to see what new diggings were like. There was no road from Brisbane to Gympie then, and no coach or teamsters. Mr Bussey saw about 800 men and the excitement was intense. He arrived back in Maryborough with the return mails in a fortnight.¹⁴

The man Mrs McIntyre referred to, P.M. Bussey, was at the time working for the saw-millers Wilson, Hart and Bartholomew. He was the firm's agent for sixteen years and was well liked and respected. Indeed, so respected was he that at the time of his death in 1883, one of his former employers wrote of him: 'Mr Bussey enjoyed a reputation which few men attain to the same degree - that of an honest man. Everyone who had regular dealings with him learned to place such implicit reliance on his word and integrity that the ordinary business precautions were deemed unnecessary. He won the universal respect of this town.'¹⁵

On the diggings, life was particularly difficult, even for those who were early on the field. According to Alfred S. Austin, even Nash had difficulties. Austin recorded Nash as stating:

Another nasty surprise we got was when two bits of Cockney sailor boys who had run away from their ship came on our claim and started measuring it and then pegging. Of course we disputed, and Mr H.E. King¹⁶ the Gold Warden came along, measured my claim and decided that I had too much ground and the boys were right and entitled to the small piece over. Well, the disgruntling part of it was that these lads took over £10,000 worth of gold out of that corner.¹⁷

The vast influx of people to the Maryborough region and the huge increases in prices that influx caused is clearly demonstrated through a review of the prices of the coach services to Gympie shortly after the rush commenced. By February 1868, just five months after the discovery of gold, there were at least two coach operators travelling the rough bush track to the diggings. From newspaper advertisements we know that these were, Express Coaches, owned by R. Walker, which left the Steam Packet Hotel every Monday and Friday at six a.m., and La Barte's coaches, owned by Joseph Moore La Barte, which left the Melbourne Hotel, opposite Queen's Wharf at five-thirty every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings. Joseph Moore La Barte also owned the Melbourne Hotel, having opened that business in 1864. Shortly after the opening Joseph Moore La Barte's son, also named Joseph, died at the hotel aged just seventeen days.¹⁸

By April another coach line had entered the fray. West's Coaches, owned by Charles West, advertised that the fare for the journey to what was then known as Nashville was just fifteen shillings. La Barte's fare at this time was £1.¹⁹ After 20 April, the date when West's coaches began operating, there was clearly going to be a price and advertising war between West's and La Barte's, but the animosity was evidently solved amicably because by 19 May the two companies had joined services and were advertising that the fares to Nashville had risen to twenty-five shillings on either line. A deal had clearly been negotiated to increase profits quite handsomely.²⁰

However, by July both companies were again advertising separately, yet with the same price which by now had escalated to a massive thirty shillings, twice the original West's fare. This was a clear case of monopolizing the market.²¹ Yet even worse was to follow. Three days later, on 28 July, the price had risen again - this time to £2 - for both coach lines.²² Fortunately for the diggers, the stranglehold these two businesses had on the coach market did not last for long. Soon afterwards the Cobb and Co. service began operations, advertising that they would carry passengers for the reduced fare of thirty shillings, still considerably in excess of the original price, but well below those of the other two coach lines.²³

Joseph Moore La Barte, one of the instigators of this price war, was to become a long and highly respected member of Maryborough's community. He was the eldest son of J. Moore La Barte, barrister-at-law of Dublin. He had come to Australia at the age of eighteen, landing in Victoria where he spent eleven years on the gold diggings. He was reported to have arrived in Queensland in 1863 where he engaged in various pursuits, but

apart from his well known coach line, he was better known for his participation in local government, particularly that of clerk and overseer of the Burrum Divisional Board. He later suffered a long illness of several years, and towards the end of his life was confined to his house. His death came suddenly in February 1910 after he was accidentally burned.²⁴

There were two types of Cobb and Co. coaches operating at the time of the Gympie gold-rush, a heavy and light version, the heavy coach was pulled by four horses and the light by two. The heavy coach had seating for six passengers with another two people seated beside the driver. The coaches left the Royal Hotel Maryborough at 6.30 each morning except Sundays, and another left Gympie at the same time. Well known drivers included Luke O'Malley and Peter McGilvray. A German driver named Louis Berger was drowned at Goochie Creek during a flood, the small coach he was driving was washed from the crossing. Coach horses were changed at Gundiah. Before the banks began to establish themselves at Gympie, most of the gold was sent via these coaches to Maryborough.²⁵

On 28 October, 1867, a public meeting was held in the Maryborough court-house. The object of this meeting was to arrange for a private gold escort, as the official police escort had not then been fully sanctioned. The first escort was formed by Maryborough residents T.N. Milner, W. Southerden, P. Graham and N. Tooth. On Wednesday 31 October, James Nash brought one hundred and twenty ounces of gold to Maryborough with the escort, this gold included a nugget weighing fifty ounces.²⁶

In December 1867, two months after the rush had started, more than four thousand ounces of gold had been taken to either Brisbane or Maryborough, and the Queensland government was making preparations to allocate £1500 to pay for a gold escort. The escort, it was deemed, would travel between both Maryborough and Brisbane, as there were many men in Gympie who lived in Brisbane and would want to remit their earnings directly there rather than sending it to Maryborough.²⁷

The police gold escort was established between Gympie and Maryborough on 28 January, 1868. This escort was run regularly every two weeks until 1869, after which it was run monthly. During that year 47,578 ounces of gold were escorted for a total fee of £1098. The first gold escort was commanded by Sergeant Lloyd, (later inspector).²⁸ Other members of the escort were Thomas King, the police legend of Maryborough, (q.v.), Tom Lennon, Officer Martin, (later sub-inspector), Officer Pickering, (later stationed for many years at Tiara), and Bob Corrie, who was later stationed at Newtown, Maryborough.²⁹

An indication of the enormous wealth being generated from the Gympie goldfields may be seen from the records of the gold escorts from January 1868 to September 1872. During this period a total of 277,515 ounces was transported. The price of gold at this time was £3/10/- an ounce, so the total value of the gold escorts for those five years was slightly more than £971,300.³⁰ This figure only shows the gold which came to Maryborough under escort, there is no way of knowing how much gold was brought privately on the regular passenger coaches.

Travelling on the Maryborough/Gympie coaches was usually a safe occupation, however, some of them were held up by bush-rangers and the coach occupants robbed.

In April 1868 one of La Barte's coaches was climbing uphill about three miles on the Maryborough side of the diggings when it was held up by three armed men. These men were dressed in moleskin trousers and Californian hats, one wore a blue poncho over his shirt, all were masked. They pointed various weapons at the coach inhabitants - all of whom were unarmed - and demanded that they empty their pockets and cases. The net haul for this gang was fourteen ounces of gold, £30 worth of sovereigns and £250 in bank-notes. The hurried search of the passengers failed to reveal a much larger cache of notes and gold in the pockets and luggage of their victims. The robbers also failed to discover a small bag of gold coins one of the passengers surreptitiously dropped to the ground and covered with his foot. A robber partially pulled a piece of calico cloth from the pocket of one of his victims, and, thinking it a handkerchief, ignored it. The owner breathed a sigh of relief for the item was a calico bag containing £200 in notes. Another passenger noticed that one of the robbers seemed apprehensive and unused to such activities, and that his inexperience was the reason why so much of the passengers' money and gold was not being discovered. While the robbery was in progress a horseman named Edward Lord, of Toowoomba, came riding towards the scene. Immediately realizing what was taking place, he turned his horse and galloped towards Gympie to raise the alarm. However, despite this timely warning, the bush-rangers were not apprehended.³¹

Just two weeks later the gang struck again, however, this time they met a man of somewhat stronger mettle than the victims involved in the previous holdup. His name was R.D. White, manager of the Rockhampton branch of the Bank of New South Wales.

White was visiting Maryborough and the diggings to ascertain whether or not it would be a profitable venture for his bank to open a branch on the goldfields. He had concluded from the amount of gold flowing into Maryborough that such a proposition was probably a sound idea, and he decided to visit the goldfields himself to gain first hand experience of the region. On the evening of 13 April, 1868, White was seated on a sofa enjoying a glass of wine with another bank manager at Currie's Hotel on the road to the diggings. Suddenly they heard a shout and into the room rushed a man who was lodging at the hotel. This man seemed terrified, and behind him came a masked figure with a revolver in his hand. The robber ordered the occupants of the bar to 'bail up,' as two more robbers crowded into the room. White had just taken off his coat but he was wearing a belt in which there were two weapons, a Tranter revolver, and a Smith and Wesson copper-cartridge revolver, of which only five chambers were loaded. The moment they were ordered to bail up, White drew his Tranter and one of the robbers immediately presented a pistol at his head. Unperturbed, White jumped at the man holding the pistol, caught him by the wrist, and, pointing his Tranter at his opponent's stomach, pulled the trigger three times. Unfortunately for White, nothing happened. The Tranter was not the revolver White usually carried for his own protection and before starting on his journey he had not noticed that one of his bank messengers had put on the pistol's safety catch. Struggling as he was with his assailant, White could not let his opponent go in order to release the safety catch, so he wheeled around, using the robber as a shield against the other two men, and began battering the thief about the head with the barrel of the Tranter.

The other two bush-rangers quickly moved closer and presented their own pistols at White's head, whereupon White finally threw down his pistol calling: 'There ... there are my arms, take them.'³²

Thinking the bank-manager had surrendered, the bush-rangers lowered their own weapons, but White drew his second revolver and fired several shots at the gang, missing them all. For a few vital seconds all was confusion as the robbers dived for cover and the shots reverberated around the hotel. One of the thieves called to another who was holding a shotgun: 'For the love of God, shoot at the devil.'³³

The man stepped forward, lifting the double-barrelled weapon, and fired. White slightly twisted his body and the shot just scorched his shirt. However, by this time he realized that he was hopelessly outnumbered, he had only two shots left in his revolver so he ran for the door. He quickly disappeared into the darkness and spent the remainder of the night hidden behind a fallen log.

The bandits were now free to rampage at will in the hotel, the owner, his wife, and several guests - all unarmed - were cowered under the guns of the bush-rangers. Yet there was little of any real value in the building, the robbers raided the till, finding just £15, and they left before dawn with a bottle of cheap brandy and a plum pudding.³⁴

The same men may have been responsible for the holding up of a Cobb and Co. coach about five months later. In September 1868 a group of three masked robbers baled up the coach at the bottom of a hill as it travelled from Gympie to Maryborough. Two of the men were armed with double-barrelled guns, the third carried a single barrelled weapon. The passengers were ordered from the coach and one of them, a Mr Power, was told to hold the heads of the coach horses and at the same time, 'shell out his cash.' Power drew a £5 note from his pocket and reluctantly gave it to the robbers, but one of them delved into Power's pockets and found a further £20. The coach was led into the nearby scrub and while the passengers watched, the robbers took down all the mails and opened them, searching especially for registered letters which may have carried money. Later the robbers left the scene, warning the coach driver not to start for Maryborough for at least half an hour. The police were soon afterwards in pursuit but their endeavours were unsuccessful.³⁵

Possibly the most notorious bush-ranger to operate on the road linking Maryborough to the diggings was George Palmer, who is alleged to have been the brother of one of Maryborough's founding fathers, Henry Palmer. George Palmer was well known to the Maryborough and Gympie police, but his notoriety increased dramatically one January morning in 1869 when he held up a coach carrying a shipment of gold en-route to the Maryborough banks. He and an accomplice gained little from the holdup, having to flee when one of the passengers was plucky enough to produce a pistol and show some resistance. After this incident Palmer was thoroughly hunted through the Wide Bay region, and was finally forced to flee north to the goldfields near Rockhampton where he believed the pickings would be easy. It was here that he met several former acquaintances, Alexander Archibald, landlord of the Lyon Creek Hotel, John Williams, and Charles Taylor. Together the four decided to bail up a local gold dealer named Patrick Halligan after he had been on a gold-buying trip to the Morinish diggings. The robbery was carried out in April 1869, but Halligan was shot and killed by Palmer after putting up a strong resistance to protect his gold.

For the following two weeks the bush-rangers hid in the scrub. A reward of £300 for the capture of the criminals was posted, a reward which was later increased to £700. On 5 May, the four men believed that they

were safe from pursuit. Palmer arranged a meeting in the scrub so that their loot could be divided. He told Taylor to bring a spring balance to weigh the large lump of retorted gold they had stolen from Halligan. The gold was roughly cut up with a tomahawk and distributed among them. They then split up, Archibald and Taylor returning to the Lyon Creek Hotel, Williams to Rockhampton, and Palmer to the Maryborough and Gympie regions.

At this time there were no known witnesses to the crime and although Palmer and his colleagues were suspected, without witnesses there was no evidence. However, a lone gold digger from Ridgeland's goldfields had been in the vicinity of the murder on that fateful day, and had seen Palmer waiting to hold up the gold dealer. Although this man feared for his life, the reward was too tempting. He finally contacted Sub-Inspector Elliot, the officer investigating the crime, and gave him what information he had. Acting on this information Archibald and Taylor were quickly arrested. Taylor could not prevent himself from talking and requested that he might be allowed to turn Queen's evidence in order to save himself from the noose. Williams was the next to be captured and the police could now concentrate on the hunt for Palmer.

By now, however, Palmer was hiding somewhere in the Wide Bay scrub. He later stated that those weeks were the most miserable of his life. He was not a murderer by nature, the killing of Halligan had not been his intention when the plan had been laid. To further compound his problems, Palmer's young and seemingly attractive wife was having a very public love affair with a local police officer. Finally, tiring of his remorse and guilt, he allowed his whereabouts to be known to the police through a local solicitor. When the troopers surrounded his hide-out, Palmer offered no resistance and allowed himself to be taken quietly into custody.

For the trial which followed, in September 1869, Taylor was allowed to turn Queen's evidence. Palmer, Williams and Archibald were all found guilty and sentenced to death. Palmer and Williams went to the gallows the following month. Palmer was in a terrible state, and the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

The appearance of Palmer seemed to shock everyone, so attenuated, so thin, such a wreck of his former self, that those nearest and dearest to him would almost have failed to recognise him. What he must have suffered, his Maker and himself could only know, but surely grief and remorse, and perhaps terror combined, rarely before made such a wreck of young and lusty manhood ... His face was pale and haggard, and with an expression on it of intense sorrow; his eyes, never prominent, had sunk into his head, and his whole frame gave able testimony of that mental anguish which medicine cannot cure. He was calm, but he looked like one walking in his sleep.³⁶

Palmer was first to ascend the gallows platform, he seemed not to be truly aware of his surroundings. Williams, however, was calm and even ran up the gallows' steps. When the rope was placed around his neck he made the hangman adjust it time and again until it was perfectly comfortable. The hangman then asked Palmer if he had anything to say, and when Palmer shook his head, Williams stepped forward and gave a lengthy discourse claiming his innocence. So long was this speech that the hangman stepped forward and whispered something in his ear, at which Williams replied: 'I will not detain you long.' He then continued the harangue, damning the man who had turned evidence against them. He said, '...then again there is that miserable wretch Taylor, that execrable fiend, that pet of the police who was put in the box to speak the foulest lies ever forged in hell, but who has sunk his soul there by uttering them, but I will leave him to his fate.'³⁷

Shortly afterwards the trap was sprung. Archibald went to the gallows four weeks later.³⁸

In August 1879 there occurred another holdup of a coach carrying passengers and property from Gympie to Maryborough. This robbery was certainly the most ambitious, the robber planned to take a box of jewels valued at around £1000. Early in the morning of 24 August that year the usual Cobb and Co. coach was travelling towards Maryborough. On board were several men, including a Mr Levoi, a commercial representative for the Brisbane firm of Hoffnug and Co., who had in his possession a number of valuable items including a strong-box containing the jewellery. After a while the coach passed the Two Mile Hotel and climbed up a steep ridge. At the top of the ridge the driver of the coach was forced to stop the vehicle as the road was barred by a temporary fence of saplings. The driver, John Morecroft, called to his passengers that some boys were playing tricks on him. He was about to climb down from the coach to clear the road when he noticed a powerfully built man on the whip side of the coach. The man was resting himself on one knee and levelling a gun at the driver. In terse terms the bush-ranger ordered the coachman to bail up. According to a description later given of the bush-ranger by the coach driver, the robber had a strip of white calico wrapped around the lower portion of his face. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported: 'Morecroft, being unarmed, considered discretion the proper card to play, and jumped down, retaining the reins as the horses were fresh and restive. His query: "Is it the mail you want?" was met by the prompt reply: "No, I want that box of jewellery".'³⁹

With this the bush-ranger walked towards the coach and called for the passengers to 'jump out,' adding, 'if you're not out by the count of three I'll blow your brains out.'⁴⁰ The passengers quickly scrambled from the coach and the robber ordered Morecroft to get down the box of jewellery. The *Chronicle* reported:

Morecroft pleaded that he could not leave go the reins, whereupon his visitor drew a revolver, and, tickling him about the ear with its muzzle, told him to hold the reins with one hand and assist him with the other to unload the coach. Here the robber shewed (sic) a previous acquaintance with the luggage he intended operating on, for, as Morecroft successively dragged out a large travelling trunk, a sample bag, and other packages, they were declined, but when the small box of jewellery made its appearance, it was recognised and collared. Morecroft all this time had the revolver buzzing about his head and describes his sensations as something quite unique in his experience.⁴¹

The bush-ranger now had to drag the heavy box into the bush, a task with which he evidently found some difficulty as the passengers later reported that in the attempt he fell down several times. When the robber was out of sight the passengers climbed back into the coach, Morecroft whipped up the horses and returned to Gympie to report the theft. Soon afterwards Sergeant Walsh, accompanied by four or five mounted constables, rode to the scene of the robbery and began casting around for tracks. While in town the Hoffnung representative, Mr Levoi, spoke to a number of miners, pointing out that the box was an exceedingly strong one and that the robber would almost certainly have difficulty opening it. It was also heavy and cumbersome and anyone carrying it would leave an easy trail to follow. Levoi also added that the return of the box intact would bring a substantial reward. Several miners took up the offer and one of these, a man named Tom Jones, had some rapid success. The newspapers reported:

Tom Jones got on the tracks and was early rewarded by first finding a gun and pistol, also a white blanket and pillow slip. The inference is that the latter was intended for use as a bag for carrying off the spoils. Following up the tracks, Jones soon came on the box hid under a bush. It had been much battered in but was found unopened. There are indications that the robber slept in a brick kiln close by the night before. The box was then brought into town on a blackfellow's head, escorted by troopers.⁴²

As the box arrived in town a hearty cheer was given by a group of miners. Levoi opened the box and found that none of the contents had been removed. In the meantime several Maryborough police officers, who had been warned by telegraph, were moving at speed down the Gympie road. They had received information that a party of five horsemen had camped in the Tuckekoi Scrub several nights previously. Suspicion was heightened when, upon questioning passers-by on the Maryborough road, they were informed that the group of horsemen now numbered just four. One of the men had gone mysteriously missing. The police eventually caught up to the men at the Nine Mile while they were having breakfast. They were questioned but could not account for the whereabouts of the missing man. The police then went on to Gympie where the captured firearms were closely examined. One of the Gympie police officers, Sergeant Walsh, stated that he recognized the revolver, and that it belonged to a man named Jenson, a miner and the son of a local jeweller. Jenson was a young man, some twenty-five years of age. The newspapers later reported: 'His career here has not been of the most satisfactory character, but neighbours have looked at his shortcomings with a forgiving eye, under the impression that he was somewhat deficient in intellect.' Jenson was soon afterwards arrested and charged with the robbery.⁴³

An indication of the importance of the Gympie gold-rush to the commercial expansion of Maryborough may be seen from the annual import taxes for the years 1867 and 1868. While the importation of agricultural implements actually dropped by about half - primarily because of the numbers of men leaving agriculture to go to the diggings - the quantities of most other goods increased dramatically. For example the amount of beer imported rose from a modest 3516 gallons in 1867 to a staggering 28,613 the following year.⁴⁴ 149 trunks of boots and shoes were imported in 1867, the following year that figure had reached 337 trunks.⁴⁵

One of the most remarkable discoveries in the Gympie region was the Curtis Nugget. In December 1867, just months after the rush began, Maryborough resident, George Curtis, entered into an agreement with a man named Charles Collin who owned a claim known as Sailor's Gully, (at the site where the Gympie town hall was later built). The gully had been purchased from another Maryborough man named Malcolm McGregor, who in turn had purchased it from James Nash.⁴⁶

This claim had previously yielded a reasonable amount of gold, enough to be considered a fair wage. Curtis arranged to work the gully with another man called Michael Canny. Curtis and Canny were to do all the hard work, and any gold found would be split between the three men after expenses had been taken into consideration. For Collin, this was an ideal arrangement, here was the chance of profit without having to physically work for it. In early December that year Curtis and Canny began working the claim. But the work was strenuous and just two days later Canny stated that he would do no more. Soon afterwards he returned penniless to Maryborough.



*Valentine Curtis Brigg,
the discoverer of the
Curtis Nugget.*

Source - Mrs Zillah
Christmas.

Knowing that he could not work the claim alone, Curtis sent an urgent letter to his nephew, a hard-working young man named Valentine Curtis Brigg. Valentine arrived at the diggings shortly after the New Year. The two men dug resolutely for a further month, enduring the searing heat of summer by day and torrential storms at night. However, they still found no gold.

By now, fading hope and mounting disappointment was taking its toll of the men's spirits. There are several versions of what followed. According to many contemporary press reports, on 6 February, Curtis pulled a bucket of loose shale and water to the top of the shaft and tipped the contents onto a mullock heap. One large piece of yellow clay looked promising. Curtis hit it with his pick and as the loose rock and clay fell away he saw that he had found a nugget of considerable size, the largest he had ever seen. Yet Curtis himself later stated that he had not been the finder of the nugget, and that Brigg had actually found it.⁴⁷

This claim was substantiated by Valentine Brigg himself. Brigg later told his son, Vern Brigg, that Curtis had been in the township buying stores when the nugget was discovered. Many years later Vern Brigg told the press that according to his father's account, the two men had waited until darkness had fallen before they secretly loaded the nugget into a bucket, slung it onto a pole and carried it between them to their camp. The find was celebrated with Curtis drinking a bottle of port (known then as porter), and Brigg buying a plum pudding.⁴⁸

News of the discovery soon spread throughout the diggings and all the abandoned claims adjacent to Sailor's Gully were rapidly taken up. When news of the find arrived in Maryborough it created a further wave of excitement in the town, hundreds of residents packed their wagons and moved off towards the diggings. However, they were to be disappointed, no other traces of gold of any significant value were found in the vicinity of the gully.

The nugget was the largest ever found in Queensland, weighing nine hundred and six ounces. When the nugget was brought to Maryborough in February 1868, one journalist described it as: '...a splendid lump of the precious metal ... its form is so irregular that it would be almost impossible to give it any description ... any idea of its shape. In appearance it is very pretty, the surface being rough ... (and) filled with red earth, making some parts of the surface look like a beautiful piece of frosted work. No-one without trying to lift it would have an impression merely seeing it that it is as heavy as it actually is. Judging by its size and weight there can be but little impurity.'⁴⁹

In order to raise money for a hospital at Gympie the nugget was exhibited for three days at the Royal Hotel in Maryborough. It was later taken - under heavy security - for exhibition in Brisbane and Sydney.

Sadly, the Perseverance Nugget, as Curtis had named it, or what more commonly became known as the Curtis Nugget, was not to bring the expected fame and wealth to its owners. News of the discovery had, quite naturally, reach the ears of Michael Canny, who reasoned that he had spent two days working the claim and he should share in the profits. He lodged his demands through a solicitor, stating that he had never really abandoned the claim and that he had intended to return to the diggings at around the same time the nugget had been found. Curtis and Brigg fought the demand through all the courts. It was a vastly expensive legal battle and although they won the case and Canny received nothing from the sale of the nugget, most of the money from the sale had been poured into legal expenses. In the final analysis, it was the various lawyers representing Brigg, Curtis and Canny who really reaped the rewards of the Curtis Nugget which was sold to the Sydney Royal Mint for four thousand pounds.

The man who had discovered the nugget was never again to strike it rich. Born at Launceston, Tasmania, in 1844, Valentine Brigg and his family later moved to Victoria where his eldest sister and her husband, John Robertson, had a dairy farm at The Springs near Melbourne. As a child Brigg reportedly played with members of Ned Kelly's family and was very friendly with Ned and his brother Dan. After the debacle of the Curtis Nugget, Valentine Brigg moved to the Normanton, Mulgrave and Palmer River goldfields, and although he certainly recovered gold, he found nothing to match the Curtis nugget. He later travelled to Western Australia, returning to Queensland in 1895. He died on 25 August, 1909.⁵⁰

George Curtis has been widely described as a scab inspector at Maryborough, and this may well have been the case, although in July 1867, just three months before the Gympie gold-rush, he was advertising his services in the *Maryborough Chronicle* as an accountant and general commission agent.⁵¹ Curtis was also a shop-keeper with a tobacconist and stationery business in Kent Street Maryborough. His son, George Silas Curtis, worked for him in the shop and had previously achieved a somewhat dubious prominence in Maryborough. In September 1864 an aboriginal woman named Kitty walked into the Curtis shop to purchase some tobacco. What actually occurred immediately afterwards is not entirely clear. George Silas Curtis later claimed that Kitty took the tobacco and demanded something else which Curtis was unwilling to give her. Several witnesses later reported what happened. Surveyor James Buchanan stated that he was in the coffee room of the Royal Hotel when he heard a gunshot. He went to one of the hotel windows and saw what appeared to be a bundle of clothing lying in the street. He rushed out to find Kitty gasping for air, blood and froth coming from her lips. Mr J.E. Brown, Kitty's employer, was also taking coffee at the Royal Hotel at the time of the shooting. He too rushed to the window in time to see the smoke of the gunshot coming from the doorway of the Curtis shop. Doctor Edward Fielding Palmer was summoned but it was too late to save the young girl. A pellet from the shot had penetrated her heart and she died within a few minutes. George Silas Curtis later claimed that it had been an accident, he had wanted to frighten Kitty and had taken the pistol from a hook where it had been hanging for months. He stated that he had not known the weapon was loaded, yet, according to press reports, he carefully inserted a firing cap before pointing it at Kitty and pulling the trigger. Curtis was later charged with manslaughter.⁵² He was tried at Maryborough in October that year, after deliberating for twenty-five minutes the jury found him not guilty and he was discharged.⁵³ Despite the stigma of this killing, George Silas Curtis went on to enjoy a long business and public career, primarily in Rockhampton. He became a Liberal politician in the Queensland parliament from 1893 to 1902 and was a member of the Legislative Council from 1914 to 1922, the year of his death.

His father, George Curtis, who, according to press reports, later became known as 'Nuggety Curtis', lived until September 1885 when he died at Rockhampton.⁵⁴

There is no doubt that the discovery of gold at Gympie was the turning point for the economy of Maryborough. Private gold escorts were the first to operate the run from Gympie to Maryborough. The first of these escorts took place in November 1867, bringing five hundred ounces of gold to be deposited in Maryborough banks. One of the richest deposits included, '...several pounds weight of pieces of quartz, some of which we have seen so richly impregnated with gold they seem to be composed half of precious metal.'⁵⁵

In February 1868 the postmaster-general called for tenders for the carrying of mails and for an official gold escort which was to run from Gympie to Maryborough. The mails were to be carried three times each week and the gold escort, comprised of two guards, was to run once a week by coach, during which no passengers would be carried.⁵⁶

In March 1868, for example, the gold escort arrived from the diggings with more than two thousand ounces of gold and £227 in cash. A further seven hundred ounces of gold was said to have come to the town in private hands. Some of this gold included a nugget weighing ninety-two ounces. The owners deposited the gold - along with forty ounces of gold dust - at the commissioner's office in Maryborough.⁵⁷



Gympie, Mary Street ca. 1870. Source - John Oxley Library print number 21466.

The quantity of supplies being brought into the town was restricted only to the size of the many vessels engaged in the trade. There was certainly a healthy competition being carried on between the ports of Maryborough and Brisbane, and many Maryborough residents complained bitterly at the government's apparent willingness to provide Brisbane with money to improve port facilities while leaving Maryborough to largely struggle for itself. In July 1868, the revenue returns on customs for goods entering the port had increased by almost £30,000. Other large increases in revenues included gold duty, miners' rights, publicans' licences, tools and equipment taxes and land sales.⁵⁸

However, as we have seen, the riches also brought a certain degree of criminal activity. In March 1868 there was a professional gang of forgers at work on the diggings and in Maryborough. These men were successfully passing off large quantities of fake gold sovereigns and banknotes of a very high quality.⁵⁹

Transportation of precious metals and coins was not all one way. The record ledgers of the Bank of New South Wales show that on 9 December, 1868, a shipment of bronze coin to the value of £20 left Maryborough under escort for Nashville. Miners preoccupied with gold digging had run short of pennies.⁶⁰

James Nash never became rich from his discovery, he was subjected to a plethora of bad luck and poor judgement. His confidant, Alfred S. Austin recorded an account of subsequent events. Nash was reported as saying:

Well, as time went on, I got married to the handsomest girl on the field, and what a wedding we had, champagne and all sorts of wine flowed like water, but what did we care then? Leaving my brothers John, William and Mark in charge, off we went to Brisbane on our way home. I had been advised to go to the Premier and claim the reward, £5000, having been offered by the government to anyone finding a field which had supported 500 men for twelve months. Well ... I am no speaker, so when those swells got to arguing and flattering the wife and me, at last I consented to accept £1000 and away we started for London and my old home in the west of England, and afterwards we went to the wife's relations in Ireland, which is a devil of a country for rain and whiskey. My word, we did have a time, but I kept away as much as possible from the 'swells'. When I had to meet any they asked such ridiculous questions, I got sick and was glad when we started for Queensland.⁶¹

There is a strange footnote to the saga of the discovery of gold at Gympie. By 1884 Nash had sold his claim and was living in Walker Street, Maryborough. On 23 November that year the house was empty. James Nash was away, he had not been home for a month, and Mrs Nash and her family were visiting friends. Knowing that the house belonged to the celebrated finder of Gympie's gold, a man named Richard Woods decided that there must be quantities of gold hidden in the house. He found a window which he could prise open and entered the building. Under one of the beds he discovered a deed box, and using a knife and a steel from the kitchen he prised it open. The pickings, however, were poor. Woods found only a bundle of papers and a few small nuggets which Mrs Nash later testified had been in the family for about fifteen years. Woods took the nuggets and met with a friend, Michael Carrol. He showed Carrol the gold and told him that he had got it from Gympie. Carrol insisted that they take it to the shop of a Chinese merchant in Richmond Street where it could be weighed and valued. On their way to the shop Woods admitted to Carrol that he had, in fact, stolen the gold from James Nash's house. Carrol seemed indifferent to the news. The Chinese dealer told them that the gold weighed twelve and a half dwts and was worth about thirty-six shillings. The men went away and pondered what they would do with the gold. Finally they decided to offer it to a local watch-maker named Max Spalding. Carrol later testified,

We then went to the watch-makers. Woods said, 'Mick, go in and sell the gold, ask £1 for it.' (I) went in and asked the watch-maker if he wanted any gold, and he said yes, and I showed it to him. The watch-maker asked how much I wanted for it, I said £1, he said he would give me ten shillings, and I said, 'all right.'⁶²

When Mrs Nash returned to her house at 10 o'clock that night, she soon noticed that one of her windows had been pulled down and a blind was twisted, she also noticed that a candle had been used. Yet nothing seemed to be out of place so she was not unduly worried. The following morning she noticed that a flower pot which had stood on the sill at the window had been put to one side. Later, while sweeping her back room, she saw that her deed box had been tampered with. Closer examination of her belongings revealed that a steel sharpener and knife had been used to prise the box open, and that the gold nuggets were missing. She immediately informed the police who questioned local jewellers and gold dealers to ascertain whether or not any gold nuggets had recently changed hands. Max Spalding informed them that he had purchased four nuggets, and from whom, and the two culprits were arrested in their homes. Woods received three months' imprisonment in Brisbane gaol and Carrol was sentenced to fourteen days in the Maryborough lockup.⁶³

Over the years Nash's money gradually ebbed away. After attempting hotel keeping and farming at Tiaro and Maryborough, he returned to Gympie where he was given the position of caretaker to the town's gunpowder magazine which had been moved, for the sake of safety, to Traveston.



The funeral of James Nash, one of the largest ever seen in Gympie. Courtesy the Gympie Library.



The grave of James Nash in the Gympie cemetery. Author's collection.

At least two men have since claimed that they directed Nash to the site of the gold at Gympie. The first was Reuben John Denman who remained adamant all his life that he had directed Nash to the site. Nash, however, as we have seen, refuted the allegation and it was a cause of bitter contention between the two men.

The second claim was made by a man named Thomas Holden. In late 1866 Holden was working as a shearer at Boobyjan. He claimed that during Christmas that year a traveller came to the station and asked if anyone would buy his horse as he needed money to continue prospecting. The horse was allegedly sold to a man named R. Christie, Holden stated in 1932 that he witnessed the signatures on the bill of sale and James Nash was definitely one of those signatures. As he had previously been working on a surveying party and knew the area of the Wide Bay, Nash allegedly asked his opinions regarding the possible sites of gold and Holden claimed that he directed him to the site of the gold discovery.⁶⁴

James Nash died at the Gympie hospital, attended by his two brothers and his niece, Mrs Daisy Gericke, on 5 October, 1913. He was buried in the Gympie cemetery. A house he owned at Hervey Bay was demolished in 1962, ninety-five years after his historic discovery.⁶⁵

Sources and Notes for Chapter Twenty-seven.

1. M/C. 17 October, 1868.
2. M/C. 6 June, 1866.
3. M/C. 30 June, 1866.
4. M/C. 16 October, 1896.
5. M/C. 12 June, 1919, p 6.
6. These conflicting reports may be read in the *Maryborough Chronicle* of 13 January, 1870 and 16 October, 1908.
7. M/C. 16 October, 1908. The listing given in this news account of persons accompanying Nash and Ware to the diggings differs substantially from that given by Nash in 1896.
8. M/C. 16 October, 1908.
9. M/C. 17 October, 1868.
10. M/C. 16 October, 1908.
11. M/C. 11 August, 1908.
12. M/C. *ibid*. See also the address of William Walker in: *The Semi-Jubilee of the Reverend J.I. Knipe*, printed at Maryborough, 1892, pp 18-19.
13. M/C. 23 October, 1867.
14. M/C. 2 August, 1924.

15. M/C. *ibid.*
16. H.E. King took over as gold commissioner from William Davidson on 2 December, 1867.
17. M/C. 12 June, 1919.
18. M/C. 22 February, 1868. See also Joseph Moore La Barte's advertisement for the opening of the hotel in M/C. 10 December, 1864, p 1 and the death notice of his son in M/C. 17 December, 1864, p 2.
19. M/C. 21 April, 1868.
20. M/C. 19 May, 1868.
21. M/C. 25 July, 1868.
22. M/C. 28 July, 1868.
23. M/C. 4 August, 1868.
24. M/C. 10 February, 1910.
25. M/C. 29 April, 1955.
26. M/C. 6 May, 1933, p 5.
27. Private paper, Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society archive.
28. *Ibid.*
29. M/C. 30 January, 1917, p 5.
30. M/C. 19 October, 1972.
31. M/C. 9 April, 1868.
32. M/C. 23 April, 1868.
33. M/C. *ibid.*
34. M/C. *ibid.*
35. M/C. 6 September, 1868.
36. M/C. 30 November, 1869.
37. M/C. *ibid.*
38. For full details on the exploits of Palmer and his associates, see, M/C. 8 May, 11 May, 12 June, 23 October, 27 November, 30 November, and 4 December, 1869.
39. M/C. 26 August, 1879.
40. M/C. *ibid.*
41. M/C. 29 August, 1879.
42. M/C. *ibid.*
43. M/C. 26 August, 1879.
44. M/C. 15 January, 1868 and 9 January, 1869.
45. M/C. *ibid.*
46. M/C. 23 August, 1928, p 4.
47. M/C. 15 February, 1868.
48. See Vern Brigg's letter to the editor, *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 28 June, 1963. M/C. 26 July, 1968, p 10.
49. M/C. 15 February, 1868.
50. *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 28 June, 1963.
51. M/C. 24 July, 1867.
52. M/C. 22 September, 1864.
53. M/C. 5 October, 1864, P 2.
54. M/C. 9 September, 1885, p 2.
55. M/C. 16 November, 1867.
56. M/C. 10 February, 1868.
57. M/C. 12 March, 1868.
58. M/C. 7 July, 1868.
59. M/C. 3 March, 1868.
60. Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society archive file G. 20.
61. M/C. 12 June, 1919.
62. M/C. 5 December, 1884.
63. M/C. *ibid.*
64. M/C. 17 August, 1933, p 3
65. Author interview with Mrs Gericke, 1983 and inscription on Nash's grave. See also M/C. 21 February, 1962, p 4.

Chapter Twenty-eight.

The Chinese in Maryborough.

The discovery of gold in Australia was the primary reason why so many Chinese were attracted to this country. The Chinese diggers called Australia 'Hsu Gum Shan', New Golden Mountain. When the Bathurst gold discovery was announced in 1850, a massive gold rush quickly commenced.

Coming to Australia was a difficult decision for the average Chinese person to make, to leave behind all they loved and to venture into a strange land. However, it was a decision they made out of sheer necessity. For years China had been severely overcrowded, as a result living standards were low. To make matters worse the population had been steadily exploited by war-lords demanding exorbitant taxes. This problem was compounded by the exploitation of the British and other traders who imported vast amounts of opium to pay for silk, rice and spices. Opium smoking in China was responsible for a general breakdown in family values and resulted in poor health and death for hundreds of thousands of people.

In 1855 alone, thirty-two ships brought more than ten thousand Chinese diggers to Australia. A total of seventeen thousand Chinese were now believed to be on the various diggings. That same year the British parliament passed the British Passenger Act to try to prevent the hideous conditions under which the unfortunate Chinese were being transported. Provisions of the act included the regulation of the number of men allowed to be carried on the transport ships, and the minimum of supplies for each man aboard.

Vast Chinese communities soon sprang up on the various Australian diggings. Here they lived in relative squalor, crowded together for security, living with their animals and using their own excrement to fertilise their vegetable gardens.

Most Chinese diggers, known generally as 'Chinks' or 'Johns' were law abiding citizens, far more law abiding - in general - than their Australian and European counterparts. Regarded as 'pagans', those who found themselves in courts were not required to swear an oath on the bible. They registered their oath by either blowing out a candle or cutting off a rooster's head.

In April 1883, the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

The appearance of a Chinaman in the Police Court yesterday, and the difficulty of getting him sworn to his own satisfaction, imparted variety to the judicial proceedings. John's conscience could only be satisfied by the decapitation of a living specimen of the *Phasianus gallus*, and a lively rooster having been procured, John proposed to use the knife there and then. His Worship, however, objected to the shedding of blood on the Government carpet, and suggested that the novel oath should be taken in the back yard. Accordingly, all hands having adjourned downstairs, and the plaintiff having grabbed the unwilling cock by the head, and the defendant, much against his inclination, having got hold of the bird's body, John essayed to saw through the chanticleer's neck with a very blunt penknife. The execution was slow, but eventually the desired separation was effected, and the 'parties to the oath,' with a fresh adornment of red splashwork on their persons, returned to the Court and justice resumed its sway.¹

One of Maryborough's earliest Chinese residents was James Chiam, a bright, intelligent and reportedly honest man who, after the resignation of George Howard, much to the surprise of many Maryborough residents, became an alderman on the Maryborough Town Council. Chiam was elected on Saturday 5 October, 1861, with a poll of eighty-one votes compared to William Southerden who, somewhat surprisingly, received a poll of only fourteen. A.W. Melville received just one vote, as did J.E. Brown and James Wright. The following Monday, after John Purser, the returning officer, announced the result of the vote, Chiam rose to make a speech. The press later reported: 'The official declaration of the poll took place on Monday at noon, after which Alderman Chiam delivered an oration in a dialect peculiarly his own. Mr Hedderwick (an interpreter) was, however, retained for the occasion.'²

For a Chinese man in Australia to have attained such rank was rare indeed. In 1861, one resident wrote:

...the mere fact of a Chinaman having been elected to the aldermanic gown is, in itself, although perhaps not desirable, not a very serious circumstance, for, being a naturalised British subject, and having the qualifications required by the Act, he is fully entitled to the position as one British born, and further, he may, by his conduct and general intelligence, have so gained the respect and confidence of his fellow citizens as to warrant their choosing him as their representative in the municipal government.³

At Chiam's first council attendance in October 1861, council discussion occupied some desultory topics and Chiam rose to state - evidently in a mixture of English and pidgin or Mandarin - that he had no intention of addressing the council during that particular meeting but he would give the alderman, '...a specimen of his oratorical abilities,' the following week. Alderman Booker stood and protested against Chiam addressing the council in a language its members could not understand. He said that if Chiam could not address council in English, then he should provide himself with an interpreter.⁴

Charles Buzacott, the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle* was evidently somewhat perplexed by the situation. Having a Chinese person elected to council was certainly far beyond the norm - although, as Buzacott reported, the election of Chiam was the result of actions taken by malicious members of an anti-municipal party. In November the newspaper printed:

It will be remembered that our last summary contained a brief account of municipal proceedings, closing with an announcement that a Chinaman had been converted into a civic dignitary. At the time it was hoped on the one hand that the Mongolian alderman would not possess the audacity to take his seat, while on the other it was believed that he would and that the other aldermen would have resigned in consequence and that the council would thus have become defunct. Neither of these expectations has been realised, the Celestial has sat in the council, has made speeches in an unknown tongue, and has voted - sometimes on both side of the question. He has done no mischief, being in blissful ignorance of the subject under discussion, and were it not that ability is shockingly deficient in our council, Alderman Chiam's public career might not very seriously affect the well-being of the town. The anti-municipal party threaten to re-elect Chiam in February next, and also to return an aboriginal native, (to council).⁵

A month later Buzacott had not changed his attitude towards Chiam. In a strongly worded editorial the newspaper claimed that Chiam's constituents were simple-minded and that Chiam would wreak irreparable injury to the town. Buzacott obliquely calling Chiam a clown who took his seat on the council and proceeded to tax and squander the cash of his deluded patrons. The report continued:

Elect another Chiam and the electors' control over the town's revenue will be virtually lost, for no fit person would be found willing to accept the 'honour of a seat' in such company. The probability would be, therefore, that at the next annual elections in February the only candidates offering would be a couple of foreign nonentities or dishonest professional adventurers.⁶

Chiam, a butcher by trade, while serving on the council, was later involved in a very public separation from his wife, it was a scandal which rocked the socialites of Maryborough and caused enormous public comment. Further comment was caused when Chiam was a witness to the trial of a Chinese man named Deong who had been charged with the murder of another Chinese person named Johnny. The murder had been committed at Gayndah on 21 April, 1861. Chiam told the court that he had gone to Gayndah to help the police after it had been reported that a murder had taken place. A vegetable garden was searched using spears to penetrate the ground. Chiam had found Johnny's badly decomposed corpse. Following the murder Deong had fled south to Sydney and Constable McCormish was despatched to track him down. McCormish enlisted the aid of the Sydney police and Deong was traced to a house in Goulburn Street. However, by the time the police arrived Deong had fled. He was then tracked to the Fairfield gold diggings and McCormish finally ran Deong to ground at a place called Black Creek, approximately twenty miles from Maitland. McCormish then brought his prisoner back to Maryborough where he was placed in the lock-up prior to being taken to Gayndah for his trial.⁷

At the end of the trial Deong was found not guilty and Chiam was so furious by the verdict that he turned his back on the judge and started reprimanding the jury. The judge, incensed by this lapse in legal protocol, ordered Chiam to cease his address, adding that if he offended again he would be put in prison for a month. Chiam stormed angrily from the court.⁸

Following the discovery of gold at Gympie in 1867, the Chinese were arriving at Brisbane and Maryborough in droves. Within weeks of the claim being lodged, thousands of diggers were on the field and the Chinese were moving north like a vast army. One journalist writing during the 1860s described several roads as being thronged with Chinese diggers, all of whom were loaded down with tools, food and other equipment. He said that at night the sides of the roads were illuminated with thousands of camp fires and the smell of cooking meats and vegetables permeated the air for many miles.

The Chinese faced many problems during their extraordinary pilgrimages to the gold-fields and they usually overcame these problems with philosophical calm, yet a few of these immigrants found that life in a strange

land with all its inherent troubles was often a difficult task. There were cases of severe depression, insanity and suicide. One such Chinese gold-miner who was returning to Maryborough from Gympie attempted to kill himself in May 1873. The press reported:

On Friday night a Chinaman, Ah Sam by name, attempted to commit suicide at Tiaro by cutting his throat. The unhappy man had left Gympie in the morning in company with a fellow countryman, and by evening had reached within six miles of Tiaro where they camped. On Saturday morning his companion was awakened by hearing a peculiar noise, and, on looking around, was horrified to find Ah Sam with a razor, employed in deliberately cutting his own throat. To snatch the weapon from him was the work of an instant, and having also secured a knife and pair of scissors of which Ah Sam was known to be possessed, his companion hurried off to report the circumstances to a farmer - Ridgeways - who lived close by. Returning immediately, accompanied by Ridgeways, they perceived that the misguided and determined man and found a second razor, and was sitting on a stump endeavouring to inflict a wound in his throat which should be fatal. The suicide being overpowered by the combined strength of the two men, the razor was taken away and information forwarded to the police at Tiaro and Gympie.⁹

When the police at Tiaro learned of the suicide attempt, they immediately sent to Maryborough for a doctor, and when the doctor arrived at Tiaro he and a police officer went by dray to the scene of the events, arriving there at about midnight. The Chinese man was by then very weak from loss of blood - although the jugular vein had not been slashed. He was taken in the dray to the Maryborough hospital and his life did not seem to be in any danger. However, as the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported: '...the patient has become very violent, and shown signs of becoming a dangerous lunatic. It has been found necessary to confine him in a strait-jacket and a constable has to be stationed at his bedside day and night.'¹⁰

Chinese men who entered into work agreements with businessmen and sugar-cane planters had to sign the same agreements under the Master and Servants' Act as white men. Yet they were generally paid far less than white workers and the wage inequality was often a cause for considerable contention. Absconding from the service of an employer was, of course, against the law, and in some cases substantial penalties were awarded. For example three Chinese workers, Thah Mah Lee, Wee See and Yee Boo were charged in May 1874 with absenting themselves from the employ of Robert Tooth at Yengarie. In fact it had been a sizable walk-out by at least nine workers, although the other six men soon returned to work after being reminded by Edmund Croft, Tooth's authorized recruiting agent, of their legal obligations. The miscreants were each awarded seven days' imprisonment or a fine, and interpreter fees of ten shillings.¹¹



Chinese gold digger. Source - John Oxley Library print number 60526.

In August 1876 the Queensland government introduced the Goldfields Amendment Bill. This bill imposed a very heavy fee on Chinese diggers working in the colony, a miner's licence would cost £3 per year and a trading licence £10 - about three times what the Australians were being charged for the same privileges. Under pressure from other Australian colonies the bill was later modified, but in 1877 a Chinese Immigration Regulation Bill was passed which closely followed the restrictive legislation already in force in Victoria and New South Wales. This bill imposed an entry fee of £10 per head on all Chinese immigrants and allowed only one Chinese migrant to be transported to Australia for each ten tons of ship's weight. The following year an amendment to the act was passed which stipulated that all Chinese would be excluded from mining areas for the first three years after the discovery of the field. By 1884 the landing tax was increased to £30, and ships were restricted to one Chinese passenger for every fifty tons of ship's weight.

On 5 February, 1887, the publication *Queensland Figaro* reported: 'When once the Chinese swarm to a goldfield they overrun it as a horde of locusts do a wheat crop. They are no earthly use to Queensland which they rob annually of much wealth without yielding any reciprocal revenue or helping to develop the productive resources of the colony.'

Yet the Chinese were not only on the goldfields, they worked in most centres where there was any sort of significant population, they also found work on the stations as cooks and shepherds. In towns such as Maryborough and Gympie many of the Chinese opened restaurants, tea houses, opium dens, joss houses, cobblers and tailors shops.

In 1884 a group of bedraggled Chinese were landed at the Maryborough wharf, they brought with them a tale of shipwreck, tragedy and lost gold.

In October that year a large group of Chinese gold diggers was ready to return to Hong Kong. They boarded the steamship *Chang Chow* at Newcastle, New South Wales. The ship was loaded with coal and edible fungi, and was under the command of a new skipper, Captain James Young. More than one hundred Chinese were on board - most of whom had served two decades in the colonies.

The weather was fine and all that week the vessel followed the coastline northwards. On the Friday following their departure they sighted Sandy Cape on the northern tip of Fraser Island. Young decided to steer between Breaksea Spit and a dangerous patch of submerged rocks known as Great Sandy Shoal. With no warning the steamer struck the rocks. Young backed the ship off the rocks but it soon became obvious it was taking in water.

The pumps were working at full pace but the damage was severe. To save the ship, or at least its cargo, Young steered a course for Fraser Island, hoping to find a place to beach the stricken vessel.

Sandy Cape was about seven miles away. It became a race against time. The surging sea water was gaining on the pumps and rising to within inches of the boilers' fires. With no power the ship would be doomed.

Captain Young, fearing that the *Chang Chow* would founder, ordered the life boats to be hauled out and lowered. Six Chinese passengers, loaded with their personal baggage and gold, rushed to one of the boats. The frail craft capsized throwing all of them into the sea.

The Chinese were carrying their gold on their bodies. Hundreds of sovereigns were carefully sewn into long leather bags. These were passed twice around their backs and chests crosswise and once around each leg. The belts were then tied around their waists and hidden beneath folds of clothing. They were destined to be fatal weights, the six men sank quickly to the sea-bed and could not re-surface.

Those who remained on the *Chang Chow* finally made a dangerous landing through difficult surf. When news of the disaster arrived the next day at Maryborough, a party of rescuers was sent aboard another steamer, the *Polly*. With typical bureaucratic pettiness, police were sent with the rescuers to collect a landing tax from the Chinese. Shipwrecked or not, they still had to pay for the privilege of landing in Queensland.

However, all the Chinese people refused to pay the tax and were taken to Maryborough where they were detained at the immigration centre. They were searched and questioned about the large quantities of gold the officials had found strapped to their bodies. More than nine thousand sovereigns were counted.

The reluctant immigrants proceeded to make themselves quite unpopular among the residents of Maryborough, in an effort to protect themselves against attack they constructed a galvanized iron fence around their quarters.¹²

The tragedy of the *Chang Chow* ended with a strange saga. In January 1885 the *Chang Chow* Steamship Company was formed in Maryborough with a capital of £10,000 in two thousand shares. The company's main project was to purchase the wreck of the steamship from its owners - a price of £1600 had already been agreed upon - and it was envisaged that a handsome profit could be made from salvaging the ship and its cargo.

The ship's cargo, according to its manifest, had included two thousand tons of coal, two hundred and thirty bales of edible fungi for the Chinese culinary market, and a large amount of general items. The machinery on board the ship was particularly valuable. On deck there were two steam crab winches with a value of approximately £2000, and there was also the ship's ballast which comprised eighty-nine tons of scrap iron. The man placed in charge of the salvaging operation was Captain Frederick.

Soon after the company was formed Frederick and a salvage committee comprised of G.D. Russell, Boyd Dunlop and John Walters visited the site of the wreck. The committee later reported:

We found the ship to be lying on the east side of Fraser Island, almost due south of Sandy Cape and about one mile from the beach. At the time we boarded the vessel the tide was a little more than a quarter on, but we could obtain a very good survey of the entire ship from the top of the deck-house. The vessel was lying as she does with a slight list to port, and with a slope from bow to stern of not more than one in twenty, can be easily walked upon. The whole of the poop deck was above water, and between each succeeding wave sufficient time was given to see all the after deck, but all the fore part was covered, except the bulwarks which could occasionally be traced up to the bowsprit ... the decks are quite intact, except the after deck which is of timber, where a plank or two has been sprung.¹³

Frederick and his committee were optimistic that the *Chang Chow* could be easily refloated and that the ship's back was not broken. Yet despite their report no salvage attempt was ever successful, some equipment was saved, but the ship eventually rusted into a hulk.

The Chinese invasion of Maryborough, on the whole, had an enormously beneficial affect on the town generally, yet there were several problems associated with having such a strange and misunderstood community living in the vicinity, not least of which was the proliferation of opium dens, gambling houses and Chinese brothels.

The existence of opium dens and Chinese gambling houses - places frequented by South Sea Islanders as well as some white people - caused a minor furore in Maryborough during the early months of 1889. This furore increased when an investigation carried out by journalists of the *Maryborough Chronicle* discovered that white women were being used as prostitutes in some of the Chinese brothels. The state of the buildings, their lack of sanitation and the dangers of fire were also causes for alarm, as the *Chronicle* heatedly reported:

According to the general view, the authorities should have pulled these buildings down long ago. Take for example the mass of fruit cases composing most of the fearfully and wonderfully constructed store of See Chung, and the den at the rear of the old blacksmith's shop of Mrs Irwin. In both buildings crowds of Chinese assemble nightly, and the places from sanitary and fire considerations are a standing menace to health and the safety of adjoining property. Yet nothing is done and no satisfactory answer can be given why nothing is done. In the matter of the two Polynesian shops in the same street owned by Messrs Wilson Hart and Co., ... on Saturday night last, at a late hour, numbers of dirty old rugs or blankets were spread on the floor of numerous cribs evidently awaiting a batch of coolies who were in the back yard, and several stupefied or drunken Kanakas were already at roost.¹⁴

The news reporter, accompanied by a police officer named Detective Clancy and the inspector of nuisances, who acted as the guide for the evening, conducted a tour of 'the dark places.' The subsequent report was illuminating.

We entered the tumbling down four-roomed house at the immediate rear of the blacksmith's shop in Adelaide Street and adjoining the premises of See Chung. In a back skillion room some 10 feet or so square, amidst stifling heat, stench as thick as a main sewer and opium fumes, sat around the table eight Chinese gamblers and a lanky white youth whose age could not be more than 17 years. Implements of the game of fan tan, two piles of silver coin used as counters and a small opium-smoker's lamp were on the table. The play was going on busily and the gamblers scarcely heeded our entry further than by a surprised look from one or two of the players. The croupier was a well known Chinese shop-keeper in Adelaide Street. In the corresponding skillion portion of the building from the back doorway were a number of recently emptied spirit and beer

bottles. Among the perspiration and intensely anxious-faced participants in the game, we recognised several men who carry fruit and vegetable baskets around the town ... On going to the front room a knot of four Chinese, more or less opium drenched and still sucking at their long pipes placed over lamps, surrounded the boss of the premises who gave his name as Ah Moh, a gaunt specimen of an advanced aged Mongolian.¹⁵

The investigative team quickly ascertained that Ah Moh paid a rent of five shillings and sixpence to the owner of the building, the wife of George Irwin. Also in the opium den was a young white girl in a stupefied state who quite obviously was a prostitute. She was carried to the lockup, probably by Detective Clancy.

That same evening, shortly before midnight, a posse of police led by Inspector Lloyd raided Tom Quong's fruit-shop. This building in Kent Street opposite the Cafe Royal was owned by H.E. Aldridge, son of pioneer E.T. Aldridge. The back room of the building was rented to a man named Quie Yin, a boot-maker. Entrance to the building was gained through a side door and the inspector, with several other officers, rushed through the narrow passageway to surprise a school of fan tan players. The game of fan tan was illegal at this time, as it was considered that the intensive gambling associated with it had a corrupting influence. Two of the Chinese made 'a desperate resistance' for a few minutes, but were quickly overwhelmed and handcuffed. About a dozen Chinese were in the building at the time of the raid, all were marched to the lockup. Included among these were Ah Huey, Ah Yangs, Bn Tung, Le Wau, Lem, and Ah Sing. Also taken into possession was the gambling equipment and a gambling pool of £37 in gold, notes and silver.

After the raid the *Chronicle* called upon the public to help in their efforts to, '...destroy the Chinese evil in Maryborough.'¹⁶

One of the most infamous Chinese brothels in Maryborough was situated in Alice Street east, a two roomed building in a region unofficially termed Rotten Row. The building was occupied by a Chinese man, his white mistress, two Chinese children and one other white woman. The room they occupied was described as being '...a bedroom, 10 feet square ... frequented by numerous Chinese.'¹⁷ The rent for this building was paid to the owner, well known Maryborough businessman, James Fairlie. When the house was subsequently raided by the police and press, the *Chronicle* reported:

As a police officer - with our representative - approached the house a few evenings ago, insufferable stenches came from behind the wretched building, and when near the front door, which was open, effluent came forth such as ought to attract our health officials. Three white women occupied seats on empty fruit cases in the front verandah, as we conversed, a youth of sixteen, apparently the son of one of the women, came home from town and took a seat, smoking a pipe in the crowd. As we have said, numbers of Chinese visit this house, a fact given us by the police. Of the occupation therefore of the young women that we saw, bootless and shoeless, there need be no doubt.¹⁸

Other houses of ill-repute included a building in Bowen Street, opposite the gas works. This building was also owned by James Fairlie and rented to a man named Tom Jack. In February 1889 Louisa Baldwin was arrested on these premises, charged with prostitution, sentenced to two months' gaol with hard labour and sent to Toowoomba prison. Another alleged prostitute, Mary Ann Hutchins, was also charged, but because she could prove that she was living with a Chinese man at the time, and was therefore his mistress, the charges were dropped and she was discharged.¹⁹

Another popular brothel was situated in Napier Street Granville. Literally streams of South Sea Islanders and Chinese were reputed to have visited this house nightly, the liquor being supplied through a white woman who lived next door. Passengers on the Granville ferry considered it humiliating that they had to be crushed into the ferry with hordes of Chinese and South Sea Islanders on their way to this brothel. The press reported:

Here in Napier Street, on the main thoroughfare from the boat ferry, is a house owned by the father of respected daughters and mothers living in this district. Two notorious prostitutes are professing to smooth his dying pillow but are actually keeping a brothel. Literally streams of kanakas with occasional Chinese cross on the ferry nightly. They enter the houses in batches, lights are extinguished and shortly after, second and third contingents occupy the places vacated by their predecessors. Liquor is obtained by the employment of a white woman neighbour and the whole thing is going on night after night.²⁰

It was estimated at the time that at least twenty or more white prostitutes were working in the Chinese brothels. Opium smoking was not a crime at this time, and so apart from closing down these dens for health reasons, there was little the authorities could do. One of the most notorious opium dens operated from a shop in Adelaide Street, close to what was then Booker's butchery. Two Chinese men rented this shop from the

Union Bank - ostensibly as a fruit shop - but no business was carried on at the building and there was no display of goods apart from one basket of fruit in the shop window. The Chinese men who operated the den always seemed to be in a state of opium stupefaction and the stench emanating from the building was described as being foul. The Chinese men who ran the 'business' had no public means of support other than the opium trade.

Three Chinese cooks, earning £2 each, who variously worked in the Sydney, the Royal and the Custom House Hotels, admitted to news reporters that each evening they went to an opium den in Ellena Street owned by John Eaton and rented to J.D. Mactaggart, a well known Maryborough businessman and Kilkivan pioneer. It was the businessmen, the owners of the properties, who came under severe attack from the press for allowing such practices to be carried on in buildings they owned.²¹

There is little doubt that the use of opium, especially among the Chinese and aboriginal communities, was responsible for a number of major crimes. During the trial of a Chinese man named Deong in 1861 (q.v.), it was revealed that the price of opium in Maryborough was forty-five shillings per pound and eighty shillings per pound at Gayndah. Deong, was accused of killing a man at Gayndah while under the influence of opium. He admitted that he smoked about one pound of opium every day and a half.²²

An indication of the extent of opium use in Maryborough may be seen from the statement of customs revenue for the month of September 1862. During that month £43/10/- was collected as customs tax on wine, just over £2 for beer, £93/6/- for tobacco, £26/16/- for cigars and £61/5/- for opium.²³ Fourteen months later the duty on opium had risen to a staggering £156/11/6d, more than doubling the importation of opium in little more than a year.²⁴ This trend was to continue. In 1867 a little over 204 lbs of opium was imported to Maryborough, but the following year, after the Gympie gold-rush which brought so many Chinese to the region, that figure had more than trebled to 681 lbs for the year with a duty of more than £1000.²⁵

Even though the Chinese were often very poorly paid, there were several instances of even further abuse. They generally received only a meagre wage with rations of flour, meat and rice. On some stations there were reports of the Chinese being poisoned with arsenic to prevent them collecting their wages.

Maryborough's little known Chinese murderer was a man whose name appeared in press reports only as Sam, but was more likely Ah Sam. This man may possibly have been the same Ah Sam who had attempted to commit suicide near Tiaro five years previously, and whom a reporter from the *Maryborough Chronicle* had described as, 'a dangerous lunatic.' In December 1878 the *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

At an early hour on Friday morning the news spread through the town that the body of Captain McIvor of the schooner *Morning Light* had been discovered lying on the poop of his vessel with his head split open ... The police having been apprised at once proceeded to the spot and there found the captain described. On entering the cabin a terrible spectacle met their gaze, for there, suspended from the skylight, was a Chinaman with his feet on the floor and with his hands stretched out in cold death.²⁶

Sam had been employed as a cook aboard the Wilson and Hart schooner *Morning Light*, but the captain of the ship, Alexander McIvor, had been less than happy with Sam's performance and had instructed him that he was to be replaced. The captain had gone ashore from the Wilson and Hart wharf and employed another man to take the Chinese cook's place. He returned aboard that evening and was never seen alive again. What exactly occurred that night has never been discovered. Captain McIvor's body was found the following morning sprawled in the ship's scuppers. He had been severely wounded about the head with a sharp instrument. The police were immediately sent for and, as Senior Constable P. Kelly later testified, a group of police - accompanied by R. Hart from the sawmill - went on board the ship. Captain Alexander lay as he had been discovered a few minutes previously, and down in one of the ship's cabins they found, in Sam's bunk, a tomahawk covered with blood and hair. In the captain's cabin they discovered the body of Sam. Senior Constable P. Kelly later testified:

(I) saw a Chinaman, as I thought, standing with his back to me, leaning against a small rope. On examination (I) found he was dead and suspended by a rope made fast to a board across the bottom of the skylight level with the deck. The body was dressed in a dark tweed coat, woollen knitted waistcoat, a cotton striped shirt, new duck trousers, old blucher boots, a black stiff hat, there was a string to the hat made fast to the coat with a turn around the ear. There was a silver watch and a brass chain attached to the waistcoat. The watch was in the trouser's pocket. Both legs were slightly bowed, the heels of each foot touching the ground, there was a candle alight on the table in the cabin, burnt down to the socket ... I found a large butcher sheath knife sticking between the belt and trousers.²⁷



Chinese market garden. Source - John Oxley Library print number 18570.

At the subsequent enquiry which took place in the Maryborough court-house shortly afterwards, many members of the crew and others who knew the murderer and his victim gave evidence. From this evidence it became clear that Sam had bitterly resented being terminated from employment and the resentment had driven him to murder.²⁸

The importation of opium was banned under the Prohibition Act in 1905. This prohibition caused large volumes of opium to be smuggled into Australia to feed the needs of thousands of opium addicts, mainly Chinese, who lived in the country. The Australian Customs Department admitted in 1908 that during the previous two years they had arrested one hundred and eighty-eight smugglers and detected 5726 tins of smuggled opium. A woman known as Rose Munro, allegedly the wife of a Melbourne Chinese dealer, was one of the drug runners bringing opium into the Wide Bay region. Arrested at Bundaberg in March 1908 with a case containing twenty-five tins of opium, she was subsequently fined £50.²⁹

During the 1880s large numbers of Chinese in the colony were the cause of great concern among many townspeople and an organization called the Anti-Chinese League was formed. In Maryborough, for example, at a meeting on 14 June, 1887, the league delegate, Mr J. Potts, referring to the Chinese on the northern Queensland goldfields stated: 'You have not yet seen the evil to such an extent as those in the north. You have not seen how dangerous it is to allow aliens to invade a white man's world. It is impossible for the white man to compete with the Chinese, as the coolie only requires a little rice on which to live. In some places not even marauding wild animals would raid a Chinese vegetable garden, considering it foul. The Chinese are grasping misers who, when they grasp the good gold of Australia, will never give it up. The Chinese should be boycotted.'³⁰

Potts was a bitter and very public opponent of the Chinese and was moved to frequently air his discrimination. In April 1887 he wrote:

(I) regard the presence of the low-class Chinamen we have amongst us, as far more damaging to the material, social, and moral welfare of the community, than the landing of a few Irish informers, or English convicts, the latter in many instances, having proved themselves to be very good colonists, and yet we raised a piteous cry against them, and wailed about the consequent moral degradation, and the vital importance of aiming at a higher standard of civilization, and so England withdrew the human rubbish she intended to shoot upon our shores. How very inconsistent we are. I suppose if England or some great power were to ship in the same way a few Chinese Coolies, for the purpose of getting rid of them, we would raise another cry, and yet we only raise a laugh or smile as the bland heathen steps ashore of his own accord and trots away to the den of his herded kin to smoke opium, gamble, and barter bananas and lollies to little girls for the pleasure of indulging his amorous passions, a practice so common in China. Therefore I affirm, that the Chinese in our midst, and in the heart of our towns, are a far greater curse than the convicts landed by an English convict ship. We tolerate the Chinese because we fail to grasp the

true extent of the evil. They are sent out to Australia by the scheming money-grabbing and grinding Chinkie merchants of China, to whom the poor wretches become indebted, and so 'John', upon arriving in Queensland, has to toil as a slave (in this free land), as he loots its gold for the comfortable maintenance of his iron-handed masters, who still reside in the Flowery Land. They belong to what are known as the Six Companies, an organization so powerful and wealthy that the Mongolian still fears and obeys it with the most abject terror, whether living under the British or American constitution. The wealth of these companies is enormous, and their influence over millions of Chinamen, unlimited. Each Chinese immigrant leaving his native land, is the goose that lays them the golden eggs. Stop their immigration to Australia, and you will raise alarm in the minds of these lazy bosses, for their periodical supply of Australian gold would cease.³¹

Two weeks later Potts was again presenting his case to the Maryborough public through the pages of the press. He described how the Chinese had overtaken San Francisco and implied that if the residents of Maryborough were not careful, then Maryborough could also become a little China, riddled with Chinese brothels in which hundreds of white women would be forced to work.³²

At the conclusion to the anti-Chinese meeting another speaker rose and addressed the large crowd, stating: 'The townspeople should take immediate steps to put down this evil.' He went on to describe the number of Chinese opium dens which were then thriving on the outskirts of the town. 'The Chinese', he stated 'are injurious to the moral, social and commercial interests of the white race, and have a tendency to degrade our civilization and retard the advancement of our country.'³³

Strong words indeed, but the fervour of hatred was now running high and even worse was to follow. Another speaker, a well respected Maryborough businessman, sprang to his feet and stated that it was a pleasure to him, as a native of Australia, to protest against the invasion of the, 'pig-tailed animals.'³⁴



*The Chinese consul in Australia, here to investigate the treatment of Chinese nationals.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 31552*



An affluent Chinese family. Source - John Oxley Library print number 31590.

Newspapers warned that all Chinese were leprous and that contact with them could only result in disease. Editors claimed that opium smoking Chinese were exceedingly dangerous because they had lost control of their minds and that white women who associated with Chinese men would be damned forever.

Indeed, the people of Maryborough *were* becoming concerned about the large numbers of Chinese in the town. Four years previously, that is in 1883, the official census had promulgated that only fifty Asians were resident in the area. By 1887 that number had swollen to about six hundred or perhaps more, as many of the Chinese fled into the country during the census count, fearing that if they were discovered in such concentration, then official moves would be made to thin their numbers

Because of the widespread uneasiness of Chinese immigration to Australia, various restriction acts were passed which finally resulted in a Chinese government commission in May 1887. The object of this commission was to investigate the treatment of Chinese nationals in Australia. The commission received little aid from the Australian government and was broadly treated with contempt.

The following year the Queensland premier, Sir Samuel Walker Griffith, issued an official memorandum concerning the Chinese. He stated:

It has been proved by experience that the Chinese become formidable competitors of European labour in almost every branch of industry, some branches, such as cabinet-making having been almost entirely monopolised by them in several Australian cities, and, as owing to their habits of life the cost of substance is to them very much less than to Europeans living in accordance with European habits, the effect of their unrestrained competition will undoubtedly be to materially lower wages and reduce the standard comfort of the European artisan and labourer. But the main, and in the opinion of this government, insuperable objection to allowing the immigration of Chinese, is the fact that they cannot be admitted to an equal share of the political and social institutions of the colony ... We hope that Her Majesty's Government will support the earnest (sic) wishes of the Australian colonists in this matter, and will use their good offices with the Court of Peking (sic) with a view to inducing the Chinese Government to discourage, and, if possible, to forbid emigration of the Chinese into Australasia.³⁵

In July 1900 Maryborough witnessed a celebrated legal case after a horse belonging to George Stupart had bolted in North Street killing a Chinese man named Lum Sing. The brothers of Lum Sing were suing Stupart for damages claiming that Lum Sing had had a wife in China to whom he used to send considerable amounts of money - sometimes £100 and at other times £50. The brothers claimed that Lum Sing's wife and children were now destitute. Central to the case was the acceptance, under British law, of Lum Sing's marriage. Lum Sing had been married in Hong Kong in a traditional Chinese ceremony. Stupart's defence lawyer, Mr L. Lukin, argued that as the marriage was not recognized under British law then Stupart should not have to pay Mrs Lum Sing any damages. The jury, which included P. Brennan, D. Rankin, James Hutchinson and R.H.M. Hall, after listening to the case and to the instruction of the judge, J.B. McGregor, retired to consider their verdict. Forty-five minutes later they returned and stated that Stupart had been negligent in allowing the horse to bolt, that the negligence had led to Lum Sing's death, but as there was no satisfactory evidence to support the claim that Lum Sing had been legally married, they found for Stupart, and Stupart's lawyer immediately filed for costs.³⁶

As with the South Sea Islands labour system, the introduction of the White Australia Policy did much to force many of the Chinese to return to their homeland. In 1880, Australia's Chinese population was around fifty thousand, by 1923 that number had fallen to just eight thousand five hundred. World-wide economic decline and large numbers of unemployed - a growing strength among militant unions and another general wave of hostility against the Chinese, were all responsible for the decline in numbers.

Sources and Notes for Chapter Twenty-eight.

1. M/C. 21 April, 1883.
2. M/C. 10 October, 1861 and M/C. 21 November, 1990 supplement p 3.
3. M/C. 21 November, 1861.
4. M/C. 17 October, 1861, reproduced in M/C. 19 October, 1911.
5. M/C. 7 November, 1861, reproduced in M/C. 8 November, 1911.
6. M/C. 5 December, 1861, reproduced in M/C. 7 December, 1911.
7. M/C. 21 November, 1990, supplement p 3.
8. M/C. 5 December, 1861.
9. M/C. 20 May, 1873.
10. M/C. *ibid.*
11. M/C. 2 May, 1874.
12. For further information on the wreck of the *Chang Chow* see M/C. 27 October, 28 October, 29 October, and 11 November, 1884.
13. M/C. 10 January, 1885.
14. M/C. 18 February, 1889.
15. M/C *ibid.*
16. M/C *ibid.*
17. M/C. 21 February, 1889.
18. M/C. *ibid.*
19. M/C. 19 February, 1889.
20. Reproduced in M/C. 7 October, 1988, p 12B
21. M/C. 19 February, 1889.
22. M/C. 5 December, 1861.
23. M/C. 16 October, 1862.
24. M/C. 14 January, 1864.
25. M/C. 15 January, 1868 and 9 January, 1869.
26. M/C. 7 December, 1878.
27. M/C. 10 December, 1878.
29. M/C. 11 March and 12 March, 1908.
30. M/C. 25 April, 1887.
31. M/C. *ibid.*
32. M/C. 10 May, 1887.
33. M/C. *ibid.*
34. M/C. *ibid.*
35. M/C. 30 March, 1888.
36. M/C. 9 July, 1900.

Part Three.

The Law and Beyond.

Chapter Twenty-nine.

Falkenberg the Forger.

During Maryborough's early pioneering years there were many people who lived on the wrong side of the law. And perhaps one of the most pernicious and determined of these was a man known simply as Falkenberg the forger.

Falkenberg's early life is still something of a mystery. At one time he had reputedly served as an officer of engineers in the Prussian Army. He was said to have been highly educated and had trained as a draftsman. When he began his career as a forger is not known. However, Falkenberg was more than just a forger, he was a clever criminal who had long practiced deceit. He probably arrived in the colony sometime during the mid-1850s and resided in Victoria for several years where he was known under the aliases of Oscar Bird or Oscar Vogle. He managed to attain some notoriety there and was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in Pentridge for 'sneaking', that is, planting himself in public houses for the purposes of planning and committing robbery. It is presumed that during his residence at Pentridge Falkenberg finished his 'felon's education' and became linked with a gang of forgers. These men - with Falkenberg's help - later preyed upon the Sydney banking establishment, reputedly with great success.¹

Falkenberg was arrested several times on suspicion of forging cheques but always managed to explain away his actions. However, the police in Sydney hounded him tenaciously and the forger decided to leave New South Wales and to travel north to Queensland. He had been attracted to Queensland after receiving glowing reports concerning the state's possibilities for fraud. A fellow criminal named Haswell, whose alias was Whit-headed Bob and with whom Falkenberg had spent time in prison, had arrived in Brisbane some time earlier for the purpose of racing one of his horses. When he returned to Sydney he told Falkenberg that the possibilities for fraud in Queensland were almost endless. The towns and villages were spread thinly on the ground, so too were the police - thus communication between centres was slow and tedious, exactly the situation required by a forger to ensure that signatures on cheques could not be easily checked.²

The first detailed reports available of Falkenberg date from 1863 when a young man answered an advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, applying for the position of bookkeeper at 'Darling Downs station'. The young man was instructed to meet his prospective employer at the Rose and Crown Hotel, Woolloomooloo. The man he met was: 'A gentlemanly looking person who took him to a private sitting room and made very particular enquires as to his fitness for the position.'³ The young man was engaged for the position and his new 'employer' arranged to meet him at his bank at ten o'clock the following morning. The next day the 'employer' handed the young man a cheque and told him that it had been signed by a leading Sydney firm. He asked the new employee to present the cheque at a bank so that his expenses could be paid to Queensland. This the young man did, returning with the money. He was then given £10 and, with a letter of introduction to the manager of Darling Downs station, was placed aboard a steamer for Brisbane. Upon arriving at Brisbane the newly employed bookkeeper could not find anyone who knew where Darling Downs station was located. Finally he went to the police for help and was told that no such station existed. The police immediately instigated enquires in Sydney and it was discovered that the cheque had been forged.

Soon afterwards Falkenberg allegedly forged a cheque for £295 on the Commercial Bank of Sydney and set about getting it cashed in the usual way which minimized any personal risk to himself. He advertised in a Brisbane newspaper for a man who was capable of travelling to Dalby on Queensland's Darling Downs, where he would be expected to work in a store allegedly owned by Falkenberg. A man named Wilson answered the advertisement and Falkenberg explained that the job was his if he would take the cheque to the local bank, cash it, and bring the money back to Falkenberg. The man was then to be given £6 to cover his expenses to Dalby where the employment could be taken up. Unsuspectingly, Wilson took the forged cheque to the bank and cashed it. Had the bank become suspicious, Wilson himself would have been arrested as a forger and Falkenberg could have made good his escape. However, all went smoothly. The bank innocently handed over the money, Wilson received from Falkenberg the £6 for expenses, a promise of a weekly pay packet and soon afterwards travelled to Dalby and the non-existent store Falkenberg claimed was waiting for him.

When Wilson arrived at Dalby and realized that he had been duped, he travelled to Brisbane and gave information concerning Falkenberg to the police. A telegram was sent to Sydney with a description of Falkenberg and a Detective Elliott, who had been tracking Falkenberg for some time, immediately recognized Falkenberg

from this description. A general police alert was given that Falkenberg was to be arrested on sight. However, Falkenberg had heard whispers through criminal contacts that the police were closing in and, using the proceeds of the forged cheque, he booked passage aboard a mail steamer to New Zealand where he went into hiding. Detective Elliott soon afterwards forwarded a telegram to the New Zealand police requesting that they watch out for Falkenberg. If the forger was spotted, he was to be taken into custody.

Falkenberg, however, was allegedly forced to flee New Zealand under one of his many aliases. He returned to Brisbane in November 1863 where he gained employment with a local businessman named Coote whose place of business was situated opposite a police station. For four months the Brisbane police did not know that Falkenberg had returned. The forger reputedly earned an honest living and made no attempt to further his criminal career. But then in March 1864 he once again reverted to his criminal calling. He forged a cheque for £37 and sent it to the Union Bank to be cashed. The manager of the bank, a Mr Turner, was immediately suspicious. He had heard of Falkenberg who had often boasted that he had a talent for calligraphy and could write in six different styles of handwriting. Turner took the forged cheque to the police station and as he walked through the door the constable on duty was, by sheer co-incidence, reading a report in a police-published magazine called, *Hue and Cry*, in which there was a description of Falkenberg and a list of his criminal activities.

Accompanied by the bank manager the constable went to Mr Coote's office and arrested Falkenberg. At first the forger proclaimed his innocence, stating that he was not Falkenberg and it was all a case of mistaken identity. But when Falkenberg's room was searched the police found evidence of his forging activities and several letters written to him by Whit-headed Bob.

Detective Elliott of Sydney was sent for, and when that officer arrived at the Brisbane wharf he was taken immediately to the police cells where he identified Falkenberg and formal charges were laid.

Falkenberg was placed in the Brisbane lockup, however, he did not remain there for long. With the help of two other criminals he managed to force the bars of his cell and all three men fled, travelling north to Maryborough, possibly by steamer. Once in Maryborough the escapees booked a room at Thurecht's public house and began to prey on the local business community. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported:

On Saturday week last, a German, a stranger to the town, called at Mr Southerden's store and purchased goods to the value of £5, presenting in payment a cheque on the Bank of Australasia, purporting to be drawn by Lawson and Stuart of Boondooma, for £34. To make himself as safe as possible, Mr Southerden enquired of the agent of this firm as to their opinion of its genuineness, and the signature, upon being examined with several others of the same firm, was believed by the agent to be genuine, and other storekeepers acquainted with the signature were of the same opinion. Mr Southerden thereupon gave the presenter a cheque for £29 in change. On Wednesday morning a cheque was presented at the Commercial Bank for £49, purporting to bear Mr Southerden's signature. The teller, slightly dubious, yet not sufficiently so to warrant the detention of either the cheque or the presenter, merely wrote across it, 'unlike signature,' and returned it. The man grumbled something about people not being more careful and walked out of the bank. About a quarter of an hour afterwards Mr Southerden entered the bank and upon an apology being made to him for refusing the cheque, Mr Southerden said that he had not drawn one for such an amount. Here was proof of forgery, and it was soon discovered of a forgery committed by the same party that had passed Lawson and Stuart's cheque.⁴

When it was realized that the escapees were in Maryborough, the police were immediately informed. It was known that the men were staying at Thurecht's public house, but by the time the police arrived the escapees had fled. It was believed that the men would try to board the steamer *Queenslander*, then tied up at the Maryborough wharf. A close watch was kept on the vessel but the men did not attempt to board it. That night the mailman, a man named West, bringing mail from Gladstone on horseback along the Gayndah Road, reported having passed three men answering the descriptions of the escapees. The following morning, William Southerden - determined to retrieve his stolen money - ordered two of his men to mount horses and, in company with the mailman, to chase the fugitives. A few hours later two mounted police followed their tracks. That morning Southerden's two men passed a bullock dray and the driver reported that he had been robbed during the night, the robbers had taken his damper, tea and sugar. Another bullock driver reported that a man had begged damper from him, and when the beggar had gone on his way he had been joined by two other men. For some reason now not known, one of Southerden's men returned to Maryborough, possibly to raise a stronger posse, while the second Southerden man, whose name was Burns, and the mailman, West, continued in pursuit. On reaching Agnes Vale station, West said that he would ride ahead to see if the escapees were at the station, the appearance of a lone mailman would not arouse undue suspicion. Burns rode slowly behind when suddenly his horse was attacked by two dogs, and on looking around he saw three men lying in the grass by the roadside.

He spurred his horse and rode on to Agnes Vale station, half a mile ahead, where he informed West of his discovery. With the aid of two men from the station the group returned to the scene. They searched the region and two of the escapees were found. Falkenberg, however, evaded capture. The captured men were taken to Agnes Vale station and the mounted police arrived shortly afterwards. That night, with the two criminals safely under lock and chain, two of the posse, Burns and Constable Biggs went out to check on the horses. As they approached the horses they saw a man moving stealthily towards the station, and Burns, who had been in Southerden's store when Falkenberg had presented his cheque, immediately recognized the forger. The constable arrested him and Falkenberg was chained with the other two fugitives. Falkenberg later admitted that he had been returning to the station in an attempt to free his two companions. He and his associates were soon afterwards taken to Maryborough where they were to stand trial for the forgery committed upon Southerden. However, attempting to get Falkenberg to trial was to prove an interesting experience.

The *Maryborough Chronicle* later, somewhat optimistically, reported: 'The utmost precautions have been taken for the safe custody of the men now, and it is not likely we shall have to record a second Brisbane affair. The prisoners will be brought up today before the Police Magistrate.'⁵

It was now Saturday 6 March, 1864. According to press reports the weather that day was foul, heavy rain had been slanting across the town all day. As darkness fell the rain intensified and with it came strong winds. It was a perfect night for an escape attempt.

Three years previously, in March 1861, the police magistrate had stated that he frequently found it inadvisable to pass sentences involving confinement in the Maryborough lockup, owing to the, '...unfitness of the lockup to the purpose to which it is appropriated.' The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

Never having been unlucky enough to make an examination of the interior of this crib, we cannot expiate on its merits, but must confess that its exterior is most uninviting and even repulsive. The land on which it stands has not yet been fenced in. For the information of our readers we may state that it is technically designated an old slab humpy, with the common advantage or disadvantage of having but one entrance. Awkward it might be for any prisoner attempting to escape, but extremely inconvenient it must be for the domestic business of the resident constable's family. The holes for the admission of a few gleams of light are so constructed as to secure to the unfortunate inmates an abundance of moisture in wet weather, and the effluvia arising from the bodies which, after a prolonged sponging at the tavern ... may be more easily imagined than described.⁶

Up until 1863 the police cells to which the magistrate was referring had been a simple wooden structure from which prisoners could have escaped with relative ease. Because of this weakness in cell security new cells had been erected and by the time Falkenberg was incarcerated at the lockup these cells were fully operational. However, the new cells had also come in for some withering criticism from many of the locals - including the press - who claimed that the cells were not strong enough and nowhere near adequate for the safe detention of dangerous prisoners. In the case of Falkenberg - a known expert at escaping - the security precautions were tightened. Fetters were riveted around his ankles and he was chained.⁷ Yet despite all these precautions the people of Maryborough were about to be astonished to learn that Falkenberg had once again escaped.

The plan of the Maryborough police building was unique in Queensland. The entire complex has long since been demolished to make way for the city hall, but in 1864 the cells and offices were comprised of a single building with three french doors leading onto a front verandah. These doors led into three rooms, the centre room contained a fireplace where prisoners - if they promised not to run away - were allowed to cook their food. The cells were arranged on either side of this building and at the back was a yard surrounded by a paling fence where the prisoners were allowed to exercise. A hefty wind demolished this fence shortly after it had been erected. At night the grounds were guarded by a janitor and a guard dog which had been described in the local press as a 'puppy'. The cell walls were fourteen inches thick and constructed of bricks held in place with layers of dry mud. All the bolts and screws of the locks and hinges of the cell doors had the pin heads outside, and the screw nuts inside - with the prisoners - where they could be easily tampered with. About three months after the cells had been completed it was discovered that the walls were falling outwards. To postpone this event and in an effort to hold the building together, an iron rod about an inch thick had been run through the cells - just below the ceilings. Some prisoners allegedly used this rod in a rather peculiar manner, they found it was an excellent scaffold upon which to hang themselves.⁸

In one of these cells the police placed Falkenberg. The other two men were similarly housed.

On the night of 6 March, 1864, the watch-keeper, a man named O'Regan, went into Falkenberg's cell and made the special precautions he had been ordered to make for the security of his prisoner. The forger's legs were chained together with leg-irons, handcuffs were placed over his wrists. It was now exactly eleven o'clock. O'Regan bade his charge good-night and locked the cell door. Falkenberg had told him that he was extremely tired and thought it likely he would sleep soundly the whole night through.

However, O'Regan was no sooner out of hearing than the forger set to work. For several nights he had been scratching away at the wall of his cell, digging out the dried mud and, in an effort to hide his work, replacing it with pieces of stale bread. The bread he first carefully covered with dust before jamming it into the crevasse between the bricks. That night the work was almost completed, a little more scratching was all that was needed and the heavy bricks came loose. One by one the forger eased them out and placed them on the floor of the cell. When the hole was large enough he crawled quietly through. It was now five o'clock on Sunday morning 7 March. Falkenberg found a pile of clothing on the police verandah from which he helped himself before slipping into the early morning light. It was still raining heavily and the 'terrible puppy' which was to have guarded the police compound was sleeping peacefully, curled into a ball beneath the verandah. There had been no alarm, no suspicion of an escape attempt, and no-one was aware of Falkenberg's disappearance until O'Regan came to the cells more than two hours later with a tray of bread and tea for his prisoner's breakfast. However, all he found was a hole in the wall and a blanket on the floor which Falkenberg had used to dull the sounds of pieces of falling debris.⁹

Within minutes news of the escape had spread around the town and the streets were filled with men who had come to help search for the forger. All that day and the next the district was scoured without success, it seemed Falkenberg had made good his escape.

When Falkenberg effected his escape he was the epitome of the man on the run. He still wore shackles around his ankles and handcuffs encircled his wrists. He had been in the town for only a few days prior to his capture and so did not know the district well. He had no friends in the town to whom he could turn for help and he could do nothing to help his two accomplices still locked in the cells. The police were in pursuit and many of the townsmen had loaded their pistols and were also seeking the fugitive. Yet despite all this Falkenberg managed to evade capture - at least for some considerable time.

After leaving the cells he hobbled through the rain to an abandoned cottage he knew of at the site of the old township, a cottage which had once belonged to the late Chief Constable McAdam. There he rested and rid himself of the shackles. But he was penniless and hungry and he knew he would need money if he was to get away from the district. Falkenberg's money had been confiscated at the time of his arrest, an efficient police constable had thoroughly searched him, discovering the £5 note he had sewn into the waistband of his trousers, another £5 in the lining of his hat, and several pounds in the tips of his shoes.

All day Sunday and the following day Falkenberg remained in the old cottage, not daring to venture outside. But by Tuesday morning he was so hungry that he knew he would have to resort to desperate measures. That night he returned stealthily to town and when all was quiet he broke into a public house where he stole a quantity of food, some money and a gold watch and chain. The following day he again ventured forth from his cottage and was seen by four horsemen on the Gayndah road. For some reason these horsemen made no attempt to arrest the forger and simply reported the sighting to the police. The old cottage immediately came under suspicion - being in the area of the sighting - but Falkenberg was cunning enough to know this and he stayed away. The police arrived, found nothing and returned to town. Soon afterwards Falkenberg again took up temporary residence in the cottage.

The following day was Thursday, it was also Falkenberg's birthday and he decided to celebrate by going to a local store owned by a man named MacPherson where he bought bread, some groceries and drank a bottle of lemonade. However, in the meantime the police had again inspected the old cottage. They found some of the doors closed - doors they knew had been left open the previous day - and immediately became highly suspicious. They lay in wait and were rewarded when Falkenberg came walking down the road towards them. They allowed the forger to go into the old building before they pounced.

Inside the cottage Falkenberg heard their rushed approach and knew that the police had arrived. In desperation he launched himself through the window, crashing through the rotting wooden shutter and virtually into the arms of the police officers. The escape was over.

The police once more inspected the cottage and found that Falkenberg had not been idle. He had made a simple saddle from a piece of rug, onto which he'd affixed stirrups and girths. There was an old bridle, a pair of hobbles and a spur. It was obvious that the forger had intended to steal a horse to get away from the district.

The police also found a loaf of bread, a pot of jam, a good coat - and the stolen watch and chain.

Falkenberg was taken into custody and lodged in the old wooden police cells, it now being thought that these cells would be more secure than the new ones. Shackles were riveted to his feet and wrists and Falkenberg ranted about a system of law which prescribed such treatment for a person who was innocent until proven guilty. The police reportedly paid no attention to his complaints.

The following Saturday, just after the Maryborough time-cannon was fired, a crowd of people gathered on the wharf as Falkenberg and his two accomplices were taken in chains aboard the Brisbane-bound steamer. The forger's spirits were lifted to see such a gathering. He thought that the townspeople had come to see him - to see the notorious Falkenberg, the man no police cell could hold. The forger believed that he was suddenly famous. However, he was quickly deflated when his escort informed him that the people had actually come to catch a glimpse of the bush-ranger Johnny Gardiner who was also booked to travel under escort on the steamer to Brisbane.¹⁰

Sources and Notes for Chapter Twenty-nine.

1. M/C. 3 March, 1864.
2. M/C. *ibid.*
3. M/C. 9 May, 1864.
4. M/C. 29 February, 1864.
5. M/C. *ibid.*
6. M/C. 7 March, 1861.
7. M/C. 14 March, 1864.
8. M/C. *ibid.*
9. M/C. *ibid.*
10. M/C. *ibid.*

Chapter Thirty.

The Bush-ranger Breed. The Wild Scotsman.

During the mid 1860s, Maryborough and the entire Wide Bay and Burnett regions were plagued by the unwelcome attentions of one man, a bush-ranger named James McPherson, otherwise known as the Wild Scotsman. (Also extensively reported as the Wild Scotchman) McPherson was certainly no ordinary uneducated bush-ranger. The son of John and Elspeth McPherson, he was born at Wester Aviemore, Scotland on 27 August, 1841.¹ He was educated at Duthil, a small unpretentious country school which had the advantage of having a permanent schoolmaster who, according to later reports, 'probably had a university education.'



James McPherson, the Wild Scotsman. This photograph was taken only a few years before his death.

Courtesy of Moreen Trethewey.

McPherson was brought to Queensland with his family in 1855 aboard the fast, copper-bottomed clipper *William Miles*.² He was an avid student at school. Edna MacPherson-Sabato, McPherson's great great niece, claimed in 1990 that McPherson could speak six languages, including Hebrew.³

After their arrival in Queensland, the McPherson family travelled to David McConnell's Cressbrook station where John McPherson worked as a labourer. James McPherson, then fourteen years' old, and his elder brother, Donald, worked as shepherds and stockmen for about three years until the family returned to Brisbane where James was apprenticed to John Petrie, first mayor of Brisbane and a well known Brisbane stone mason.⁴ James later befriended two men, Charles Dawson and Charles Morris, with whom he travelled north, earning his living as a shearer and drover.⁵

McPherson's bush-ranging career is said to have started due to a misunderstanding when an employer at Reedy Creek on the Burdekin River refused to pay McPherson and his associates, claiming that while shearing they had cut too many of the sheep. McPherson, Morris and Dawson allegedly used a rifle to obtain the money owed them, and subsequently disappeared into the bush. McPherson had read stories in the newspapers of the exploits of bush-ranger Ben Hall and his gang, and was reported to have wanted to join them.

Accompanied by Morris and Dawson, (alias MacMahon, also reported as McMahon) McPherson's first major robbery - apart from horse stealing - is said to have been the hold up, in 1864, of the Cadrington Hotel on the Houghton River near Charters Towers. McPherson was going under the name of Kerr at the time. After this exploit James McPherson's two accomplices disappeared and were not heard of again.

McPherson is attributed with various exploits in New South Wales, including robbing the mail at Scone. He was surprised by a police patrol on 11 February, 1865, captured and remanded for trial at Bathurst. However, before this trial could take place McPherson was extradited to Queensland to face charges of attempted murder. The charges related to the holdup of the Cadrington Hotel. McPherson was placed in the dock at Bowen on 17 May, 1865 and remanded to Rockhampton for trial at the next criminal sittings. He was placed on board the steamer *Diamantina* under the escort of Constable Michael Maher.

The famous account of McPherson's escape from custody has, over the years, been altered and fictionalized so much that it is now difficult to differentiate between fact and fiction. Some reports claim that the escape took place from the steamer *Diamantina* in 1865, while others report an escape from the *Leichhardt* in 1866. Yet it is clear that the escape took place from the *Diamantina* in July 1865 while that ship was at Mackay en-route to Rockhampton, and a 1909 report gives the following version. On the evening of the ship's arrival at Port Mackay a number of passengers and the police escort indulged in a game of cards between decks. The hours passed and a large quantity of alcohol, mainly rum, was consumed. The card game turned into something of a party, gold diggers crowding around spending freely. Several of these diggers endeavoured to persuade the escort to take the handcuffs from the prisoner, remarking that he could not possibly escape from the ship as they were quite a distance from shore. They pointed out that crocodiles were sometimes seen in the river and that McPherson was in leg-irons, making swimming impossible. Yet the police officers remained adamant, they were under strict instructions never to remove the handcuffs and leg-irons. McPherson, seated at the table, now began to laugh. As the gamblers at the table looked at him curiously, he shrugged his wrists and the cuffs fell free. Amazed at this trick the police officers asked him how he had managed it. McPherson placed the cuffs back on his wrists and with everyone watching, deftly picked the locks freeing himself once again. After that his hands were left free.⁶

As the hour was now late the passengers, prisoner and escort retired to their respective berths. Soon afterwards all was quiet aboard the ship. When he was sure that his guards were sleeping, McPherson climbed from his bunk and walked on deck. There was no way he could climb silently down into the water so he simply jumped into the river, the noise instantly awakening several passengers and the police escort. Within minutes there was pandemonium on deck as the police called vainly for their prisoner to return. When it became evident that McPherson had no intention of returning, the officers took out their pistols and began shooting into the darkness.

The following morning a hunt was organized for the escapee. Many thought he had no hope of reaching the river-bank and would almost certainly have drowned, the weight of the leg irons dragging him down. However, this was not the case. Within a few hours the leg-irons were found nailed to a gum tree, allegedly with the following inscription attached to them on a sheet of notepaper.

Presented to the Queensland government with the Wild Scotsman's thanks, that gentleman having no further use for them, the articles being found to be rather cumbersome to transit in this age of enlightenment and progress the 19th century. Many thanks, adieu.⁷

Another report of the escape gave a less dramatic version, as the *Rockhampton Bulletin* later claimed:

When the *Diamantina* reached Mackay, Maher (the police escort) suffered his charge to wander about the vessel shackled in leg irons only and paid no attention to the advice of the Captain, who recommended him to secure the prisoner in the steerage lest he should effect his escape. At about half past five o'clock on Saturday morning the prisoner was near the cook's galley. He was missed an hour afterwards, and on a search being made his presence was found wanting. The steamer left Mackay and brought Maher to Rockhampton minus his prisoner.⁸

Following his escape James McPherson continued with his life of crime. He robbed the Condamine and Taroom mail on 16 October, 1865, followed by the robbery of the Condamine-Roma mail just over two weeks later. A price of fifty pounds was quickly offered for his capture.

In November 1865 McPherson robbed the mail-run on the Gayndah to Maryborough road, relieving the mailman of a considerable amount of cash. This hold up was witnessed by a man who stated in 1919: I saw McPherson stick up on the Gayndah Road his first mail ... The mailman's name was John Hickey, and when the revolver came in sight he (Hickey) said, 'For God's sake don't shoot me, I've got a wife and two children.'⁹

The following day McPherson again held up the same man, this time as he was returning to Gayndah with the Maryborough mail. The mailman later described McPherson as being tall and slim, dressed in a pure white crimean shirt with a bright red sash running crossways from shoulder to waist. McPherson was mounted on a beautiful black horse which had been stolen some time previously. The bush-ranger was brandishing a revolver in the mailman's general direction and almost immediately began pulling the numerous mail bags to the ground where he proceeded to rifle through them, opening each letter and extracting any cash he found - including cheques. However, Hickey reported that he discarded any Chinese cheques he came across, stating as he did so that he could not understand the, 'damned hieroglyphics of the Chinese,' and that they could therefore lead to trouble when he attempted to cash them. He chatted casually while he worked and even asked the mailman if there was a photographer in Maryborough as he wished to have his portrait taken.¹⁰

Following these hold-ups the police, led by John O'Connell Bligh, (q.v.) moved quickly and mounted a thorough search for the bush-ranger, following him with the aid of aboriginal trackers. Within days this intensive hunt led the police to a site where the outlaw had camped for the night. Indeed, even as they stealthily approached, McPherson was in the act of tying his swag onto his horse. However, in the excitement one of the trackers shouted. Upon hearing this, McPherson leapt on his horse and spurred it into a gallop. Bligh lifted his pistol and pulled the trigger as McPherson flew past. The cap missed fire three times, and before another attempt could be made, McPherson was safely beyond pistol range.¹¹

A man-hunt was rapidly organized and it was widely believed that in the open country of the Burnett region it would be easy to re-capture the bush-ranger. However, this was not to be the case.

The Wild Scotsman had many advantages. He was an astute horse thief and was reputed to have stolen only the best mounts. The police on the other hand were less fortunate. Their horses, although strong, well cared for and sturdy, could not match the thoroughbreds McPherson was riding. This meant that when McPherson was finally tracked down, as happened on at least two separate occasions, he could easily out-distance his pursuers. Another advantage he maintained was that of working alone and trusting no-one. He reasoned that by doing so he could never be betrayed by an accomplice. Several expeditions were sent to track him, all with little success.¹²

Shortly before Christmas 1865 a government reward of £250 was posted. Yet this was only advertised in the *Queensland Police Gazette*, a publication with very limited circulation. McPherson answered this by robbing the Nanango mail, this time on foot, telling the mailman that he had lost his horse, saddle, bridle and revolver. Under the threat of a double barrelled shotgun the victim relinquished his own horse and saddle along with the bags of mail. A few days later the Wild Scotsman struck again, this time the mail for Banana was rifled and robbed. Half hour after this incident McPherson stuck up the owner of the Black Horse Hotel - who was driving a dray along a lonely road - and demanded the man's boots. However, after trying them on McPherson found they were too small and politely returned them to their rightful owner. Now the hunt closed quickly on the bush-ranger's general area and he was finally trapped, surrounded in a dense patch of scrub. But once again the outlaw seemed to lead a charmed existence. When the troopers moved in they found nothing, the Wild Scotsman had simply disappeared.¹³

Perhaps one of the Wild Scotsman's most bizarre exploits was his challenge of a horse race against arch foe, Police Magistrate John O'Connell Bligh.

As we have seen in earlier chapters of this publication, former Native Police lieutenant, John O'Connell Bligh, was now the police magistrate stationed at Gayndah. Because of the depredations which McPherson had perpetrated on the Maryborough to Gayndah road and elsewhere, Bligh badly wanted to arrest McPherson and thus prove the efficiency of himself and the police officers. Yet he was frustrated at the inadequacies of the police force. Bligh sent a letter to the local newspapers stating that if the Wild Scotsman was not soon caught by the police, he, Bligh, would go out alone to capture the bush-ranger and thereby show the police force the quality of the man who served on the magisterial bench.

McPherson read the published letter and rose to the occasion. He replied by letter in the next edition of the newspaper that he would meet the 'Knight of the Bench' on a certain day for a race - 'a canter' he called it. McPherson was careful to stipulate that the race was to take place with each rider being beyond the range of a pistol shot.

Bligh recklessly agreed to the terms and on the set day the race commenced. Bligh no doubt harboured some plan to double-cross the bush-ranger and capture him alive or dead. There was now, after all, a substantial reward on the bush-ranger's head. However, the magistrate was never to get a chance to come near McPherson. After a swift ride of ten miles or so Bligh was clearly losing the race when he suddenly came upon a steep precipice. Pulling up his horse, Bligh cautiously approached the edge of the cliff and peered below. At the bottom of the cliff was the Wild Scotsman. He had taken his horse right over the top, regardless of the dangers to himself and his mount, and was waiting patiently for Bligh. His horse was unsaddled and when he saw Bligh looking carefully over the top of the cliff he called up for the magistrate to join him for lunch. Frustrated, Bligh declined the offer and returned angrily to Gayndah where he declared that the bush-ranger and his horse must have rolled down the cliff face as it was impossible to ride down it.¹⁴

For the following few months James McPherson roamed and robbed virtually at will. He even became something of a celebrity and his exploits were constantly in the newspapers. For example, in February 1866 several newspapers reported the hold-up of the Peak Downs mail.

The sticking up of the Peak Downs mail by McPherson alias the Wild Scotchman (sic), formed the subject of information that reached town by Mr H. Cooper of Talagi Station Clermont. It appears that Mr Cooper, when coming along the Springsure road to Rockhampton, met a foot traveller near Springton and the man told him that he had seen the Wild Scotchman who had stuck up the mail going to Peak Downs. Mr Cooper questioned the man and he made a statement to the effect that on Wednesday morning last he was coming along the Clermont road to Rockhampton when he met the mailman carrying the up mail. Shortly afterwards he met a man riding a roan horse and leading a chestnut horse. The man on horseback asked how far the mailman was ahead and the pedestrian thinking that he was travelling in company with the mailman told him he had passed him but a short time before. The man rode on and the foot traveller continued his journey to town. He walked ten miles further on and camped by a creek. While he was having his tea the man who was leading the two horses came up to him, hobbled his horses out, and joined him in tea. He then informed his entertainer that he was the Wild Scotchman and intended robbing the down mail from the Peak Downs, only he was a little too late; that having missed the down mail he had stuck up the up mail. He then pulled from his horse's back a new saddle-bag which our informant thinks bore the name of Cooroora (Messrs. Headrick, Livermore and Companies station). He took a lot of opened letters from the bag, and threw them into the camp fire. He threw a draft on the Union Bank for £15 over to the pedestrian, telling him to take it, and also gave him two half sovereigns as a present. He camped there the whole night, breakfasted the next morning and rode back in the direction from whence he came. The traveller is on his way to Rockhampton with the draft in his pocket and intends returning it to the bank on reaching town. It appears also that a night or two preceding the above mentioned occurrences, the highwayman visited Mr Beatie's public house, at Gainsford, where a number of men were camped engaged in splitting timber for fencing, he stole two horses from them and two or three pairs of new boots from the store.¹⁵

However, McPherson's luck finally ran out as he prepared to rob Edward Armitage, the mailman who took the mails each week from Maryborough to Gladstone.

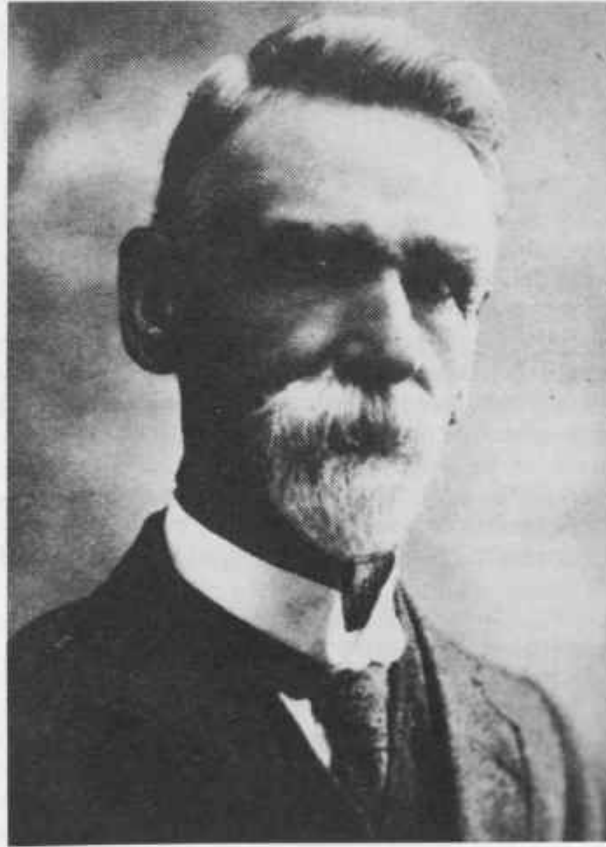
Arriving at Gin Gin station on 30 March, 1866, McPherson made enquiries regarding the mails, and suspicion at Gin Gin was immediately raised. McPherson departed, leading his packhorse on the track to the Monduran public house. Edward Armitage was informed of these suspicions after he arrived at Gin Gin, and two men, Marshall Gadsden and John Walsh, offered to act as an escort. A posse of men was organized at Monduran station, these included, in addition to Armitage, Gadsden and Walsh, the station manager W. Nott and a station hand named Currie. Armitage was sent on ahead to allay the bush-ranger's fears and as McPherson prepared to carry out the robbery the remaining men rode quickly up and arrested him.

The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported: 'The capture of James McPherson the bush-ranger was reported in Maryborough on Saturday morning the 31st March from the telegraph station at Golden Fleece by a telegram from Mr A.H. Brown, Gin Gin, to the Police Magistrate, requesting him to send two constables to that station to take the prisoner on to Maryborough. The constables were immediately despatched and reached Gin Gin late the same night, returning without delay to Maryborough with their prisoner.'¹⁶

A correspondent to the newspaper also reported:

A man answering the description had been seen on the morning of the 30th and had been inquiring for a road which he did not, it seems, intend to travel. He was again seen within a short distance of Monduran by two gentlemen living at Gin Gin, and they instantly proceeded to the Monduran

head station and reported their suspicions ... to the manager, W. Nott, who with praiseworthy promptitude, joined them, together with another person, making a party of four, and immediately started in pursuit. They overtook him about five miles from the station ... When he saw them in full gallop and nearly upon him, he let go his pack horse and started at full speed down a very broken range. Being well mounted they followed, and were fast gaining on him when he pulled up and commenced to unstrap a double-barrelled gun which he had with him. Upon his commencing to do this, Mr Nott covered him with his rifle and told him that if he did not there and then throw up his arms and surrender, he would fire at him.¹⁷



Edward Armitage, the Maryborough man who played a major part in the capture of the Wild Scotsman. He received none of the reward.

McPherson seemed to be quite unperturbed over his capture. He told his captors that he had known they were not police by the courageous way they had followed him over the broken range. He said the police were incapable of such horsemanship. He was taken to Monduran station and the next day to Gin Gin.

When his saddle bags were searched it was discovered that unlike many other bush-rangers, McPherson had equipped himself for every contingency. Items found in his bag included an American axe, a compass, and a complete medical kit including lint and bandages.¹⁸

While in Maryborough McPherson was regarded by many of the townspeople as something of a folk-hero, some residents erroneously believing the myth that he had robbed the rich to give to the poor.¹⁹

The reward for the capture of McPherson was finally distributed to members of the posse who had captured him. W. Nott received one hundred pounds, the other one hundred and fifty pounds was distributed among Walsh, Currie and Gadsden. Edward Armitage, even though he had acted as bait to trap the outlaw, received nothing.

In September 1866 McPherson was tried at the Maryborough Assizes where he faced a possible death sentence. Several witnesses were brought to testify against him including some of the mailmen he had robbed, all of whom clearly recognized and identified him as the notorious Wild Scotsman. McPherson had no lawyer to defend his case, although he was himself a capable and persuasive speaker. At the end of the trial he was found guilty on two counts of holding up the mail. The jury recommended mercy and, as McPherson had

offered no violence, he managed to escape the gallows. He was sentenced instead to two terms of twenty-five years' imprisonment, both sentences were to be served concurrently. He was incarcerated firstly at Brisbane gaol, and on 20 February, 1870, he was transferred to St Helena prison in Moreton Bay where, several months later, he and five other prisoners unsuccessfully attempted to escape by rushing the stockade gate and making for the southern end of the island. All were quickly recaptured. Most of the escapees were whipped for the attempt, McPherson and another man received one month's solitary confinement.

Many people including, of course, members of his family, and especially his parents, John and Elspeth McPherson, believed that McPherson's lengthy prison sentence was unduly harsh. His father, then a farmer at Bald Hills, arranged for a petition requesting a reduction of the sentence. After long deliberation the petition was finally successful and McPherson's sentence was reduced to eight years. He was released from St Helena prison on 22 December, 1874, at the age of thirty-three years. He married seventeen years' old Elizabeth Hoszfeldt in December 1878 and over the following years the couple had six children. James McPherson died near Burketown on 23 July, 1895, aged fifty-three, after his horse reared and fell on him. He was buried in the Burketown cemetery.²⁰

Christian Biermeister and Others.

The Wild Scotsman was not, of course, the only bush-ranger to roam the Maryborough region. In March 1867 the little known and extremely unsuccessful bush-ranger Christian Biermeister was charged at the Maryborough Circuit Court sittings with, '...feloniously stopping with intent to rob etc Her Majesty's mail in transit from Maryborough to Gayndah.'²¹

On 25 January that year, John Bates, a coachman driving a light four-wheeled American mail coach, was suddenly confronted by an armed man approximately eight miles from Gayndah. At Biermeister's trial, Bates stated that Biermeister had presented his gun at Bates, ordered him to stop and then said: 'Get down you wretch.'²²

Bates shouted to the bush-ranger, asking what he wanted. Biermeister said that he wanted the money and ordered that everything in the coach be thrown out. When this was done Biermeister examined all the mails and discovered that there was nothing of any value in the bags. He then ordered that everything was to be returned to the coach and, still holding his gun at the passengers, made off into the scrub. When news of the hold-up arrived at Gayndah, police officer Sergeant Dennis McCarthy immediately saddled up and made after the would-be robber. He later stated that he tracked Biermeister for about two weeks, finally catching up with him on Coonambula station. Biermeister was armed with a double-barrelled shotgun but he offered no resistance when McCarthy ordered him to drop the weapon and surrender. In fact, he admitted the crime.

At the subsequent trial, Henry Edwards, one of the coach passengers at the time of the hold-up, positively identified Biermeister as the culprit - as did the coachman. Biermeister was not represented by a defending lawyer, and he did not even bother to cross examine any of the prosecution's witnesses. The judge wasted little time in his summing up and the jury returned a guilty verdict without even leaving the box to deliberate. Biermeister was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment.²³

Other bush-rangers were never identified. In 1865 two men held up a public house in Mundubbera. The men arrived at the bar and started drinking, but shortly afterwards they produced revolvers and told the owner, a man named Skelton, to hand over all his cash. When the money had been handed over the bush-rangers made Skelton open his store and they helped themselves to about £10 worth of goods. They bailed up a servant woman and ordered all the residents of the public house to gather together. They then climbed onto their horses, described as 'splendid looking animals,' and galloped away. These two men later held up a dray camped nearby. They robbed the owner of a pound note, stayed with the dray all night, and disappeared at dawn.²⁴

In September 1868 there occurred in Maryborough a controversial trial of two men accused of highway robbery, which some people later claimed was almost certainly the grossest travesty of justice ever seen in the region. Two men had been arrested on circumstantial evidence and convicted of a crime, having had no opportunity to prove their innocence or to bring witnesses in their defence. They were not even represented by a defence lawyer.

The date was 26 September, 1868, and the two men who found themselves before the Maryborough Assizes were named William Troden and Joseph Blake. In July that year Troden and Blake had been working with several other men prospecting at Sheep Station Creek near Imbil. On the 28th of that month news came that a

gold rush was taking place at Sunday Creek. The men packed their swags, mounted their horses and set off to join the rush. Unfortunately, the so-called gold strike proved to be a failure, Troden and Blake spent several days digging large holes and panning the creek, but, like most of the other prospectors, they found nothing. Shortly afterwards they returned to their original camp near Sheep Station Creek where they found a large road gang from Maryborough at work. It was a Sunday and the men decided to hold a day of sports which consisted of foot racing, jumping and pole vaulting. The road gang, Troden, Blake, and several other men employed as bullock drivers by Maryborough businessman William Southerden, remained in each other's company for the following few days. One of the drivers who had recently left Southerden's employ suggested to Troden that together they should set up a butcher's shop at the bottom of the range where they could sell fresh meat to travellers. Troden said he had no money, but the driver, a man named William Ferguson, said that he had £6 or £7 with which to buy the cattle, and that if Troden and Blake would help build a butcher's shop, they would be equal partners. Troden and Blake immediately agreed. The shop, a small log and bark structure, was completed by 10 August and Ferguson went to nearby Jimna to purchase the animals ready to begin slaughtering. While Ferguson was away Troden and Blake set up the interior of the shop with blocks and shelves.

That night, completely without warning, two police troopers, Sergeant Dennis McCarthy and Constable Brown, rode up to the shop. According to Troden, McCarthy said: 'I come to arrest you.'²⁵ Troden protested. 'What for?' he called.

'On suspicion of highway robbery,' McCarthy replied.²⁶

It transpired that the mailman carrying mail from Brisbane to many of the outlying stations had been waylaid and robbed in late July. Several men who claimed to have witnessed the robbery had given detailed descriptions of the two robbers, and McCarthy, who had previously shared a few glasses of rum with Troden and Blake, felt that the descriptions closely matched these two men.

Protesting vehemently, Troden and Blake were taken into custody. Troden stated that he could produce fifty witnesses to prove that he and Blake had been nowhere near the scene of the robbery at the time. Irrespective of these claims the two men were taken to Gympie and then Brisbane before being returned to Maryborough for trial. Troden had given the names of all the witnesses he wished to be summoned for the trial, including the Maryborough work gang, many of the men he had travelled with to the failed diggings, and several travellers who had been on the road and had spoken with both Troden and Blake on the day of the robbery. All of these witnesses could conclusively prove that at various times of the day and night of the robbery, both men had been at least fifty miles from the scene of the crime.

At the trial, however, not one of these witnesses appeared. Sergeant McCarthy claimed that he had been unable to serve summonses as the witnesses were working in the bush and could not be found.

'But we are ready to proceed,' the chief prosecutor said. 'We have all the witnesses for the prosecution, and any delays in the trial would mean that these witnesses may not in the future be able to attend the proceedings.'

'Then the trial must proceed,' the magistrate stated.²⁷

Descriptions of the two men seen at the scene of the crime were given as evidence, and even the magistrate acknowledged that these descriptions did not perfectly fit the accused. Of the two criminals who had actually perpetrated the crime, one was described as being short and stout, yet both defendants were lean. The magistrate insisted: 'I cannot see which is the stout man out of the two.'²⁸ One witness said that the two men had been masked, but that he had managed to catch a glimpse of Troden's face from a distance of one hundred and fifty yards. He stated categorically that Troden and Blake were the men who had committed the crime. Yet the trial continued regardless of these confusions. Finally the jury of twelve Maryborough men retired and returned soon afterwards with a guilty verdict. The judge, obviously forgetting for the moment that no witnesses had been brought for the defence, and that the defendants were not represented by a defence lawyer, sentenced both men to twenty years' imprisonment, the first three years to be spent in irons, adding that, had blood been spilt during the crime, both men would have ended their lives on the gallows.²⁹

Sources and Notes for Chapter Thirty.

1. Register of Birth and Baptisms, Parish of Duthil.
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3. M/C. 25 March, 1909 and 21 May, 1990, p 13.
4. *Queensland Desperadoes*, Angus and Robertson, 1983, pp 133-134, and M/C. 21 May, 1990, p 13.
5. *Ibid*, p 134.
6. M/C. 25 March, 1909.
7. M/C. *ibid*.
8. *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 17 April, 1866.
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10. M/C. 29 November, 1865 and 15 September, 1866.
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16. M/C. 30 July, 1895.
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18. M/C. 30 March, 1909.
19. M/C. 15 September, 1966.
20. M/C. 30 July, 1895.
21. M/C. 30 March, 1867.
22. M/C. *ibid*.
23. M/C. *ibid*.
24. M/C. 19 April, 1865.
25. M/C. 26 November, 1872.
26. M/C. *ibid*.
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Chapter Thirty-one.

The Spence Tragedy.

On the afternoon of Saturday 9 June, 1894, a woman named Marian Spence gathered together all her children in a small bedroom at the back of their house in Union Street, Maryborough, made them take off their clothes, and, promising them an apple to take away the taste, ordered them to drink spoonfuls of carbolic acid. With only one exception, the children, some crying, dutifully did as they were told. Mrs Spence then immediately took a dose of the acid, lay down on the bed with her children, and died with them. Victims of the killings were Anna Marian, aged 11, Matilda Lucy, 8, May Davidson, 5, and Jeannie May, 4. William Spence, aged just 2, was also poisoned, but survived. Their mother was thirty-three years of age when she committed the crime.¹

News of the tragic events awaited the people of Maryborough as they awakened on the morning of 11 June. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported:

One of the most terrible and shocking domestic tragedies ever recorded anywhere, and certainly the most awful that has ever happened in Maryborough, occurred early on Saturday night in the home of Mr W. Spence, a slaughter-man and very old and well known resident of the town. In a terrible moment, which, for want of any known motive, must be generously regarded as a moment of insane desperation, the mother deliberately forced five of her six children to drink carbolic acid and then drank some herself, with the result that they all died.²

It was a horrific tragedy which shook the residents of Maryborough to the core. How, people asked, could a loving mother do such a thing to her children? The answer was that Mrs Spence had for many years wanted to die, but had refrained from taking her own life because she did not want to be without the children. Her solution, when it finally came, was to take the children with her.

On the morning of that tragic day nothing had seemed amiss in the household. Mrs Spence's husband, William, was a loving husband and a good provider. Working as a slaughter-man for the butcher E. Booker, Spence earned more than £2/10/- a week and was given a ration of free meat. The family lived modestly and had no debts. William Spence wanted to leave Booker's, and had given his notice that week. His wife, who was pregnant, asked him to remain working, at least until after her confinement. William Spence, however, was determined to leave.

After work that day he returned home to a normal house. He asked his wife the total cost of the grocery bill and went to pay it. He later returned home, ate a meal alone while his children played in a back-room, and then asked his wife for clean clothes as he intended visiting his mother and another woman named Mrs Bickers. Yet at his mother's house he found some cause for alarm. His mother warned him that his wife intended poisoning the children, but according to the statement later supplied by William Spence, Mrs Bickers had caught him by the arm and squeezed it as if to reassure him that his mother was imagining the danger. Spence had nodded. He knew that his mother and his wife had not been on friendly terms for over twelve months.

Spence later returned home. He contemplated confronting his wife with his mother's allegations but thought better of it, the idea seemed plainly ludicrous. Mrs Spence was devoted to the children. Afterwards he again went into the town, he was never to see his wife or four daughters again.

One of the children who narrowly escaped the killings was William Spence's eldest son, John, who later testified:

(I) am the son of the last witness; (William) resided with my father and mother on Saturday last in a house in Union Street; (I) attend the Albert State School; am 14 years old; remember Saturday last 9th June; was not up out of bed when my father went to work on Saturday morning; he came home from work about 6 pm; my mother and sisters were at home; we had not had tea; my mother gave me a piece of bread and butter; about a fortnight before this my mother scrubbed out a back bedroom; she used carbolic acid; she put the acid in the bucket of water that she was using; saw the bottle of carbolic acid in the bathroom; it was in an ordinary clear glass bottle; knew it to be carbolic acid from the label on the bottle; there was a red label also on the bottle marked 'poison'; my mother told me she was using it to kill cockroaches; after I saw the bottle on the first occasion my mother put it away and I did not see it again; my mother undressed my little brother and all my sisters with the exception of Annie about 4 p.m. on Saturday; my father had not been home. About 5.30 p.m. my mother told us that we did not require any tea as she was going to give us medicine that would make us sleep so that we would not hear father swearing when he

came home; I saw a tumbler-full of carbolic acid on the bedroom table; I know it was not water as it had a black colour; the tumbler was brimful; I smelt it; there was a table-spoon and some apples beside the tumbler; my mother sent me over to my auntie's (Mrs Thomas Spence) who lives at the back to ask her if she saw my father down town; I went over but she was not at home; saw my aunt Sarah Bickers in the dining-room; said to her: 'Sarah, is carbolic acid poison?' she said she did not know; met my auntie (Jane) coming in the gate; asked her if she saw my father down the town; she said no; (I) asked her if carbolic acid was poison; she replied: 'Yes, it is rank poison,' I said: 'Mother is going to give it to us as a medicine, will you come over?' she was coming with me but when I got to the dividing hole in the fence I said: 'Never mind, my father is home.' I saw his horse in the paddock; she went home; I went and fed the horse; got the feed from the bathroom; saw my father in the kitchen getting his supper, my sister and brother were playing in the bedroom; Annie was there to. After feeding the horse I went inside and stood near the bedroom door; my mother was sitting on a chair in the kitchen; they were talking, it did not appear to be angry talk. I heard my mother telling my sister Annie to go and light the candle and get father a clean pair of stockings and a shirt; she did so; my Auntie Jane came over as my father was getting his tea ... I went into the bedroom and showed my auntie where the carbolic acid was in the tumbler; she took it off the drawers and gave it to me to throw away, which I did. I then heard my auntie say to my mother, 'You would not do such a thing as give the carbolic acid to the children.' My mother said in reply, 'I wish I was dead.' My sister Annie also said that she had heard mother often say she wished she was dead.³

Jane Spence, the dead woman's sister-in-law, was also her closest friend. They had known each other for about twelve years and for the previous three years they had been on very close terms. During that tragic day Jane had been with Marian on at least three occasions and each time she had not noticed anything unusual in Marian's manner. Jane later testified that Marian had been, '...a good wife, doing her duty in every way, a very fond mother and a very industrious, sober, straightforward woman, she was well educated and of a cheerful disposition.'⁴

John Spence later described the actual murder scene for the court of enquiry. He stated:

Mother had taken my sister Annie and myself into the bedroom where the other children were and had undressed us; it was then she looked across to auntie's from the bedroom door; she came into the bedroom and called us together; I sat on the foot of the bed; my sister Tilly was asleep in bed; the others were playing on the bed; there were two beds in the room; she told us she would give us a thrashing if we did not take the medicine she was going to give us, and promised us an apple afterwards to take the taste out of our mouths. She brought the carbolic bottle which was about half full, from underneath one of the beds; she filled the tumbler; she said she would give it to the littlest first; she then dipped a spoonful out of the tumbler and gave it to May, who swallowed it; she filled the spoon again and was going to give it to Mary, (when) I said, 'Mother, I don't want any carbolic acid as auntie told me it was poison.' She replied: 'You will have to take it.' Mary took it, and both she and May went into bed crying; she filled the spoon again and gave it to my sister Annie ... I ran out and over to my auntie's.⁵

Jane Spence added:

(I) heard Johnny crying and running towards my place in his shirt. He cried out, 'Auntie, come quick, mother is giving the children carbolic.' I ran over, my daughter and sister following me, ran into the children's bedroom, saw two children in the cot and the mother and three children in the bed, the children were crying or choking, the mother was lying on her right side with the baby Willie in her arms. As I entered I heard her say, as if to the baby, 'Goodbye my darling, goodbye my darling,' in a low tone. I cried out, 'Oh Marian, what is this you have done,' she made no answer. I ran out and called to a neighbour to come quick, she came and we went back into the bedroom ... Mrs Spence was then snorting and struggling for breath, all the children were struggling for breath and choking.⁶

John later said that when he returned to the house he found his sisters crying and his mother lying on the bed, 'making a little gurgling in her throat.' His aunt and the neighbour seemed unable to do much to help the victims and so John quickly put on a coat and went to find Doctor Harricks. On his way to the doctor's surgery he met another man named Prove who, realizing the urgency of the situation, then drove John in his cart to the surgery. They were fortunate enough to find two doctors at home. They drove to Prove's shop to obtain half a dozen bottles of salad oil before catching a horse-drawn cab from the cab stand and racing for the scene of the poisonings. Once there John saddled his horse and went looking for his father whom he finally found in Adelaide Street.⁷

After the arrival of the doctors, one of them, realizing that Marian was pregnant and that the baby was soon due, immediately carried out an emergency cesarean section in an attempt to save the unborn baby, however, his efforts failed, the child was born dead. The *Maryborough Chronicle* later reported:

The scene during the next few hours was simply heartrending, and will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it. The screams and moans of the poor children were dreadful to hear, and the agony they suffered, relieved by occasional periods of unconsciousness, and finally released by death, must have been awful. They were first taken from the room in which they had been poisoned together, and laid on sofas and beds about the house, each doctor attending to a patient. The stomach pump was used and every remedy applied without delay, but without success, except in the case of Willie, the baby, who apparently did not swallow the acid, but spluttered it out over his face, arms and chest which are badly burned. The scene was an experience to move stout hearts, and many present were unmanned. With scorched and swollen faces and blistered mouths, the poor children struggled for breath and life as the corrosive poison continued its torturing and fatal course.⁸

On hearing of the tragedy William Spence rode immediately to Jane Spence's house where he was told the details of the affair. When questioned by the police he said that he had been happily married for fifteen years but that even before he had married Marian she had threatened to poison herself when she had been involved in a lover's quarrel. He added, '...she has remarked that she would like to take all the children with her when she died.'⁹

The youngest child, William, remained in hospital for a considerable period after the event, and although he survived he was very badly scarred for life. The funeral of Marian Spence and her daughters took place at the Maryborough cemetery on 11 June, 1894, and was one of the largest ever seen in Maryborough. Two horse-drawn hearses carried the remains which were followed by about sixty buggies and carts and thirty or more horsemen. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported: 'At the cemetery the scene was a most solemn and affecting one. The Rev. J.I. Knipe read the burial service and the coffins containing the mother and the four daughters were lowered into two graves.'¹⁰

Sources and Notes for Chapter Thirty-one.

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3. M/C. 15 June, 1894.
4. M/C. 16 June, 1894.
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Chapter Thirty-two.

The Letter of the Law.

One of the youngest men ever to be hanged in Queensland was a murderer named Arthur Ross. This case was an especially poignant one for the people of Maryborough, for although the crime had been committed at Gayndah, Ross was convicted by a Maryborough jury who later tried desperately to save the young man from the gallows. Ross was the son of a wealthy and well known family, and he was hanged for two reasons, the crime of murder, but also because the authorities could not - or would not - make any changes to the 'letter of the law', even under substantial protest from the people of Maryborough.

The case of nineteen years' old Ross is a chilling example of the use of the 'letter of the law'. By 1909, the true horror of the death penalty was impressing itself more clearly upon the collective conscience of the public. Over the preceding years many appeals for clemency had been made to the Queensland executive on behalf of criminals sentenced to death and a large percentage of these appeals had succeeded - primarily on humanitarian grounds. It was, in fact, becoming almost common practice for the executive council to issue reductions of sentences to life imprisonment, especially where a jury had made strong recommendations to mercy.

Arthur Ross was an Englishman, born in 1888, who had arrived in Sydney in 1908. Just a year later he was to be executed. His trade is described on his prison record as that of a horse dealer, but horse thief may have been a more accurate description. His only other convicted crime occurred at Bundaberg in October 1908 when he was found guilty of 'uttering' and given a three years' suspended sentence.¹

Money was finally the cause of Ross's undoing. Just after his conviction in the Bundaberg Circuit Court, Ross decided to rob the bank at Gayndah. It was a small sub-branch, lightly defended, and, as Ross thought, easily robbed.

During the course of a normal working day Ross somehow concealed himself inside the bank. That night, when all was quiet, he waited until the solitary clerk, a man named James Muir, had lit the evening lamp. Ross then stepped from his place of concealment and attacked Muir with a green baton.

Muir, although severely stunned, was courageous enough to fight back, in fact he almost overcame his assailant. Fearing that he was about to be caught Ross drew a pistol from beneath his coat, took deliberate aim, and shot the clerk dead.

Ross was forced to endure two trials for the murder of Muir, the first trial jury could not reach a decision. At the time this was not an unusual occurrence during murder trials as a guilty verdict for 'wilful murder' brought a mandatory death sentence and jurors sometimes did not wish to have the death of the criminal on their conscience. This was the case with Ross. All the Maryborough jurors agreed that Ross had committed the crime, but few of them wanted him hanged. The trial was dismissed and another ordered, Ross's hopes must have soared, especially so when the second jury found him guilty of murder, rather than wilful murder, and strongly recommending him to mercy.


In the normal course of events this recommendation would have been carried through the executive council and Ross's sentence commuted, probably to life imprisonment. The public thought so, the judge thought so, and so did the jurors. However, as the date set for the execution approached, the executive council repeatedly declined to commute the sentence. Queenslanders - especially the people of Maryborough - were thoroughly enraged and the press quickly took up the banner.

Many meetings were held in Maryborough, over three thousand signatures were collected on a petition and sent to Premier Kidston, who, at the time, was visiting his electorate in Rockhampton. Kidston accepted the petition and later received a deputation from the city.² Nine signatures had also been collected from the twelve jurors (the remaining three had been unable to be contacted). The signatories placed their names to the following plea:

We, the undersigned jurymen who convicted Arthur Ross of the murder of Alex Muir, hereby enter our strong protest against the death penalty being carried out for the following reasons: That we were under the impression that when we convicted Ross of murder, in place of wilful murder, as charged, the extreme penalty of the law would not be carried out, and in order to further emphasise our intention, we made the strong recommendation to mercy, in the belief that the death penalty would not be put into effect.³


Photo No 50-09

QUEENSLAND.



No. 112-0 Name Arthur Ross
 Native place England Education None
 Year of birth 1881 Height 5-4
 Arrived in Colony (Ship Pontalca) Weight 10-11
 (Year 1904) Colour of eyes Blue
 From where Sydney Colour of hair Brown
 Trade or calling Stone Dealer Complexion Fair
 Religion Church of England Build Slender

Date when Portrait was taken 5th May 1909 When and where tried 23rd April 1909
 Offence Murder 6/6 Maryborough
 Sentence Death



No. of previous Portrait ()

Marks and special features Scar palm of left hand

PAST CRIMINAL HISTORY.

Where Convicted.	When.	Offence.	Sentence.
<u>6/6 Bundaberg</u>	<u>6-10-08</u>	<u>Uttering</u>	<u>3 Mths. H.L., suspended when \$50</u>

Arthur Ross. Tried by a Maryborough jury and recommended to mercy, but hanged in 1909 despite petitions from Maryborough residents.

Source - Queensland Premier's Department.

During his meeting with the Maryborough deputation, Premier William Kidston said that he would not argue about the rights or wrongs of the death penalty. Whatever his opinion he would not let his personal opinions influence him in carrying out the letter of the law, as he saw it. He said that it was the duty of the executive council to carry out the law until parliament decided to alter it. The executive had gone carefully through the evidence taken at the trial and had also scrutinized the judge's report. Kidston said that he had only met with the deputation in case they could provide, at the last moment, some extenuating circumstances or fresh evidence which could be used to call a retrial.⁴ With some degree of emphasis Kidston told the deputation that the gallows, '...were a bulwark of society and must not be weakened,' a comment which was treated with both disappointment and ridicule by the Queensland publication *Worker*, the editorial staff of which quickly released a damning cartoon and feature article claiming: '...In spite of Premier Kidston and his brother Ministers, with their talk about bulwarks of society being weakened, the time has arrived for the enlightened modern spirit to repudiate the grisley (sic) gospel of the gallows.'⁵



'The Bulwark of Society', Premier Kidston's response to a deputation pleading for the life of Arthur Ross. From, the Worker, 12 June, 1909.

For Ross, however, there was to be no delay in his execution. On the gallows he stated: 'I wish to thank the people of Queensland for the keen interest they have taken in me and my life. I thank them very much.' There was a pause of several seconds and the gathered spectators thought that Ross would go to his death without admitting his guilt. But this was not to be. With his face white and bloodless Ross added: 'I am sorry for the deeds I committed, I beg forgiveness for my sins.'⁶

As the gaol bell tolled eight o'clock, Ross dropped to his death.

Several days after the execution the post-mistress at Unanderra - who was the mother of the murdered man - received a letter written by Ross shortly before his execution. Ross had written:

I wish to tell you Madam, you have cause to be proud of your son, for never have I met such a brave young fellow, and I have met a good many for I have travelled far. When I entered the bank on that fateful night it was with the intention of robbing it, but not to kill anyone, although I had the means to do so. I did not even see your son, or things might have been different, but he jumped at me and got me by the throat like the brave lad he was.⁷

Sources and Notes for Chapter Thirty-two.

1. Prison file 15209, Queensland Premier's Department.
2. M/C. 5 June, 1909.
3. M/C. 7 June, 1909.
4. M/C. 4 June, 1909.
5. *Worker*, 12 June, 1909.
6. M/C. 8 June, 1909.
7. M/C. 25 June, 1909. This statement is at variance with the trial transcriptions which clearly demonstrate that Ross had, in fact, seen Muir prior to the attack.

Chapter Thirty-three. The Jewellery Robberies.

There were three major jewellery robberies in early Maryborough. The first of these concerned the jewellery shop of Alexander Ebnetter which was robbed by two men who used the names of Alfred Hermann and Robert Porter - although they were also known under other aliases.

On the night of Thursday 10 May, 1888, these two men broke into the shop and stole a large amount of gold and silver watches and other items of jewellery valued at approximately £1000. Such a valuable haul was considered to have been a major robbery at that time. The two men were travelling with a woman named Rose Porter, allegedly the wife of Robert Porter. After the robbery the jewellery was concealed in the false bottom of a case and the three fled to Melbourne. They were all arrested by Melbourne police, led by a Detective Cawsey, after being caught selling the goods in the city. Some of the watches and other items had been concealed in small leather bags and buried.¹

Following their arrest Rose Porter - who had actually been arrested in the act of pawning a watch - claimed that she had had no knowledge of the robbery and that she had been given the watch and several other items of jewellery by her husband.² Ebnetter was sent for and he travelled reluctantly to Melbourne (at a cost of £80) to identify his stolen items.³

The three were arraigned at Maryborough before Police Magistrate R.A. Rankin in July 1888 and committed for trial at the District Court in September that year. At the District Court all three pleaded not guilty. The jury found Robert Porter and Alfred Hermann guilty but discharged Rose Porter as she had not taken part in the robbery and allegedly had been acting under coercion from her husband when she had attempted to sell the jewellery. Hermann pleaded with the judge, saying that he was fifty-four years of age and that he did not have long to live. In spite of this he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Porter received four years.⁴

The loser was, of course, Ebnetter. After the robbery he had almost immediately offered a reward of £50 for the return of his goods. By the time the culprits were apprehended in Melbourne more than two-thirds of the stolen goods had been sold and were never recovered. The thieves had about £22 in their possession when they were arrested, £5 of which went to pay their legal fees. Ebnetter finally received only a little over £1. What became of the remaining money was something of a mystery. Detective Cawsey, the police officer in charge of the case, travelled from Melbourne to Maryborough to give evidence at the trial. While in Maryborough he applied to Ebnetter for the reward of £50. Ebnetter gave him £25, stating that a large percentage of the goods had never been returned.⁵

Ebnetter quickly realized that he could profit from his misfortune and soon after the recovery of his goods he advertised that he had, '...come to the conclusion that the wisest course open to him is to offer his entire stock to the public at such a reduced rate of prices that will enable even the poorest to secure a bargain for very little outlay of money.' Ebnetter went on to claim that he, '...did not intend to put back into stock all those stolen watches, jewellery etc which have been recovered from the thieves.'⁶

Ebnetter was a quiet, unobtrusive character who was described as having a '...very retiring and kindly disposition.' He had arrived in Maryborough about 1870 and bought Mitchell's jewellery store. He was evidently a fairly wealthy man and lived for a while at the prestigious house *Glenaros*, in Fort Street - built in 1898. He became ill late in 1914 and died in December 1915 leaving a wife and five young children, Ruska, Ilka, Isa, Rupert and Arthur.⁷

The second Maryborough jewellery robbery took place in 1893 at Hans Jacob Fevre's shop in Kent Street. On 2 December that year the duty police officer, Constable Dickinson, and a night watchman named Ready, were making their rounds when they heard a noise - described later like that of a rat - in Fevre's shop. They went to the rear of the building and found two packing crates on top of each other at the door. There were also signs of a forced entry. Ready went to the front of the building while Dickinson attempted to follow the thief through an open skylight. However, as he pushed his head into the opening he was punched in the face. Despite this he struggled to get through the narrow window but he was a bulky man and could not get his shoulders past the window sills. Meanwhile the thief panicked. He jumped through a skylight in the front of the shop, breaking a gas pipe around the window and smashing about a dozen gas globes. He quickly picked himself up and almost immediately fell over a chain which surrounded a number of bunya trees then lining the street. Before Ready could catch him the thief recovered and ran down a dark lane-way between a chemist's shop and the Royal Hotel. Ready eventually lost sight of him in the region of Richmond Street. Investigation of



H.J. Fevre, jeweller and 'fancy goods importer'.

Source - Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society.

Fevre's shop revealed that the thief had intended getting a large haul, hundreds of pounds' worth of jewellery had been stacked up ready to be taken, although the thief had only managed to steal about one hundred pounds' worth and some of this was recovered near the bunya trees. The thief also left behind a coat, in the pockets of which were discovered some tobacco, a pair of socks and a table-knife.⁸

In January 1894, exactly one month after the robbery, Fevre was brought before the police magistrate, G.L. Lukin, on a charge of having assaulted a Chinese man named Charles Lee Tuck. Precise details of events are not clear, although it seems that Fevre suspected Tuck of receiving some of the jewellery which had been stolen from his shop. Tuck always refuted the allegation but on the morning of 21 December, 1893, Fevre saw Tuck coming from a butcher's shop, a piece of meat in his hand and a meerschaum pipe in his mouth. He accused Tuck of receiving the goods, Tuck denied it and Fevre struck him on the head. At the Police Court Fevre was found guilty and fined ten shillings.⁹

Three years later Fevre appeared at the Supreme Court in Brisbane as the complainant against his wife in a highly unusual divorce case, a case which caused something of a scandal in staidly Victorian Maryborough, especially as Fevre was accusing his wife, Katina, of having an affair with an actor named Harry Gibson.¹⁰

The third jewellery robbery took place in December 1921 when B.Z. Robert's shop in Kent Street was robbed of £800 worth of jewellery.¹¹ For several weeks there were no break-throughs in the case but finally two men were arrested, one in Fortitude Valley Brisbane the other on the Caboolture railway station. These men were Herbert Russell Collie, a journalist, and his brother Frederick Collie a stove fitter.¹² Both were tried at the Maryborough District Court sittings in March 1922. Frederick Collie was discharged and his brother was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour.¹³

Sources and Notes for Chapter Thirty-three.

1. M/C. 25 July, 1888.
2. M/C. 11 September, 1888
3. M/C. 5 June, 1889.
4. M/C. 12 September, 1888.
5. M/C. 5 June, 1889.
6. M/C. 27 August, 1888, p 1.
7. M/C. 16 December, 1915.
8. M/C. 4 December, 1893.
9. M/C. 3 January, 1894.
10. M/C. 22 March, 1897.
11. M/C. 28 December, 1921, p 4.
12. M/C. 14 January, 1922, p 8.
13. M/C. 10 March, 1922, p 6.

Chapter Thirty-four.

Crime and Punishment

The dispensation of justice in a small town was often an exacting task, not only for the visiting District or Circuit Court judges but also for the resident magistrates who lived in the town and were often subjected to abuse because of decisions made on the magisterial bench or because of sentences imposed. Men such as R.B. Sheridan, G.L. Lukin, John Kent and F. Vaughan, shouldered this responsibility with stoic determination even in the face of very real adversity.

Until the turn of the century justice was dispensed at the original single storey court-house on the corner of Kent and Adelaide Streets. The building was situated on the present site of the garden seats opposite the old firm of Yarets.¹

The first clerk of petty sessions was a man named J.T. Jamieson, who, prior to his eventual dismissal, led a quite interesting life while he was in Maryborough. He was variously accused of rudeness, drunkenness, exceeding his authority, absenteeism and poor work. He was also severely castigated over his relationship with George Furber's daughter, Mrs Murray. Yet, as Colin Sheehan points out in his paper, *Beyond the Limits of Location*, Jamieson was living and working under difficult and very basic conditions. Among his many irritations was the fact that he was forced to live in a hotel with the court papers under his bed.²

One of the least known cases of Maryborough's judicial history involved one of the founders of Maryborough. E.T. Aldridge.

Aldridge seemed to have had a knack for getting himself into the news, usually when he had something to gain from such press coverage. However, in 1861 there occurred an event which Aldridge would, almost certainly, have preferred not to have been reported.

In May 1861 Police Magistrate John Kent charged Aldridge with supplying liquor to an aboriginal person. Aldridge protested that the drink was only a cordial but Kent fined him twenty-one shillings with three shillings court costs.

In October that year Aldridge and two of his workers, Adolphus Hall and a Chinese man named Wydong, were charged with having assaulted John Patching, a waiter, also working for Aldridge. The assault took place in the kitchen of the Bush Inn on Monday 21 October.

During the opening of the case the defence lawyer, Mr Poole, asked for an adjournment until two o'clock that afternoon on the grounds that Aldridge's servants were required at 12.20 p.m. to prepare lunch for his guests. The magistrate denied this request.

According to testimony given at the hearing by Patching, on the morning of the attack he had gone into the kitchen and told the cook, Adolphus Hall, that he had some ill-feeling towards him because approximately a month earlier Hall had threatened to punch Patching on the head.

No sooner had Patching made his grievance known when Aldridge, Hall and Wydong all grappled with him and threw him to the ground, Wydong taking the opportunity to strike him a severe blow on the forehead. A constable was then sent for while Aldridge sat on Patching's head and the cook sat on his abdomen and held his legs. The case was confused because some elements of the events were certainly withheld by both parties. Patching claimed that the cook was trying to discredit him in the eyes of their employer and the defendants claimed that Patching had used foul language and had threatened to have 'their heart's blood.' The defendants were, however, found guilty of the charges. Aldridge was fined £5, Wydong £3 for having struck Patching, and Hall received a £2 fine.

Almost immediately Patching was charged by Hall for assault. The magistrates, Richard Sheridan and E.B. Uhr, found in Hall's favour and Patching was fined £1. Not wishing the case to rest there, Patching summoned Aldridge for wages, however, the magistrates, by now sickened of the whole affair dismissed the case.³ The entire sequence of events was discussed by a correspondent named 'Argus' in the *Maryborough Chronicle* a few days later. Argus claimed that a gross injustice had been done to Aldridge, despite the fact that Aldridge was frequently in court bringing charges against his servants. Argus made the point that the defending lawyer, Mr Poole, was, '...a gentleman whose knowledge and experience are not by any means equal to his conceit.' Argus went on to state that the Chinese servant Wydong could have conducted a better defence.⁴



Justice Alfred James Lutwyche.
Source - John Oxley Library print number 64301.

One of the more prominent circuit court judges was Alfred James Peter Lutwyche. Lutwyche was born in England in 1810, and educated at private schools. In 1828 he entered Queen's College, Oxford, and in 1832 took the degree of B.A., and afterwards that of M.A. He then studied law and was called to the Bar in 1840. He emigrated, due to ill health, in 1853, however, the vessel on which he was travelling was wrecked on an island in the Pacific and the passengers and crew escaped from the ship with nothing but their clothes. The survivors remained on the island for several weeks until rescued by another vessel, yet this vessel was also wrecked and the survivors were finally taken to Sydney aboard a third ship, arriving there on 30 December, 1853. In 1855 Lutwyche was appointed solicitor-general and in 1858 he became attorney-general. On 21 October, 1859, he was appointed resident judge in Moreton Bay district and upon Separation in 1859 he became sole judge of the new colony of Queensland until the arrival of Sir James Cockle some time later.

Lutwyche died on 12 June, 1880, after a long illness.⁵

The career of Richard Bingham Sheridan has already been well documented in this book. A fair and honest man, who battled courageously for civil rights and especially for the rights of the South Sea Islanders, he was possibly the most respected of all Maryborough magistrates. He arrived in Australia from Dublin in 1842 and was soon afterwards appointed to the Customs Department, later transferring to Maryborough when the town was very much in its embryonic state. By 1859 he was chief officer of customs, water police magistrate and harbour master. He and fellow magistrate John Kent were the source of a raging controversy in 1862 when the headmaster of the Church of England School, Mr R.S. Kerley, was brought before the bench on charges of assault. The charge had been brought by George (Cocky) Howard (q.v.), whose son had been caned by Kerley after refusing to apologize following a minor misdemeanour. The magistrates sitting at the bench that day were Sheridan and Kent and one of the witnesses was Sheridan's son - also a pupil at the Church of England School. However, when the young witness's name was called he failed to appear. Kent became angry and when Sheridan refused to allow his son to stand in the witness box - claiming that he was too young to know the meaning of an oath - tempers quickly flared. The two magistrates argued for some time and Kent subsequently called an adjournment for an hour, but as Sheridan and his son were about to leave the court, Kent ordered one of the police officers, Constable Hawthorne, to arrest the boy. When the court resumed, Sheridan still refused to allow his son to testify. Kent threatened to have him arrested, Sheridan hotly dared him to do so and Kent ordered Hawthorne to arrest Sheridan. Hawthorne realized that he was treading on very dangerous ground and sought the advice of fellow police officers, Constables Harwood and Kitching. Sheridan did not wait for

their response and strode from the court. The headmaster was subsequently sentenced to six weeks in gaol and Kent forced the clerk of the court to lay charges against the three police officers who had failed to arrest Sheridan. When they were brought before the court they found that Kent himself was to be their judge. Hawthorne was fined £10 and the other two officers £2 each. Kent was soon afterwards appointed lands commissioner to Mitchell. He committed suicide at Maryborough on Christmas Day 1862.⁶

After a long career in public service, R.B. Sheridan retired on a pension in 1883 and soon afterwards was elected to the Queensland parliament. He held office in the cabinet without portfolio and in 1886 was appointed postmaster-general. He later lived in a semi-detached house in George Street Brisbane. His son, Frank Bingham Sheridan and grandson, N.S. Stable, all served on the Maryborough bench, retaining a family tradition for over one hundred and twenty years.⁷

Sheridan had been one of the first men to blaze a track to Hervey Bay and was certainly one of the original purchasers of land in the Point Vernon region. In 1872 he built historic Sorrento House on the waterfront. He sold the house in 1885 to a French national named Charles Pon'ers. Pon'ers kept it for only three years before selling it to well known Maryborough baker, Valentine Barbeler. Other owners of Sheridan's home at the bay were Andrew Dunn - later the managing director of the *Maryborough Chronicle* - and his son, Hector.⁸

Another magistrate held in high regard - although he was reputedly something of a martinet, was George Lionel Lukin. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reported in October 1900:

In no department of the public service ... has a larger share of responsibility been thrown upon the individual office than has been the case with our police magistrates and gold wardens. And it has been a fortunate thing for Queensland that the duties of the office have almost invariably been discharged by men who recognised the importance of the trust reposed in them, and who spared no effort to worthily fill the position. The representatives of government at places far distant from headquarters sharing many of the privation and disabilities of the pioneer's life, they have almost without exception worthily administered the law and maintained order ... in districts where the utmost tact and good sense were needed in the task. Prominent amongst these was George Lionel Lukin.⁹



George Lionel Lukin.

Source - John Oxley Library print number 7477.

Lukin was a Tasmanian, born in Launceston on 24 January, 1836. When he was just twelve years of age he was sent to London for his education. The journey to London was something of an adventure for the young man. The ship called at Tahiti for repairs and to have its hull cleaned. While at Tahiti Lukin spent the weeks

ashore, learning the islanders' customs and habits. Eleven months after leaving Tasmania the ship arrived in London. Lukin lived for two years in the British capital before returning to Tasmania, and in 1855, at the age of nineteen, he went to Victoria to try his luck on the goldfields. However, he was eventually drawn to Queensland, then considered to be the place where new opportunities were quickly opening for enterprising people. He landed at Brisbane in 1863, four years after Separation, and soon found employment as clerk of petty sessions and land agent at Condamine. He remained at Condamine until November 1868 when he was appointed police magistrate at Leyburn. Four years later he was gazetted police magistrate and land commissioner at Roma.

On 7 August, 1874, Lukin was transferred to the position of under secretary at the Mines Department, a position he held until the end of 1880 when the Mines Department was combined with Public Works and Lukin accepted the position of police magistrate and gold warden at Gympie. Later he was transferred to Rockhampton. On 3 March, 1889, he was transferred to Maryborough as gold warden and mineral lands commissioner. During the time he was at Maryborough his health began to fail and he started to lose his eyesight. On 17 February, 1897, he was granted twelve months' leave of absence on full pay, after which he retired and moved to Sandgate. He died in October 1900.¹⁰

Another high profile administrator of justice was Christopher Francis. The career of Police Magistrate Francis was long, distinguished and sometimes difficult. He was born in Sydney on 12 December, 1840, and educated in London. Returning to Sydney aboard the ship *Vimeira* in 1859, he soon afterwards travelled to Queensland aboard the well known steamer *Telegraph*, landing in November the same year. Over the following years he worked for the National School Board, as a journalist on the *Moreton Bay Courier*, later entering the public service and serving as land agent and clerk of petty sessions at Normanton. He was transferred to Maryborough in 1876 as land commissioner and in 1881, upon completion of the railway between Maryborough and Gympie, the lands offices in the two towns were amalgamated and Francis was transferred, firstly to Brisbane and then to Cunnamulla.

Accompanied by his wife and family it took Francis five days to reach the western Queensland town, travelling by coach via Surat and St George. While there he became involved in the first major shearers' strike of 1891 and was later commended by the Queensland government for the way in which he handled the difficult situation. He never once had to read the riot act to strikers nor was there any serious violence. Other appointments included police magistrate at Townsville, 1899, police magistrate at Gympie, 1904, warden for the central district at Rockhampton and police magistrate at Maryborough, 1909, the press later reporting of his service at Maryborough: 'In the discharge of his duties ... he had been called upon to decide some very knotty questions of law, and his decisions appear to have been in each instance lucid and sound.'¹¹

Francis retired from his post in Maryborough in 1910 at the age of seventy years.¹²

Yet another of the Maryborough police magistrates was Edmund Morley. Morley was born in London on 3 December, 1826. He was the son of George Morley (1789-1849), who served as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy and fought at the Battle of Trafalgar aboard *H.M.S. Mars*. (Third ship of the line behind *H.M.S. Royal Sovereign* and *H.M.S. Belle Isle*).

Edmund Morley was educated at Christ's hospital on a Royal foundation for the sons of naval officers. He passed his examinations at Trinity House and was destined for the Royal Navy, however, he changed his mind and in 1842 emigrated to Australia to join his brother George. Over the following decade or so he ran several cattle stations including Euston station on the Murray River. Here, in 1852, the station was attacked by hostile aborigines and many of the white station hands were killed - after which the herds were scattered and butchered. In March 1858 Morley sailed for Europe and was married at Tunbridge Wells. He returned to Australia in 1860. Morley was involved with T.S. Mort in the establishment of the first frozen meat exports from Australia. This involved a massive investment of some £15,000 in the Mitchell Downs station in western Queensland. However, because of the drought of 1868 Morley was left almost destitute and he later took a position as police magistrate with the Queensland government. He served at Banana, Cairns, Port Douglas, Charters Towers, Townsville, Clermont, Bundaberg and Maryborough. Upon his retirement he lived at his residence near Point Look-out in Maryborough and died there at the age of eighty-six years on Monday 10 February, 1913.¹³

The magistrates, of course, could not function without the services of the many police officers stationed in Maryborough, men who covered a wide district to carry out their work of crime prevention and criminal apprehension. These officers were generally well regarded in the town, so well regarded that they were often honoured by the local people when they either retired or were transferred. Inspector O'Driscoll, for example, upon his retirement in October 1902, was guest of honour at the Royal Hotel where he was presented with a, '...valuable silver salver.'¹⁴ Inspector Daniel Toohey, after a rapid and brilliant climb from the rank of constable in 1881, received many accolades and tributes from local residents when he retired in September 1920.¹⁵



Constable Tom King (right) with his brother Ned. Their captive is one of the 'Dora Dora blacks'.
Source - John Oxley Library number 62345.

But one of the more famous Maryborough police officers was certainly Thomas King. King is still considered to be a hero of the Maryborough district, and he was, without doubt, a courageous officer. He was an expert bushman, rough-rider and horse-breaker whose untiring efforts in the carrying out of his duties made him something of a Queensland legend.

Thomas Orten King was born in Kerry, Ireland, in 1852. He was just ten years of age when he came to Australia with his parents. His father was a police officer based at Ipswich, and indeed there was a strong tradition of police service within the family. Thomas's grandfather was Major King of Killarney, and all of his sons served in the Queensland Mounted Police.

Leaving school at the age of fifteen, Thomas King immediately joined the police force. He soon mastered the art of police-work - work which often had to be carried out under extremely difficult circumstances and in barren, rugged country.

King was responsible for the apprehension of many notorious criminals in the history of the Wide Bay region, including the much reviled aborigines Dugald and Daandy in 1872. These two men had attacked and robbed Sarah Hutchinson, a settler's wife, on 23 March that year, and Dugald had raped the woman.¹⁶ After the crime had been reported King and another police officer named Edward Martin, based at Gympie, tracked the two offenders, arresting them on Yabba station. Their guilt was obvious, they had several items of stolen property in their possession - some of which they had attempted to hide under a log - and Sarah Hutchinson later identified both of them as the culprits. Appearing before Sir James Cockle at Maryborough in April 1872, both men were sentenced to death.¹⁷ Dugald was executed on 28 May that year, but it appears that Daandy received a reprieve as no record of his execution exists.

Thomas King's skills as a tracker were legendary and he could live from the bush in the same way the aborigines have done for centuries. He tracked and captured an aboriginal man named Toby after the killing of James Cunningham in February 1878. The *Chronicle* later reported: '...After being hunted for weeks from scrub to scrub, Toby at last became reckless and camped close to Sandy Cape lighthouse with his brother and his gin. His wanderings and anxiety had told on his once powerful frame and he was a wreck of his former self. He was captured without offering any resistance, and was charged with wilful murder.'¹⁸

It must have been a gruelling month for King for he was also reported as having tracked an aboriginal bush-ranger named Sambo. Harry Aldridge, then at Toowoomba, had sent word to King that a large gathering of aboriginal people was taking place near that town and that Sambo was among them. King, accompanied by Aldridge and two other men named White and Dicken went to the camp at 3 o'clock one morning, quietly swimming a creek to approach the site without discovery. The press later reported:

True to his 'captivating' instincts Constable King had several of the blacks by the wool before he found that Mr Dicken had the one he wanted. Sambo, however, escaped, but broke his arm in falling over a log while endeavouring to make his escape. Doctor Power treated the broken limb.¹⁹

For many months King also tracked the notorious bush-ranger and rapist Johnny Campbell and came close to capturing him. Shortly before King could make an arrest Campbell was captured by a group of aborigines at Tewantin and sent under escort to Brisbane via Maryborough. He was tried at Ipswich and sentenced to fourteen years for highway robbery. He was convicted of rape at a second trial and was hanged in Brisbane on 16 August, 1880.²⁰ After his death, Campbell's body was handed over to Nicholas Miklouho Maclay, a visiting Russian scientist. Maclay had portions of the body embalmed and sent to the Anthropological Society in Berlin.²¹

In April 1882 while tracking some police horses through the scrub Constable King came upon a massive wild boar in densely wooded country at the rear of Urangan. King shot the boar which weighed over four hundred pounds. King and another officer could not carry the carcass so a dray had to be requisitioned to take it to Pialba.²²

When two Fraser Island aborigines named Willie and Jackey were recruited as trackers into the Victorian Native Police during the late 1890s, it started a series of events which resulted in murder and mayhem and sparked off a man-hunt of almost unprecedented proportions, a man-hunt involving not only Thomas King, but also his brother, police officer Ned King.

Willie and Jackey had been recruited, allegedly on the understanding that their terms of service would not exceed one year, after which they would be allowed to return to their families. However, their terms of service were not met and they were forced to remain as trackers with the Native Police. Archibald Meston, the protector of aborigines, later wrote: 'My visits to the island settlement were only marred by the pain of meeting those two mothers and hearing their sadly pathetic enquires with regard to when their boys were coming back, and they said they so badly wanted to see them before they died. They never saw their boys again.'²³

Disgruntled, bitter and hostile, Willie and Jackey decided in April 1891 that they would desert the Victorian force. Hunted as deserters, they easily fell into a life of crime and went on a rampage of theft and murder. Less than a month after their desertion they killed a woman named Mary Smith at Benalla. Soon afterwards they speared a man named Sovran Mursezkvitz at Bassin N.S.W. This district was known as Dora Dora and it was from this region that the two killers were named - finding infamy as the 'Dora Dora blacks'. After the attack Mursezkvitz was taken to hospital where, before his death, he gave a detailed description of his attackers.²⁴

In September 1892 the two deserters committed a 'criminal offence' against a young girl near Draper New South Wales.²⁵ What followed was a man-hunt almost equal to the Kelly gang saga as the fugitives continued their spree of crime and murder. A reward of £75 was posted for their capture but they managed to evade even the most clever of trackers.²⁶

In Maryborough, Thomas King was keeping a careful watch for the return of the two offenders. He visited Fraser Island on several occasions to speak with their family and friends. Meanwhile his brother, Nathaniel Irvine King, in Mount Perry, learned that one of the men, Willie, was resting at an aboriginal camp near the Bundaberg show-grounds. He took a train to Bundaberg, refused an offer of assistance from the local police, went to the camp and, with little or no fuss, arrested Willie. However, Willie was later able to slip his handcuffs and succeeded in escaping into the scrub. Constable Ned (Nathaniel) King fired several shots as a warning and pursued on foot, eventually catching the murderer hiding in the bed of a creek. He secured him with a belt around his neck and brought him into custody. The captive said that he had not been responsible for the killings, that he and Jackey had split up during the 1893 floods, and that he had not seen him since.²⁷

Jackey was later traced to Mackay. The two King brothers disguised themselves as itinerant workers and travelled to Mackay aboard a steamer. They effected an arrest after a brief struggle but Jackey also managed to escape. A huge hunt swung into place and the criminal was traced to a small island north-east of Mackay. The King brothers once again made the arrest and brought the man back to Maryborough for trial. Jackey was sentenced to life imprisonment and Willie received fifteen years.²⁸

But Thomas King's fascinating career was not based solely on the tracking and capture of criminals. During the floods of 1893 he played a vital role in saving many people by taking charge of a lifeboat and searching up and down the Mary River and Tinana Creek for people who were trapped by the rising water. For this selfless act of courage under difficult and dangerous circumstances he was given an illuminated address by the people of Maryborough.

A police colleague later wrote of King:

We were fellow-troopers for many years after he joined the force in the seventies, and often did the Gold Escort together. His personal courage was ... sometimes displayed under circumstances that were ... ludicrous and sublime. Long after the period when he was rescued from death by strangling at the hands of a demented charge in a Gootchy hotel, he soberly assured me that he never again intended to handcuff himself to a lunatic for the purpose of preventing the latter's escape in the night time.

He casually related to me on another occasion how the blanket, from which he had unrolled a dead kanaka, had saved him from perishing on a cold winter night when he arrived at the defunct heathen's humpy for the purpose of investigating his demise, and burying the body if there were no suspicions of foul play. He deferred the disagreeable part of his visit till the morning, and, being short of bedclothing, commandeered the article for which the owner had no further use ... He brought off his ... most difficult job in '78 by running down a black horror, Johnny Campbell, who went berserk on the Upper Burnett, and has left a recollection of murder, outrages and robbery in the district from Gayndah to Gympie and Ipswich ... He (Campbell) was an abnormal physical specimen, his massive body tapering to attenuated hips and legs. King picked up his tracks near Gympie and for three weeks followed the aboriginal's doubling in the coastal scrub. He (King) travelled with a revolver and half a blanket, and kept going on snakes, fish, and woodgrubs ... He slept frequently in the hunted man's camp and sometimes cleared up the provisions he had abandoned. Campbell made for Noosa Heads in the end and this led to his undoing for his gin, who was a native of the district, delivered him into the hands of a local tribe who handed him over to the police, three hours previous to King's entry into Tewantin.

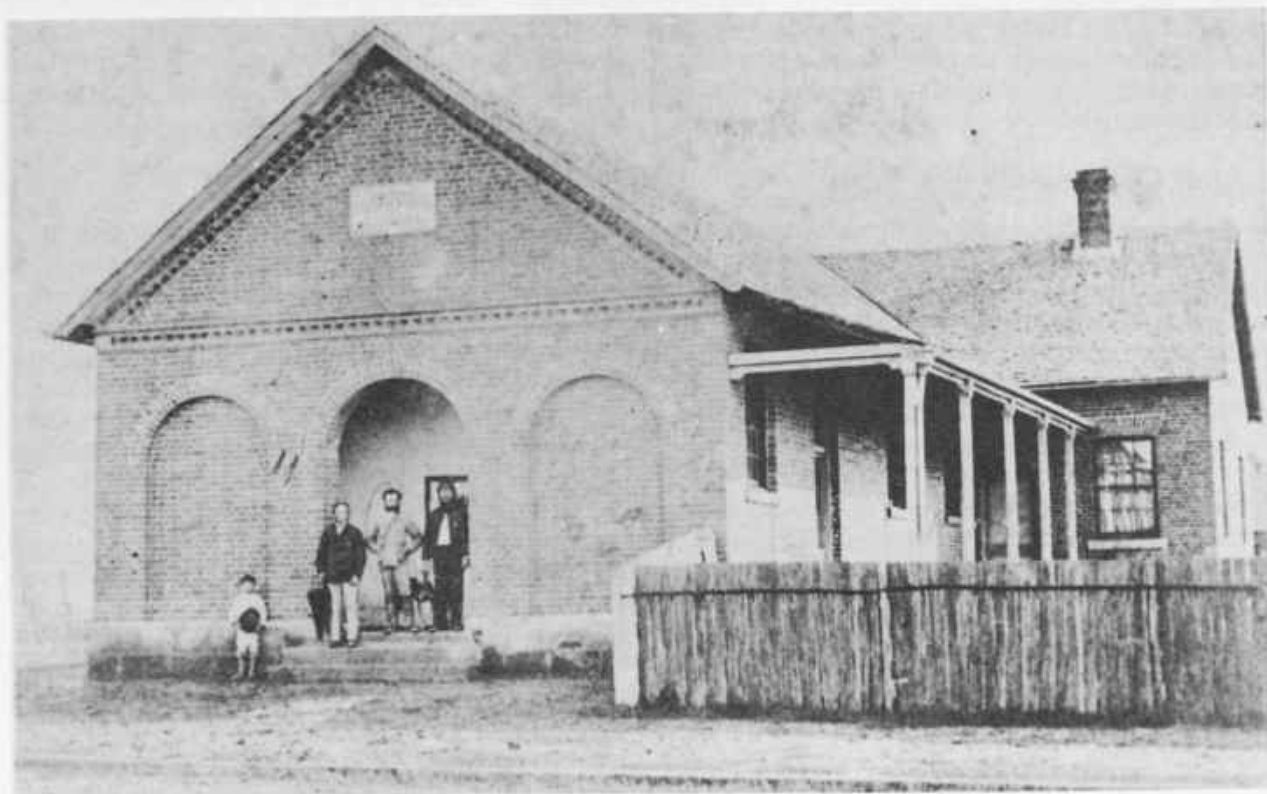
I formed one of Campbell's escort to Brisbane, where he was afterwards hung. During the trip, we learned that he had occasionally sighted Tommy (King) during the chase, and had adopted the expedients of travelling in water and walking backwards in an effort to queer the trail.²⁹

King retired from the police force in 1900 after serving for thirty-two years. He was involved in horse trading on Fraser Island, and, with partners Dick Webber and Colin Henderson, managed to breed up a large number of head. He became the proprietor of the Urangan Hotel and a member of the Pialba Shire Council.

In January 1917 King had been mustering and branding cattle on Fraser Island for about a week. He was aided in the work by his son Nathaniel and several other men. When the mustering had been completed King was preparing to return home, when, while at Watoomba, he stretched out under a tree and said that he was not feeling well. He died there in his sleep aged sixty-five years. King left a wife - whom he had married at Gympie when he was nineteen years of age - four sons and three daughters.³⁰ He was buried at the Maryborough cemetery.³¹

Another officer who saw a wide variety of service was Sergeant Thomas McCulkin. McCulkin was born in Warwick on 25 August, 1859. He joined the Queensland Police Service in Brisbane on 31 December, 1883 and was transferred the following day as a mounted officer to Goondiwindi. Over the following years he served at St George, Miles, Condamine and Toowoomba. He was involved in controlling the second shearers' strike of 1894, and was later transferred to Augathella, St George, Adavale, Ipswich and Maryborough. He had been involved in the massive police hunt for Pat and James Kenniff after the murder of Constable George Doyle and A.C. Dalke, the manager of Carnarvon station, in March 1902.³²

McCulkin was responsible for the capture of a 'notorious' aboriginal named Jacob in 1893, having tracked him through the bush for five days. He was a friend of aboriginal fighter Jerry Jerome who also assisted him during a five weeks' tracking expedition in search of another aboriginal who had kidnapped a young girl. McCulkin won a gold medal for the best mounted police officer at the Maryborough show in 1912. He retired from the service in February 1914.³³



The original court-house ca. 1872 at the corner of Kent and Adelaide Streets where the park benches are now located - opposite Yarels. Source - John Oxley Library print number 35121.

Unusual Cases. Paddy McKearney

One of the more colourful characters ever to appear before the Maryborough police magistrates was almost certainly Paddy McKearney. On 1 February, 1919, McKearney's name was called in court on charges of breaching the Liquor Act - he was, it appears, a habitual drunk. However, when the magistrate called for McKearney there was no response. The *Maryborough Chronicle* reporter later wrote:

Silence reigned supreme for a minute or so. Many times had the same name been called before, when McKearney promptly rose and in a long harangue told the Bench the same story in effect, that when the police wanted firewood cut, the hedge clipped or odd jobs done about the place they looked up Paddy and 'ran him in.' McKearney was never, or least hardly ever drunk - according to his version. On a number of occasions the well-known character took such a strong objection to 'durance vile' that, to use a police official's words: 'He howled like a dingo all night.' But all that is now past - McKearney has gone - departed, never to return, that is, if he observes the conditions under which he was allowed to leave Maryborough. For at least four or five years he had resided in our midst and was one of the queerest characters the town had known. He could neither read nor write, but he had few equals as a talker. In the street, in business premises, and even in the Court House, he was the hardest man to silence. McKearney has gone to pastures new, and Maryborough's most loquacious resident will make himself widely known in a short space of time in his new home, believed to be Clifton. At any rate, as far as Maryborough is concerned, Paddy has gone.³⁴

Senior Sergeant Sullivan, addressing the magisterial bench, had said that when it had become known that McKearney had either to leave the town or go to gaol several 'good natured' Maryborough men had given him a small amount of money. McKearney had then secured a ticket for the Darling Downs, and left by the mail train the night before he was due in court. In his absence the magistrate said McKearney would be convicted, but not punished.³⁵

Shortest Prison Term

What was possibly the shortest gaol sentence ever imposed by a magistrate at Maryborough was served by James Walker, (the son of John Walker) who, in 1886 pleaded guilty at the District Court to having unsuccessfully attempted suicide by shooting himself in the head with a revolver. Walker was sentenced to serve sixty seconds imprisonment.³⁶

Sources and Notes for Chapter Thirty-four.

1. M/C. 8 August, 1956, p 1.
2. Sheehan, C.G. *Beyond the Limits of Location*.
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3. M/C. 31 October, 1861.
4. M/C. 7 November, 1861.
5. M/C. 15 June, 1880.
6. Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Year Book of Proceedings,
Vol. 9, No. 3 1971-72, p 71. M/C. 7 October, 1988, p 13 B.
7. M/C. 27 August, 1973 and *Sunday Mail*, 25 June, 1978.
8. M/C. 13 April, 1988, p 21.
9. M/C. 23 October, 1900.
10. M/C. *ibid*.
11. M/C. 29 November, 1910.
12. M/C. *ibid*.
13. For further details on the life of Morley see M/C. 11 February, 1913.
14. M/C. 2 October, 1905.
15. M/C. 21 September, 1920.
16. M/C. 20 April, 1872.
17. M/C. 23 April, 1872.
18. M/C. 4 February, 1928, p 5.
19. M/C. 18 February, 1928, p 6.
20. M/C. 4 April, and 6 April, 1880.
21. Oxley Journal, Vol. 1, Number 5 May/June 1980, p 16.
22. M/C. 22 April, 1933, p 2.
23. M/C. 7 October, 1961, p 2.
24. M/C. 19 December, 1892.
25. M/C. 12 December, 1893.
26. M/C. 11 December, 1893.
27. M/C. *ibid*.
28. M/C. 9 February, 1894 and 19 February, 1894.
29. M/C. 20 March, 1917, p 3.
30. M/C. 30 January, 1917, p 5.
31. M/C. 30 September, 1961.
32. The Kenniffs were later captured, Pat was executed on 12 January, 1903, still proclaiming his innocence and his brother James, who had also been sentenced to death, later had his sentence reduced to twelve years. He did not want this reduction and requested that he go to the gallows with his brother. His request was refused.
33. M/C. 21 February, 1914.
34. M/C. 2 May, 1919, p 6.
35. M/C. *ibid*.
36. M/C. 17 April, 1886.

Appendices.

Appendix One.

Biographical details of current councillors, their committees and statutory bodies. Details sourced from Maryborough City Council.

Alan James Brown. (Mayor).

Date and Place of Birth:

1 January, 1932, Maryborough. The only son of George and Vera Brown of 'Beaumont' Tiaro. He received his primary education at Mundubbera, Ironbark Ridge, and Bauple State Schools and his secondary education at Maryborough Boys' High School.

Occupation:

Councillor Brown served his apprenticeship with Walkers Ltd. as an electrical fitter and mechanic and was employed by that company for twenty-four years. He was later employed by the Wide Bay Burnett Electricity Board as a workshop foreman and chief stores officer for twenty years.

Family:

Married June Hoyle in 1954. They have two children, a son and a daughter, both of whom were educated in Maryborough, and six grandchildren.

Date Elected:

Alan Brown entered local government at Maryborough in 1979 and was re-elected in 1982 and 1985 when he was also elected as deputy mayor.

He was elected mayor of Maryborough in 1991 and re-elected unopposed in 1994.

Committees of Statutory Bodies Served On:

1979/1988

Councillor Brown served on the three council committees, was a member of the Fire Brigade Board, director of Maryborough District Development Board, director of Maryborough Show Society, and the inaugural director of Sugar Coast South Burnett Regional Tourism Board (later Fraser Coast South Burnett Regional Tourism Board). He was also inaugural director of the Wide Bay Group Training Scheme and chairman of the Area Committee of National Fitness (later Recreation Council).

1991/1994

He is a member of the four council committees (viz Works and Services, General Purposes, Planning and Development and Finance and Administration [chairman]) and council representative for a number of regional and community bodies. He is a board member of the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Electricity Board and a member of the Wide Bay Regional Health Authority. He was chairman of the Maryborough Bicentenary Community Committee.

Division One.

Anne Dawn Miller (B.A., Grad. Dip. museum management).

Date and Place of Birth:

20 December, 1939, Maryborough.

Family:

Married Lionel Miller in 1960. Two sons, Gavin and Michael, four grandchildren.

Youngest of sixteen children of pioneering family (Hoffman).

Date Elected:

In 1991 as a member of the Community Progress Team in the local authority elections she was elected as the Division 1 alderman on the Maryborough City Council. Elected unopposed for a further three years' term as a councillor in 1994.

Committees or Statutory Bodies Served On:

Serves on Finance and Administration, General Purposes and Planning and Development Committees.

Member of the Queensland Heritage Council, council representative on the Neighbourhood Centre Committee, the Lower Mary River Irrigation Area Advisory Committee and Maryborough and District Tertiary Studies Association.

Received the Maryborough Australia Day citizen of the year award in 1991.

Has also served 17 years as instructor for St. John's Ambulance Service.

Councillor Miller is involved in community work, including Healthy Cities.

Division Two.

Alexia Isobel Tudman. (Deputy mayor).

Date and Place of Birth:

24 July, 1940, Kyogle, N.S.W.

Occupation:

Trained community health nurse

Family:

Husband John and three sons, Peter, Paul and William. All married. Eight grandchildren.

Date Elected:

19 March, 1988 to date. Served as deputy mayor for the period 23 March, 1991 to date. Representing Division 2.

Committees or Statutory Bodies Served On:

Works and Services Committee, Planning and Development Committee, General Purposes Committee.

Committee on the Ageing (Maryborough) on the board representing local government of the Queensland Council on the Ageing.

Division Three.

Angus Henry Robertson

Date and Place of Birth:

28 June, 1937, Chinchilla

Occupation:

Hotelier

Family:

Married - Wife Shirley with four children - Malcolm, Ian, Kathy and Lyn and has seven grandchildren.

Date Elected:

23 March, 1991 to date. Representing Division 3.

Committees or Statutory Bodies Served On:

Finance and Administration Committee, Works and Services Committee, General Purposes Committee, Fraser Coast South Burnett Regional Tourism Board Ltd., Maryborough-Hervey Bay Show Society.

Division Four.

Beverley Carruthers-Turner.

Date and Place of Birth:

3 November, 1947, Sydney.

Occupation:

Journalist.

Family:

Husband, Stephen. Son, Nathaniel Hyde and two step-sons Peter and Mark Turner. No grandchildren.

Date Elected:

23 March, 1991 to date. Representing Division 4 (Baddow).

Committees or Statutory Bodies Served On:

Committee chairman General Purposes, Member of Works and Services and Planning and Development Committees. Council delegate on Wide Bay South Burnett Local Government Association. Chairman, Regional Arts Development Fund Committee. Council delegate on National Trust of Queensland, Wide Bay branch.

Division Five.

Julie Ann Arthur

Date and Place of Birth:

12 September, 1958, Maryborough, first child to Alwyn and Daphne Silvester.

Occupation:

Educated at the Maryborough West State Primary School, and Maryborough Girls' High School where she served a one year term on the Maryborough Youth Council. After completing her education she worked for a period of seven months with the Maryborough City Council before entering the Queensland State Public Service.

Family:

Married - Husband, John.

Date Elected:

23 March, 1991, re-elected unopposed March, 1994, representing Division 5.

Committees or Statutory Bodies Served On:

Works and Services Committee, Finance and Administration Committee, General Purposes Committee. Also serves on Maryborough's Main Street Committee, Maryborough and District Promotions Bureau and chairman of 'Light Up Our City' Christmas festival.

In 1994 Councillor Arthur was appointed to the National Board of the Australian Local Government Women's Association and to the Executive of the Queensland Branch of the Australian Local Government Women's Association.

Division Six.

Edward Christian (Ted) Weber.

Date and Place of Birth:

21 April, 1933, Maryborough.

Fourth generation of one of Maryborough's early settlers, Christian William Weber who arrived here from Germany in 1856.

Occupation:

Started work at Walkers Ltd. engineers in 1948, began his apprenticeship as a fitter welder in 1950 being continuously employed by that company for a total of 41 years, the last fifteen years as a foreman.

Family:

Married Margaret Jean Otto, reared a family of four children, three sons and a daughter all of whom were educated in Maryborough.

Date Elected:

In 1991 as a member of the Community Progress Team in the local authority elections he was elected as the Division 6 alderman on the Maryborough City Council. Elected unopposed for a further three years' term as a councillor in 1994.

Committees or Statutory Bodies Served On:

Chairman, Planning and Development Committee. Serves on Finance and Administration and General Purposes Committees.

Division Seven.

Leslie John York, M.I.E. (Aust)

Date and Place of Birth:

24 April, 1931, Bundaberg. Councillor York was born in Bundaberg but grew up in Townsville during the war.

Occupation:

After receiving his engineering qualifications in 1955 he did some engineering work at Inverell and at Grafton in N.S.W. Councillor York took up employment as an electrical engineer with the Wide Bay Burnett Electricity Board in 1960. After a rewarding career as an electrical engineer responsible for the major supply system of the board, Councillor York retired in August, 1989.

Family:

Councillor York is a family man with five grown up children and lives with his wife Dell (nee Stabler) at 16 Woodstock Street and has been at this address since 1965. Councillor York lived at Baddow in 1960.

Date Elected:

Elected as alderman for Division 7 in March 1991 and re-elected unopposed for a second term as a councillor in March, 1994.

Committees or Statutory Bodies Served On:

Chairman, Works and Services Committee. Serves on Finance and Administration and General Purposes Committees.

Charter member of the Rotary Club of Maryborough City and served as president in 1989/90. Also a life member of the Maryborough and District Lawn Tennis Association, having been on the executive of the association since coming to Maryborough until completion of the construction of the clubhouse at the courts in Alice Street.

Sporting interests are now in sailing, Councillor York was the first life member of the Hervey Bay Sailing Club.

Councillor York is interested in seeing the Maryborough Family Heritage Institute become an integral part of the 'heritage theme' for Maryborough and was on the steering committee for the establishment of the institute. The 'Heritage City' theme will be continued with the private sector of the community being asked to support the theme and voluntarily offer their services to assist the city in the promotion.

Division Eight.

Colin John Comber

Date and Place of Birth:

21 July, 1949, Maryborough.

Occupation:

Refrigeration Mechanic.

Family:

Married with three children.

Date Elected:

23 March, 1991. Re-elected March, 1994, representing Division 8.

Committees or Statutory Bodies Served On:

Works and Services Committee, Planning and Development Committee, General Purposes Committee, Granville Hall Management Committee, Council Representative on Chamber of Commerce.

Appendix Two.

Verbatim report of Doctors John Thomson and C.J. Hill Wray on the facilities and treatment of South Sea Islanders at various plantations in the Maryborough region. Sourced from, *Regulations, Reports etc Under the Polynesian Labourers' Act*, Printed under orders of the Legislative Assembly 13 July, 1880.

YENGARIE.

Visited 9th April, 1880.

Acres under cultivation. - 25.

Polynesians employed. - Sixty-five strong muscular fellows; all picked men for special work at the mill. There were no boys among them. Three were on the sick list, but were not in hospital, which is a small wooden building, at present used as a tool-shed.

Hours of labour. - Ten daily - from 6 a.m. to 8, from 9 a.m. to 1, from 2 p.m. to 6.

House accommodation. - Three slab houses and twelve grass huts, built very irregularly in a small enclosure, through which there was a very offensive drain. The huts were very small, the ridge of some of those containing three, four or five boys not being 5 feet from the ground; and they were in every possible stage of decay. New houses on another situation were in course of erection. No latrines (sic) or attempts at sanitation.

Water supply. - Rain water, collected in iron tanks. During droughts, or when the tanks fail, river water is pumped from the Mary.

Diet scale. - The meals seemed to vary somewhat; there was no regular scale. The cook was a Polynesian, and whatever arrangement he made apparently satisfied the others.

Complaints. - None.

IRRAWARRA.

Visited 8th April, 1880.

Acres under cultivation. - 500.

Polynesians employed. - 95, of whom 7 were boys, and 21 were on the sick list, but it was reported that five of these were from Yarra Yarra. Of the 21 sick, 13 were in one of the mill-sheds and the other 8 were in the 'hospital' - a slab house 15 ½ feet long by 13 ½ feet wide, 6 ½ foot of wall, or 13 feet to the ridge. In this there were no conveniences whatever; no latrine accommodation, no bedding, and but few and poor blankets, and the patients were dirty, and apparently neglected.

Hours of labour. - 10 daily - from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an hour, 12 to 1, for dinner.

House accommodation. - This consisted of 2 each divided. These were of slabs, and measured 15 by 15 ½, with 7 ½ feet of wall, or 15 feet to the ridge, and altogether contained twenty-eight bunks. Then there were four large new huts, each to accommodate twelve, and there were also four old huts each intended for four. These were all good, and built on a good situation.

Water supply. - This was from a reservoir about 20 yards square, unconnected with any creek, but fed by the surface drainage from the ridge to the west, part of which was under cultivation. In future, however, the water supply would be roof water collected in a large brick and well-cemented underground tank which had just been completed.

Diet scale. - Breakfast - tea and bread; dinner - bread, potatoes, and rice with meat (salt and fresh alternately); supper - tea, bread, and potatoes or rice. The bread was in properly shaped loaves, and well baked, but the flour was indifferent. The tea was fairly good, but the beef-tea prepared for the invalids was very greasy, insipid, and quite unfit for anyone suffering from intestinal derangement.

Complaints. of harsh treatment.

YARRA YARRA.

Visited 8th April, 1880.

Acres under cultivation. - 750.

Polynesians employed. - 108, of whom 13 were mere lads and 4 were sick, suffering from rheumatism.

Hours of labour. - 10 daily - from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an hour, 12 to 1, for dinner.

House accommodation. - There were two sets of huts. Of the larger there were 4; these were 26ft. long, 15ft. wide; had a 7ft. side, and were 15ft to the ridge. They were roomy, well ventilated, and pleasantly cool, and could easily and comfortably accommodate ten people. Of the smaller huts there were 18, and they measured 16ft. by 10 ½, and were 5 and ½ ft. to the slope of the roof, or 9 ½ to the ridge-pole; they were supposed to contain 5 bunks. These huts were built regularly in two rows on a fairly good situation, and were clean and in excellent condition, but were very poorly provided with blankets.

Water supply. - This was from a stagnant water-hole 25 yards long, and varying in width from 1 to 6. It was about 3 feet deep, and was fed by surface drainage from cultivated land, some of which had been manured.

Diet scale. - Breakfast - tea and bread; dinner - tea and bread and potatoes, meat (salt and fresh alternately), rice occasionally; supper - tea and potatoes, with soup on the fresh-meat days. There seemed to be great irregularity and a want of method in issuing and preparing the rations. The cook knew very little about it, and the overseer was scarcely better informed. The bread was hardly fit for use, the flour was very inferior, and the baking bad, and the tea was only tea in name; about 7 ozs. went to 15 gallons of water, or about 25 grains, or as much as a small egg-spoon would lift, to the imperial pint.

Complaints. - Generally of insufficient rice and potatoes.

IINDAH.

Visited 9th April, 1880.

Acres under cultivation. - 400.

Polynesians employed. - 95; 4 of whom were boys, and 5 were sick. The hospital for these was estimated to accommodate 15, and measured 31 1/2 by 16ft. with 8ft. to the wall, or 15 feet to the ridge.

Hours of labour. - 10 daily, viz., from 7 a.m. until noon, and then with an hour for dinner from 1 until 6.

House accommodation. - There were 21 grass huts built very irregularly on a good, dry, and drained situation; 6 of these were large and roomy, but the others were exceedingly small and very defective.

Water supply. - From a chain of water-holes about a quarter of a mile from the huts. The water was not stagnant.

Diet Scale. - Breakfast - tea, ½ lb. bread; dinner - bread, 2 lbs. sweet potatoes, and 1 lb. of uncooked meat free from bone. Supper - tea, ½ lb. bread.

Complaints. - Want of sugar, insufficient clothing, and bad tobacco. The tobacco was bad.

EATON VALE.

Visited 9th April, 1880.

Acres under cultivation. - 400.

Polynesians employed. - 117.

Hours of labour. - 10.

House accommodation. - Wooden houses and grass huts. The former large, airy, in excellent condition; the latter similar, though older than the new grass huts at Yarra Yarra. In all the floors were hard, dry, and clean; and there was a plentiful supply of good blankets.

Water supply. - Roof-water collected in tanks; and when these failed, river-water from the Mary.

Diet Scale. - Breakfast - tea, ½ lb. bread, ½ lb. meat; dinner ½ lb. bread, ½ lb. meat, 1 lb. potatoes, or an equivalent in cooked rice, supper, tea ½ lb. bread, ½ lb. potatoes, or an equivalent of cooked rice.

Complaints. - None.

ANTIGUA.

Visited 10th April, 1880.

Acres under cultivation. - 500.

Polynesians employed. - 130.

House accommodation. - There were a dozen grass huts of various sizes and in various stages of decay, and there were seven wooden houses. These were 24 ½ feet by 14 by 10 or 16 to the ridge, and were to accommodate twelve in each. These were weatherboarded, shingled, had closely planked floors, roomy bunks, and were kept clean and sweet by occasional coats of white-wash. The position of these was good, and they were well arranged.

Water supply. - Rain from the mill roof collected in underground hardwood tanks; when these fail water is got from the river.

Diet scale. - Breakfast - tea, 1 ½ lb. bread, ½ lb. cooked meat; dinner - tea, ½ lb. bread, potatoes for about four or five months, and rice cooked in the field, with an unlimited supply of molasses. Supper - tea, ½ lb. bread, ½ lb. cooked meat. Of the tea ¼ lb. was allowed daily to every fifteen boys, a 1 ½ lb. of uncooked corned beef with bone was the daily allowance to each. This was preserved, and served at the morning and evening meals, and gave about ½ lb. of cooked meat to each. The allowance of bread was ½ lb. for each boy. This was exceedingly good, the flour was first quality, and the loaves well-shaped and well-baked.

MAGNOLIA.

Visited 12th April, 1880.

Acres under cultivation. - 430.

Polynesians employed. - 112, of whom 6 were sick and in hospital - of these there were 2, and they were both in excellent condition, being well supplied with good bedding and plenty of blankets. Dysentery was not the prevailing sickness, nor did the new arrivals suffer most; it became epidemic about November, and all were attacked alike. Consumption was more fatal than dysentery. A fruitful source of sickness was the Sunday holiday, which was frequently spent in some sort of carousal. The boys would leave on Saturday evening and not return again till early on Monday morning, and not infrequently dispose of their blankets in order to provide themselves with a little money. Mr Boughey had had experience of this and had set his face against it, would allow no boy to leave the plantation on Sunday without special permission, and strongly advised that the blankets should be the property of the estate and not of the Islanders, so that a check might be put upon their sale.

House accommodation. - Grass huts were not permitted; a few wooden houses gave accommodation to about 30, while the remaining 80 were housed in two handsome octagonal buildings. Each side of the octagon was 12ft., and this gave a diameter of about 28 ft. The wall-plate was 11ft., and the roof ran up cone-shaped to the ventilator, which was 32 ft. from the floor. The building was surrounded by a verandah 7 ft. wide, and the floor of both house and verandah was of bricks well cemented. The bunks in double tiers, and to accommodate 40, radiated like the spokes of a wheel and gave a clear floor space of about 13 ft. in diameter, in the centre of which was a fire. These houses were stated to be worth about £250 each, and were certainly well adapted for the accommodation of the boys.

Water supply. - From Tinana Creek, near the source of the supply to Maryborough. The water is stored in iron tanks.

Diet scale. - Breakfast - tea, ½ lb. bread; dinner - tea, ½ lb. bread, 1 lb. potatoes, rice occasionally, ½ lb. cooked meat; supper - a repetition of dinner. About 2 ½ cwt. of potatoes are used daily; of corned beef the consumption is about 1000 lbs. a week; and extras, such as oatmeal, peas, or cornflour, are issued if wanted and if the boys choose to cook them.

Hours of labour. - These are irregular, but average about nine hours a day. No boy is allowed to work in rain or during fog, nor is he permitted to work in the cane while the dew remains.

Note. - An arrangement exists with one of the medical men of Maryborough, who for an annual sum attends the plantation as required.

FERNEY.

Acres under cultivation. - 80.

Polynesians employed. 25; no sick.

Hours of labour. - 10. In hot weather, occasionally, two hours or more, from noon until 2 or 2.30, are allowed for dinner, but this time has to be made up by either beginning the day's work earlier or continuing it later.

House accommodation. - Two good weatherboard houses bunked for 12 each; good site; no grass huts allowed.

Water supply. - Rain-water collected in iron and underground tanks.

Diet scale. - Breakfast - tea, bread, meat, dinner - tea, bread, potatoes, meat; supper - tea, bread, meat. In lieu of this meat at supper twice a week, soup thickened with rice is issued. This soup is made from fresh meat; the ration meat is corned.

Complaints. - Boys discontented and complaining of want of rations.

ALPHA.

Visited 12 April, 1880.

Acres under cultivation. - 280.

Polynesians employed. 74, of whom 3 were sick. Pulmonary consumption was stated to be the chief disease, there having been little or no dysentery.

Hours of labour. - In summer, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an hour, 12 to 1, for dinner - 11 hours' work. In winter, 10 hours.

House accommodation. - 4 weather-boarded houses, each 17 feet by 12 with a 10 feet wall or 14 feet to ridge, and each to accommodate 16. These were shingled, had a ridge ventilation, and a verandah in front 4 feet wide. For some reason these were untenanted, the boys preferring their grass huts; 5 of these, though in good order, were exceedingly small, being 12 feet long, 6 feet wide, 2 feet of a wall, and 4 ½ feet to ridge, and other 9 (in all 14) were within small enclosures and were occupied by married couples.

Water supply. - From Tinana Creek, pumped daily into a large wooden reservoir and carted to casks near the huts.

Diet scale. - Breakfast - tea, ½ lb. bread, ½ lb. uncooked meat; dinner - tea, bread, and potatoes; supper - tea, bread, sometimes potatoes and meat. 5 cwt. of potatoes are used weekly; no rice is given. Fresh meat is issued twice a week, and on the other days either salt or corned is served out. One pound of uncooked is the daily allowance for each boy, and half of this is prepared for the morning meal and the rest for supper. The bread was bad; it was baked in irregular lumps varying from about 2 to 7 lbs., and badly baked.

The meals were taken in a large dining hall, 60 feet long by 18 feet wide, and well fitted with tables etc.,

NERADA.

Visited 13th April, 1880.

Acres under cultivation. - 360.

Polynesians employed. - 72, of whom three were on the sick list.

Hours of labour. - In summer, 12 - viz., from 6 a.m. to 6.45 p.m., with ¾ hour for dinner; in winter, 9 and ¾ - viz., from 7 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., with ¾ hour for dinner.

House accommodation. - Very indifferent - about eighteen grass huts, very small, but in fair preservation, built on a low ridge in front of which was an extensive swamp. It was stated, however, that arrangements were being made to have this drained.

Water supply. - From a dam supplied by the surface drainage from the plantation.

Diet scale. - Breakfast - tea ½ lb. bread, rice or potatoes, ¼ lb. cooked meat; dinner - tea, ½ lb. bread, potatoes, or occasionally rice; supper - tea, ½ lb. bread, rice, or potatoes, ½ lb. cooked meat.

The meat was killed weekly, and for two or three days it was served fresh, the rest of the week salted; ½ lb. of cooked but unboned meat was the daily allowance for each boy - half issued at breakfast and the other half at supper.

The bread was fairly good, and was baked in 2 lb. loaves; ½ lb. was the allowance for each meal; about sixteen bags of potatoes were used weekly.

Appendix Three.

List of known immigrant ships for Maryborough. These dates may vary slightly with other listings, depending upon the dates of the arrival of shipping at Hervey Bay and the arrival of the passengers, days and sometimes weeks later, at the Maryborough wharves. This listing also includes the *Montmorency*, see appendix note 1 for details.

<i>Ariadne.</i>	October 1862.
<i>David McIver.</i>	July 1863.
<i>Montmorency¹</i>	July 1863.
<i>Prince Consort.</i>	March 1864.
<i>Sultana.</i>	July 1864.
<i>Golden Land.</i>	October 1865.
<i>Sultana.</i>	February 1866.
<i>Golden South.</i>	June 1866.
<i>Sarah and Mary.</i>	March 1868.
<i>Jane Lockhart.</i>	March 1868.
<i>Scotia.</i>	March 1868.
<i>Star of the South.</i>	April 1868.
<i>Flying Cloud.</i>	August 1870.
<i>Reichstag.</i>	March 1871.
<i>Star Queen.</i>	March 1871.
<i>Shakespeare.</i>	August 1871.
<i>Herschel.</i>	March 1872.
<i>Polmaise.</i>	September 1872.
<i>Alardus.</i>	June 1873.
<i>Gloucester.</i>	July 1873.
<i>Reichstag.</i>	July 1873.
<i>Humboldt.</i>	October 1873.
<i>Tim Whiffler.</i>	January 1874.
<i>Glamorganshire.</i>	May 1874.
<i>St James.</i>	July 1874.
<i>Great Queensland.</i>	October 1874.
<i>Gauntlet.</i>	January 1875.
<i>Tim Whiffler.</i>	June 1875.
<i>Star Queen.</i>	September 1875.
<i>Great Queensland.</i>	November 1875.
<i>Indus.</i>	February 1876.
<i>City of Agra.</i>	July 1876.
<i>Lammershagen.</i>	January 1877.
<i>City of Agra.</i>	July 1877.
<i>Saraca.</i>	December 1877.
<i>Glamis.</i>	May 1878.
<i>Herschel.</i>	September 1878.
<i>Caroline.</i>	October 1878.
<i>Highflyer.</i>	December 1878.
<i>Scottish Hero.</i>	April 1879.
<i>Silver Eagle.</i>	May 1880.
<i>Duke of Athole.</i>	May 1881.
<i>Scottish Wizard.</i>	January 1882.
<i>Scottish Admiral.</i>	April 1882.
<i>Silver Eagle.</i>	June 1882.
<i>Western Monarch.</i>	August 1882.
<i>Shenir.</i>	January 1883.
<i>Earl Granville.</i>	April 1883.
<i>Maulesden.</i>	May 1883.
<i>Kapunda.</i>	July 1883.
<i>Earl Derby.</i>	January 1884.
<i>Duke of Westminster.</i>	June 1885.
<i>La France.</i>	June 1885.
<i>Gulf of Carpenteria.</i>	August 1885.

<i>Duke of Buccleuch.</i>	September 1885.
<i>Waroonga.</i>	September 1885.
<i>Duke of Sutherland.</i>	October 1885.
<i>Bulimba.</i>	November 1885.
<i>Duke of Argyll.</i>	December 1885.
<i>Duke of Buckingham.</i>	January 1886.
<i>Silhet.</i>	January 1886.
<i>Cloncurry.</i>	January 1886.
<i>New Guinea.</i>	February 1886.
<i>Rialto.</i>	March 1886.
<i>Waroonga.</i>	March 1886.
<i>Duke of Sutherland.</i>	March 1886.
<i>Roma.</i>	March 1886.
<i>Duke of Argyll.</i>	June 1886.
<i>Scottish Hero.</i>	August 1886.
<i>Cloncurry.</i>	August 1886.
<i>Scottish Knight.</i>	October 1886.
<i>Selkirkshire.</i>	December 1886.
<i>Duke of Sutherland.</i>	December 1886.
<i>Eastminster.</i>	March 1887.
<i>Bulimba.</i>	March 1887.
<i>Merkara.</i>	June 1887.
<i>Almora.</i>	August 1887.
<i>Duke of Devonshire.</i>	September 1887.
<i>Oriana.</i>	October 1887.
<i>Chyebassa.</i>	October 1887.
<i>Dorunda.</i>	October 1887.
<i>Duke of Buccleuch.</i>	December 1887.
<i>Eastminster.</i>	January 1888.
<i>Duke of Sutherland.</i>	January 1888.
<i>Duke of Argyll.</i>	February 1888.
<i>Chyebassa.</i>	February 1888.
<i>Merkara.</i>	April 1888.
<i>Famenothe.</i>	May 1888.
<i>Duke of Sutherland.</i>	June 1888.
<i>Merkara.</i>	September 1888.
<i>Famenothe.</i>	November 1888.
<i>Lindula.</i>	November 1888.
<i>Dorunda.</i>	February 1889.
<i>Endymion.</i>	August 1889.
<i>Scottish Lassie.</i>	November 1889.
<i>Culmore.</i>	March 1891.
<i>Taroba.</i>	October 1891.
<i>Merkara.</i>	November 1891.
<i>Jumna.</i>	December 1891.
<i>Roma.</i>	December 1891.
<i>Dorunda.</i>	January 1892.
<i>India.</i>	February 1892.
<i>Taroba.</i>	March 1892.
<i>Tara.</i>	March 1892.
<i>Jumna.</i>	April 1892.
<i>Jelunga.</i>	May 1892.
<i>Avoca.</i>	September 1892.
<i>Jumna.</i>	October 1892.
<i>Jelunga.</i>	November 1892.
<i>India.</i>	December 1892.
<i>Avoca.</i>	February 1893.
<i>Taroba.</i>	March 1893.
<i>Merkara.</i>	April 1893.
<i>Dorunda.</i>	June 1893.
<i>Jumna.</i>	July 1893.
<i>Tara.</i>	August 1893.

<i>Merkara.</i>	October 1893.
<i>Jumna.</i>	December 1893.
<i>Dorunda.</i>	January 1894.
<i>Merkara.</i>	March 1894.
<i>India.</i>	March 1894.
<i>Duke of Buckingham.</i>	May 1894.
<i>Jumna.</i>	June 1894.
<i>Dorunda.</i>	July 1894.
<i>Jelunga.</i>	September 1894.
<i>Duke of Devonshire.</i>	November 1894.
<i>Merkara.</i>	February 1895.
<i>India.</i>	June 1895.
<i>Duke of Westminster.</i>	July 1895.
<i>Merkara.</i>	July 1895.
<i>Rakaia.</i>	August 1895.
<i>Duke of Argyll.</i>	September 1895.
<i>India.</i>	November 1895.
<i>India.</i>	April 1896.
<i>Banffshire.</i>	October 1896.
<i>Merkara.</i>	December 1896.
<i>Jumna.</i>	January 1897.
<i>India.</i>	January 1897.
<i>Goorkha.</i>	January 1897.
<i>Duke of Buckingham.</i>	April 1897.
<i>Banffshire.</i>	May 1897.
<i>Fifeshire.</i>	July 1897.
<i>Duke of Argyll.</i>	August 1897.
<i>Duke of Sutherland.</i>	September 1897.
<i>Buteshire.</i>	November 1897.
<i>Duke of Westminster.</i>	December 1897.
<i>Duke of Argyll.</i>	January 1898.
<i>Duke of Devonshire.</i>	March 1898.
<i>Duke of Westminster.</i>	May 1898.
<i>Duke of Argyll.</i>	July 1898.
<i>Duke of Sutherland.</i>	August 1898.
<i>Duke of Fife.</i>	August 1898.
<i>Duke of Norfolk.</i>	September 1898.
<i>Duke of Buckingham.</i>	October 1898.
<i>Duke of Portland.</i>	December 1898.
<i>Duke of Fife.</i>	April 1899.
<i>Jumna.</i>	May 1899.
<i>Hopewell.</i>	August 1899.
<i>Jumna.</i>	November 1899.
<i>Duke of Norfolk.</i>	February 1901.

Appendix Four.

Immigration regulations of 1869.

Full paying passengers.

Each person proceeding by a ship sailing direct from Europe to Queensland, and who shall have paid the full cost of his passage, or the passage of members of his own family, including domestic servants of such family, shall be entitled to a non-transferable land order on account of each person whose passage shall have been so paid in full, to the extent of forty acres of land for each person or statute adult of twelve years and upwards, and twenty acres of land for each child between the ages of one and twelve years. Intermediate and steerage passengers are required to sail in ships approved by the Agent-General, and sailing under Instructions.

Free passages.

On application to the Agent-General in London, or Emigration Agent in Germany, free passages may be granted to female domestic servants and such other emigrants of the laboring class, approved by the Agent-General, as may from time to time be specially required in the Colony; provided that in the case of laborers and others, not female domestic servants, an undertaking is entered into, to repay to the Queensland Government, in one year after arrival in the Colony, £8; and in two years after arrival in the Colony, £8 sterling, being £16 in the whole, and on such undertaking being paid, a non-transferable land order for forty acres of land will be issued.

Assisted Passages.

On application to the Agent-General in London, or Emigration Agent in Germany, assisted passages may be granted to suitable persons, being mechanics or laborers, on payment of £4 each for persons under twelve years of age, and £8 each for persons twelve years of age and upwards; provided that applicants for assisted passages shall sign an undertaking to repay to the Government, within twelve months after arrival in the colony, the sum of £8 per statute adult; and on payment of such undertaking, a non-transferable land order for forty acres of land will be issued.

Remittance Immigrants.

Persons desirous of sending for their friends or relatives can do so under the new Act, by paying to the Immigration Agent in Brisbane or to the Clerks of Petty Sessions in the country, the following sums, viz: - For males under twelve years, £4; twelve years and under forty-five, £6, above forty-five, £8; for females under thirty-five years, £1; thirty-five and under forty-five £6; above forty-five, £8; and also entering into an undertaking to repay to the Government, within twelve months after the arrival in the Colony of such friend or relative, such sum as will, together with the amount as aforesaid, make up the sum of £16 per statute adult, the estimated cost of a passage to Queensland; and on payment of such undertaking, a non-transferable land order for forty acres of land will be issued to the nominator. Sums of £1 and upwards, intended for outfit, may be deposited at time of nomination.

Hire of mechanics, laborers, &c., in Europe.

Persons wishing to engage and secure the services of any mechanic, laborer, or servant in Europe and bring such mechanic, laborer, or servant to the colony, may apply to the Immigration Agent in Brisbane, or Agent-General in England, or the Agent for Emigration in Germany; and on certain conditions being complied with, the Agent-General in England, or Agent for Emigration in Germany, as the case may be, shall engage such mechanic, laborer, or servant, and sign agreement on behalf of the intending employer ... whereby such mechanic, laborer, or servant shall agree to serve the person so applying for the term of two (2) years from his arrival in the Colony, and such mechanic, laborer, or servant shall be subject to the conditions hereinbefore stated with reference to free or assisted Immigrants as the case may be. On arrival in the Colony, the employer will be required to indorse on the undertaking to be entered into by such mechanic, laborer or servant, an undertaking to pay the Government the sum named therein, in the event of default of payment on the part of such mechanic, &c., in the latter case, on payment being made by the employer he shall be entitled to the non-transferable land order for forty acres of land.

Non-transferable land orders for forty acres of land will be granted, under certain circumstances, to full-paying passengers arriving in the Colony from parts of the world other than the Australian Colonies and Great Britain.

All further information may be obtained at the office of the Immigration Agent, William Street, Brisbane.

Persons receiving land orders may select Country land in any part of the colony where land is open for selection.⁴⁵

Appendix Five.

Maryborough City Council specification, dated 1908, to be observed by persons applying for the appointment of Driver of Sanitary Vans.

Applications.

All applications must be in writing signed by the applicants stating age, occupation, whether married or single, and the present address.

Qualifications.

The persons appointed to do this work, must be sober steady men and must attend to their duties every day regularly. At present there is no work done on Sunday, but if it should be found necessary to work on Sunday, it must be done.

The persons appointed must be prepared to go with the present drivers and learn the rounds for each day in the week, and he will require to pay particular attention to the boundarys (sic) of the daily runs and not miss any of the dwellings. In the event of anything being forgotten, it must be attended to next day, or as soon as discovered.

The Deodorant which will be put in the pans at the Incinerator must be left in the receptacle provided for it in the closet and the empty pan taken round to the back of the closet and put in the proper place fair under the seat and the door closed again and fastened.

When the full pan is recovered from the closet, care must be taken to put the lid on to prevent the contents from being spilled in the yard, and in the event of a pan being so full that it cannot be recovered without spilling, a second pan is to be got and part of the liquid emptied into it, as the full pan would be likely to make a mess in the van.

The vans must be washed out regularly to prevent offensive smells. The vans are to be driven along the smoothest part of the road carefully, and not quicker than a slow trot.

Any damage done to the vans by careless driving or by vicious or badly trained horses, will be made good at the Driver's expense.

The Driver to provide and keep (in good condition and well groomed) a pair of well trained draught horses with suitable harness for the vans, the Council providing Vans, stables for the horses to run in if required at the driver's risk. The Driver to cart Sawdust in his turn with the others, the Council providing the carts and the Sawdust.

The Driver must see that the Van is washed out clean before it is put in the Shed; also that it is oiled regularly, and if any repairs are required, the Foreman of Works attention should be called to it, so that the necessary repairs can be done at the proper time.

It is to be distinctly understood by persons undertaking this work, that horse breaking is strictly prohibited in the Sanitary Vans. All horses used in this work must be staunch (sic) quite tractable and in fair condition and good strong harness suitable for the vans. If rough trace chains are used, they must be covered to prevent wearing away the shafts, and care must be taken to prevent horses from getting into the habit of staleing (sic) at the Store whilst the Vans are being unloaded thereby causing a nuisance.

It is to be distinctly understood that no dumping will be allowed. Every pan must be put in the van, and a clean pan put in the closet.⁴⁶

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