OVER EARTH AND OCEAN

THE ARCHERS OF TOLDERODDEN AND GRACEMERE

A Queensland pioneering saga spanning two centuries

Lorna McDonald
Over Earth and Ocean

Dr Lorna McDonald, OAM, is a Queensland historian and biographer whose "walking boots" have taken her to Britain and Norway, as well as to Australian archival collections, in researching Over Earth and Ocean, her thirteenth book. She is well known for her Rockhampton: A History of City and District (1981), Gladstone: City That Waited (1988), Cattle Country (1988), and Magic Ships: Life Story of Colin Archer (1997). She also collaborated with Liz Huf and Professor David Myers to produce Sin, Sweat and Sorrow (1993).
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THE ARCHERS
OF TOLDERODDEN
AND GRACEMERE

A NORSE–AUSTRALIAN SAGA
1819–1965

‘We are now so much scattered over the face of the earth and ocean, that [keeping in touch by letter] is a matter of no small difficulty …’

William Archer (Junior) to William Archer (Senior), 6 June 1845

Lorna McDonald

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Foreword

Australia since 1788 has always been a multicultural society, but it is easy to forget that our own ethnic mix sometimes reflects patterns of migration and cultural exchange going back hundreds of years into European history. Traces of the Viking impact may be found in Scotland to the present day, and as the old ballad of Sir Patrick Spens reminds us (‘To Noroway, to Noroway / To Noroway o’er the foam …’) Scottish royalty continued to intermarry with Scandinavian until the 17th century. Among fishermen, merchants, and scholars the contact lasted even longer, so that the Archer family of the early 19th century was by no means unusual in having roots in both Scotland and Norway.

What was less usual was that they should have transformed themselves into one of the leading pastoral dynasties in the Australian colonies, and that having eventually established themselves in the Rockhampton district of Queensland, they would endure at least to the end of the 20th century and continue to play a prominent and constructive role in their district’s history. Some of the family have been recognised in works such as the Australian Dictionary of Biography and publications in the Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, but until now there has been no sustained scholarly research into the Archer dynasty as a whole and their contribution to the social, economic, and environmental history of a significant part of eastern Australia. There has been no lack of source material, but rather the reverse; too much, too widely scattered. To discourage prospective historians further, the family was prolific in number but parsimonious in its use of Christian names. It requires a sure and practised touch to disentangle the Colins and Williams and Johns and to sketch the distinctive character of each in a way which brings enlightenment to a new reader.
Fortunately Rockhampton possesses such a historian in Lorna McDonald. She has built up a national reputation as one of the most deft and productive of Australia’s regional historians. Her knowledge of the Rockhampton region and the sources for its history has given her a marked advantage in attempting a multiple biography of the members of the Archer family, and she has consolidated this foundation by her research in Scotland and Norway — corroborating once more R.H. Tawney’s famous dictum that a historian requires stout boots as well as more documents. She has also shown a quality which mature and established historians ought always to cultivate, and that is a readiness to venture into new and possibly difficult fields. Family history is not an easy genre. If it is to avoid mere chronicling it has to trace the dynamics of the interplay of family character, as well as setting its subjects convincingly in their time and environment. It strikes me that in this book Lorna McDonald has managed the complex threads of her narrative skilfully. Also, while leaving the reader in no doubt that the Archers were on the whole good specimens of their class, she avoids the triumphalism of the ‘pioneer legend’.

Lorna McDonald has written a substantial and stylish history. Those interested in Queensland history, Australian history, and the history of immigrant cultures in general should find pleasure in reading it and in once again appreciating the high standards of historical craftsmanship which can be expected from scholars practising outside, though often in co-operation with, the universities.

Professor Geoffrey Bolton
5 October 1999
Preface

Some years ago I began a literary pilgrimage through the medium of manuscript journals, diaries and more than 5000 letters written by or to several generations of the Archer family between 1819 and 1965. I was introduced to these at the source of much of the correspondence, Gracemere homestead near Rockhampton, home to Archers since 1855 but also the cradle of European settlement in central coastal Queensland. My pilgrimage eventually took me to the original family home, Tollerodden (now spelt Tollerodden), in Larvik, Norway. This was the ‘magnetic pole’ for three generations of letter writers. Like the protagonist in Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, I took many years to achieve my goal — the story of this Norse–Australian saga with its interaction between Australia and Scandinavia. My delays, however, were neither symbolic nor allegorical. Nor were there any ‘Mr Badmans’ opposing my progress, simply other books to research and write.

Within the pages of early letters lie answers to many questions which are as pertinent today as they were in the nineteenth century — motivations for migration, attitudes to indigenous peoples, causes and effects of economic instability and, not least, how migrants cope with dislocation from their roots. My own great-grandfather on the eve of migrating with his wife and children from England to Australia in 1843 wrote to his brother who had already settled in North America: ‘My motives for migrating are purely for the welfare of my children … The condition of this country is such that the prospects for young men are gloomy … I admit that Australia is not a commercial country like this; it is … eminently a pastoral country. If there is not a probability of becoming rich by
commerce, there is at least a moral certainty of obtaining a competence by industry and good management."

His notion of an independent life in Australia proved to be more realistic than that of William Archer who migrated with his family from Scotland to Norway in 1825. The bankruptcy of his father's timber import business following the Napoleonic Wars and subsequent economic recession seemed to provide a valid reason, but there is evidence in William's Scandinavian Journal of 1819 that his basic motivation was romantic rather than economic. Within a decade his nine sons began what was to be a twenty-year migration to Australia in order to save their father from a second bankruptcy. In the process they each had a role to play in pastoral settlement and the ultimate displacement of Aboriginal people from their traditional lands. In the event, their attitude was enlightened and humane compared with the majority of their fellow squatters.

Charles Archer and his brother William became the first Europeans in the Fitzroy River Valley in 1853. It was Charles who chose the site of the future Gracemere homestead on a peninsula lapped by the waters of a small lake because it was a mini-version of Tolderodden's peninsula jutting into Larvik Fjord. The building of the homestead from ironbark slabs in 1858 was the culmination of almost twenty years of rough pioneering life for the Archer brothers as they moved their flocks and herds just ahead of the ever moving northern frontiers of settlement.

David, the original pastoral pioneer in this family, had come to an understanding with the local Aborigines when he squatted in the upper Brisbane Valley in 1841. Charles, newly arrived there in 1843, revealed how unusual such a policy was:

... it is the invariable practice among squatters in every part of the Colony — and certainly in this — to hunt the Blacks from the run and show them as little mercy as native dogs. Davie pursued quite another system on his arrival here ... [he] considers the Black as the hereditary owner of the soil and that it is an act of injustice to drive him from his hunting grounds ...

Their letters show that the Archers continued this policy when they settled at Gracemere in 1855. But despite the best of intentions, Aboriginal culture and lifestyle were threatened when the town of Rockhampton came into existence three years later. In what was to become Central Queensland, Aborigines of the Darumbal language group occupied an
area which included the Fitzroy River Valley and north-east beyond Shoalwater Bay. Many different clans belonged to this language group. At Gracemere the Warrabura clan continued to make their summer and winter camps near the ‘mere’ for at least twenty years after settlement.

I have been rewarded richly in a human sense for my efforts in ‘mining’ the Archer letters for treasures hidden upwards of 170 years. There were times when I mourned with the bereaved, others when I rejoiced or laughed aloud with these long dead men and women. In imagination I have sailed on Larvik Fjord a hundred years ago with Mary Archer in Bolgen, or wept with the boy Tom who left home and parents in 1837, aged fourteen, to migrate to New South Wales. Who could fail to be moved by his homesick cry to his eldest sister eight years later: ‘... had I known that I should never visit you again until I had made Australia home for so many years, I think I should have broke my heart ...’³

Tom simply expressed what tens of thousands of migrants felt then and continue to feel today despite dramatic improvements in communication.

Australia is now identified as a multi-cultural or cosmopolitan nation with people from Asian and other non-Caucasian races, but its migrant origins prior to the Second World War were predominantly Anglo-Celtic. The Archers with Scottish blood in their veins, but educated in Norway, brought with them a strong attachment to Scandinavian culture, especially the myths and legends. Central Queensland is sprinkled with geographical names such as Mount Sleipner, Berserker Range, File-field (Byfield), Kroombit, Callide and Eidsvold. Others have not survived or become Anglicised in the manner of Byfield. Four of the original migrants were Norwegian born, as was second generation Alister Archer who had to become a naturalised British subject in order to enlist in the Australian Light Horse in the First World War. The strong bonds between family members ‘scattered over earth and ocean’ (as Willie described them in 1845) provide a continuing theme in the letters. We hear much today about the nuclear family and its problems, but it seems the Archers survived separation and isolation through the medium of letters.

Being a historian who firmly believes in ‘a good pair of walking boots’ in order to absorb environmental atmosphere, mine carried me in the 1990s to Perth in Scotland and Larvik in Norway, and then back again to Queensland. This circuitous route followed first by the migrants in sailing
ships took them many months. I completed mine each way in about 25 hours. Among the many privileges bestowed upon me was an 'extra-terrestrial' one — to fulfil on young Tom Archer's behalf his dream away back in 1843:

We were talking about the aerial machines of which the papers are full, which will enable us to pay you a visit and spend Christmas with you [in Norway] and return in the course of a month — and all for 20 or 30 pounds ...⁴

When past generations are allowed to 'speak' for themselves, as they are through letters, we catch history alive. Because these letters (all in English) were so precious to the recipients, they were preserved. One of Tom's sons edited bundles of letters in the 1930s, chiefly Australia to Norway, 1833–55. I discovered several thousand more through my 'mining' of Australian and overseas archives. I am now able to share some of these treasures in Over Earth and Ocean. My literary pilgrimage has reached its goal.
Acknowledgments

The narration of the Archer saga has been made possible by the preservation of documents, photographs and art work conserved in private and institutional collections. In Australia the Mitchell Library (State Library of NSW) has the most extensive holdings, but relevant papers are also lodged in John Oxley Library (State Library of Queensland), the Central Queensland University Library and the Rockhampton and District Historical Society, both in Rockhampton. My research in 1993 also took me to the British Library (London), the National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh) and the Sandeman Library in Perth, Scotland. Without these sources this book could not have been written.

Members of the Archer family in Europe and Australia have provided all the illustrations and original art depictions in Over Earth and Ocean, as well as sharing their private collections with me. In Australia I greatly value the continuing friendship and assistance provided by the Gracemere Archers: Mrs Alison Forster, Mr R.C.M. (Cedric) and Mrs Cath Archer and Mr A.J. (Jim) Archer, also Mrs Claire Williams (nee Archer). My research in the United Kingdom in 1993 was enhanced by the personal memories of Mrs Karen Anderson, Dr Simon Archer and Sir Anthony Parsons, all now deceased. During a second visit in 1998 I was hospitably received and assisted by Mrs Anne Anderson, Mrs Julie St Quintin, Mr Stephen Archer and Mr Colin Archer. Please accept my deepest thanks. These are all great-grandchildren of naval architect Colin Archer, whose life story is told in my 1997 publication, Magic Ships.

Descendants of the Archer family in Norway whose friendly and generous support is greatly appreciated include the late Mr Harry Archer, Mrs Kari Archer, Mr Ronald and Mrs Karin Archer for their warm
hospitality, Mrs Karen Saether (nee Archer), Miss Else Archer, Mr Hans Robert Archer, Mr Per Jørgensen and his sister, Mrs Sidsel Øien. To my Danish colleague, Dr Birgitte Possing, I also extend warmest thanks. My greatest debt of gratitude goes to Mr James Ronald Archer who not only shared his extensive family archives with me in 1998, including the history of Tolderodden, but also checked the Norwegian chapters of this book. Most importantly, he corrected my mis-interpretation of Norwegian spelling. Any remaining mistakes are mine. Because the form of spelling was changed in the late 19th century, the old form used in quotations from the early letters may be unintelligible to modern Norwegians. In most instances the English interpretation is given. The spelling of Aboriginal words follows that used in the Archer family letters.

I must express also my sincere thanks to the Arts Division of the Queensland Government which made my overseas research possible in 1993, and to the Regional Arts Development Fund, Arts Queensland, for further financial assistance in 1997.

Finally, to my family, colleagues and friends who have encouraged me throughout the long gestation period of this work, please accept my warmest thank-offering.

Lorna McDonald,
Rockhampton, 1999
**Guide to the Archer Generations**

**FIRST GENERATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECOND GENERATION</th>
<th>THIRD GENERATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catherine (Kate): 1811–1865. Married in 1828, Simon Jørgensen: 1796–1836.</td>
<td>Julia (Julia); Amelia (Malla); Marianne (Mari); Catherine (Katen); Simon b 1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John (Jack): 1814–1857. First wife 1845 Eliza Ann Cooke Second wife 1850 (Miss) Miller; Third wife 1856 Maria Blest.</td>
<td>Julia Eliza (Eliza); William (Willie Minor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David (Davie): 1816–1900. Married in 1855, Susan Stubbs: 1830–1902.</td>
<td>Julia (Sissie); Robert (Bob, married Alice (Daisy), daughter Joan b 1890); William David (Dadie); John (Jack); Charles (Charlie); Susan (Toorie); Colin; James (Jim); Edward (Ted); Alexander (died in childhood).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archibald (Archie): 1820–1902.</td>
<td>William (Young Willie, married 1883 Frances, son Tomarcher); Margaret (Maggie); Julia (Dooie); Charles (Cha); James (Jim); George Lindsay; Annie; Grace; Francis (Frank Fa).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas (Tom): 1823–1905. Married in 1853, Grace Lindsay Morison: 1832–1911.</td>
<td>Julia Marie; Frederik William (Willy); Reidar; Charles Archer Arentz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary (Mary Man): 1826–1908.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin: 1832–1921. Married in 1868, Sofie Karen Wiborg: 1838–1908.</td>
<td>Julia (Lullul); Justus; Mary (Tulla); Colin (Colle); William (Illam).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James (Jamie): 1836–1919. Married in 1885, Louisa Stewart MacKenzie.</td>
<td>Ronald; Erling; Alister (1890–1965); Kathleen; Cedric; Arthur; Rolf.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Southern Norway and Sweden where William Archer first journeyed in 1819
Colony of New South Wales in 1840s and 50s showing Archer pioneer treks with their stock north to the new settlement they founded at Gracemere.
Charles Archer's map of his second expedition to the Fitzroy – July/August 1853 – as sketched on the back of a letter from Colin to David, 27 August 1853.
The Squatting Districts between Brisbane and Gracemere — the official map issued on the opening of Port Curtis and Leichhardt squatting districts, 10 January, 1854, based on Charles Archer's 1853 map
PART I
Norway: A Chequered Dream 1819–1861
When William Archer boarded the sailing craft *Jay* in March 1819, he began not only an actual voyage from Scotland across the North Sea to Norway, but also one which was to scatter his seed across the face of earth and ocean. One of his sons would later describe life in the Australian bush as 'like a chequered dream'. He might also have been speaking for his father and for generations of his forebears.

The dream began — who knows when? — perhaps with Guillaume l'Archer, one of William the Conqueror's henchmen in his invasion of England in 1066. Perhaps it began even earlier with the Normans' Viking ancestors. Dream and substance eventually came together when Andrew Archer — believed to have been one of Cromwell's 'Ironsides' from Warwickshire who deserted in disgust with his leader's excesses — married Elspeth Bennet. Through their son John, born in Perth, Scotland, in 1654, they founded the family whose lives provide a saga of human endeavour from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.

At the time of William Archer's birth on 16 November 1786, Perth on the River Tay was a prosperous town. William was the eldest living child of Charles Archer, Shipmaster, and his wife Catherine Robertson. He and his five brothers and one sister grew up in a comfortable home situated in Spey Gardens and bounded on the north by Canal Street. Set in spacious grounds, it was laid out with garden walks and orchard, all surrounded by a high wall with espaliered fruit trees. The house itself consisted of three storeys and an attic, also a ground floor comprising kitchen, servants'
quarters, scullery and three cellars. The first floor comprised a large dining room, a drawing room and a small sitting room. There were six bedrooms upstairs, two with ‘dressing closets’.

Charles Archer’s seven children, nurtured in this sequestered environment and able to run free within the high garden walls, had a privileged upbringing and education. William entered his father’s business office at about the age of sixteen. In later life and in greatly changed circumstances, he considered a large home and good education essential for the well-being of his own sons and daughters. As children they heard many stories about life at Spey Gardens.

At the time of William’s birth in 1786 the omens appeared favourable. Scotland, despite losing much of its independence by its union with England earlier that century, gained commercially and economically. The shadow of the French Revolution had not yet fallen over Europe, nor the disruptive Napoleonic Wars. That these events would have disastrous consequences for Charles Archer and his family, mercifully remained hidden. The Shipmaster of earlier years took advantage of Britain’s great phase of naval ship-building to establish the firm of Charles Archer & Son, timber importers. That it initially prospered is shown in the family’s comfortable lifestyle. Then, with the French Revolution came internal unrest in Scotland. Charles Archer as Captain of a Volunteer Corps of ‘gentlemen militia’, dressed in gold-laced blue and white uniforms. On one occasion he was called to quell a riot at Buchan’s farm near Perth. The rebels ran away on sighting these gaudy foot-soldiers who, on return to Perth, were pelted with stones by an angry mob of ‘democrats’. These were no doubt responsible for planting a ‘tree of liberty’ in the town in 1792.

Then came the Napoleonic Wars and the threat of invasion. This threat was extreme in 1803 when the Perth Glovers Incorporation volunteered personal service to His Majesty ‘in case of invasion or the actual appearance of the enemy on the coast’. Archers had been members of this institution since 1684 so it is almost certain that Charles Archer, with or without gaudy uniform, was also involved in Perth’s efforts to ensure that Napoleon did not land on its shores.

Nelson’s victory at Trafalgar in 1805 was a great event for the British people, less so for the economy which was plunged into recession. Now
Unlucky Star

that the nation’s shores were safe from the threat of invasion, naval ship-building declined dramatically. The following decade was a difficult one for Charles Archer & Son, but with the end of the French Wars in 1815 they hoped to resume their pre-war timber imports from Sweden and Norway. Peace in Europe, however, did not bring peace to Scandinavia. The firm had to wait more than three years until Carl Johan was crowned King of Norway as well as Sweden in 1818, before planning to resume trade.4

The effect of the Napoleonic Wars on Norway, 1807-15, had far reaching political and economic consequences, including Charles Archer & Son across the North Sea. The dual monarchy between Norway and Denmark ended in 1807 as a result of Denmark's support for Napoleon against the British. This was disastrous for Norway as the British blockade of her coasts meant literal starvation for many during a time of failed local crops, no food imports and no timber exports. In addition, Norway and Sweden were at war in 1808-09. After an alignment of European powers, Sweden forced Denmark to cede Norway to its rule in January 1814. While the Norwegians were grateful for peace, they bitterly resented Swedish rule and went ahead to elect a constituent assembly which drew up an independent constitution at Eidsvold (now Eidsvoll) which was accepted by the Assembly on 17 May 1814. After a few short weeks with their own King Christian Frederick, they were forced by the European powers to cede to Sweden, a union ratified in 1815. But Norway retained its constitution, the most democratic in Europe.5 This important event in Norway's history was to impress William Archer's sons during history lessons at Laurvig Grammar School from 1828. Twenty years later they named one of their Queensland pastoral properties 'Eidsvold' as a tribute to Norway's independent spirit.

When peace returned to Scandinavia, trading with Britain resumed. Charles Archer grasped the opportunity to restore flagging financial returns. He decided to send William, 33, to Sweden and Norway in order to purchase cheap lumber as well as further his eldest son's business experience. As his father's senior partner, William boarded the Jay in a spirit of optimism. Through the medium of his Scandinavian Journal, it is obvious that initially he enjoyed both the adventure and the importance of being the firm's ambassador. He had married Julia Walker in 1810 and
already had five ‘bairns’, so he increasingly suffered from home-sickness and occasionally from doubts about his own business decisions. He spent several weeks in Sweden and two and a half months in Norway, recording his day to day movements, social occasions, business dealings, even his own emotions. He reveals himself on the one hand as a typical early nineteenth century travel writer, and on the other as a keen observer of human nature, not without a sense of humour.

Archer’s journeying through southern Sweden and Norway in 1819 so soon after the official union of the two countries certainly gave an air of adventure to his travels. His comments on recent history and the effects of the British blockade provide an eye-witness account of a society in transition. Evidence of continuing unease was confirmed by a Swedish army of 70,000 men. William thought this far too large for such a small country and added the perceptive comment that perhaps ‘the new King thinks it as well to have something else to trust than the affection of his people’.

William set out by coach from Gothenburg (now Göteborg) to Christiania (now Oslo), combining business and sight seeing. After inspecting some sawmills he took an evening ride ‘through the ruins of the Swedish encampment of 6000 men, who bombarded the fortress in 1814’. Only five years since the event and the fortress was already in ruins. After dinner he was taken to Fredricksten where he ‘stood upon the spot where Charles 12th fell upwards of a hundred years ago’. As an avid reader, William would have been aware that Charles was the Swede’s ‘hero king’ who had met his death at the border fortress in 1718 on the second of his attempts to conquer Norway.

It was in Sweden that William brought out the first of his letters of introduction to influential people and on 18 March dined with the British Consul. To his modest surprise he was received ‘in a most flattering manner’. Also dining with them was a very genteel young Swedish Major who disgraced himself through over-indulgence. In William’s words, ‘the wine being too strong for his stomach, he injured the Consul’s carpet’. But there were more serious sights for his comment. Post-war economic depression was evident in the many vessels belonging to bankrupt estates which he saw lying at Masthuggat. He commented on the bankrupt merchants allowed by Swedish law to remain in their houses ‘elegantly
fitted up with mirrors, china vases and other eastern ornaments, and everything in the greatest style’. Shades of his own future. He saw his first purchase of timber loaded on 23 March and, with no thought of impending disaster, he bought a carriage complete with lamps. More realistically in preparation for his journey over the border to Norway he obtained a map and ‘bespoke’ several other items. At a farewell dinner that night he was treated to a ‘bombe’:

... a large punchbowl filled with claret mixed with citrons and sugar; it is a great favourite here, but in my opinion it destroys all the taste of the claret and brings it near as possible to my Wife’s Blueberry Wine!

It was about this time that a seed thought lodged in William’s mind. He observed that the monopoly of the English merchant, Dickson, as an importer was now at an end, and he wondered if a trade in timber or some other commodity could be established between Scandinavia and Scotland. After studying his map he thought that Porsgrund (now Porsgrunn) in Norway might be a suitable port and that ‘perhaps a few years trade might be got out of it before it becomes conspicuous’. Keeping his thoughts to himself, he called on Dickson and gave him a draft for a little more than 131 English pounds for timber purchased. His conscience clear, he then went to the theatre where he ‘nearly perished with the cold’, the Captain of the Jay having sailed without restoring William’s ‘dreadnought’ to him. He was therefore forced to purchase a wolf-skin coat, the cheapest fur available. Finally, before leaving Göteborg, he entertained Dickson and Consul Wise and two Swedish gentlemen in his lodgings. ‘This has brought me a swinging bill’, he complained. His conscience was already troubling him concerning expenditure, given the financial troubles of the firm.

What happened to the carriage he bought is not clear, but he left Göteborg riding on the outside of the mail coach, the first night stage being most disagreeable. He was compensated to an extent the following day by the ‘romantic scenery’ in which the old crumbling fort of Bohus added atmosphere. Carrying his own rations in a mahogany chest, he refreshed himself with a bottle of porter and ‘a bit of Scotch cheese’. As a timber merchant he was particularly interested in the forests, chiefly spruce with a few birch trees. When rain set in he was thankful for his wolf-skin coat which kept him as warm and dry as if he had been inside the coach.
On the third day his interest in ceremonial stones 'something like the druids temples in Scotland' was spoiled by the discovery that his mahogany chest had been broken into. He suspected the coach driver or the hostler of stealing his pocket-book full of Danish notes. 'These circumstances have completely soured me and I wish I were well home', he confided to his Journal. Although he had letters of introduction to Count Rosenkratz, the greatest merchant in Sweden, he chose not to dally but cross the Norwegian border to inspect some of the thirty mills and the country's largest iron foundry at Moss. There he met successful merchants named Christie whose grandfather had migrated from Scotland many years earlier. This was another fact for William to store in his mind. On his journey from Moss to Oslo, he received a grisly reminder of contemporary brutality — the head of a criminal on one post and his body on another — 'a very revolting sight'.

In Oslo on Sunday he breakfasted with the English Consul and then attended an unimpressive service in the Cathedral where a noisy organ played the principal part. By contrast the small church at the Castle was well filled with fashionable people, including many ladies. On a walk around Oslo he was surprised by the simplicity of the architecture, even in public buildings. Even the royal palace was but one storey, as were most houses. Wherever he went he made comparisons with Scotland. Oslo was then a town of about 10,000, occupying the same area as Perth.

William then began his journey southwards towards Skeen, stopping first at Dram (now Drammen) to purchase a small cargo of timber. He was delayed there waiting for mail from home, and on a mid-week public holiday walked into the country to spend the morning in solitude among the rocky crags. The afternoon was spent in reading the poetry of William Cowper whose 'quiet delights' in the countryside matched William's own. It was in Dram that he first experienced Norwegian domestic life. This impressed him as being the most rational foreign party he had seen. The gentlemen smoked their pipes and conversed while the ladies plied their needles. A supper of sandwiches, sweetmeats and 'a few glasses of Bishop' brought the social evening to a close. This quiet family party with some resemblance to a private gathering in Perth left William with an acute attack of homesickness. The month since he left home, he mused, seemed more like six.
A few days later he received a letter from wife JuHa which gave him 'much concern'. A sudden crisis had arisen soon after his departure which drastically threatened the firm's survival. William refers to this indirectly in his Journal, but other sources identify it as a heavy duty imposed by the British on imports of Scandinavian timber in order to protect the Canadian lumber industry. This caused panic back home, with brother Sandy advising William to return immediately. William rationalised, however, that by continuing his buying he would be doing something to defray the heavy expenses he had already incurred. Only by personal haggling could he obtain the best prices. Even so, he admitted that his business dealings 'may now put my friends in great inconvenience in raising money to pay duty for, and have no profit or perhaps a loss'.

Having made his decision, William climbed the highest hill overlooking Dram and there found a rough circular stone cairn. He cut a branch of juniper, pared it smooth, carved his initials and the date upon it, and placed it under the stone:

WA P XII APRIL
MDCCCXIX.

He imagined some of his friends finding it in 'the long hereafter. I hope they will take it out in better spirits than it was put in'.

A day on which he did not meet one person who could speak a single word of English deepened his gloom. He could not even bear to write a description of a grand dinner to which he had been invited, for the benefit of his family. Instead he recorded, '... the thought of the straits you may be at this moment put to at home have damped me very much, and I am afraid that my excursion will not make them any less'.

His spirits lifted the following day when he drove out with Mr Omsted to inspect his mills on the Dram River. The wild and beautiful scenery provided balm for his troubled mind, while his interest in watching Omsted's employees floating timber and battens down the Dram and its tributaries distracted his thoughts. On the following Sunday he described the dancing and music that accompanied celebrations of a Christian confirmation ceremony in a house he passed. Raised in Calvinist Scotland himself, his comment was predictable — 'so much for a Norwegian Sunday'. For his family's interest he recorded his breakfast: rye bread, butter,
cold veal and a glass of brandy. Early morning coffee was served, but not for breakfast.

William's romantic nature was stimulated once more by the fine views around Tønsberg which he identified as 'the seat of Count Wedel, Viceroy of Norway'. Count Wedel of Jarlsberg was a very important player in contemporary history. He had been leader of the minority group, mainly merchants, who in the Constitutional Assembly argued that peace with Great Britain was essential for the country. At the time of William's visit he was the owner of a great estate and also a county governor. Tønsberg was a place of great antiquity which appealed to William's sense of the romantic. He resolved that when he returned home he would read Mary Wollstonecraft's description of it. And so his spirits fluctuated, rising rapidly on viewing such scenery, plummeting at any hint of adversity. This was a characteristic which he would pass on to his as yet unborn son, Thomas.

Preparing to leave Tønsberg for Larvik, William again vented his ironic humour. The driver of his carriage, presumably that purchased in Sweden, was not the only butt of his sarcasm:

Here my temper sweetened by paying eleven dollars or 5 shillings sterling for my lodging and what Jamie McEwan would call a dish of deel head — and on the person who was to drive me. He refused to do it unless I hired a horse for my trunk as it was too heavy. I indulged myself by abusing him in a mongrel of Swedish, Norsk, English and Scottish, and after about half an hour and when I had put my foot near his seat of honour, he yoked and drove like a lamb; had I submitted it would have cost me two horses all the rest of my journey.

William's determination to continue his Norwegian journey rather than return to Scotland as his brother had advised was to provide the key to his own future and that of his family. He arrived in Larvik (then spelt Laurvig) late in the afternoon of 20 April. His first impressions were significant:

I arrived here about 6 o'clock, and after taking coffee went out to see the town; the romantic appearance struck me on my approach. This is the most beautiful piece of Norwegian scenery that I have seen ... A beautiful bay surrounded with rocks covered with trees, a beach of fine sand ... the town at the bottom of the bay forming a half moon facing the sun at midday, and several rivers falling in thro' or near the town thro' rocks, trees and steep banks of earth; the houses and rocks mixed and tumbled together with gardens of very fine soil, which the inhabitants, male and female, were busy in, formed a
most interesting picture ... On one side you have the town, the bay and vessels of 300 and 400 tons lying within a cable length of the shore, besides a number of vessels and boats at two wooden piers at different parts of the town. On the other side is a lake which goes up into the interior 5 or 6 miles, where it is not bounded but lost among the rocks that run into it in all directions ... The town is more famed for its iron than for a timber port. I have ordered a horse for tomorrow for 6 o'clock and expect to get to Porsgrund by 11, where, and at Skeen, about 3 miles further, I shall spend the day ...

The impression made upon William by Larvik's 'romantic appearance' was to act like a siren song on his decision six years later to return there with his entire household. He admitted on that first visit that the town's iron foundry was its main industry, but that was no longer a consideration in 1825. His tendency to rationalise personal decisions usually favoured wants rather than needs. But on this initial visit he did not linger in Larvik but continued to Porsgrund and Skeen 'where Mr Niels Aal lives to whom I had a letter. He told me that it was him who supplied us with a cargo so many years ago ...' He was disappointed in the quality of the timber there, but fascinated by 'the fantastic dress of the peasantry'.

He continued on horseback from Porsgrund to Brevik, 'a hilly ride of about 7 miles'. There he hired a boat for four dollars and sailed 24 miles to Øst Risør, breakfasting on his 'sea-stock' of rusks, Scotch butter, Dutch cheese and a glass of port wine. Having come to terms with conscience, he ordered a cargo of timber to be landed in Perth or Newburgh. And as usual, having completed business he accepted an invitation to dine out — on this occasion with the Surveyor of Customs where William 'got stupefied with smoking and drinking brandy and punch'. But not so stupid as to be incapable of judging timber quality. The vendor complained, he recorded, 'of my being so particular [about price], and I daresay Mr Archer will think I have not been particular enough'.

The over-clearing of Norwegian forests during the late 1700s to 1805 as a result of Britain's frenzied naval ship-building meant that William had great difficulty in finding good quality timber. At Øst Risør William met Mr Schluter whose father had also been a supplier. Schluter's uncle had visited the Archers at Spey Gardens. As a result of this personal connection, William went sailing with Schluter and his daughter and niece. He described this as 'most pleasant' and later enjoyed pipes and coffee made by the daughter, 'a very beautiful girl'. Talk of the family back home
brought on the usual bout of home-sickness. He went for a walk on the rocky hills and cut juniper sticks and boxer ‘for the bairns’.

While sailing back from Øst Risør, William noted the wreck of a frigate which had been attacked by the British in 1812 during the blockade. In Oslo there was a more personal link with a wartime incident — the ‘Seagull sloop of war’ which had been commandeered from his Scottish neighbour Cathcart in 1808, but had since been sold to a Norwegian merchant. William also visited the island where English prisoners of war had been confined — high among the rocks. War was no longer words in a history book to the observant Scotsman.

William, travelling by coastal shipping from Arendal, was back in Oslo by 3 May. On the voyage he observed what appeared to be a thriving lobster trade with London. Another seed thought lodged in his fertile mind. Awaiting letters from home at Oslo, he had plenty of time to comment on such trivialities as his landlady’s appearance — the ugliest woman he had ever seen. Perhaps he still carried the image of Schluter’s beautiful daughter. ‘This is a holiday’ he recorded on Friday 7 May, ‘and I as usual visit the Church, which was pretty full of the common people but not a gentleman or lady’. While they were not at church, some of these showered invitations upon the visitor. He had a weekend of sailing with a party of ladies and gentlemen who, returning by moonlight, added to the romantic atmosphere by their singing. On Monday he spent a pleasant evening with ‘music for two clarinets and a French horn admirably played by some of the party’. When his father’s letter eventually arrived it threw further light on the causes of panic in the family firm. Charles Archer, alarmed by the escalation of prices in the Norwegian trade, had ordered 2000 super feet of Canadian timber. William now realised that his own purchases, subject to a heavy tax, would be an embarrassment. Even so, it was too late to cancel orders already given to Isaacson of Oslo.

Isaacson, not unlike William himself, mixed business with pleasure. This was at first very agreeable to the Scotsman, but being delayed in town for almost four weeks proved ‘most vexatious’. During this time William twice visited Isaacson’s country estate. He found this ‘superior to any nobleman’s in Scotland for scenery, an elegant house and fine pleasure grounds’. The dining table was larger than the floor of William’s own dining room and every day seated 42 people comprising family, clerks and visitors. ‘This
man must live at great expense’, understated William, for he employed almost 100 in his timber yard. Despite this hospitality, William complained that the timber was badly squared.

In the end, William was so vexed by the manner of Isaacson’s business dealings that he arranged his passage home in the brig Pilot. His parting with the Norwegian began badly. This was on account of ‘some language and threats he had used to me, [so] I declined giving him my hand. I thought this would have put him mad’. But when William explained the cause of his anger, Isaacson admitted he was in the wrong. When William again offered to shake hands, he found himself embraced and kissed — to his ‘no little surprise’. And so with this non-Scottish hug as resolution, William arranged for the sale of his carriage and wolf-skin coat and then boarded the Pilot for his passage home.8

William’s Journal provides insights to his character which are later confirmed by his letters: sensitivity to beauty and the romantic in nature; spirits which swung from contentment to depression; a tendency to rationalise matters of conscience; a Micawber-like attitude to business; a quick temper; a sense of humour; a keen observer of human nature; a love of literature and an interest in history; and a deep affection for family. Some of these attributes, both positive and negative, were later shared among his children as adults.

His return to Perth early in June 1819 was bitter-sweet, with financial woes taking the edge from the joy of re-union with Julia and the bairns. As well as the shock impost of heavy duty on the Norwegian timber at the worst possible time, the firm’s yard was greatly over-stocked following the arrival of William’s orders and his father’s Canadian lumber. This was at a time when drastic changes were taking place in ship building, with iron being used as well as timber, and steam beginning to supplement sail. The family firm also shared, naturally enough, in the general post-war economic depression. This was exacerbated in Scotland by the Highland clearances in which tens of thousands migrated to Canada, Australia and New Zealand in the first half of the nineteenth century. Scottish men and women were evicted in favour of sheep, just as Australian Aborigines were in the same period.

The end came for Charles Archer & Son at noon on Saturday 10 January 1824 when their ‘sequestered estate’ was sold by auction at the George
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In addition to the timber-yard and business office, the sale included the large house in Spey Gardens where the Archer family had grown up. In addition to William, several of his brothers also lost their livelihood. David aged 24 at the time of the sale was the youngest. John and Alexander (Sandy) eventually established businesses in England, but in old age lived near London in such poverty that they became pensioners of William’s sons.

The unsettled lives of William and Julia after the collapse of the firm are reflected in the birth places of three more children born in Scotland after their father’s return from Norway. Archibald, named for Julia’s brother, Colonel Archibald Walker, was born at his parents’ Newburgh home in March 1820. By the time of Thomas’s birth in 1823 the family had moved to Glasgow, the first step in the rambling life which was to be this son’s lot. Tom’s name, like that of his four older brothers and their eldest sister, Catherine, honoured Archer or Walker relatives. When a second daughter was born in Glasgow in 1824, she was given her mother’s name, Julia. This traditional handing down of names had begun with Catherine (Kate), Charles, John (Jack), David and William (Willie), the ‘bairns’ for whom their father cut juniper sticks in Øst Risør. Nor was the custom abandoned for the five children to be born in Larvik.

Not much is known about the Scottish early childhood of the older children, but on one occasion in Perth when young David was walking with his uncle, Archibald Walker, and several other gentlemen he asked if they knew what was for dinner. Apparently not, so David announced that it was to be ‘a roast duke’. His progress in spelling had not yet enabled him to distinguish between ducks, drakes and dukes.

William and Julia lived at Newburgh on the Firth of Tay, about 10 miles from Perth, from about 1814 to 1823. When the firm became bankrupt and the decision was eventually made to migrate to Norway, it seems that they were far from destitute. It is significant that the move to Glasgow was made before the sale of the business and estate. William certainly had sufficient funds to purchase the schooner, Pomona, at Greenoch. This enabled him to take his family and their personal and household goods on board in September 1825. They left behind the twelve year old Charles who was at school in Glasgow. While his knowledge of semantics was superior to that of his younger brother, his sensibilities were still those of
a child. He wrote to his Grandmother Walker in Perth with news of the family’s departure. They had all got safely on board with their luggage ‘except a few bottles of milk which a drunk man broke while trying to get on the cart’. Feeling abandoned and more than a little sorry for himself, he complained that his mother had forgotten ‘to lay out some nightcaps’, so he asked Grandmother to supply them ‘the sooner the better’ as he had a cold. This was an inauspicious start in life for the man who was to become a noted pastoralist-explorer in Australia.

The adventure began for young Charles’ siblings as the graceful Pomona sailed from Glasgow through the Clyde Canal and Firth of Forth and across the North Sea to Norway. Tom, then in his third year, threw his shoes overboard ‘so that they might sail back to Scotland’. This symbolic action proved to be as atypical of his future roving life as Charles’ concern over nightcaps was to the future adventurer. The rest of the family, eager to see the beautiful locality described by William, were not disappointed. As the Pomona came to her mooring, he pointed out the various landmarks which included the old Customs House and its splendid location on a small peninsula. Before long the family were comfortably settled in a rented house at Langestrand, across the harbour from the Customs House.

Twelve months later, in the autumn of 1826, William returned to Scotland on a business trip, but was so pressed for time that he was unable to visit Perth relatives. Julia’s unmarried sister, Ann Walker, was disappointed as she had expected to get all the family news. But William had to get Pomona back to Larvik before the harbour froze. No ship could enter or depart between December and March in most years. Nor could letters be sent or received. With only a few hours of daylight, the long winter evenings were surely a trial to Julia with a houseful of children ranging in age from fifteen year old Catherine (Kate) down to baby Mary born at Langestrand in that year — the first of the Norwegian children. While the older children might have been kept from wearying by the antics of two year old Julia, already taking an interest in dress, much of the mother’s time was occupied by the new baby. Mary would later become an enigma within this close-knit family.

William found the perfect home about eighteen months after arriving in Larvik. The seventeenth century building across the harbour from Langestrand was for sale. It had been built as Customs House and dwelling,
its name ‘Tolderodden’ (now Tollerodden). It had large grounds and the sea on three sides. It was the ideal house for a large family. Its splendid location and romantic history appealed so strongly to William that he sold Pomona in order to buy both the house and its mortgage. This appears to have been William’s only recorded astute business deal. He signed the purchase agreement on 27 September and received the title deeds on 15 October 1827. Before long he emulated those local citizens he had admired in 1819 as they worked in their gardens among the tumbled rocks by landscaping Tolderodden’s grounds down to the water’s edge.

Larvik provided a wonderful environment for the Archer children, rapidly becoming as fluent in Norwegian as English. In the brief daylight hours of winter they went skating, snow-shoeing or tobogganing. But it was sheer paradise during the long summer days which they spent dabbling on the seashore at the foot of the garden or sailing on the fjord. Tom’s first solo adventure almost ended in tragedy. Rowing himself out in the boat-harbour in a heavy flat-bottomed ‘pram’, he ventured too far, was caught in a squall and blown further into the fjord. He later recalled: ‘I rowed and yelled for help with all my might, but in vain, and would soon have been drifted out “mid-fjords” towards the sea but for the timely assistance of the captain of a Dutch koff ... He was being rowed ashore by a couple of hands, and in response to my touching appeal for help, he took hold of my painter and towed me back to the shelter of the rocks. I re-entered the bugt [boat-harbour] safely, a calmer and a wiser child!’

While William struggled to establish a business in the export trade to Britain, his ever growing family made extra demands on his limited resources. Mary’s birth was followed at irregular intervals by Alexander (Sandy) in 1828, Jane Ann in 1831 and Colin in 1832. Four years later Julia gave birth to her thirteenth and last child, James George Lewis (Jamie), 25 years after her first-born, Kate. While Jamie already had several nieces older than him, his first nephew, Simon Jorgensen, was born within several months of him in 1836. These two boys grew up more like brothers than uncle and nephew.

While the children all took advantage of their superb location, there were more serious aspects to life than play and recreation. William and Julia, both brought up in the Scottish tradition of a good education (especially for boys) and the precept of a useful life for all (the Protestant
Unlucky Star

ethnic), ensured the girls of a sound basic schooling and training in the domestic virtues. After becoming proficient in Norwegian, the boys received the best education available in Larvik, then the older ones were trained in a trade or profession in Perth. All this became more and more difficult as William's financial situation worsened — along with that of Norway and Britain.

Charles, Jack, David and Willie were all enrolled at Laurvig Grammar School in July 1828 for the start of the summer term. Archival records for the school reveal this as a novelty: 'One notes as a rarity that of 13 pupils matriculated this year, four are Scottish by birth and the sons of a merchant Arscher [sic.] who settled here about three years ago'. Charles, then aged fifteen, remained at the school until July 1830 when he left to begin his adult life in the West Indies. Jack left in September of the same year and departed for further training in Perth, likewise David one year later. This exodus was the result of William's increasing financial troubles. The school Board of Directors had waived fees for David and on his leaving school they took on Archie in his place and extended exemption of fees until July 1832. Willie remained at the school until the midsummer holidays in 1833 and then was sent to Scotland to learn a trade.

In this manner William continued to 'juggle' his sons' education so that each had a reasonable share, with the exception of Tom. Although he took Willie's place in 1833, his secondary schooling was limited to one year partly as the result of a near death dealing illness, typhoid fever. Tom was to educate himself in the Australian bush, for he was barely fourteen when he accompanied Willie to the antipodes in 1837. Sandy, identified as the clever one of the family, was the only son to receive his secondary education in Scotland and the only one of the nine not to experience bush life as a means of earning a living. His schooling in Perth was paid for by his uncle, Colonel Archibald Walker. Colin and Jamie, the two youngest Norwegian-born children, each had about ten years preparatory and secondary education in Larvik. Their years at the Grammar School were by the grace of the School Board as the following extract (translated from Norwegian) from one of William's letters in 1849 reveals:

I am the breadwinner of a very large family, and my financial position is dependent on the very unstable lobster fishing, that even during the favourable trading conditions only gives me just enough income. For a long time now
this source of income has almost stopped completely, and as a result of this I am now in so strained circumstances that I do not see the possibility of giving my children such an education that is sufficient to make provision for their future position, without any kind of assistance.\textsuperscript{18}

At this time William held office as British Consul, a position which brought honour but little or no income. It must have humiliated him to write such letters, year after year, but he was determined that his sons should go into the world as educated gentlemen.

It was chiefly through the agency of Julia’s uncles, William and James Walker, that the young Archers were sent to the outposts of the British Empire — West Indies, Pacific Islands and Australia. The first Europeans to live in the southern continent, convicts and soldier guards, had reached Sydney Cove just two years after William Archer’s birth. William Walker first arrived in Sydney about 1813 and before the end of the decade was firmly established as a mercantile firm, William Walker & Co., in both Sydney and London. His brother James received a land grant in the Blue Mountains near today’s town of Lithgow. This was Wallerowang Station (now spelt Wallerawang), significant in the training of several young Archers as wool growers.

Jack Archer, in the course of his training as a merchant seaman, was the first of William and Julia’s sons to reach Sydney in 1833. David arrived in the following year and immediately was sent to Wallerawang to begin his three year apprenticeship in wool growing. In the early decades of free settlement in New South Wales, such young men were known as ‘swells’, but from the late 1870s as jackeroos. Willie and Tom joined David there in 1837 and it is from their letters home that we follow the misfortunes of their father. Their own experiences and adventures are narrated later as the saga unfolds.

During the years from 1834 until about 1850 the lives of the young Archers were dominated by the united aim to save their father from financial ruin. As home news reached them of increasing problems, they shared the stress. In 1837 David delayed writing to his father because of ‘the late calamitous events’ and ‘for fear of causing pain to one to whom suffering must have made more than usually sensitive’.\textsuperscript{19} As the proud owner of a small flock of sheep a year later, David sent 50 English pounds from the proceeds of his wool sale. This was almost half his income. In the
severe Norwegian winter of 1837–38, William was obliged to burn the family boat in order to keep his family warm.\textsuperscript{20} By this time his distant sons seem to have lost hope in any of his business ventures turning out well. News of his scheme in 1840 to sell wooden paving blocks for London streets certainly did nothing to inspire confidence in them. Seafaring Jack hoped this would work to his father’s satisfaction, but confessed to his mother his belief that ‘some fatality seems to hang over all his speculations. I am afraid he was born under an unlucky star’.\textsuperscript{21} Jack’s prediction was to apply even more to his own life, than to his father’s. William, however, had a bevy of sons to rescue him from failed business deals. The enterprises which at first appeared most promising, usually turned out to be most disappointing. His trip to London in 1841 to promote the paving block scheme aroused doubts in Charles similar to those expressed by Jack. He also shared his fears with his mother:

\ldots even were the funding (the sinews of speculation) necessary to carry the plan out, at command: and I am afraid all Father’s plans, however well arranged, will be wrecked upon the shoals of poverty. But should it fail, I console myself with the knowledge that disappointments have been so often met and struggled against by you, that you will not feel this (should it prove a disappointment) very keenly.\textsuperscript{22}

Charles was well aware that his 50 pounds paid into Walkers’ account for his mother’s use was merely ‘a drop in the bucket’.

Jack’s and Charles’ assessment of the wood-block venture proved accurate. Even so, news of its failure gave them ‘great pain’. Their father, Micawber-like as usual, told Jack that he expected to be employed by some of the London people as their agent.\textsuperscript{23} Willie’s reaction to this latest disaster was to advise Walkers that the 50 pounds owed to him as salary was to be credited to his father’s account. For as long as William lived his sons would continue to be his financial keepers. During their first two decades in Australia, they did so through personal sacrifice. Willie, on learning of his father’s losses in the lobster export business in 1848, credited his account with 100 pounds to enable him to carry on until he was able to make a further remittance. He aborted his own planned trip home because he saw his father’s plight as the greater need. The colony at this time was experiencing its first economic recession through the failure of the wool market. This translated to a loss of half Willie’s annual income.\textsuperscript{24}
William's business failures never depressed him for too long. His love of the sea could make him forget all his troubles, whether sailing on it or messing about with boats at the Tolderodden slipway. His old friend, Sir Hyde Parker, often visited Larvik in his yacht *Turquoise* during the summer season. He looked to William for company while salmon fishing — a sport that both men loved. Willie visualised his father's happiness in the summer of 1840 on returning home 'after a long evening, spent rod in hand, on the banks of [Lake] Farris, to find a packet of Australian letters'. William was also fascinated by the sea in its wilder moods. David's mental picture in 1844 illustrates this: 'I fancy I see him now in his broad-brimmed green cap and coat watching the tossing of the surf in a Southeaster.' Twenty-five years had passed since William was first impressed by the 'romantic' in Norway's wild scenic beauty, but he responded still with the same deep feeling. He found refreshment too in his own creation, Tolderodden's landscaped gardens. But if all else failed, there was solace in a pinch of snuff.

While all these diversions were within the ambit of Larvik, there were other sure ways of taking William abroad by means of his imagination. Not only did his sons prevent him from becoming completely wrecked on the shoals of poverty, but their letters and journals enabled him to share vicariously in their adventures and different lifestyles: Charles at first in the West Indies and then in New South Wales; Jack at sea, chiefly in southern oceans; David, Willie and Tom all in the Australian bush until Tom became a 'forty-niner in California; Archie adventuring in the South Sea Islands before settling in Queensland in 1860; Sandy on the Victorian goldfields until becoming a banker; Colin as a young 'forty-niner before joining his older brothers to learn the squatting business; and last of all, young Jamie and his nephew Simon Jørgensen 'learning the ropes' as bullock drivers and wool growers in Queensland. William often sought more detail about their expeditions, their fellow squatters and their daily lives, urging them to keep journals. During their various voyages to the antipodes he urged them to record their daily longitude and latitude as he liked to trace their wanderings on his world globe.

On at least one occasion William alarmed his sons with the suggestion that he himself should migrate to Australia. After the failure of one of his wild schemes in 1838 it occurred to him that he might emulate the Walkers
and make his fortune in the colony. On hearing this, David shared his concern with his mother:

Mr James Walker talks in his last letter to me of your coming out here, a step which I cannot bring myself to approve at present. Father's age [62] is too advanced to admit of his changing his habits to meet the circumstances of a young country and a person at a certain age has much to suffer in beginning in the world without capital, even altho' in other respects in the most favourable circumstances. When the happy day arrives that I can invite you to shelter your heads beneath my own roof which will then be yours, it will give me pleasure to see you in Australia, but until then I think you would comfort all our feelings most by remaining in Norway.\textsuperscript{27}

David at that time was still an employee of James Walker at Wallerawang, but William's later suggestion that New Zealand might be a more suitable place to take a family met with the same realistic response. His sons preferred to subsidise the house-keeping budget at Tolderodden rather than see William's dreams dissolve in the rugged reality of pioneering life in the bush.

While William lacked the business acumen of Julia's Walker uncles, he cannot be blamed for failing to forecast the economic effect of Norway's union with Sweden. As he was to experience personally, Norway's fishing industry suffered in British markets through competition with Newfoundland. Worst of all, the country's currency system was in great disorder and to help overcome this the Bank of Norway in 1822 began a process of raising the rate of exchange. This continued for twenty years, causing considerable difficulties in business life.\textsuperscript{28} While it provided a cure for the economy in the long run, it also contributed to William's financial ruin. Norway's great period of economic development in the second half of the nineteenth century came too late for William.

Meantime, during the 1840s and early 1850s William still had sons to educate. Colin and Jamie were then receiving their share of free education at Laurvig Grammar School in the manner of their older siblings. There is a pathetic sameness in the Vicar of Larvik's supporting letters relative to scholarships, 1847–52. He refers in 1847 to William's position as British Vice-Consul and as Lloyds of London's agent, also as agent for a British lobster fishing company. The Vicar's letter continues:

... the income he gets is so small that even with the greatest thrift he could
not have brought up such a numerous crowd of children, even with the hard sacrifice to send his children as emigrants to New South Wales, had he not from time to time received support from his family in England ... one cannot calculate on help from there any longer after his relative's death. I thus in all respects find Mr Archer very well qualified to be taken into consideration to obtain ... the scholarship for his son.

This son was Colin, but in like manner Principal Hysing supported yet another application in 1850 on the grounds that 'his parents' financial position still is unchanged ... free schooling must be granted the pupil James Archer'.

When this youngest child completed his schooling, it seems that William gave up his struggle. It was during the decade of the 1850s that a slow mental decline became apparent. David, home on a first visit since leaving Norway in 1833, was obliged to take over the business connected with his late Aunt Ann Walker’s estate. Julia confided in Colin (by then in Australia) in December 1853: ‘We could never have managed alone. Your father’s increasing years render him more and more unfit for other matters too ... writing has now become rather a labour to him’. Ann Walker’s death in Perth, following that of their brother, Colonel Archibald Walker, severed the last financial life-line from that source. Ironically, William’s mental decline began at a time when his migrant sons had begun to prosper as a result of the upturn in the colonial economy with good wool prices following the gold-rushes of the 1850s. The greatest irony, in that this occurred at a time beyond his comprehension, truly emphasises Jack’s comment that William was born under an unlucky star. There was one exception.

William, unlucky in business, was doubly fortunate in his marriage to Julia Walker. While her role as wife and mother was accepted as a natural duty in the nineteenth century, her affluent Walker relatives provided a bonus — though not in any charitable sense. Loans had to be repaid by the sons at high interest rates. Even so, William and James Walker set each of the older sons on his path through life. And in doing so, these sons became William and Julia’s most reliable assets.
Julia Walker was eighteen years old when she married William Archer on 21 April 1810. Marriage with its inevitable span of child-bearing provided the only opportunity for middle-class girls to escape dreary spinsterhood in their parents' homes. Julia, born 29 November 1791, was the only one of her siblings to marry. She had an older brother, Archibald, and a younger brother, Colin, also a younger sister, Ann. As educated young people they were fortunate to have in Perth an old established firm of booksellers, Morison & Son, later linked to the Archers by the marriage of Grace to Tom. Morisons had run a circulating library since 1752 and before the turn of that century became printers and publishers. They founded the *Perth Courier* in 1809. Morison literary talent was to be inherited by several of Tom and Grace Archer's sons. But when William and Julia married they were as unaware of genetic influence as they were of birth control.

The dream-like sequences of Archer generations from their documented roots in Scotland has its parallel in Julia Walker's antecedents. For two centuries prior to 1900 there was a Walker tradition of lineal descent from John Knox, the sixteenth century ecclesiastic and reformer. This was later disproved. Their earliest documented ancestor was born in 1625 and was a cordwainer — one who dresses leather, a shoemaker. Of much greater relevance, given the deep religious convictions of some Walkers and Archers, was Julia's great-great-grandfather, the Reverend David Walker, son of the cordwainer. He was born about 1660 and inducted to
the Temple Church of Scotland in 1690. David as a Christian name was passed on from Julia's father to her son, grandson and eventually to her great-grandson in Queensland.

The first recorded event in William and Julia's married life was the birth of their daughter Catherine (called Kate) in 1811. Julia later commented that 'all first-borns are a kind of miracle of nature'. In her own twenty-five years of child-bearing, a different kind of miracle is apparent. All her thirteen children were born healthy and all survived infectious diseases which proved fatal to so many nineteenth century infants. According to family tradition, the continuing good health of the Archer children was the result of being fed on good Scottish oatmeal porridge. While it is possible that Julia experienced miscarriages, such happenings were not the subject of letters. Pregnancy was often referred to as 'a delicate state of health'. While the Archer sons conformed to polite usage in the written word, they avoided the worst euphemisms and cliches. When nineteen year old Jack left home in 1832 he was aware that his mother and his sister Kate were both pregnant.

According to the customs and values of the nineteenth century, children, however many, were the natural consequence of marriage and nature. Julia's continuing survival of the perils of childbirth was an added reason for thanksgiving when so many women died of puerperal fever or similar infections. While the euphoria surrounding her firstborn undoubtedly faded with subsequent births, she gave the same loving nurture and upbringing to each. Jamie, born when she was forty-five, exemplifies this — as a toddler running howling to Moer (mother) for comfort, with his mouth full of sand while playing on the strand at the bottom of the garden.

The move to Norway in 1825, with the North Sea separating her from all her friends, was the beginning of a life of domestic isolation for Julia. When she acquired the Norwegian tongue it allowed her to communicate with her children's friends, but it was not easy to make friends in her own generation. She never once returned to Scotland, but enjoyed occasional visits from Walker relatives. As her younger daughters, Julia, Mary and Jane Ann (Jeannie) entered their teenage years they each spent a year or two with their Aunt Annie Walker in Perth. It was usual for Ann Walker when visiting Tolderodden to take one of the girls back with her. Tom was the
only one of the older sons to miss out on the Perth experience. When he was nineteen and in faraway New South Wales he explained to his mother the root of his homesickness:

... it is no wonder I am more attached to Laurvig than my brothers. They look to Scotland as a secondary home, but I have no other than Laurvig; nor have I any personal acquaintance with those relatives who are so dear to my brothers ... Of our connections in London I saw but little and that little did not tend much to plant them in my memory. So that Laurvig contains almost all in which I have any interest, out of this colony; and this does not apply to our family alone, but the friends I left there very much surpass any I have since acquired ...  

Letters provided a two-way lifeline between Australia and Norway. Julia liked best to hear of her sons' domestic arrangements, or their needs in the way of knitted stockings or flannel shirts. She finally drew a response from Tom on 'domestic economy' in March 1844. He admitted that their neighbours had superior 'eating departments', but put this down to the Archers' 'mortal dislike of interfering in the kitchen arrangements'. They were in fact terrified by their Scottish female cook who 'henpecked' them all as well as her husband. Julia surely chuckled over Tom's description of breakfast at Durundur (near the Glasshouse Mountains just north of Brisbane). Although they had about 30 hens they were given only one egg apiece in addition to 'the chops (which we have had for breakfast every day for the last two years) which are either boiled in grease in the frying pan, or burnt to cinders, instead of being done in the gridiron.' The gridiron was left hanging on the wall and the chops uneaten.

Julia's pantry naturally lacked the copious raw materials of an Australian sheep station, but Tom imagined the 'capital meals' his mother would 'knock up' with Durundur's excellent mutton and vegetables. He drooled at the thought of her sheeps-head broth and haggis all made from meat which their Scottish cook threw to the dogs. And as usual, the fertile imagination which brought Moer to Durundur also took Tom to Tolderodden and the confession that he was never so happy as when reflecting on home and kindred. Nor was Tom the only homesick son. Charles recalled Christmas 1840, the big living-room at Tolderodden with its Juuletrae and Christmas fruit; and 'the bairns looking out for their presents and cooling their impatience with a nip at the cakes and raisins'; Kate's mother-in-law,
old Mrs Jørgensen, sitting on the sofa enjoying the scene ‘and apparently expecting her Juulegave like the other children’. 9

The Archer children, with 25 years between eldest and youngest, were two distinct families. Kate and the six brothers born between 1813 and 1823 were all young adults during the early childhood of their other siblings. These ‘two families’ were literally worlds apart in time and space. In the pre-photographic age none knew what his distant brothers or sisters looked like. Tom who left home in 1837 when Jamie was just a toddler and Colin five, was amazed in 1842 to learn that they were young schoolboys. 10 Willie, in writing to his mother, 17 November 1844, thanked her for the home-made slippers which he intended to keep for ‘gala days’ then concluded: ‘With kindest love to Father, Kate and the youngsters (I have only vague recollections of their names and succession) [and] Julia, Mary, Colin, Jamie and Simon’. It was then seven years since Willie had seen the youngsters and would be another six before he saw them again.

The younger children did not seem so remote to Charles when he scripted a letter to Jamie and Simon, aged eight in 1844. He began by assuming that they could read English as well as Norwegian. He described his life at Durundur ‘in the middle of a vast forest, a great deal larger than Norway and Sweden put together’. After assuring them that there were no wild beasts such as wolves and bears, he described the native people whose lives consisted of ‘eating, drinking, fighting, hunting and sleeping’. He then added:

You know, I suppose, that they are black and savages, that is that they do not know who God is, nor that there is any life hereafter, neither can they make clothes for themselves nor build houses, but walk about naked, and at night when they wish to sleep, strip a few sheets of bark from the trees which are placed so as to protect themselves from the wind. We have several little black boys staying with us and you would be astonished to see a child not more than four years old climbing up a high tree ... looking for honey, they can also, even at this age, throw small spears with much certainty ...

Charles’ simplistic definition of a ‘savage’ reveals his conformity with the beliefs of the age in which he lived, but there is also one significant difference: the Archers, unlike the majority of squatters, allowed the Aborigines to camp close to their head station. Jamie and Simon, though unaware of it, were already being prepared for their own future life in the
bush. Meantime their Norwegian primary schooling was progressing as well as English lessons within the walls of Tolderodden:

Who is school mistress at home — Bestemoder or Fruen [Grandmother or Sisters]. I hope you two continue as good friends as you were when I was home ... the little black boys here never fight except when they throw sticks at one another with great force, but they jump about so quickly and are so active that they seldom hit each other. Hils Bestefader, Bestemoder, Fruen, alle de andre fra mie.

Your affectionate Brother and Uncle,
Charles Archer.12

Kate Archer had married Simon Jørgensen in 1828 and continued to live in Larvik. They had four daughters, Julla, Malla, Marianne and Katen before their only son, Simon, arrived in 1836 soon after his uncle, Jamie. When Kate’s husband died prematurely in that same year, she and her children moved into Tolderodden. Julia Archer and Kate Jørgensen, both with young children, were more like sisters than mother and daughter. Only nineteen years separated them.

The first son to wed was Jack, the least communicative of all. He did not tell his mother or brothers of his marriage to Eliza Cook in New South Wales until a month after the event on 4 March 1845. They had been forlovet [engaged] for two years, unknown to his family.13

It was Julia’s fate to be surrounded by young children at Tolderodden, so letters from her young men on the other side of the globe had a similar effect on her as on William — transporting her to a strange new world without leaving home. How peculiar Willie’s roving life must have seemed to his mother. He told her it often meant ‘lying beside my campfire, under the shadow of some huge Gumtree, wrapped in my opossum cloak, with the cloudless canopy of heaven overhead ...’ His life on Wallerawang Station varied so little that he was uncertain of his own age in 1844 — he thought he was 26, but referred his mother to ‘the venerable old Bible’ in which he believed the record of his birth was the first entry ‘in my dear Mother’s handwriting’.14 That entry was made in March 1818, exactly one year before his father’s Norwegian journey became the catalyst for change in all their lives.

Julia’s far-away sons did not entirely escape her motherly concern in matters ranging from handwriting to marriage. On one occasion Tom took
umbrage over his mother’s lack of understanding about the realities of frontier life: ‘I am sorry to perceive [sic.] that you will complain of the badness of my penmanship …’ explaining that he’d had little or no writing practice for months ‘owing to the wild life we have led of late’. He then dared to reprimand her in a gentle manner for not writing herself for a long time, for there was little to take their thoughts ‘off home and kindred’ in the bush. They were apt to feel ‘a certain longing anxiety’ when months passed without letters. At the best of times it could be twelve months between letters leaving, and replies reaching Australia. Added to this, there were no mail services on the frontier in the 1840s so that dispatch and receipt of letters depended upon the occasional dray going to Brisbane for supplies.

When Tom’s parents both chided him for giving in to Hjeimvie, he justified his homesickness as the principal spur for goading him to make sufficient money to visit Tolderodden and also help his parents financially. The usually good natured Tom was stung into commenting that thought of home was ‘one of the most pleasant and I hope innocent subjects for reflection’. He was careful to distinguish his longing as ‘a cheerful, hopeful sort of thing’ quite different from the ‘Norwegian sort of Hjeimvie’. As he had left home as a mere boy, at his father’s instigation, it is strange that his parents should identify homesickness as a flaw in his character.

Julia, it seems, thought Tom was dissatisfied with station life and so she pointed out how necessary it was for him to remain in Australia because of his father’s business failures. As it was about 18 months since Tom had justified his longing for home, he had forgotten all about it and assumed his mother’s concern must have come from ‘some desponding letter’ of his ‘dictated by some irritation or disgust of the moment’. He assured her of his satisfaction with the squatting life, but admitted he was still ‘rather given to despondency’ when he realised how long it would be before he could visit Norway. At other times he was ‘as merry as a cricket’. Tom’s mood swings were to be lifelong. But in the 1840s Julia worried about this aspect of his nature. It was always in his mother that he confided his innermost feelings, although he wrote as often to his father. He agreed with his mother that it was a great cause of thankfulness that they had ‘hitherto’ all been spared ‘in health and prosperity’. And then, Tom being Tom, he confessed the nearer the time for reunion ‘the more my heart
Magnetic Pole

misgives me — it would be such felicity that I always think it would be too good for us erring mortals'. More to Julia's liking was his confirmation that her hand-made slippers would be most prized for their beauty, the stockings for their utility. And because she had difficulty getting wool in Norway, Tom sent her a fleece of Durundur wool to spin and knit up as stockings. There was a bond between Julia and this son which was more emotional than the filial affection expressed by the others.

The concern of all Julia's sons for her well-being is confirmed by an incident in 1841. Her brother, Colonel Archibald Walker, who had recently retired and returned to Perth from Newfoundland where he had been senior military officer and Member of Council, paid a visit to his sister. He raised all their spirits considerably in this time of increasing financial hardship. On learning of the 500 pound mortgage on Tolderodden he persuaded Julia to draw upon his personal account whenever necessary. But he also stipulated that her older sons were to consider this a debt of honour to be repaid before any of them could return home. When Willie received this news in the following year the colony was in deep depression as a result of the wool-market crash, land speculation and an 'unbounded system of credit', bad seasons and high wages. Even so, he believed that bad economic times should not cancel a debt of honour and assured his parents that he and his brothers between them would liquidate it. This was but one among many sacrifices made so that William and Julia might remain safely within the solid walls of Tolderodden.

Willie inherited more of the hard-headed Walker business sense than Archer optimism. In contrast to Tom's expressions of deepest feelings in letters to his mother, Willie's formal style appears stilted and almost cold: 'I need not again allude to my disappointment on not being able to accomplish my intended visit', he told her on 25 March 1849, 'particularly as the state of the times renders it more than ever problematical, when this happy consummation may be attained'.

When Willie finally reached home in mid 1850, Tom was already suffering hardships in California. Tom had set off for California in 1849 partly because it was 'half way to Norway — the goal of all our aspirations'. Julia's worst fears for him were very nearly realised. Some of his party were drowned and Tom narrowly escaped death when their small boat sank while making its way from San Francisco to the gold-
fields. Julia and William were greatly comforted to have Willie at home during this time of family restlessness and danger. With Colin off to search for Tom in California and Sandy leaving a little later to try his luck on the Australian goldfields, their mother lived in constant fear of bad news. Willie, however, found the long, cold winter days in Larvik most depressing. He confided: 'You have no idea of the effort it sometimes cost me to keep up the little spirits I had left'. For his mother's sake he made the effort.

Julia's anxiety for her family both at home and abroad is evident in one of the very few of her letters to have been preserved. She wrote to Colin on Christmas Day 1853:

Last post brought us no less than three letters from your side of the globe — from Jack, Archie and yourself. The last has given me renewed strength to my self-upbraidings for not long ere this having written you, and as I have a little quietness this evening, your father and I being quite alone, I think I cannot employ the time better than in easing my mind on this head.

Our usual festivities at this season are commenced tonight by a young party at the Proost's. You have probably heard of Marie's marriage and she and Koren are here at present for the first visit. We understand that there is to be a great deal of gaiety going on. Simon is here at present and also Helga Olsen on a visit to Marianne, so we number strong from this house. Kate, however, is not of the party, having got a sudden call the other day from Fredrickshall on account of Malla's rather premature confinement. Fears were entertained at first that the child might not live, but we have heard since that all is going well. This hurried journey is rather a disappointment to Kate who had hoped to spend Juul at home and have the pleasure of Simon's company for a short time — at least if he is made a cadet, which there is every probability of as he stood his examination well, but he left Christiania before [the results] were known. He brings very satisfactory accounts of Julia [Arentz] who has improved rapidly since Mary joined her. I fear her complaint was of a much more serious nature than we first supposed — very nearly approaching cholera if not the very disease ...

Three weeks later Malla Elligers (nee Jørgensen) lost her baby — 'a sad disappointment to Georg and herself'.

The happiest occasions of that decade for Julia were Tom's marriage to Grace Morison in Perth in 1853, David's marriage to Susan Stubbs in Dublin in 1855, while in the following year in Australia Jack wed (his third wife) Anna Maria Blest. When Tom and Grace returned from Australia in
1856 they brought Julia Eliza with them, Jack's eight year old daughter by his first marriage for Grandmother Julia to rear. With her own two youngest sons, Colin and James, off to Australia in 1852 and 1855, Julia had begun all over again with a 'very difficult' grandchild.

Poverty no longer reigned at Tolderodden in the 1850s. The success of the new Australian stations and improved wool prices brought a measure of comfort and a few modest luxuries for Julia and her two unmarried daughters, Mary and Jane Ann. David returned from the colony in 1853 and relieved his mother's mind by taking over the business and correspondence now beyond William's ability.

This, as fate decreed, was the last period of calm before a series of tragedies in Julia's life, but mercifully this was hidden from her.
The four ‘petticoats’ in the Archer family were idolised by their nine brothers on the other side of the world. For these brothers living lives of social isolation, the sisters symbolised the true values of home. The petty irritations of shared living in the family home were forgotten, or recalled only during long-awaited holidays at Tolderodden.

While their mother remained the ‘magnetic pole’, Kate held a special place among those of the ‘first family’ as eldest sister, the first to marry and bear children and the one they confided in most often. While fewer letters were exchanged with sister Julia, the brothers continued to value hers and complained when long overdue. Mary, the first of the Norwegian-born children, was almost completely ignored in the correspondence of her older brothers. And when it came time for Colin and Jamie to sail away to the southern hemisphere, they wrote most often to their nearest sibling, Jane Ann (Jeannie).

With the exception of Kate, the girls each finished their education in Perth. It is possible they attended a private school as day pupils or at least received private tuition by courtesy of their Walker aunt and uncle, although this is not confirmed. Their letters, whether in English or Norwegian, reveal well educated young women. At Tolderodden they had their father’s library of English literature at their disposal. Julia in particular
made good use of this. Then, like all well brought up young ladies of the nineteenth century, each learned to play a musical instrument. Musical evenings at Tolderodden with their mix of Scandinavian and Scottish airs were an important part of their lifestyle.

There are no letters recording Kate’s engagement and marriage to Simon Jørgensen in 1828. This took place in Gøteborg, Sweden, in the same year as Charles, Jack, David and Willie began their studies at Laurvig Grammar School. Kate, like her mother, married while still in her teens and then gave birth to five children within eight years. Kate, however, was widowed within eight years. The earliest reference to her as a married woman appears in a letter from Jack (in Sydney) to his father, 23 February 1833, which concludes: ‘I send my best wishes, both to those I left behind and the new comers. Kate’s ought to have been a boy’. The two newcomers were his niece Marianne Jørgensen and his brother Colin. Kate’s children, as already seen, grew up as part of the ‘second family’ at Tolderodden. Among their older uncles, Charlie and Tom showed special affection for them — Tom in his remembrance of them as his juniors as children playing together, and Charlie in his joy of getting to know them in 1839–40 after returning from the West Indies. After this time Kate’s children wrote ‘nice kind letters’ to Kjare Onkel Charlie who more easily found topics of interest for the three young boys than for the girls. When Malla Jørgensen married Georg Elligers in 1849, Willie thought it ‘a forcible reminder to her ancient uncles, who are eking out a miserable existence in single blessedness’. No matter who else in the family married, Willie lived out his life in single blessedness.

The older brothers were mature men before the young Victoria became Queen of England in 1837. Their attitudes to women were chivalrous and idealistic. Mental images of home sustained them in their loneliness. Each sister was visualised as in a tableau: Kate tending her children; Mary sailing alone on Larvik Fjord; Julia reading poetry; Jane Ann romping with Kate’s children. And so in 1853 when Willie hinted at the possibility of Jane Ann visiting the colony, Charlie hoped the plan had been abandoned — ‘... we wish to keep all those ties which make home so dear to us knitted together at Tolderodden, and lastly Jane would sure to want to return which would leave us worse off than if she had never come out ...’ The sisters — ‘you petticoats’ — remained in those early years firmly on their
pedestals. The brothers' ethical idealism, indirectly an effect of the Enlightenment, more directly the result of their upbringing and social isolation, is most evident in their attitudes to women.

Kate was a special sister. They shared thoughts and occasional criticisms of one another with her which they kept from their mother. Such was the case in 1845. Julia and Mary refused to write to David because his letters were so often on religious subjects. Charles tried to mediate, agreeing that David 'does not display much knowledge of human nature in expecting a girl of Julia's age, however much her thoughts might tend that way, should make religion the topics of her correspondence. She is at that age when all girls enjoy amusements'. Charles begged Kate to use her influence with both sisters, as Davie was 'much hurt' by their silence. His own and Tom's letters were full of nonsense, he said, which made them of lesser value than those of David, who so often committed his inner thoughts to paper. They all considered their mother had enough worries through their father's business failures without adding another burden. Even so, they sometimes teased Kate for not writing more often, unappreciative of her problems in raising five fatherless children.

When Charles returned home in 1839 to recuperate from the tropical fever which almost killed him, he discovered Julia, 15, shared his love of English literature. Jack worried about the cultural development of Julia and Mary, hoping they had 'a taste for reading something more substantial than the trashy novels of the present day and endeavour to keep a slight acquaintance with English literature'. But it seems that they had more than 'a slight acquaintance' with literature. Charles advised Julia in 1845:

Let me recommend for your studies, when you next read poetry, Byron's 'Lament of Tasso' and 'Prisoner of Chillon', in my opinion the two finest short poems in our language, unless some of Goldsmith's be equal to them. They are, it is true, only simple portraits, while Scott's poems are large compositions introducing a great variety of characters, and they both, but particularly the 'Prisoner', have nothing about love in them — a theme which I believe you petticoats think almost essential in every poem — but the sad and sorrowful nature of the subjects, and the splendid language and imagery in which the stories are told, have made them such favourites with me, that I can almost repeat both poems. As a prose study, take 'Rasselas'. It was in the house when I was home ...

While Julia found Shakespeare's plays difficult to understand, Charles
reminded her that even modern poetry often required a second reading, much more so some passages of Shakespeare 'as the idiom of the language has changed greatly since Elizabeth's time'. Even more difficult for a young woman who carried on all conversations outside the home in Norwegian. Julia who was only six years old when this eldest brother left for the West Indies, developed a special affection for 'lange Charlie'.

In the same year in which Julia received Charlie's literary advice, Willie sent her a gold watch which he had received in payment for a debt. 'May I beg your acceptance of it as a present from your brothers scattered over the Southern Hemisphere ... in return I hope you will write me a long letter containing all the Laurvig sladder and vaey [gossip and nonsense]'. He sent the watch home in the care of James Walker, also daguerreotypes of himself and Charlie. He described his own 'likeness' as 'a most hideous sulky, sepulchral-looking daub ... taken when the art was yet in its infancy in the Colony'. He had an extreme aversion, he said, to spending an additional 26 shillings for the chance of a second failure. Charlie agreed. He was disgusted to see such dour looking characters, but explained that because the sitter was obliged to keep his features 'perfectly fixed' during the process, this gave 'a peculiar expression to the face ... A wink of the eye will destroy the whole affair and although it is all over in half a minute, yet the violent effort the sitter makes to look amiable ... gives that sort of desperate determination to the expression which is almost always seen in Daguerreotypes'.

It was in 1846 that the Australians first heard from Mrs James Walker of Julia's forlovelse (engagement) to 'a Mr Somebody' — she couldn't remember his name. A letter from home soon told them that the Somebody was Herr Arentz — 'a gentleman who has gained not only her love but the esteem of the whole family'. Great preparations were then underway for Julia's marriage in July 1846 to Diderik Capellen Arentz. The bride's father complained that he could hardly 'get a mouthfu' o' meat, or a quiet hole to put his head in'. It had been 18 years since Kate's marriage, hence the fluster. When reports reached the brothers that the Bryllup (wedding) had gone off 'with great eclat', Charles commented to Kate:

I sincerely hope my dear Julia will be happy. The character you give of her husband is a pretty strong guarantee of this, and although Julia is not perhaps
a first rate Huusholderske [housekeeper], she has other good qualities, in my opinion of more importance ... and I am sure she is possessed of as warm and kind a heart as ever beats.\textsuperscript{10}

Julia, the last of the Scottish-born children, was to become truly Norwegian through her marriage and children. Her husband, a lawyer, was to hold the post of Inspector of Customs at Larvik from 1860 until his death in 1880. During the first year or two of Julia's marriage, Charles was hurt by her neglect of him. 'I am afraid she has forgotten me, I have not heard from her since her forlovelse, and now she is married and a mother', he complained. The bachelor brothers' lack of understanding of the demands of marriage and motherhood were increased by their social isolation. Married men were seldom to be found on the northern frontier in the 1840s, let alone women and children. When at last a letter from Julia reached Charles in 1854, his pleasure was touched by guilt that she should have been the first to break 'the spell that has lain on our correspondence'. He thought 'the laws of chivalry' should have guided him to be the first to take up his pen. He was disappointed, though, that she had so little to say about herself:

I think it is a great mistake of yours that a letter should not be full of egoismer — at all events where we feel a strong personal interest in the writer, these very egoismer are the most valued portions of the letter, and when you write next, I hope you will indulge freely in these. Let me have a sketch of your bairns; of course I know the necessary allowance to make when a mother paints.\textsuperscript{11}

While Charlie's emotions were touched in his relationship with Julia, Willie evinced a more down-to-earth relationship with those at Tolderoden and his married sisters and their children — now so numerous. He concluded his letter to Kate in July 1852 (shortly after his own return from Norway) with a roll-call: 'And now my dear Kate, I have only room to mention your names (I like to do this to bring you all before my mind's eye). Well there is Fa'er and Mo'er, Kate, Tom, Arentz, Julia and her tribe, Jamie, Julla, Georg, Malla and her piccaninnies, Mari, Katen and Simon (I wonder if I've got you all)'.\textsuperscript{12} He had omitted Mary and Jane Ann. Tolderodden's inhabitants decreased considerably after 1854 when Archie purchased the house and furniture to save them from the mortgagor. His mother asked Kate if she would prefer a house of her own now that all
the children were grown up. 'Kate took a very remarkable view of the thing & so it is decided she takes up a house of her own', Archie told Willie. 'I have told her she may depend upon your assistance and mine to keep up the same style of housekeeping'. Archie, like Willie, remained a bachelor.

The greatest changes since the initial move from Scotland to Norway, affecting the family in both hemispheres, occurred around 1855 after Colin, Jamie and Simon had all gone to Australia. The 'petticoats' as well as their parents all benefited from increased prosperity on the Australian stations following the gold-rushes. And to the advantage of all, steam ship services which commenced between England and Australia in 1852 speeded up mail and passenger services. An excited Edward Walker wrote to David Archer on 19 February 1852: '... in a couple of months time we will be aboard the Australian, the first steam ship that ever left this country for the Colony!!!'

Mary was to become the enigma within the family, not only in her own lifetime, but also to later generations. To begin with she was physically different from her sisters for she was six feet (180 cm) tall and 'mannish' in her dress. Edward Walker met Mary in London when she was twenty-four. He described her state of mind to David: '... poor thing, she is ... hard at work on religion. Who knows, but she may be one of those scattered sheep ... Walker's writings may prove the means of bringing her out of Babylon'. He was proven correct. Mary, a born rebel, rejected the Lutheran State Church of Norway and became a Separatist like several of her brothers. This was a sect founded by John Walker of Northern Ireland which rejected churches and clergy, adopting instead Sunday Bible study in private homes.

Among the Collected Letters, 1833–55, two letters only are addressed to Mary, the first by Tom in 1848 describing his exploration and plans for the future. The second, and more important letter, was written by Jack from Hobart in January 1854. It not only tells us much about Jack's dilemma in relation to his two orphan children, Julia Eliza and William (Willie Minor), then aged about eight and six, but also reveals something of Mary's nature, already different from that of her sisters:

My dear Mary,

I received your and Davie's joint letter yesterday, being the quickest com-
munication from home I ever received and, as it is I hope the commencement of a correspondence between us, it is doubly welcome. I met Willy at Twofold Bay about a fortnight since, and he accompanied me on here ...

As Willy is the first of our family who has seen my young branches, I suppose he will report upon them, perhaps without a certain bias in their favour, of which I myself feel conscious when I mention them, and which I take to be a thing not uncommon among fathers, mothers and aunts, but which can hardly be expected to extend to bachelor uncles. I must, however, leave the case in his hands.

As to sending them home, it is a thing more easily said than done. I know it would be far better for them, but I am not yet sufficiently unselfish to prefer their interest to my own. When an old fellow like me [aged 40] has nobody within his reach to care for him but two bits of children, he is ready enough to find excuses, valid at least to himself for not sending them away. One thing I promise, that when I return home myself, I will bring them with me, and I know no one I would prefer to trust them to, rather than yourself.

As I should like to be particularly well acquainted with you, I hope your next letter will contain a full and true account of yourself, physical, mental — and eccentric — something I have already managed to gather from Willy, but he appears, like myself, to belong to the taciturn branch of the family. Jas. Walker also told me that his mother, in a letter, mentions a Miss Archer staying with her in London — very tall and very sensible. I immediately gave you credit for being the sensible young lady ... 15

Mary, who loved to sail alone in the family boat, Bolgen, had already liberated herself from the docile role expected of women. But there was another facet to her character which Jack recognised — her love of little children. It was left to James Walker's mother to comment on her superior intelligence — not quite concealed within the adjective 'sensible'.

Jane Ann (Jeannie) was the extrovert among the sisters. Her appearance and manner made her the exact opposite of Mary. She was as distinctly rotund as Mary's tall frame was angular. There are several glimpses of the 'petticoats' (including Kate's daughters) at home in the mid 1850s. Julia Snr. wrote to Colin:

... you are no doubt informed of various changes which have happened amongst us this last two month. That is to say Joakim Jørgensen's death which made it necessary for Julla to be with her aunt until after the funeral. Julla and David proceeded in to Christiania. David brought Mary home with him after an absence of 14 days, but Julla remains to take lessons in Music and English with the intention of teaching these branches of education at some time if she
should find it necessary. This of course she is able to do of David's goodness which indeed has no bounds for any of us as far as his means go ...

One of the many blessings connected with his return is that it has taken place just at the time when we required him most. The business attending the property left by your aunt, we could never have managed alone, and your father's increasing years rend him more and more unfit ... writing has now become rather a labour to him which he willingly transfers to David. Kate is still at Fredrickshall [with her married daughter] and I suppose will remain there till the steamboats begin. Poor Malla lost her little boy when about three weeks old which was a sad disappointment — both for Georg and herself.¹⁶

David in taking over the role of head of the house in attending to family business also had a wider role, not only in making them more comfortable financially, but also in evangelising them according to the teachings of the Separatists: ‘... Marianne [Kate's daughter] is making such a row and shaking the table so that I can hardly write. The church here [a home meeting] is reduced by the absence of Jane in Christiania, to Mother, Mary and myself. We go on quietly, perhaps too much so. I wish sometimes there was a [non-family] member amongst us as I think it would have the effect of shining us up. Our tendency is to get drowsy and go to sleep ... ’¹⁷

But it was the long absent Archie, returned from the South Seas, who brought the greatest change of all in their living conditions and future security. Writing to Willie at the end of 1854 he announced: ‘I have purchased this house etc. & all the furniture from [Mother and father], the purchase money being portion of the sum paid by us to Mr A. Smith. This arrangement they consider preferable to that of leaving the house & for the benefit of the daughters in common ... ’¹⁸

This suggests that Archie paid off the mortgage to ‘Mr A. Smith’ thus ensuring that the family could not be turned out of Tolderodden. After his departure for the South Pacific, and David's for Dublin and marriage in 1855, the house was curiously depleted of males, with the exception of old William. Jamie and Simon left for London on their way to the colony in June of that year. Charles's return was still eighteen months in the future. In the meantime David continued to manage the house-keeping accounts and other business from afar. Mary would later assert herself in this matter, but not in the 1850s. The changes which came to the lives of the two unmarried sisters in the 1860s and 1870s liberated them to a greater extent than any previous events. This applied most particularly to Mary.
The letters which came to Tolderodden from sons and brothers during the early years of their Australian lives were conserved without difficulty. It was a different matter when the females' letters reached their brothers. These were passed on from one to the another. In consequence most (apart from several in the Norwegian language) eventually were lost or disintegrated through being carried around in saddle bags. The 'petticoats' are usually seen as reflections in male mirrors.
PART II
Australia: A Flourishing Colony of Archers
1834–1861
The dream which lured William Archer across the North Sea inevitably led to the ‘exile’ of his sons in distant colonies. There was no suitable employment for them in Norway and migration offered better prospects than low paid positions, if obtainable, in Britain. Edward Walker commented to David Archer in 1849, in relation to a skilled compositor unable to get work in London, ‘there are 50 dogs at one bone’. He described the tide of emigration as flowing steadily and increasingly towards Australia.

The older Archers reached Australia long before the tide of emigration became a flood. While Jack first landed in Sydney in January 1833, David was the true pastoral pioneer. He began his apprenticeship at James Walker’s Wallerawang Station in 1834 after some preliminary training in Perth. The arrival of Willie, 19, and Tom, 14, in 1837 provided the nucleus for the ‘colony of Archers’. It was Tom in 1846 who coined this phrase when Jack’s first child, Julia Eliza, was born: ‘The Archers will soon be able to form a flourishing Colony of their own in the southern hemisphere, if they all take unto themselves wives, which they no doubt would if they could’, he quipped in a letter to his mother. Living as they did for so many years in bush isolation, they seldom met any young women, let alone had many opportunities for courtship. Jack, as it transpired, was the only one to marry in Australia, but whether married or single they ‘flourished’ as a colony in the sense of staying together in the years between David’s arrival in 1834 and Colin’s return to Norway in 1861. Their lives personified the ‘warp’ of the colonial tapestry, the times in which they lived provided the ‘weft’.
Learning the Ropes: Jack

During the years to 1840 while land-lubbers David, Willie and Tom were being transformed from raw ‘new chums’ to station overseers and then independent wool producers, Jack was leading a very different life at sea. He was truly ‘learning the ropes’ as seaman and whaler, before joining his brothers on land in 1841.

Like Mary among the girls, Jack was the odd-man-out among the males of this close-knit family. Short, slight and bandy-legged, he bore little physical resemblance to his tall and burly brothers. He was also introverted and inclined to carry the proverbial chip on shoulder. He described himself as having a ‘sheepish disposition’. His affection for home and family was occasionally tinged with sarcasm as when in 1836 he complained to his father: ‘I suppose Kate has lost the use of pen and ink — I am sure I shall not know her hand when I see it, if I ever have that pleasure’.¹ He surely would have been less critical had he known this was the very year in which Kate’s husband died. Yet, despite his tendency to feel apart from the others, his tragic life did not result from any flaw in his character, nor any foolish or irresponsible action. Fate seemed to bear a grudge against one so often referred to during his lifetime as ‘poor Jack’.

In a pattern that was to become familiar, Jack, after leaving school, was sent to his Aunt Annie Walker in Perth to begin an unidentified training, presumably in preparation for a life at sea. This began in 1832 when he was about 18, on a Walker-owned whaling ship, Earl Stanhope, under the tutelage of Captain Salmon. When the ship left England, Jack believed it
was to return there once its catch was complete. They were half way to Australia before he knew of their destination. If, like Tom, his 'heart was like to break', he kept his feelings to himself. But he did recall on reaching Sydney in January 1833 that his grandfather Archer had expected to see him again long before this. Little did Jack know that eight years were to pass before he saw any of his Scottish or Norwegian relatives again.

Writing to his father from Sydney he described, for the benefit of his young brothers and sisters, how whales were caught. A watcher on the masthead gave the signal when a whale blew. Two or three boats were then lowered and the whale harpooned and another seaman attached his line to it. If the line fouled it had to be cut to prevent the threshing whale taking boat and crew with it:

A sperm whale spouts as regular as a clock; a large whale, or a whale from 70 to 120 barrels, is usually spouting from 10 to 15 minutes and is down from an hour to an hour and a half, the larger the whale, the longer up and down. Small whales, on the contrary, always go in schools (shoals), if a boat happens to fasten in a school of cows they usually have to and each boat fastens to a whale and lances as many loose ones as they can. I have heard as many as 16 whales being got out of a school in this manner, although the boats are very apt to get stove, as the whales are going in all directions and the boats are built of half-inch plank ...

Jack's American contemporary, Herman Melville, went to sea on a whaler about the same time, later creating from his experiences the literary classic, *Moby Dick*. Jack had no literary pretensions, but just as many adventures. On this particular expedition the *Earl Stanhope* had sailed first to Guam, the Carolines, New Ireland and Bougainville before reaching Sydney. Jack related the tale of the *Oldham*, a whaler taken by natives at Wallis Island and all the crew murdered. This did not deter Jack and his shipmates from going ashore on another island to obtain taro and pigs among 'the most barbarous race' he had ever seen. On landing a second time they were met by natives brandishing spears and clubs and so 'were obliged to decamp in great haste'. Needless to say, he does not tell what kind of treatment the natives received on the first visit to invoke this response.

While the *Earl Stanhope* was refitting in Sydney, Jack had a week's leave. He was not impressed by the hills surrounding the town which either
were bare or covered by low brushwood. And as a sailor, he saw no particular beauty in the harbour. 'The only fine walk that I have seen is round the Governor's grounds. There is no place I have seen to compare with Norway'.

For all the brothers, Norway was always the yardstick when scenery was described. Nor was Jack as pleased as Tom would be when Thomas Walker lent him his 'pleasure boat' for a pull on the harbour.

And so the pattern of Jack's first few years at sea was fixed. A 'pretty successful' cruise to Japan, a description of life on the Ascension Islands, and then to the Bay of Islands in New Zealand. In March 1834 he found 30 vessels anchored there and an unofficial settlement of whalers. These men were believed to be escaped convicts, and a few honest men as well. He was not impressed by the scenery which, in modern times, attracts thousands of tourists and holiday makers every year: 'This seems to be a very barren country, I have not seen anything worth the name of a tree round the whole harbour'. His description of the settlement appears to be that which was later named Russell. But there was one compensation on the next voyage to that place. The Second Mate left the ship and Jack received a promotion to fill his place.

While it was difficult enough to keep up a meaningful correspondence between Larvik and New South Wales because of the time which must pass between dispatch and reply, how much worse it was trying to keep up with the erratic movements of Jack's ship. Even worse for the lonely sailor who expressed his feelings to his father in 1837:

... You can hardly imagine the disappointment I feel upon coming into a port after four or five months in full certainty of finding a letter, and going out again without hearing whether you are well or ill. I have just looked over all your letters — four in number, in six years ... I am persuaded some of your letters must have been lost, either in Sydney or on the passage out — you must have written more than four in the six years I have been absent ... I received a half sheet from Mother in Sydney, which only made me wish for more ...

The Earl Stanhope after six years in the southern hemisphere was on its return voyage to England late in 1837 when, in 60° south latitude and 152° west longitude it was battered by a severe storm accompanied by snow. She lost all her spars and rigging except the main and mizzen masts and main yardarm. Decks were sometimes covered with two inches of ice. Second Mate Deucher, a former fellow apprentice of Jack's who was
looking forward to reunion with his Edinburgh family ‘was pitched from the main topsail-yard on the forecastle and killed’. Another man’s leg was broken while Jack’s feet and legs swelled and shed all their skin after two weeks of scarcely ever being in dry clothes. The ship finally limped into Rio de Janeiro on 15 February 1838 after unexpected ‘happy weather’ on rounding Cape Horn. Its refit at Rio by Portuguese carpenters took several months and was very costly.9

William, on receiving two letters from Jack while he was at Rio, was gratified by news that his son was Chief Mate and on a salary of 6 pounds a month. Jack desperately hoped his father might be in London on business when the ship arrived about June, for he was obliged to stay there until the crew was discharged. He revealed only too clearly, in sea-faring imagery, how little he could depend on his father for financial help and how bound he was to his mother’s uncles: ‘I have several letters from Messrs. W[alker] to be delivered personally, and where I suppose my marks and deeps are laid down from the best authorities — I hope accurately … I have always tried to deserve a good character, and have done more hard work for their employ than I should like to do again without being better remunerated’.10

When Jack eventually returned to Larvik later in that year, he found in addition to his parents and the younger children, his Aunt Annie from Perth and also Julia and Mary who had been living with her. ‘How delightful a meeting you must have had’, David wrote from Wallerawang, ‘and poor Jack, after his eight years of toil, privation, suffering and hardship, to find himself again amongst hearts that beat to his own’. He also knew how difficult it was for this brother to express his ‘keen feelings’. Jack confirmed that these were easier to express in writing than speech. Back in London in 1839 he told his father how humiliated he had been to have no riches to lay at his feet after all those years at sea. He even felt that his presence at the family table each day added to the strains of balancing the housekeeping budget.11

Nor was there much joy for Jack in London. While his uncle, John Archer, seemed to be doing well enough in the foundry business, he found his Uncle Sandy ‘quite destitute’. And so was Jack, for there was an over-supply of Chief Mates. After three months idleness he was obliged to work his passage to Sydney in the *Achilles* which sailed in March. He
had to share steerage accommodation with the Second Mate and carpenter. And to add to his woes, to equip himself he had to borrow from William Walker who advised him to stay in the colony. Jack saw this as 'transportation', in the convict sense, for a few more years. He complained that this was 'a melancholy prospect for a person who is so fond of his home as I am'.

With Walker assistance in Sydney, Jack obtained command of a coastal clipper, the *Essington*. Suddenly life looked much better. He believed he had a bright future with a salary of 10 pounds a month and 2% of gross freight and passage. Soon afterwards in Launceston, Tasmania, the vessel was sold to Mr Griffiths, but as this man was identified as Mrs William Walker's brother, Jack decided to stay with the ship. He soon discovered that Griffiths was 'an eccentric genius', formerly a ship's carpenter who, unassisted, built a small schooner which he used to put gangs of seal hunters on the islands of Bass Strait. Knowing his father's interest in boats and sailing, Jack used the language of an old salt to describe the clipper's capabilities:

The "Essington" is a fine vessel, a regular clipper. I can lash the helm a little a-weather and take nine knots out of her on a bowline, she is very dry and as stiff as a church, in fact I am quite proud of her. Her rigging is not very good and I have persuaded Mr G. to give her new [rigging], which was not very difficult as he was on board going to Port Fairy and saw the deficiencies. We lost the fore top gallant mast and main gaff one night, and parted two shrouds of the lower rigging, so that I thought we were going to have another "Earl Stanhope" job.

This was not Jack's last voyage to Port Fairy on the southern coast of what is now Victoria. It is notorious for high seas beating up from the Antarctic and for many shipwrecks in early times. In describing Port Fairy to his father, Jack asked him to imagine 'a fine sandy beach running diagonally from Hummerberg to Stavaern [Stavern] and you have the harbour of Port Fairy, open from SSW to East'. In southerly gales his vessel almost disappeared under the spray and sand stirred up from the sea bed. Jack had long since 'learned the ropes' and was now proud to be a master mariner.

Less than a year later he found himself, somewhat to his surprise, learning completely different skills on land. After being tossed about in
Bass Strait for a year, he decided to accept David’s invitation to become a
land-lubber. He had discovered that he was no better as a businessman
than his father. He had speculated and dealt in anything he could buy and
thought he could sell — from fruit to goats and pigs, from timber to spirits
and tobacco — and made no money nor lost any. But as he told his mother,
‘I am, as you Norwegians would say, ligeglad (just as happy)’. A new life
awaited.
All the young Archers were forced into early maturity by their father’s business failures. At Wallerawang Station, a two day ride from Sydney, David at the age of twenty-one took on the role of father-figure to young Tom, fourteen, as well as mentor to Willie, nineteen. He was tall and strongly built, dour by nature though not without self-criticism. His classical education at Laurvig Grammar School in Greek and Latin was not much use in the bush, but his technical training in Scotland made him adept in the use of tools. The Walkers then decided he should learn the business of sheep and wool production on the land granted to James Walker in New South Wales in 1824. This was one of the earliest large sheep runs to be established in Australia on a land grant. David Archer was therefore one of the first jackeroos — although this term for a young gentleman gaining colonial experience did not come into use until the 1870s.

Migration from Norway to a convict colony on the other side of the world provided the young Archers with a cultural change of enormous magnitude. For David first, moving from a large house full of noisy children to a primitive bush dwelling in the Blue Mountains with the superintend­ent, Andrew Brown, as his only companion was equally strange. When he heard in 1835 that Jack’s ship had returned to Sydney his mind was ‘entirely engrossed’ by the thought of their meeting. ‘Judge of my feelings, separated as I am by thousands of miles from all I hold dearest — Jack is within 100 miles of me …’ he told Kate.¹

David served his three year apprenticeship in what was to become a
tradition for jackeroos in later generations — first learning how to carry out the meanest tasks such as sheep-washing, then progressing to mustering, droving and eventually becoming manager. David was promoted first to assistant superintendent and in 1838 he became manager. An unusual duty fell to him in 1836. He acted as guide to Charles Darwin then on his scientific voyage around the world in the *Beagle*. Darwin had a letter of introduction to Andrew Brown who sent David out with him for the day. Darwin’s Journal entry for 19 January reads:

> Early on the next morning Mr Archer (the joint superintendent and the only other free man on the farm) took me kangaroo hunting. We continued riding the greater part of the day; but my usual ill-fortune in sporting followed us and we did not see a kangaroo or even a wild dog.

Darwin depicted Wallerawang Station as running about 15,000 sheep under the care of shepherds, some as far as 100 miles ‘beyond the limits of this colony on unoccupied ground’. He did not appear to count the Aborigines. While Wallerawang itself was within the nineteen counties (legal boundaries for settlement) its out-stations followed the Castlereagh River. Normally there were about forty assigned convicts, but more during sheep shearing. Darwin judged these to be ‘hardened profligate men’. James Walker as absentee owner believed they were kept under the control of their overseers, but Brown and Archer were obliged to attend Hartley Courthouse on three occasions soon after Darwin’s visit to testify against several of their assigned servants for violent behaviour.

The ‘squatting age’ commenced in earnest in 1835 when, following the introduction of free immigration, ‘the graph suddenly took an upward curve’. Government policy confirmed the change from a convict colony to one welcoming free settlers. New South Wales was seen as a sound place for investment. After all, it was capable of becoming one vast sheep run and the demand for wool remained strong in England and Europe. David Archer was soon to discover that financial theories are very different from reality. Meantime the immigration graph again shot up with news of settlement at Port Phillip. David was amazed that Willie should have heard of this place in London. But the English papers were full of it and Willie had half expected to be part of the migration to that place. The Walkers decided otherwise.

Tom’s extreme youth at the time of migration was largely the result of
an earlier and near fatal attack of typhoid fever after only one year at Laurvig Grammar School. It seems that on recovering he was allowed to run free, sailing in summer and skating and tobogganing in winter. When Willie returned for a farewell visit in the Spring of 1837 after several years technical training in Scotland, Tom’s future was a key subject for discussion. His father asked his old friend, Sir Hyde Parker, again visiting Larvik in his yacht Turquoise, whether Tom should go to Scotland or Australia. Decades later Tom recalled Sir Hyde’s advice: ‘Tom is a fellow that will educate himself. Send him to Australia’. By the time Tom wrote these words he had long forgotten his early homesickness. Writing to his sister Kate on 14 July 1845 he described his true feelings:

It is just eight years this month (I think) since Willie and I left Laurvig — little I thought that evening when pulling to Malmo in the boat, that I should be separated for so long a time from the dearest of all places, containing all, or almost all, for which I care in the world. I was but a boy of fourteen and thought my destination was Scotland, and therefore did not feel the separation so much — but, had I known then that I should never visit you again until I had made Australia my home for so many years, I think I should have broke my heart …

While Sir Hyde might have pontificated, it was James and William Walker in London who sealed Tom’s fate. The Walker role as God ex machina was enacted just as it had been for Charles, Jack and David. Willie explained to his father that these gentlemen thought it ‘most advisable to send Tom out with me immediately as giving us a greater facility for improving ourselves both on the voyage out and in the colony’. Fortunately they were able to obtain intermediate accommodation on the ship — ‘a place of refuge and study separate from the rest of the little world’. There were also comforts denied those in steerage. But Walker’s benevolence came at a price, for all monies advanced had to be repaid by the brothers — with interest.

The boys’ daily routine on board began with a bath ‘if the days seemed likely to be hot’, a walk around the decks and then breakfast which they had to prepare for themselves. This consisted of tea, ship’s biscuit, a piece of cheese or perhaps meat salvaged from the previous day’s dinner. Then came Tom’s ‘favourite job of washing up’ while Willie prepared the ‘beef and duff or pork and pease pudding’ which they had on alternate days,
Wednesdays and Sundays excepted. On those days they had the luxury of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding.

After their duties were completed, they spent the mornings in reading, mathematical exercises or, occasionally, scrubbing their duck trousers. At one o'clock they served up their own dinner accompanied by half a pint of porter or wine and water. Their cabin companion was Swiss, servant to a Mr Campbell and his son and daughter. Willie enjoyed honing his French — a bonus from his five years at the Grammar School — in conversation with the Swiss. In the evening the two boys read, played cards or watched the sailors ‘dancing and skylarking’ until lights out at 10pm. Willie’s role as tutor during the four month voyage was somewhat interrupted by Tom’s severe attack of fever which kept him in bed for more than three weeks. As the porthole could not be opened in bad weather, which was much of the time, the cabin was often too dark for reading.

When they eventually reached Sydney they were disappointed to find they had missed Jack by two months. Tom did not think much of the town, but conceded the harbour was beautiful. Willie saw resemblances to Norway as they sailed through the heads and down harbour. Their trip over the Blue Mountains in a rough dray designated ‘Royal Mail’, and on the line of road laid out by Major Thomas Mitchell, nearly shook them to pieces. The dray was so full of mail bags and lumber that there was little room for passengers. The countryside was ‘quite barren and desolate’ as the result of bushfires. Their depression increased when David failed to meet them at the Wallerawang turnoff — he had not received news of their arrival. They stayed the night at Cooerwee with Andrew Brown who by this time had taken up land there. Ahead of them lay a long, hot walk to the head station where they took David completely by surprise.

Willie and Tom arrived at Wallerawang on the last day of shearing so were, in effect, pitched in at the deep end of the mysteries regarding wool production. A few days later when they went into the bush with David to bring in fire-wood, they were more fortunate than Charles Darwin in the previous year. They saw four kangaroos. While Tom was excited by this, he found the bush ‘such a queer looking place’ that he didn’t know what to say about it to his father. Within days Willie was instructed in the mysteries of ‘reaping [timber], jobbing and erecting a hut’. He had already been in
at the kill of two dingoes and two snakes. His colonial experience had begun in earnest.

Tom had a gentler baptism. While Willie was away with David at one of the out-stations, Tom had the pleasant task of riding to Bathurst ‘to muster the men’s tickets’ — that is, to collect tickets-of-leave for the convict employees. By September he was competent enough on horseback to ride up to the Wolgan out-station to fetch a horse for Willie. These chores did nothing to ease his sense of being put down in an alien world. He confessed to his father: ‘Before leaving home I was anxious enough to see the world, but I have already seen enough to convince me there is no place like home’. Had he foreseen the long and eventful fifteen years which would pass before he saw Tolderoden again, it is likely that his heart would have ‘broke’ again.

While David was in charge of the day to day running of Wallerawang and all its out-stations, overall administration was carried out by Thomas Walker, head of William Walker & Co. in Sydney. He had a plan to move the head station further up the Castlereagh to Loowie, but awaited James Walker’s probable return to the colony. Willie thought the climate of Wallerawang would alleviate James’ ‘asthmatic complaint’. But James had more than a health problem. His nephew Edward Walker wrote:

I cannot say whether Uncle James intends going out [to Australia] or not — he vacillates incessantly & is as “unstable as water” — between ourselves, I doubt whether he would be able to do much even if he were out — Of course he looks upon everybody in the gloomiest light & groans most lamentably over Farm affairs and the Colony in general.

Edward and his Uncle James, accompanied by their wives, did set sail for Australia soon afterwards to ‘commence the patriarchal trade of wool grower and breeder of cattle’. Despite his alleged vacillations, James settled down at Wallerawang and remained there for the rest of his life. Edward, however, disliked the ‘patriarchal trade’ and returned to England barely a year later. Even so, his influence on David Archer’s life was to be far-reaching.

Meanwhile Willie and Tom were rapidly gaining colonial experience — sometimes with a dash of derring-do, for there was always the chance of encountering a convict ‘bolter’. Mustering horses at Wolgan on one occasion, they set off home after sunset on fresh horses ‘at a good trot ...
making the mountains echo to *Gamle Norge, Scots Wha Hae* etc.* W*olgan comprised an area bounded by precipitous cliffs which made it, with hurdles across the opening, a natural paddock for horses. Rolf Boldrewood in his novel, *Robbery Under Arms* (1882) depicted this as a bushranger's lair. Bushrangers were no mere figment of the imagination to the young Archers. Eight months after arriving at Wallerawang Tom told his father:

> I have just got word that one of our men has taken a bushranger about 2 miles from here. There were three of them in a cavern just above his hut. The man loaded his gun with buttons for want of lead and went up to their fire, when two of them ran away and he succeeded in stopping the third. If there is no heavy charge against him the fellow will get 50 lashes and be returned where he left ...  

A year later, what consternation at home when Tom's letter arrived with news of David's clash with a gang:

David was [in Sydney] a few weeks ago as evidence against three bushrangers whom he captured; they were found guilty of Murder and hanged the other day. As two of them were our own men I could not refrain from going to see the execution. While standing at the foot of the gallows, one of the men whom I had known quite well up the country recognised me and kept his eyes fixed on me till I was obliged to look another way. I can scarcely describe the horror I felt, and I promised myself never to see the like again ...  

David has succeeded in getting a prisoner, who was with him at the capture, his ticket-of-leave, and two tickets-of-leave men their unconditional pardon, by writing a letter to the Judge, who forwarded it to the Governor ... The whole colony is overrun by bushrangers still. I have been at the capture of three in the neighbourhood of Wallerowang, and Mr Walker has captured some since I came down [to Sydney], and I believe shot one who showed fight ... Mrs W is so frightened that Mr W cannot leave her to go shearing at Biambil, where David and Willie are at present ...  

Willie, in the second year of his apprenticeship, had his first solo trip 'up country' to Loowie (250 km from Sydney, near present-day Mudgee) carrying his quart-pot, rations and swag on horseback. The out-station was undergoing great improvements with sawyers, bricklayers and fencers all busy. In addition to the dwelling house with detached kitchen there were blacksmith and carpenter shops, woolshed, stables, barns, immigrant housing and convict huts. The large number of buildings on sheep and cattle stations continued to be necessary well into the twentieth century, but
with station-hand and jackaroo quarters instead of convict and immigrant housing.

Tom, despite his continuing conviction that Norway was the finest place in the world, gradually began to find pleasure in the bush. Early in his second year he was proud to be entrusted with starting ‘a flock of wedders’ to Sydney and preparing a horse team. He wrote an entertaining account of a trip in the bush for Kate to read to her children — one of whom would experience the same kind of thing in 1855. He worked from 9am to 6pm with an hour for lunch, or to 5pm without lunch. But as he told his mother, ‘a growing young fellow like me should always have food in the middle of the day’. Did she remember, he asked, how he used to be in Norway ‘going with those half-starved Englishmen [sic.] all day without my dinner’.14

Late in 1839 Tom, now about 16, was sent to Sydney to further his education in the office of William Walker & Co. He expressed himself highly delighted with town life, with the exception of its expense. He amused and educated himself with library books obtained through David’s membership. At the office his chief duty was to copy accounts, make up papers for England and collect rents. He found the latter disagreeable. ‘If I was not so stalwart … I think I would sometimes get a knockdown’, he told Willie, ‘you can scarcely conceive the insolence and the independence of Sydney shopkeepers and tradesmen’. The great attraction of Sydney for Tom was its harbour. He was able to have a swim or row a boat before work — ‘upon the whole my amusements are much like the Norwegians and therefore I am very fond of them’.15 The loan of Thomas Walker’s boat, also visits to a Scottish couple he had known in Norway, helped assuage home-sickness. But it was David, not the Walkers, who paid his board and other expenses ‘so that I may learn to use my pen and my head a little better than I could learn at Wallerowang’. James Walker and David also agreed that sixteen year old Tom needed the company of other young people and opportunities for recreation and social life.

David now devised a plan to establish his own sheep station with his own flocks of sheep, Walkers having paid part of his wages in livestock. This meant that for the past several years he had a modest wool cheque — part of which went to his father, part in paying Tom’s expenses. His plan was to overland his stock northwards in a search for ‘vacant crown
land' on which to establish his own sheep station. That this would coincide with practical and economic disasters was mercifully hidden from him when late in 1839 he arranged a partnership with Edward Walker. Edward, having admitted that he was as much suited to the bush 'as a cockney is to sport a kilt' was the silent half of the new firm of David Archer & Co.

Edward and his wife Harriet were at this time in Sydney awaiting permission from his father and uncle to leave the colony. 'I am chained by the leg to this doghole of a town', he told David. He complained of the expense and his inability to find a decent house. Harriet disliked the colony as much as Edward, so it was a great relief to both when James Walker finally signed the agreement which allowed them to depart for London early in 1840.

Tom, nearing the end of his commercial and social education, also eagerly awaited his release, the call to join David in overlanding the stock. At sixteen he was already more than six feet tall and broad of shoulder. Edward Walker assessed him as having 'the character of being shrewd, active and willing'. Mrs James Walker had been loath to part with him at Wallerawang for she had great faith in him as a protector 'whose size alone is not without its value here'. But while David and Tom were poised ready for new worlds to open before them, Willie was to become superintendent at Wallerawang.

Their years of colonial experience wrought mighty changes in the three brothers. When Jack and Charlie eventually renewed acquaintance with them, they were amazed not only by physical growth, but also manners. In that age before the invention of the camera, mental images had to suffice. And so it was that when Charlie met Willie, last seen at the age of twelve or thirteen, he found 'a fine, strong, good looking fellow'. He couldn't imagine 'where he picked up his really good manner, buried as he is in the bush'. Jack, on his reunion with Willie, found the comparison odious: 'I had no idea till I met Willy that I was such a despicable little fellow. Davie was not much out of the way, but Willy is a regular stunner'.

The colony itself, as well as the Archers, was undergoing transition. The squatting age was to enjoy only a few brief years of optimism before being plunged into the pattern of recurring drought and low wool prices. As early as 1838 James Walker, then in London, had 'groaned lamentably' over colonial affairs, but he was to learn harder lessons. When transportation of
The Young Colonials: David, Tom, Willie

Convicts was abolished in 1840 the squatters wondered how they would survive without this cheap, though troublesome, form of labour. In those times of unfenced runs, wool growing was extremely labour intensive. David Archer setting out in high spirits in 1840 was to encounter so many set-backs that he must have thought that, like his father, he had been born under an unlucky star.
The great overland adventure was about to begin. Tom’s urban education had ended with his father distinguishing him as 'a Prince of Correspondents' after receiving a well-written letter free from spelling mistakes. Now 'the prince' was back in the bush, literally jumping for joy at the opportunity to mount a spirited horse once more. He rode along loudly singing his own composition:

I love, oh how I love to ride  
With the silent bush boy alone by my side —  
There is rapture to vault on the champing steed  
And to bound away with the eagles speed.¹

David left Tom at Loowie to organise the droving of several flocks of sheep to Biambil, the furthest out-station, approximately 200 kilometres from Wallerawang, while he rode to the town of Maitland to order supplies. Meantime Tom was having difficulty in obtaining non-convict labour and was fed up with the three convicts allocated to him. They did as little work as possible and made plenty of mischief. He regretted he had no hand-cuffs ‘to quickly bring them to reason’.² He was hopeful of obtaining Aborigines who, he said, very often made good shepherds. Otherwise he and David would have to do the shepherding themselves as well as organise drays, supplies, tents and other necessities.

Tom had matured rapidly during the preceding year and was confident of becoming David’s right-hand man. Having received no salary during
his time with William Walker & Co., he was excited by his contract with David Archer & Co. with an income of 50 pounds for each of the first two years rising to 100 pounds by the fourth. He had seen enough of life in the colony to make him realise how fortunate he and David and Willie had been to gain experience in ‘an old establishment’ rather than setting out on this venture as new-chums. He knew of young men coming out to New South Wales with a few thousand pounds, but no practical experience, who had failed miserably. Many of these ‘took to the bottle’, were fleeced by artful operators, and finally were obliged to give up. According to Tom the ‘tough chaps’ got on pretty well. He and David were already tough chaps, but even they would be tested.

When David returned, the brothers set out for New England (now part of northern New South Wales) with 5,000 sheep and a mob of horses. Tom thought this not a bad beginning ‘if fickle fortune favours us’. But fickle fortune held the aces. The colony was approaching the end of the wool boom. During David’s six years in New South Wales wool exports had increased from 4.5 million pounds in weight in 1835 to 10 million in 1839. Australian wool on English markets exceeded every other source except Germany. What is more, the quality was surpassed only by Germany’s finest wools. The English market was soon to react to oversupply.

David and Tom had not progressed very far on the great trek when they experienced a serious set-back. The dreaded disease, scab, broke out in their flocks and they were obliged by law to stay where they were — in the District of Bligh, north of present day Dubbo. David described the scab as a cutaneous disease, something like itch in humans. As a contagious disease it posed a serious threat to the colonial wool industry as well as a personal one to David Archer & Co.

David sent Tom on to Biralían with a pack-horse load of supplies and a dozen Aborigines to strip bark and erect a temporary woolshed. His helpers belonged to the Wiradury tribe and were ‘fine, good-humoured, jovial fellows’. Tom found them great company. Three of these young men, given the names of Micky, Jimmy and Billy, would accompany the Archers all the way to Moreton Bay and remain until becoming homesick for their own country. But while these men were so helpful on the great trek, it was a different story further north where the Aborigines were so unlike their ‘kindly, honest and peaceful Wiradury friends from the Castlereagh’.
On one occasion on the Darling Downs Tom was obliged to defend himself with 'an old double-barrelled fowling piece, cut down to a carbine and with one lock broken and useless'. Fortunately he was not required to fire it.

They were still at Birallan in January 1841 when Jack finally accepted their invitation to try the lifestyle of the aspiring squatters. The reunion with his three brothers (Willie was there on a visit) 'made a merry quartet'. Willie and Jack had not seen one another for ten years. Willie thought Jack resembled their Uncle John Archer both in features and manner. Jack decided after noting Willie's size and good looks that he himself was 'a pigmy'. But after a short trial he decided he liked the bush better than expected. Even so, he was more than a little satirical about his brothers' habits while in camp and shepherding the sheep:

As it has been the fashion of late to send you journals etc. of travels — I shall only say that we shot, hunted, eat, drank and lay down to sleep under the trees. By the bye, that laying under the trees is a horrid bore as you are forced, in order to keep in the shade, to move around the tree with the sun, or run the risk of brain fever. We ran short of tea, and David gave me some herb tea, which had the same effect as Dr Bach's Hyldetee [Elder tea] and made me svede [sweat] so, that I was afraid I should run into my boots ... 

Sailor Jack found the countryside so dry that he wondered how long it would be before he could have a sail. He hoped as they moved closer to the coast there would be a stream big enough 'to float a boat'. He admitted he was 'rather deficient in the grand accomplishments of a bushman', most especially in riding. A year or so earlier when for the first time ever he got on a horse's back it resented him so much that, as he told his father, 'it pitched me over the bows'. Jack's sea-faring language was to be the butt of many jokes, especially from the vivacious Tom. But Jack was also picking up the colonial idiom in such terms as 'up the country' (or down) and 'bolted' — first applied to escaping convicts but a generic term by the 1840s. Thus when David was delayed on a business trip to Sydney, Jack reported, 'Tom is of the opinion he is either married, or has bolted, but I ... suppose he has met with some difficulty down the country'. (Jack's underlining.)

The arrival of the sheep with their convict shepherds at Birallan led to frantic activity. Sheep-washing in the cold winter waters of 'Tarrabul Billy's
Creek' was followed by veterinary treatment before shearing. After working in the icy water, Jack and Tom warmed themselves with hot coffee or tea, but the men were issued with a daily ration of rum. As each individual sheep was washed it was lifted into the 'poisonous solution' (containing nicotine) in a tub, with the plunging animal splashing it over the operator. This caused finger tips to swell and nails to turn black, so naturally the men objected. Tom, however, persevered and was rewarded (much later) by David Archer & Co. with the gift of 50 sheep.  

Tom first experienced the life of a shepherd at Birallan, assisted by his collie dog Yarrow. The convict shepherd he replaced had allowed 200 of his flock of 1400 to be killed by dingoes. Tom, by taking the flock further afield to good grass, was able to keep the contented animals together at night. He and Yarrow between them did not lose one sheep. There was one great advantage for Tom during this lonely two-month period. While his sheep safely grazed he leaned his long back against a tree trunk, reading and 'spouting Shakespeare' to his heart's content. Sir Hyde Parker had forecast accurately that Tom was a boy who would educate himself. David ensured that his travelling menage was well stocked with books.

Jack's legs might have been short and bandy, but he was delighted after a few weeks on dry land to out-walk long-legged Tom. He put this down to the three or four quarts of milk (3.5 to 4.5 litres) he drank each day, also the honey which the Aborigines bartered for flour. Despite his years of rough living on a whaler, Jack thought his brothers barbaric in some respects. While on the road with the sheep they often ate with the Aborigines who would cut a possum out of a tree, singe the hair off, and throw it on the fire and eat it. But while Jack easily picked up white-fellow idiom, he found Aboriginal names of more than two syllables 'terrible jawbreakers'.

The frustrating year at Birallan eventually ended and the party set out on 'the grand journey' in May 1841. In addition to David, Jack and Tom and the three Castlereagh Aborigines, there were four shepherds, two cooks and a watchman, a bullock driver and a Namoi River Aborigine named Billy Grey. The cooks were the only free white men, the others were emancipists — that is, former convicts — all Irishmen. David was, in Tom's words, 'head boss and managing director', Jack was in charge of stores and Tom himself was 'aide-de-camp, butcher and ... general useful'.

Despite this self-deprecation he was put in charge of the first mob to leave Birallan. They headed towards the Warrumbungle Ranges under the guidance of Dusty Bob and his woman. Bob did much more than find the route, he also introduced Tom to one of the delicacies of bush tucker — wichetty grubs roasted in the ashes or even eaten raw. Rock wallaby, too, ‘seasoned with the best of all possible sauces, hunger’.

Tom’s experiences had already matured him beyond his seventeen years and given him the necessary ability and self-confidence to manage men and sheep. He sometimes surprised himself. On one occasion on the long trek he took a swim in an unusually clear waterhole in a mountain stream. Like the young Narcissus, he saw his image reflected in the clear water and was ‘quite startled’ to discover he was ‘nearly grown up. The knowledge of this inspired me with much veneration for myself …’ But in typical Tom-fashion, he then admitted he hadn’t noticed a similar attitude in anyone else. Leaving the sheep with Dusty Bob at an unoccupied sheep station near the ranges, Tom returned to Birallan for the lambing ewes. He and Yarrow had plenty of action as the young lambs were constantly being attacked by dingoes.

By the time the main party was well under way, Jack found the lifestyle very primitive ‘living in tents and subsisting by hunting’. He commented in a letter to his mother:

If philosophers are right in saying that the life of a hunter is only the first advance from savage life and the keeper of flocks and herds the next, we are fast relapsing to barbarism. I begin already to feel a horrible propensity for underdone beef and mutton — a savage symptom.

Life on the road was not completely devoid of excitement, at least for Tom. In the vicinity of ‘Coonambil’ he had a stirring horseback chase after a dingo. He ran it to earth and finished it off with a knife while Yarrow held it by the throat. Most of the time though passed in routine tasks such as the night watches. On one of these Tom wrote to Willie: ‘… the last page of this is written by moonlight before our tent door where I am sitting watching sheep till 12 o’clock when I call Jack.’ The brothers shared one tent, the hired hands another. The Aborigines slept around their own campfire.

The trekkers reached the true Darling Downs country in August 1841, its splendid appearance impressing upon Tom how disastrous the year’s
delay had been. They were excluded from what was later judged to be some of the most productive country in Australia. Honest men themselves, the Archers believed what they were told — that all the land had been taken up. They discovered later that they had been misled.

Moreton Bay remained a convict settlement from 1824 until proclaimed open to free settlement in May 1842. The first squatters on the Darling Downs in 1840 were officially excluded from Brisbane Town, though towards the end this rule was not strictly enforced. David Archer's plan to take his flocks to the Downs and depasture them there on a squatting licence of 10 pounds a year was part of a loose arrangement which Governor Bourke introduced in 1834. It was obvious by this time that the flood of free settlers could not be contained within arbitrary geographical limits. In what was to become Queensland in December 1859, nothing was then known of the interior except the eastern Darling Downs which Allan Cunningham traversed in 1827. His description of their valuable sheep pastures remained locked away in his Journal or official reports for more than a decade. This, and the exclusiveness of Moreton Bay as a convict settlement, ensured the Aboriginal people on the Downs of another thirteen years undisputed occupation. The first European settlers, the three Leslie brothers, reached the Condamine River with their 5,000 sheep in 1840 and there established Toolburra Station.

But for his scabby sheep David and party would have been on the Downs about September 1840, not long after the Leslies and the other aspiring squatters who followed them. Many, like the Leslies, had arrived in the colony with Scottish capital. The Archers had only their Scottish blood, their sheep and the will to succeed, despite the loss of a year. Passing the future sites of Allora and Clifton, Tom and Jack continued with the sheep towards Hodgsons Gap. They were to meet David where Drayton would soon be established. They then had another 180 kilometres to cover before reaching the run which David had selected on the upper Brisbane River, not far from the Glasshouse Mountains. Captain James Cook had named these on 17 May 1770 for 'their singular form of elivation [sic.] which very much resembles glass houses'.

Tom, accompanied by a local Aborigine, lost no time in climbing one of these, Mount Beerwah. He was touched by the wild beauty of the scene. Nor was he disappointed in
David’s ‘promised land’ on which they bestowed its Aboriginal name, Durundur:

You will have heard of our arrival in this part of the Colony and I am glad to say we have every reason to be highly satisfied with the change for a great number of reasons, but principally that we are now within 50 miles of Brisbane, and the country is far better supplied with water and grass . . .

The excitement of the party on seeing the chosen site, following the bitter disappointments of the previous eighteen months, provided a much needed boost to David’s morale. The hardships of the past year had not been in vain. It had opened all their eyes to the vastness of Australia, inspiring Tom in particular. Very early in the expedition he revealed one of his dreams to his father:

I wish I had a few thousands to spare, I would soon know what this continent is made of from Spencer Gulf to the Gulf of Carpentaria. There is a large river discovered in the north which is called the Victoria up which one of Her Majesty’s ships proceeded several miles and the boats still further. I believe the country is beautiful on its banks but it must be exceedingly hot. I dare say you have heard as much about it as we, for we are entirely out of the world here and it is seldom a newspaper reaches us . . .

The published account of John Lort Stokes’ marine survey of Australia’s northern coast, 1839–41, including his naming of the ‘Plains of Promise’ at the base of the Gulf of Carpentaria, was enough to inspire any young adventurer. Tom could be sure that his father would locate this on his world atlas without realising that several thousand miles lay between Birallan and the Gulf. By the time the trekkers reached Durundur, after tailing sheep for a thousand kilometres, Tom himself had become a realist regarding Australian distances. But this would not deter him from becoming ‘Tom — alias the great explorer’ in the near future.

Jack’s letter to his father dated ‘Head of River Brisbane, abt. 8th November 1841’ is the first from the new station. He paddled in a bark canoe ‘found hauled up on the banks of this river’ and was pleased to feel himself ‘afloat again’:

This country is very beautiful compared to anything I have hitherto seen in New South Wales . . . Along the banks of the creeks and round the bases of the mountains are belts of cedar and thickly leaved trees, amongst which are
interwoven numerous vines and rattans, so as to form an impenetrable shade at noonday and which have quite a tropical appearance ... I am employed at present erecting some temporary huts of bark which the blacks cut for me ...

The first great overland journey had ended safely, the future appeared full of promise. There had been no loss of life, no serious accident and only one minor conflict with Aborigines. And it seemed that David’s choice of land only 80 kilometres from a port made Durundur an ideal situation for a sheep station. Several years would pass before they realised that lush tropical grasses, high summer rainfall and high humidity provided the worst possible conditions for sheep raising and wool production.
David selected the name ‘Durundur’ (local Aboriginal name for Moreton Bay Ash) for Archer & Co.’s sheep station in the Brisbane Valley 80 kilometres north of Brisbane, but it was Tom who dubbed the managing director ‘Laird of Durundur’. The ‘laird’ himself was so weighed down by practical and business matters during the first three months that he left both home correspondence and hut and yard building to his brothers.

Jack, more at home on a stormy sea than behind a flock of wethers, had one skill which Tom lacked. He was handy with his tools. As soon as the sheepyards and shearing shed were complete, Jack began building a house for themselves and huts for the station hands. All the building materials were close at hand. Nothing had to be purchased in Brisbane and paid for in cash. Jack had them all snugly housed by Christmas 1841. Proud of his success, he described the ‘homestead’ to Kate:

We reside at present in a hut, over which is built a bark roof projecting several feet in front, so as to form a sort of verandah which is our sitting room, the hut being our bedroom. Our furniture consists of a table made of slabs split from the tree and fixed upon posts sunk in the ground, three-legged stools of the same material, and one shelf. Our cooking is performed in large three-legged pots, and our crockery consists of tin plates, dishes of the same material, and three iron spoons. Our knives we carry in our pockets, and when there are Fremmade [strangers] here we make forks of wooden skewers; when by ourselves this is considered an unnecessary refinement. We eat mutton and damper (bread baked in the ashes) and drink tea three times a day — a quart each time … 1
Before long the garden flourished with all kinds of vegetables to supplement the water-melons planted on arrival and, most importantly, to counteract the monotony of mutton and damper. Jack soon learned to use his skills as a 'breeches maker' during rainy weather. He complained that it was difficult to obtain duck (heavy cotton material) wide enough for him to cut out trousers 'for certain parts of David's huge frame'.

The 'laird' and his brothers, snugly though simply housed, began to enjoy a lifestyle unknown to them at Wallerawang and its out-stations. There they seldom met anyone except 'swell stockmen' or those who thought themselves better but were generally 'a parcel of profane drunkards and bullies'. At Durundur several of their neighbours had much in common with the Archers. The brothers Bigge who had settled at Reedy Creek were 'rather gentlemanly persons'. Their immediate neighbour was 'Mr McKenzie the eldest son of a Scotch Baronet ... here to initiate a younger brother in the mysteries of our profession. We are fortunate to have him as a neighbour'. Had Tom possessed the Scottish gift of 'Second Sight' he might have seen his young brothers, Sandy and Jamie, as mature adults married to two sisters, Minnie and Louie MacKenzie, daughters of Robert Ramsay MacKenzie, the younger of the Archers' neighbours in 1842. Even more strangely, Tom would soon find himself 'rival in love' to Robert Ramsay MacKenzie.

It was David who established the continuing Archer tradition of hospitality, but it was Tom who formed the friendships. The contrast in nature between these two brothers is epitomised in the following incident. Thomas Walker had written to David for advice, adding: 'Few persons in the Colony can be more capable than you are, by experience and judgement to supply the information I am in want of'. On hearing this Tom called it 'flapdoodle' and began 'spouting it with mock solemnity whenever Davie says anything sage'. Thomas Walker's judgement was indeed sound. Squatters all around Durundur were 'going under', David by careful management kept his concern afloat. Wool prices were at their lowest — one shilling a pound — and sheep were worthless. Tom explained in 1843 why he had no money, even though his salary was nominally higher than Willie's at Wallerawang. David Archer & Co. were obliged to pay him, not in cash, but in live sheep.

A change came to the Durundur establishment in 1843 with the arrival
of Charles. 'You will perceive, I daresay without much astonishment, that I have quitted Sydney and the desk and taken to the bush', he told Kate. His meeting with Jack and Davie at the German Missionary Station 'a few miles from Brisbane Town' was his first sight of Jack since they had left Larvik together in 1830 — 'imagine how rejoiced I was ... after such a separation'. But he was less impressed by their ride through 'the interminable forest, something like the Bogeskoven' (the beech wood near Larvik). The monotony was relieved by a lunch break in which Charlie learnt the secret of making good billy tea. Before nightfall they camped by 'a pretty enough brook', a term he would soon change to 'a good creek'. Charles did not enjoy his introduction to bush camping:

Jack persuaded me to lie closer to our fire than I thought quite safe, and my sleep was haunted with confused dreams of being roasted alive and miraculously saved by the inter-position of some good spirit drenching me with water ... several heavy showers having fallen during the night. We were fortunate enough to find our horses close at hand in the morning, which is not always the case; they occasionally stray a considerable distance towards home, in which case the traveller has to strap his saddle on his own back and thus equipped pursue bucephalus — this I should say was putting the saddle on the wrong horse.4

Within twenty-four hours Jack had taught Charlie the rudiments of pioneering. His arrival at Durundur enabled Jack to depart in the following year without leaving David short-handed. 'I have made a fresh start in life and have taken to my old trade again', Jack told his father in October 1844. His experiences at Durundur were not entirely wasted, for now he had charge of a coastal vessel in the cattle trade between Twofold Bay (NSW) and Hobart Town.5

The heavy losses from scab and consequent small wool clip incurred during the great trek had taken the edge off David's pleasure in finding good land. He was forced to borrow money from William Walker & Co. at 15 per cent interest. By the time this 'doleful news' reached his partner, Edward Walker in England, the colony itself was suffering economic depression. A year after breaking the bad news to Edward by letter in February 1842, David received the depressing reply. 'I confess I am somewhat apt to lose heart about my property in Australia'. Recalling his own distaste for bush life during his recent year at Loowie, Edward thought
the colony ‘a poor country’, backing up this by quoting his Uncle James Walker — ‘the nature of the country may furnish us with food, but nothing beyond’.\textsuperscript{6} Ironically, at Durundur they might have had no money but they were ‘furnished with food’ in abundance.

Within a few months William Walker & Co. were also in severe financial trouble as part of the general economic collapse. Edward blamed Thomas and Archibald Walker, managers of the Sydney firm, claiming they had been ‘cruel thorns’ in his ‘worthy and excellent’ father’s side for many a long day. William Walker was forced to return to Australia with his second wife and all his family. This event caused Edward, like Jeremiah, to denounce the colony and its people:

The fictitious prosperity of New South Wales is now stripped of its mask — it is and must be by nature a poor country. By prudent management and economy, wool growing may provide moderate means ... but as to making a fortune ... the wide dispersion with all its ramifications of my Father’s enormous Capital, has not been the least [of his worries]. The settlers ought certainly to raise a public monument to him as one of the greatest benefactors of New South Wales ...\textsuperscript{7}

As many of the settlers themselves were entirely ruined, some by exorbitant interest rates charged by merchants such as the Walkers, they could hardly be expected to see them as public benefactors. David himself surely smiled wryly on reading Edward’s letter, though perhaps relieved to find his partner blaming the colony rather than him personally for current financial failures.

Business was not the only matter on David’s mind at that time. Surely it is no coincidence that in the very year in which he and Edward became business partners, he began to think seriously about religion. Edward had been his mentor in this respect while they were both at Loowie in 1839. There is also evidence that the set-backs which David experienced on the long northern trek raised questions in his mind on the meaning of life. ‘You mentioned to me in your letter from Birallan’, wrote Edward in July 1841, ‘that the “great concern” had begun to occupy your mind’. He identified and underlined this as ‘Religion’, adding that its study provided the greatest blessing in life. Edward was at that time about to commence studies for the Anglican priesthood at Pembroke College, Cambridge University. He took this course because his father agreed to keep him and
his family while completing his studies. But he confessed to David that he would prefer to ‘set up a new sect’ of his own. This was an extremely significant statement in view of the influence he would exert over David’s life and also several of his brothers and a sister.

As well as their business partnership and religious ‘brotherhood’, Edward and David shared a complicated blood relationship. Edward’s father William was the uncle of David’s mother. This made Edward first cousin to David’s mother. His own mother was Elizabeth Griffith whose brother was the ship-owner for whom Jack worked before joining his brothers at Birallan. There is no record of marriage between William Walker and Elizabeth Griffith, but it might have been a common law arrangement. Edward, their first child, was born in Sydney in 1815, just one year before David’s birth in Scotland. Then in 1828 William Walker married Elizabeth Kirby in Sydney and they eventually had nine sons and two daughters. If the young men knew of Edward’s origins, they were not discussed. Of far greater importance to them was their eventual ‘brotherhood in Christ’.

Edward and David were as different in nature as were David and Tom. David’s character was already confirmed as steady and dependable with a strong sense of responsibility to his fellows, both black and white, when he settled at Durundur. Edward, on the other hand, was mercurial by nature and deeply emotional, though possessing a good sense of humour. His commitment to religion, although more than a little eccentric and narrow, did not exclude an interest in worldly wealth. In his later years he was a rich man. His decision to ‘study for the church’, was clearly influenced by his father’s willingness to provide a comfortable income for himself, Harriet and children during his four years in Cambridge. As he was already critical of some Church of England practices, this smacks of hypocrisy. His father, a strong supporter of the Scots Church in Sydney, had no objections to his son becoming Anglican, but fundamentalist relatives in Scotland were shocked.

Edward had been raised and educated in Perth where he attended the Sunday meetings of one of the sects — the Sandemanians. As breakaways from the established Church of Scotland, they shunned clergy, religious ceremonies and ecclesiastical buildings. They met in a plain hall. The study of the Scriptures formed the basis of these meetings where ‘perfect
unanimity' was said to be secured by 'the simple expedient of expelling any member who obstinately differs in opinion from the majority'. Robert Sandeman (an ancestor of Grace Archer) who married a daughter of John Glas (founder of the Glasites) himself founded the Sandemanians. Edward described to David in January 1841 the reaction of Perth relatives to his entry to the Church of England:

They are all, I am told, greatly shocked at my base ingratitude in deserting the Meeting House. Aunt Jane told me (with much pathos) that she once thought I never would have done it. Young John Todd was quite sure I never would ... I veritably believe they would have thought it a less disreputable trade to turn mountebank — the bigotry of these good people is quite extraordinary, for my own part I care very little as to which church I belong, as long as the Bible, the unadulterated Word of our Master, is read therein ... John Glas or John Wesley or John Bull ...

About the time that Edward completed his studies at Cambridge, David suggested he should come to the colony as a minister of the gospel. Edward's reply reveals much about the theological dilemma in which he found himself. He doubted if he would find it possible to be a minister of the established church in Australia 'as their views are so much tinged with the High Oxford doctrines'. He had many misgivings about the Church of England as he could see it 'leaning to Popery'.

Edward's concern was shared by many Anglicans in the mid-nineteenth century. The Tractarian Movement in Oxford and the Anglo-Catholic party within the church left evangelicals such as Edward — who had difficulty finding a Bishop to ordain him — in an unenviable position. Eventually the Bishop of Chester agreed to his ordination in 1845 and he became curate at Grappendhalt, filling the formerly empty church and leaving 'as many as 200 standing'. But the wealthy patron was less pleased than the people and asked the Bishop to revoke Edward's licence — which he did.

Two years later Edward and Harriet and several children were living in London where Edward held 'house meetings'. He told David he was 'jogging along waiting with anxiety for destiny'. In pressing David for money from their squatting enterprise, he explained that he refused to 'make a trade' of preaching and so received no stipend, nor any income from his father. But within a short time he found his elusive destiny
through the writings of John Walker of Dublin and became a Separatist, a fundamentalist sect similar to the Sandemanians. He confessed that in abandoning the 'priestly character' he was considered a fool by many — his father among them. He also admitted that he was one of those persons who, whether in the Sandemanian Meeting House or the Church of England, 'obstinately differed in opinion from the majority'. Such was David's 'sleeping partner' in Durundur Station. Nevertheless after reading John Walker's writings, as well as countless letters of persuasion from Edward, David found his own spiritual destiny.

Edward assured his 'dear Brother' that to one 'so lonely and isolated' his English brethren were called upon to bring consolation and encouragement. One of these, introduced to David by letter, was H. Johnson, head clerk in William Walker & Co.'s London office who was later to become his business partner. But an even more important introduction awaited David in Dublin.

David had a yearning for marriage. Ever since he has seen Edward and Harriet together at Loowie as a newly married and loving couple, he had the will to fall in love. Edward encouraged him in this and even young Tom had told Edward (before leaving Sydney) that he would like to see David with a good wife. There were few opportunities for meeting young women. As early as 1836, however, while David was still a very 'new chum' he and Andrew Brown spent Christmas with the Innes family at Port Macquarie. While it might not have been love at first sight, David admired young Annabella Innes. They met occasionally, as in 1839 when the Innes's were guests of the James Walkers at Wallerawang. Annabella's Journal reveals that 'Mr David Archer ... was most kind and patient in mounting us and helping us to manage our steeds'. On their departure, David accompanied their covered wagonette part of the way, assisting on a difficult part of the mountain road. When a part of the harness broke and the horses plunged, there was a dramatic incident which Annabella later recorded in her Journal:

... Mamma was thrown out on the back of one [horse], but escaped quite unhurt, and my uncle held them steady till Mr Archer helped us out the back of the van. After that the horses made a bolt ... but they were soon caught, [but as the wagon was smashed] I was mounted on Mr Archer's huge but quiet animal. There was a valise strapped in front of the saddle, and the off-side stirrup
was thrown over [to make a side-saddle] ... it was a long and weary ride, eerie in the pale moonlight ...  

After settling at Durundur, David on his occasional business trips to Sydney by coastal boat, sometimes called at Port Macquarie. One visit was especially significant. In May 1844, having first made 'more favourable financial arrangements' with William Walker & Co., David felt he could honourably contemplate marriage. Writing to his mother from the Port, he described its fine beaches and headlands, the rolling surf crashing on the rocks and 'throwing the spray high in the air' as on the Tolderodden rocks. What better place to pluck up courage for a proposal? None was made, it seems. Willie described his brother at this time as having 'acquired a staidness and solidity of character' which perhaps was too much for the young Annabella.

David returned to Port Macquarie by coastal boat to spend the Christmas of 1844 with the Innes family and to share another adventure with Annabella. On the Sunday after Christmas the whole party set out for church — eight ladies in the carriage and the gentlemen on horseback. The girls were not allowed to ride horses on Sundays. When they reached the bridge the water was over the road and the carriage became bogged. The question was, how were the ladies to be got out of the vehicle. Patrick Mackay (later to be a neighbour of the Archers on the Burnett) and David rode their horses into the deep water. While Mackay remained in his saddle with dry feet, the gallant David dismounted and 'proposed that he should take us off on his horse' reported Annabella. Eventually this was achieved with some trembling but also some laughter. With the arrival of help, the carriage was pulled out of the mud and the party arrived at the church after the sermon had begun. 'No doubt we looked rather remarkable with fiery red faces and dishevelled hair, our white dresses crumpled and bespattered with mud'. David surely thought one of the party remarkable for a different reason.

A few months after this visit, Edward Walker was 'peculiarly pleased' to congratulate his friend on his approaching marriage. Even though his information did not come from David, he assumed it was true:

... the young lady of your choice I am unacquainted with, altho' my sister Jane has been beforehand with you in mentioning her name which I understand is Miss Innes — of course you will let me know all the particulars, for the
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anxiety of my dear wife is not a little excited ... Kindest regards and best wishes to your bride and tell her we are old and sincere friends of yours who are exceedingly pleased that so desirable an event is about to take place ... I suppose you will build yourself something like a decent house and furnish it at least with two chairs ... 17

Edward and Harriet, secure in their own domestic bliss, appear to have read too much into Jane Walker's gossip and David's cautious hints concerning his courtship. Charles told his mother in August 1846, twenty months after the Christmas visit, that David intended visiting Port Macquarie again:

... to carry out his love operations in person — a very necessary step, as from what I know of the affair, I do not think Miss Innes, during his former visit to that port, had the least idea he was in love with her, and saw too little of him to form a just estimation of his character. I am sure a good wife would contribute greatly to Davie's happiness, and Tom and I, on this account as well as for our own sakes, are anxious to see this affair happily concluded ... 18

David's apparent shyness in proposing marriage to Miss Innes was in fact motivated by his poor finances. He told his father in 1843 that although he owned about 9,000 sheep there was no market for them and only poor returns for the wool. 'We can live, and that well, but can get no money ...' A statement he was hardly likely to repeat to the young lady or her mother. And so in 1846 when he was able to make more satisfactory arrangements with the Walkers, he felt he was in a position to propose marriage. Tom was aware that David's visit to Port Macquarie depended upon this, and thought it high time that 'the poor fellow should see some end to his difficulties'. 19 It was David himself who, for the first time, confirmed his hopes of marriage. Before leaving Sydney for Port Macquarie, he told his father that it was his intention to have his affair there 'brought to a final determination'. If successful he expected to be married in about twelve months. Even so, his letter concluded: 'At present I am in uncertainty ... I shall go prepared I think for either result, but I know I shall feel a disappointment much'. 20

Charles' comment that Miss Innes was possibly unaware of Davie's feelings appears correct. She responded to his proposal with a request for time to think about it. Nor did she make up her mind in haste. And while
David waited for an answer, Edward increased his friend's agitation by stressing the blank in his life as a result of his 'wifeless state'.

Miss Innes eventually gave David his answer in a letter indicating that she had no wish to be married 'for the present'. David understood this to mean 'never' in relation to himself, but Tom saw nothing in her letter which would drive him to despair. He thought David should take the advice of the old Scottish song and 'let her wait a year or twa, she'll no be half sae saucy yet'. But David, not blessed with Tom's resilient nature, stoically accepted the truth that the lady did not wish to marry him. She later became Annabella Boswell.

Edward, on hearing the news, told David of his recent visit to Dublin to meet 'the brethren' there. He added: 'I wish with all my heart you could pick up a wife in Dublin, I assure you there are many very good girls among them'. While he did not go so far as to introduce one by letter, he did plant a seed thought in David's mind. His long and largely silent Australian courtship had disappointed him, so perhaps there was hope among the Dublin 'sisters' when he eventually returned to Europe.

It is surely no mere coincidence that David's request to join the Separatists came after his rejection by Annabella Innes. He had joined a sect which Edward admitted differed from the Plymouth Brethren in that 'they are numerous and spreading ... we are few and contemptible'.

During the years in which David struggled to find fulfilment in both marriage and religion, he was also struggling against the natural environment as well as economic recession. The brothers who so often referred to John as 'poor Jack' might well have added 'poor Davie'. After several seasons at Durundur he realised that there was something 'radically wrong' — the sheep were not thriving and the wool clip was poor. The 'something' was the nature of the country and the high summer rainfall which made it unsuitable for wool production. By this time Tom and Charlie had already moved west across the Dividing Range to form new stations, first Waroongundie on Emu Creek and then Cooyar. Within a few months on this drier country, the sheep had improved dramatically and so David decided to find a buyer for Durundur and follow the sheep to sweeter pastures.

David needed all his inner resources during those years, for despite the better conditions in the drier districts, wool prices again slumped drasti-
ally. He estimated a decline of 500 pounds in his wool cheque for 1846 from his 13,500 sheep depastured at Cooyar. He was already ‘in treaty with a party’ for the sale of that place for 400 pounds and 2,500 ewes for four shillings and sixpence a head. Seven years earlier he had paid 20 shillings a head for the same class of sheep. This second major decline in wool and sheep prices coincided with Governor Gipps’ new squatting regulations which defined a station or run as not greater than 20 square miles and capable of carrying not more than 4,000 sheep and 500 cattle. While the number of runs held was not restricted, a 10 pound annual licence fee was levied on each. Naturally this did not please most squatters, including Willie and Tom who in letters home begged sympathy for the ‘the oppressed squatter’. David, with his usual rational attitude, admitted they were all too deeply involved to take an impartial view of the new regulations, but believed an annual charge of less than 2 pence a head for sheep and 7 pence a head for cattle was reasonable — ‘though it must be owned that the time chosen for the additional impost was ill chosen’. He thought this should be offset by some more secure tenure for those who risked their capital for very little return. The vexed question of tenure was eventually fixed at 14 years in the unsettled districts — in which the Archers then had their runs.

Cooyar passed into new hands on 1 April 1849, but the sale of Durundur had fallen through. The McConnells, among David’s original neighbours, eventually bought it. Descendants of both families remained friends through to the third generation. David’s difficulty in selling Durundur was exacerbated by yet another disaster in that year — ‘The squatters are as a body on the brink of ruin’, he reported in February 1849. This new calamity arose from the fact that advances paid in Sydney for wool to be sold in London were, for this season, almost completely absorbed in refunding excesses on the previous year’s disastrous sales. David expected to scrape through without getting deeper into debt to William Walker & Co., but only by the direst economies in an already sparse operation. For a second time Willie’s proposed trip home had to be postponed — the first deferment arising from the brothers’ commitment to repay Colonel Archibald Walker’s loan to their mother.

The year 1849 proved to be one of dramatic change for the ‘laird’ and his brothers with the sudden departure of Tom for the Californian
goldfields. At first David thought the suggestion was ‘a lark’, but on learning the truth he declined to interfere, leaving Charlie and Tom to decide between them, seeing they were partners in their own squatting business by this time.  

The venture proved to be no lark for Tom, though in the end it led to new directions in his life. There were other changes in the following year. Willie, who had left Wallerawang, at last departed for his spell in Norway in 1850 leaving David and Charlie managing both partnerships. David began to prepare for his own return home after the Australian gold discoveries in 1851–52 led to a booming economy and subsequent increases in wool prices. None of his letters from this period have survived, but a suitable ‘epitaph’ to his eighteen years in the colony appears in one to his mother written from Coonambula (in the Burnett district) on 9 September 1849:

... this country has answered our expectations, our sheep having thriven well since coming here ... my position is upon the whole more encouraging than it has been for years past. We have already got many comforts around us in this new place. It is now about half past twelve on Sunday. There is upon the table what is dignified with the name of luncheon, good raised wheaten bread (not damper), roast mutton (cold), pickles marked “Picalilly” ... and Tea — never failing tea ... A garden is commenced out of which we have already had some cabbage sprouts to flavour our soup ...

More important than creature comfort or even financial prosperity, was the general high regard in which David was held in the Moreton Bay district. Late in 1845 the controversial Dr John Dunmore Lang wrote to him in connection with his scheme to settle Scottish Presbyterian migrants there:

My principal object in the matter, I have no hesitation in saying to you, altho’ I would not choose to do so in print in the Colony, is to prevent the Colony falling into the hands of the Lords of the Roman Catholic Church ... As it is evident that Brisbane can never be the maritime and commercial capital of what I trust will be a separate Colony ... [alternative sites suggested] ...

Now as Mr Petrie informs me, there is such a locality at Toorbal Point, and as Mrs Griffin who is staying with my family at present, informs me that yourself and the other gentlemen in that part of the district ... are strongly in favour of having the principal harbour and capital in that vicinity, I shall feel much obliged by your favouring me with a description and if possible a rough sketch as a proposed site for a town ...
While David might have requested Charlie, the artist among them, to make a sketch of the proposed port area, it is likely that Lang's bigotry and interference in political matters would have driven him further towards the Separatists and their rejection of all clergy.

When Lang's first shipload of 245 Protestant immigrants arrived at Moreton Bay in the Fortitude on 20 January 1849, David was extremely critical of the lack of arrangements for their reception. He believed these people — 'poorer persons of the middle class' — could benefit themselves as well as the colony, but feared they would be disappointed. 'Dr Lang professes great activity and is a man of ability, but he is notoriously deficient when he has to carry out the details and financial part of his scheme' he told his father who remained intensely interested in news from the colony.30

Despite his personal worries, David did what he could for the advancement of the district. In May 1849 he attended a meeting called for the purpose of establishing a company 'for the growth of sugar cane'. A man named Boden, one of Lang's migrants, had been a pioneer planter in the West Indies and he told of his experiences. But the cautious David was not easily lured: 'Like novels, all such schemes end happily and Mr Boden's estimates showed a fair profit, but I doubt whether the thing will be gone into'.31

By the time David left Coonambula in June 1852 on his way to Sydney and Norway, his financial position was most encouraging. His departure was timed in order to meet Edward Walker in Sydney, having received his jubilant message that they were about to leave England on the first steamship to the colony. Edward had forgotten his early detestation of Sydney as 'a doghole of a place'. His father had finally agreed to his joining his brothers William and James at Twofold Bay when 'preaching' failed to produce an income. Edward's brothers had at first objected to this on the grounds that he would make trouble.32

Both Edward and David were pleased to end their unproductive business partnership in April 1853. David Archer & Co. purchased half Edward's sheep — 4,379 at 5 shillings a head. Edward was unsure what to do with his remaining sheep now that he was 'so disgustingly rich'.33 Willie Archer, who had remained in a managerial position for James Walker of Wallerawang for all those years of struggle at Durundur, now became the
'& Co.' instead of Edward. Beginning with a debt of about 500 pounds, he expressed the opinion 'prevalent in the Colony that an establishment thrives best when it is head over ears in debt'. Viewed in this light, David as 'Laird of Durundur' was most successful. Now his life as an Australian pioneer pastoralist had run its course. Again through Edward's intervention, a new life as London businessman, husband and father awaited him.

*Conrad Martens drew this scene from Durundur station the year after it was sold by the Archers.*
It was David, after arrival at Durundur, who had laid down Archer standards on the treatment of the indigenous people. He believed they were 'the hereditary owners of the soil'. The challenge presented itself when he settled at Durundur — 'waste lands of the Crown' according to the government — but the spiritual home of the Dungidau people. When Jack and Tom arrived with the stock late in 1841, very few of these people had seen white men before, although they knew of the convict settlement at Moreton Bay. Apart from an occasional escapee, or some bold explorer such as Andrew Petrie passing through, they remained remote from European influence. Official proclamation in 1842 of the opening to settlement of the Districts of Moreton Bay and Darling Downs heralded cataclysmic changes for the ancient occupiers of these lands.

Before arrival at Durundur 'someone' told the Archers that Moreton Bay Aborigines were troublesome. The brothers astutely judged any trouble to be the result of 'misconduct by the whites'. Communicating partly by sign language and partly by the few words of English picked up by some of the blacks, David promised food in return for assistance in building huts. The Aborigines stripped bark to roof the white men's huts, just as they did for their own bark shelters. Tom assured his father, alarmed by newspaper reports, that by using 'gentle and at the same time determined means' they had established an excellent understanding with the local people. They rewarded them with tobacco, flour, and rice, also sweet potatoes and Indian corn once their gardens became productive. The locals
soon realised that they could continue to camp where they wished and remain on good terms with David Archer as long as they did not take his sheep or anything else they fancied.

In 1842, with genuine regret, the brothers parted with the three Aborigines who had accompanied them north, paying their sea-passage south to Sydney when they became homesick. 'We considered them more in the light of friends than dependants', Tom told his mother.¹ On a later occasion when some bullock drivers made one of Tom's black friends drunk, he was so incensed that he smashed every bottle of brandy he could find on their drays.

By the time Charles arrived at Durundur in 1843, relationships between white and black were firmly in place and working well. Having lived in the West Indies for so long and been accustomed, first to Negro slaves and then to liberated Negroes, Charles showed more than the usual European interest in the lives and customs of the Aborigines. It did not take him long to discover that the friendly clans on Durundur were the exception rather than the rule among district squatters. He was appalled to learn that many 'hunt the Blacks from the runs and show them as little mercy as native dogs'. Davie, however, considered it an act of injustice 'to drive him from his hunting grounds'.² Their neighbours, the MacKenzies, were frequently annoyed by attacks upon their sheep, but Charles did not think one single sheep belonging to Davie had been taken by the blacks since his arrival.

David's bold but generally successful experiment in relation to property was as much a matter of logic as ethics. His philosophy in relation to land ownership, however, was reached after much agony of spirit and consultation with his mentor, Edward Walker. As the son of a man who had arrived in the colony as early as 1813, Edward had no doubt often heard his father and his Uncle James 'holding forth' on the subject of the Aborigines. His response to David's troubled conscience reflects an attitude still held by some Australians:

You ask my opinion ... as to whether European foreigners and aliens are or are not entitled to intrude upon the Aboriginal population of this soil. It is certainly a knotty subject — wherever land has been subdued by man, brought into a state of cultivation and money or its equivalent in labour expended upon it, then no doubt it is downright robbery for a stranger to seize it — but this case is very different — in such a country as N S Wales, where the scanty native
population merely subsists by hunting the beasts of the fields — the intent of the Almighty [is that] we should cultivate the ground — these savages have not done so (it will not do in a question of this sort to debate their ability or inability) — hence others who comply with the great law are entitled on that account to use the soil which the Aborigines neglect ... ³

Edward did not emulate the devil and quote Scripture out of context, knowing that David was familiar with the Old Testament edict: ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it’. (Genesis I. 28) This was ‘the great law’. Thus David was able to compromise Biblical teaching with the practice of wool production, at the same time maintaining that it was an act of injustice to drive the Aborigines from their traditional hunting grounds. In this way the Archer brothers lived in harmony with the indigenous people, with one brief exception at Durundur, and peacefully on later lease-hold properties including Gracemere settled in 1855. The occasional exceptions occurred when other white men did not play by this rule and all Europeans suffered.

David and Tom, already familiar with the lifestyle of southern Aborigines, took for granted the habits and customs of those in the Moreton Bay district. But to Charles, every aspect of their lives, from hunting methods to corroborees, provided novelty. That he was able to observe these closely was a direct consequence of David’s humane treatment. Thus Charles had a better opportunity than ‘any Squatter has hitherto had’. This remarkable claim is validated by his long and detailed description included in a letter to his father in April 1845. One short extract on the life-style of these first Australians on Durundur must suffice:

... As they only subsist on what nature provides for them, they are necessarily always on the move. Their camp is seldom pitched for more than a week at a time at the same place; ere that time the Kangaroo has been scared from the neighbourhood and every tree within miles of opossums, squirrels [koalas] and wild honey. When a tribe is on the move, the women and children carry the baggage which generally consists of a few opossum skin coats and a dilly (a kind of bag made from vines containing perhaps a kangaroo net). The men are on the outlook for food, for they have no care for the morrow and never carry provisions with them on their march. Their gunyahs (huts) are like a child’s card house and a small fire in front is shelter enough for two or three persons. Most of the women carry a lighted piece of wood with them, for although they can obtain fire by friction, it is a tedious process.

When the Kangaroo is to be hunted the whole tribe go on an expedition
and proceed somewhat in the same manner as Mr Lloyd describes his bear
hunt in Sweden. I think game taken is equally divided amongst the party. This
is the only occasion on which they hunt in company; when in search of other
food they steal singly through the forest, nothing escaping their observation
whether in the trees or on the ground — they are certainly admirably adapted
for their way of life ...

Charles then described a corroboree to which an elder had invited him.
He disagreed with the opinion that this was a religious ceremony, believing
it to be for enjoyment and entertainment. He also witnessed a bullan-bull-
lan — an inter-tribal fight ‘more in the nature of a tournament than a
battle’. Spears, boomerangs and waddies were used by each side, but
individual combat between the most celebrated warriors also took place.
And just as the women had a part in the corroboree by providing the
rhythmic beat with their digging sticks, so they had a role in the
bullan-bullan. He saw this as ‘a sort of promiscuous fight amongst
themselves with long poles … much in the style of an Irish row’. But as
well as observing these more striking events, he also noted that at about
the age of 35 or 40 the men were ‘frequently attacked by rheumatism. I
think they are a short-lived race’. There was possibly one thing that
Charles did not tell his father, but according to Aboriginal oral history, he
fathered a child in the clan living on Durundur.

Tom observed that his Aboriginal neighbours could never be persuaded
to settle permanently ‘to any fixed business or mode of life’. He thought
this reasonable enough, given that it was the way their fathers had lived
‘for hundreds of years … though they suffer great hardships from cold and
hunger etc., yet they lead I suppose the most independent life of any people
in the world’. Good relationships between black and white continued with only
minor problems until the latter part of 1845 when a murder occurred
which was certainly not the subject of letters home. Tom, then at
Waroongundie, told David that he was ‘much shocked to hear of poor
Gregor’s murder and more so of the unfortunate woman’s’ in that locality.
But he also had a personal concern for Davie, being convinced that in the
prevailing state of unrest his brother’s non-aggression policy threatened
his own safety and that of his employees. Tom had been told that Aboriginal
‘renegades’ had threatened Durundur. Three earlier murders of whites had
been allowed ‘to pass off quietly’. But on this occasion some of their own
blacks were said to be involved. Tom was glad that he could ‘put in an alibi in favour of Bono’, but nevertheless felt that ‘something must be done’ to prevent more murders.  

The murders Tom referred to appear to have been part of Aboriginal unrest in the Brisbane Valley during that year. The tragedy underlying the great majority of such incidents was white man’s ignorance of Aboriginal law and vice versa. The perceived threat to David’s life simply could have been that as a white man he represented the enemy. Whenever Aborigines carried out their law of retaliation against any representative of an enemy tribe, including Europeans, the action was inevitably described as an unprovoked attack. While it is most probable that a white man’s treatment of an Aboriginal woman was the root cause of these murders, the perceived threat to Durundur might have arisen when David at about that time ‘removed the Blacks to better pasturage’. This was on Durundur but possibly too far from their sacred sites.

Ludwig Leichhardt, back in Sydney after his triumphant trans-continen-ntal expedition from the Darling Downs to Port Essington (Northern Territory), wrote to David in May 1846 after hearing of ‘annoyance by blackfellows’ in the vicinity of the German Mission Station and Pine River: ‘... I considered your treatment of the natives always as a pattern to which I referred whenever the relations of white people and natives was discussed’. The German explorer did not hold this opinion from hearsay — he had been David Archer’s guest at Durundur for eight months in 1843–44, familiarising himself with the bush in preparation for exploration. Having heard of Gregor’s murder, he was even more alarmed, ‘if not for your personal security ... for that of your stock; the time of hostility and war is approaching fast and I fear you will have your share of it’. Leichhardt’s forecast eventually proved true, though it was an undeclared war. While David was obliged to compromise some of his early ideals in order to protect lives and property, he never did so in relation to the killing of innocent black people. He believed that convicted murderers, black or white, should be dealt with by the law courts, not groups of blood-thirsty squatters.

When the Archers moved north into the Burnett River district (west of present day Bundaberg) they resumed their usual good relationships with the Aborigines — apart from their frustration caused by the disap-
pearance of sheep or tools left about the huts. Europeans naturally classed this as theft, while to the Aborigines it was simply a continuation of their custom of sharing food or tools. While this is not the end of the Aboriginal role in the Archer saga of frontier settlement, it is the point where the 'laird of Durundur' leaves the colony never to return. Ironically, his last surviving letter from this period concerned the future of the indigenous people. Written from the new station, Coonambula, on 8 June 1852, it was addressed to R. Innes (possibly a relative of Annabella Innes to whom he had proposed marriage) and was in reply to Innes's question concerning the Native Police:

I neither agree with you in the sentiments you have expressed condemnatory of the Force, nor with those who laud it as everything that could be desired. It seems to me that too much is expected of the Native Police on the one hand, whilst objections might be taken to the disposal of the Force by those in command; yet upon the whole ... the officers display a fully average amount of zeal observable amongst other men in the discharge of their duties, [while the Aboriginal troopers] are better adapted for the peculiar service in which they are engaged and consequently are more effective than white men would be. The only suggestion I can offer to make the Force more efficient is that each trooper should be furnished with two horses instead of one as at present.

The Native Police Force was established by Frederick Walker in 1849. It was a para-military organisation intended to provide protection for those, like the Archers, on the frontiers of white settlement. Well educated white officers, usually the sons of upper class English families, were appointed by the government to command 'civilised' Aboriginal troopers. These were recruited from distant tribes, dressed in colourful uniforms and taught to ride and shoot. While their official task was to 'disperse' tribal Aborigines from the vicinity of head stations, this verb soon became a synonym for 'shoot'. This eventually led to retribution in which black men shot and killed black men, women and children.

When David Archer expressed his opinion of the Force in mid 1852, it probably still operated as intended. His own life had been under threat on several occasions despite his humane policies. This, combined with his belief in the Biblical injunction to 'subdue the earth', led him to believe that Aborigines should obey European law relating to murder. He maintained his initial policy that it was 'an injustice' to drive the black man
from his hunting grounds, but he denied them the right to defend these by attacking the invaders. David's brothers adhered to his original policy of allowing the Aborigines to remain on their runs — provided they laid down their weapons before approaching the homestead. If all squatters had adopted a similar policy, the excesses of the Native Police in the slaughter of their own race might had been avoided.
'I wish I had a few thousands to spare, I would soon know what this continent is made of', wrote eighteen-year-old Tom to his father in 1841. While he did not explore it from Spencer Gulf to the Gulf of Carpentaria as he wished, within a few years he did venture into unknown territory on several separate expeditions. Life would have been much duller for his brothers in their frontier isolation without the exuberant Tom. He was blessed with a highly developed sense of humour combined with a spirit of adventure in contrast to David and Willie in particular. By his own admission, Tom was of a restless nature so that the thought of exploration with its challenge and constant change appealed to him. When the as yet unknown Ludwig Leichhardt became David's guest at Durundur in 1843–44, Tom found his role model.

It is likely that one of the Walkers gave Leichhardt letters of introduction to David. According to Tom their visitor was 'a German M.D. who is botanising and mineralogizing all through the Colony'. As he became better acquainted with their visitor he added that he was 'the most agreeable and well informed man I have ever seen in the Colony — an enthusiast in his profession, and what is still more rare, there is not a grain of pedantry in his composition'. Sharing as he did the limited house-room at Durundur for so long, this was praise indeed. While Tom's enthusiasms at times were greater than their causes, in this case his opinion was confirmed by David. Writing to his father four months after Tom's comments he added:
The German naturalist, Doctor Leichhardt, whom I mentioned to you before, is still with us. He makes frequent excursions into the unsettled parts of the country and has collected an immense mass of information, geological, botanical and respecting the habits and ideas of the natives. He has already a list of about 80 forest trees many of them producing timber fit for cabinet work and more useful purposes. When he publishes, which he intends doing, you will have a very detailed account of Durundur and its vicinity. The Doctor having spent some 8 or 10 years since leaving his University in visiting different countries in Europe is, as you may suppose, a most intelligent person and as he has a pleasing address and is not chary with his information we find him a most agreeable inmate ...²

David, like most of his peers, referred to the scientist as 'Doctor' in recognition of him as a man of learning. Friedrich Wilhelm Leichhardt (1813-48?) was born in Prussia and educated at the Universities of Berlin and Gottingen. At Durundur he shared with his friends his plans to cross the continent from east to west — 'to make a scientific expedition hence to the Swan River'. Meantime he was undertaking some local exploration in company with his hosts. This was to prove most significant to Tom and later, to Charles.

Leichhardt recorded on 1 October 1844: ' ... we left Jimba, and launched, buoyant with hope, into the wilds of Australia ...' — not to the Swan River but northward to Port Essington near the site of present day Darwin. Nothing was heard of the party for so long that many, including the Archers, thought they had perished or been killed by Aborigines. 'It is greatly to be feared he has fallen a sacrifice to his enthusiasm for science', wrote Charles in October 1845. He commented on the small size of the party and its inadequate equipment. 'A friend of his and ours (Mr Lind of Sydney) has written a piece of poetry on his supposed death ... We still entertain a faint hope he will return to hear it'. David, in a footnote to Charles' letter of October 1845 shared these concerns. Leichhardt, he said, 'is or was' one of the very few he had met 'amongst a host of acquaintances and many friends who had not, as far as I ever heard, one enemy'.³ If the doomed explorer had no enemies during his lifetime, he had plenty after his disappearance in 1848.

But when news came in March 1846 of the party's return to Sydney, the brothers Archer were among those who rejoiced in the success of their friend. Tom could not contain his excitement, while the more sober Willie
commented to David, 'You will rejoice with the whole Colony in the safe return of Dr Leichhardt'. They were not yet aware that their friend had put their names on the map of northern Australia as 'The Four Archers' — four flat-topped cones of sandstone. This was a kind of 'thank-you' for their hospitality.

Leichhardt's long stay at Durundur and his successful overland expedition fired Tom's blood. Just a few weeks after the German set out in October 1844, Tom took his first 'learner' expedition accompanied by their neighbour, Francis Bigge. This proved to be decidedly non-heroic. They reached Eskdale, the station of squatters Graham and Ivory, but their horses strayed and they were forced to stay there for a week — including Christmas dinner of 'tea and watermelon'. While Ivory's good library pleased Tom, it was not quite the adventure 'by flood and fire' he promised his father. When their horses were found, they did discover some excellent mountain country on the Stanley River, a tributary of the Brisbane, so their time was not completely wasted. Tom, on reading through his account of the journey for his father, was so disgusted that he tore up the last pages. He was no doubt pleased that Leichhardt was well out of the way.

On his next expedition of two weeks, Tom was accompanied by David. They found better sheep country on Emu Creek (inland from present day Kilcoy) and marked out the run which they named Waroongundie. Shortly after this Tom set out again, led by an Aborigine who promised to take him to a certain Darling Downs station — supposedly a short day's ride. But they rode till sunset 'without coming upon the smallest trace of civilized man and I began to suspect my sable guide of deceiving me', he recorded. Continuing by moonlight, it at last became so cold that they camped and 'made a good roaring fire, ate a piece of damper without anything to wash it down ... [I] smoked my cutty pipe, rolled myself in my blanket and slept like a top until morning'. This was much more the stuff of a 'boys' own adventure'. No danger of Tom tearing up this letter to his father.

In the morning after a false start they arrived at Jondaryan Station about 140 km west of Brisbane 'just as the inmates were getting out of bed'. Resting a while, and then riding out over a great plain on the western Darling Downs 'without a drop of water and only one tree on it, which is called the Dinner tree ...', Tom had his first sight of a mirage, although
he was unaware that such a phenomenon existed. He described to his father how 'some trees and hills on the side of the plain looked as if they were suspended in the air just like the rocks at Fredricksvoern in an Easterly wind'.

This was Tom's true initiation in the art of exploration. He rejected this beautiful plain because he believed it was unwatered. By the time he discovered his error someone else had taken it up. But there is no doubt he was excited by the experience of venturing into unknown territory. 'Tom is anxious to swarm off to some of those countries lately discovered by Leichhardt and Mitchell' wrote Willie in September 1847. But Tom, 24, had already 'swarmed off' with a vengeance.

When newspaper reports of Mitchell's expedition to the Maranoa and the Barcoo (which he named Victoria) and the Belyando came out early in 1847, Tom devoured every detail, compared it with Leichhardt's, and dreamed of linking the two routes. As David, now 33, was absent at the time, Tom discussed his idea with the more easy-going Charlie who agreed they had nothing to lose in exploring further. Their sheep had multiplied so greatly that they needed more land. Tom set out on what he called 'an exploring trip into the "Wild West"' about the end of July 1847. His task was to find a route from the Darling Downs to Mitchell's Fitzroy Downs. By this time the Archers had taken up Cooyar (north of Waroongundi) and it was from this run that he set out with one pack-horse and one riding horse 'well equipped for a bush journey'.

Tom had heard of two young men, Blyth and Chauvel, camped on the Condamine River with flocks they had brought from Mudgee in the hope of finding unoccupied country. They agreed to join Tom's expedition. Tom at twenty-four was the senior in years and also the most experienced bushman. At last he had realised his great dream of leading an exploration party, minuscule compared with Mitchell's 60 men and massive equipment, but this was his very own. On his way out to the Condamine he met Leichhardt at the Jimbour woolshed (about 175 km north west of Brisbane) 'and on comparing some of his observations with some of Mitchell's, we concluded the Fitzroy Downs must be west of Dried Beef Creek'. The first leg of Tom's expedition was relatively easy, following Leichhardt's route to Dried Beef Creek, but after turning west Tom and Blyth accompanied by an Aborigine named Darby battled their way
through dense scrub — ‘more scrub than I ever conceived could be jammed into the same piece of country’, Tom told Charlie.

Eventually they emerged from this dense brigalow scrub and found a couple of hills which Tom named Mount Disappointment and Mount Deceitful — in the tradition of disappointed Australian explorers. But then he received his reward — they discovered some country which for quality exceeded Tom’s ‘most sanguine expectation’. They could spare only one day to examine it as their food was running out. They returned to the Condamine and then waited at Jimbour woolshed for a reply to Tom’s request to Charlie for a fresh horse. His letter concluded: ‘I am sure Davie and you won’t be cool at my resolve to go out again, considering the great inducement, more especially as Coxen, Pinnock, Leichhardt and Isaacs, have gone out and may fix upon our discovery if we don’t mark it ...’

When Jimmy Hedly, the messenger Tom sent to Cooyar, returned with a fresh horse he also brought a letter from the cautious David which was intended to dampen Tom’s enthusiasm. Tom was annoyed with Charlie for going over to Emu Creek (Waroongundie) to show his letter to Davie. Perhaps it was not coincidence that David had been ‘away somewhere’ when Tom left on this expedition. He had returned much too soon for Tom’s liking. Davie’s letter was the very reverse of the ‘go on and prosper’ which Tom had been expecting. David told him to come back to Cooyar where he was needed. Tom rebelled. If he were to apply for the country he must mark and describe its boundaries. ‘If I can’t apply, I can’t secure, and if I can’t secure, I can’t take out any stock, so that my labour goes for naught unless I go out again’, he told Charlie. He was also pledged to Blyth to return west with him. Despite Davie’s order to him, Tom ‘would not turn back for Father Peter’. David was unlikely to be impressed by a reference to the Pope, but on this occasion Tom appears to have enjoyed needling his brother. ‘What’s the use of having brothers if they can’t look after a man’s interests when he is sweating for the benefit of the whole’ he asked, certain that Davie would also read his letter to Charlie.

Tom, having thrown down the gauntlet, set out with Blyth to return to their Eldorado which in a rare fit of British patriotism he named Wellesley Downs to honour the Duke of Wellington (a ‘Tory name’ according to Charlie). They took ‘about a month’s grub’ and expected to be back in three weeks, but if it took longer Tom was not going to ‘grudge
a few days to promote a laudable object’. He had a sense of urgency because of the others looking towards Fitzroy Downs. A letter from Leichhardt to David at the end of that month hardly supported Tom’s case:

I hoped to see you on my return from Fitzroy Downs ... but my trip lasted longer than I expected ... I saw Mr Thomas and I wish him to consider well the distance and practicability of the road before he ever thinks of shifting his stock to the Eldorado which I hear he has found on the higher part of what I call “Horsetrack” River and he calls “Leichhardt”, but which will no doubt turn out to be the Robinson.11

Ironically, Tom and Leichhardt were on even footing regarding the naming of the watercourse now known as Yuleba Creek, but in addition Tom was mistaken in claiming to have reached Mitchell’s Fitzroy Downs. In the distant future, his son James researched this expectation in 1933 with the help of Alister Archer of Gracemere, and concluded that the Fitzroy Downs were ‘fully 40 miles west of Yuleba Creek’. Tom’s Wellesley Downs were westward of today’s town of Roma. This was the only extensive area of open country other than Fitzroy Downs ‘to which Thomas Archer’s enthusiastic description could apply’.12

David, 33, praised Tom’s ‘energy and perseverance, which have been rewarded by the discovery of a piece of splendid country, which he is to endeavour to occupy with sheep’.13 Three months later Tom was ready to set out as an independent squatter. He had bought a span of eight oxen, ordered goods from Sydney, was about to hire men and then ‘yoke my team, and hurrah for the road’. He was quite blase about exploring by this time. ‘I am so old a bushman now’, he told his father, ‘that the romance of the affair has in a great measure worn off, so that I care very little for exploring regions where “foot of civilized man never trod before” and all that sort of thing’.14 This was ‘Tom the handsome squatter’ (so depicted by a brother) speaking, but in fact ‘Tom — alias the great explorer’, as Willie dubbed him, was far from finished.

On his way back from the west, Tom applied to the Crown Lands Commissioner, Christopher Rolleston of Eton Vale, for his Wellesley Downs country. He also met James Reid, overlanding stock to the Burnett River area, who suggested that he should take a look at that country before transferring his sheep to the ‘never never’.15 And so, though claiming to
be ready to set out for the west at the end of December, it seems that early in 1848 Charlie persuaded him that he should first take Reid’s advice.

Ignoring his own claim to be finished with exploration, Tom set out again, this time northwards, with his cheerful Aboriginal companion, Jacky Small, and Leichhardt’s former botanist Daniel Bunce. In retrospect Tom’s expedition to the Burnett and through unknown country proved that ‘time never passed so quickly or so pleasantly with me as it did on an exploring trip when I was leader’. Back at Cooyar he and Charlie had to make a final decision between first and second-class land. The Burnett had the advantage of easy land carriage for their wool to Wide Bay (Maryborough), while the fine western country was disadvantaged by its distance from the coast. In the end, the new firm of Charles & Thomas Archer obeyed the dictum of their facetious Australian motto ‘funky [fearful] but firm’ and decided in favour of the Burnett. And so it was that in mid 1848 their bullock drays made the first wheel tracks through the site of Gayndah on their way to their run on the Burnett which they ‘unanimously decided to call “Eidsvold” after the village in Norway where the Storthing passed the Norwegian Constitution’ in 1814. No British Tory naming here, nor to the block Tom called Telemark, nor to their land on St John’s Creek on which they bestowed its native name — Coonambula. Tom’s future adventures were to be in California, and Charles’ had not yet begun. Thanks to a hint from Leichhardt, Charles’ expeditions were to be of much greater significance than Tom’s ‘boys’ own’ adventures.

Leichhardt, on returning from the Port Essington expedition, had described to David in his letter of 14 May 1846 the location (in present day Northern Territory) of ‘the four very remarkable flat topped cones of sandstone’ which he had named the ‘Four Archers’. ‘I did not specify which was David, John, Charles and Thomas, and hope that the four brothers will settle the question among themselves’. More importantly for their future he added, ‘You will have a peep behind the curtains after reading my first letter …’. In this he had assumed (correctly) that the rivers he had named Dawson, Comet, MacKenzie and Isaac must eventually form one large stream which ‘disembogued in Keppel Bay’ (south east of present day Rockhampton). Neither David nor Tom were to do the ‘peeping’ following this advice, but in 1853 Charles and Willie were to become the first European explorers of the Fitzroy Valley.
Leichhardt's correspondence with David Archer undoubtedly provided much of the inspiration for Tom, even though his efforts were relatively localised. While there is no evidence to show that Tom volunteered to be one of the great explorer's party in either 1844 or 1846, it is certain that if he had, the cautious David would have vetoed it.

Leichhardt again wrote to David on 19 November 1846, the eve of departing on his second expedition, an attempt to cross the continent from east to west — a journey of more than 3,000 kms. He expected, if successful, to find a large extent of country east of the settlement on the Swan River in Western Australia, and was sure the government would make him 'tolerably independent' and allow him to 'an unembarrassed pursuit' of his favourite studies. But the only country Leichhardt 'discovered' was a re-discovery. When the party — including botanist Bunce — reached the junction of Leichhardt's Comet and MacKenzie and Mitchell's Nogoa rivers in that very wet and mosquito-ridden summer, they were all prostrated by tropical fevers. After months of delay on the Peak Downs (in the vicinity of present day Capella) Leichhardt was obliged to return with his rebellious party, some of whom made a miraculous recovery on hearing of his decision to abort the expedition. He told David in September 1847 that all he knew of their conduct (behind his back) came to him through Bunce and Healy — 'I myself had never the slightest indication of their alleged grievances'. In this admission the scientist revealed himself as totally lacking in understanding of human psychology. Tom Archer would have handled them better, but had no more chance than Leichhardt of reaching the Swan River.

Undeterred by failure, Leichhardt set out again on a second attempt. This time he chose a route more directly west from the Darling Downs, before turning to follow the inland rivers. Acknowledging 'a kind note' from David on 10 March 1848, he described each member of his party, in whom he had not observed 'the slightest flaw' and consequently was 'very sanguine' of success. He continued:

You know well that I consider the Exploration of this great Continent my great task, which has been allotted to me and which my previous studies have rendered me capable of executing satisfactorily. I consider consequently the persevering in this line of my life my duty, even if my habits and inclinations allowed me to derive less pleasure from its pursuit, than they actually do ...
He concluded with some advice to 'Mr Thomas' regarding country he had found west of the Darling Downs and then added, 'Peak Range is a country which must be carefully examined. It will be very extensive if in any way connected with Mitchell's Mantuan and my Albinia Downs'. (Charles and Colin Archer were to follow his tracks there in 1854.) Asking to be remembered to Charles and Thomas, he signed himself, 'Your most affectionate friend, Ludwig Leichhardt'. This was one of the last letters the doomed explorer wrote before disappearing forever along with his entire party. No trace of them has ever been found, although there have been plenty of claims to have done so, and even more theories as to the cause of their disappearance.

The link between Leichhardt and the Archers was to extend far beyond the explorer's disappearance. When the firm of Archer Brothers bought Minnie Downs, near Tambo, in 1873 two very old mules were running on the station which were thought to be relics of the fatal expedition. More importantly, in 1853 and 1854 it was on Leichhardt's advice that Archers took up land on the Fitzroy River and the Peak Downs.

While Leichhardt had many financial sponsors, he had few friends as close as David Archer. Their rapport was enhanced by similar religious convictions. David and his brothers were more disgusted than most by the vilification of the explorer by members of the two earlier expeditions after they were reasonably sure he was dead. Within the Archer family both oral tradition and documentary evidence confirm their continuing support for Leichhardt's character and achievements.

Tom, 'alias the great explorer', has left us with a thumbnail account of Leichhardt's great expedition of 1844–45 — which also serves as an epitaph for the dedicated explorer — in a letter to his father on 26 March 1846:

... there is a letter from our German friend Dr. Leichhardt, who has just returned to Sydney from a journey he undertook from here to Port Essington, a distance of about 1200 miles, through a country totally unexplored, which took him 14 months travelling, during which he had one man killed and two wounded by the blacks, and had to eat all his working oxen but one. Everyone thought him mad at the time, and he had been long given up for lost. His funeral dirge was published about six months ago, which he is now singing to the tune of 600 or 700 pounds which have been raised for him by subscription in Sydney. All this was done without assistance from the Government.
The brothers Archer enjoyed 'sending up' one another. Tom was not only 'the great explorer', but also 'the handsome squatter'. Originally the term 'squatter' in New South Wales referred to one illegally occupying Crown Lands, but by the time David legally occupied Durundur the term was generally applied to pastoralists paying leasehold rents to the government.

The head stations might be 50 or more kilometres apart, and so social life, usually male, was often combined with the dray trip to Brisbane Town for supplies. Tom confessed in 1846, at the age of twenty-three: 'I have never even been in love yet, and am in consequence looked on as a prodigy ...' The reason was obvious, he said, he had not been in the society of any young ladies for the past six years. Charlie and David assured him he would fall victim to the first one he saw, which frightened him so much he declined to call on the Richard Jones family in Brisbane — one of whose daughters already had been linked to Willie's name. Tom had no wish to be one of the district's 'desponding lovers' of the popular Miss Jones or one of her sisters.¹ But then fate, or perhaps one of his scheming brothers, played a trick on him. In Brisbane in June 1846, on business for the firm, he was quietly sitting in his lodgings when he received a mild shock:

... I was surprised to see a gentleman and three ladies standing before me, the former I recognised as Mr Jones, at one time a leading merchant and MLA in Sydney, but much reduced by the late bad times. I of course introduced myself to him and was in turn introduced to the two Misses Jones, the latter very pretty and accomplished young ladies.
In a very short time I found myself on very easy terms with them all, and to my astonishment found myself buttering toast and doing the amiable, to perfection, a style of business to which I have been rather unaccustomed of the last ten years. Next day I had the honour of escorting them to their cottage about a quarter of a mile from the town where I have been every day since, boating, shopping and visiting with the ladies and in fact acting as their “chaperone” on every occasion, and during this time I led a very agreeable life and was within an ace of falling in love with one when I was told she is engaged to be married next month! This of course pulled me up short, and has since shocked me so much that I am in no danger from the other one ...²

The other one, he wryly added, was neither so pretty nor so amiable as the chosen one. His brothers made capital fun out of Tom’s first adventure into love. Willie’s sympathy (relayed from Wallerawang) was accompanied by the comment: ‘but, from the circumstances of being engaged in shovelling treacle and rice by the bushel, I presume he has regained his appetite, which I take is a favourable symptom.’³

But if Tom’s life was bereft of young ladies prior to 1846, he did have occasional meetings with the colony’s ‘cream’ — even the Governor himself in 1842. On his way to Moreton Bay with the bullock drays, he called as usual at the German Mission Station at Nundah. There he met Governor Sir George Gipps who happened to be visiting from Sydney. Tom was introduced to His Excellency who honoured him with a long conversation ‘principally in questions about our station’.⁴ The energetic Gipps, unknown to Tom, was then gathering information prior to his unpopular change in the squatting regulations.

The effervescent Tom referred to such men as their neighbours the Bigges and the MacKenzies as the ‘top sawyers’ in that part of the colony. (In the process of pit-sawing timber, the top sawyer had the better role, the bottom sawyer got all the sawdust over head and body.) During a visit to Brisbane in 1842 Tom found a great bevy of what he called ‘the squattocracy’ awaiting the arrival of the steamer from Sydney. As one of his own wool wagons had become a complete wreck on the way down, he left it at the German Mission and walked into town. There he borrowed a pony and went in the evening to visit the Warners at Eagle Farm. He had a particularly rough ride, so next day when a squatter of his acquaintance named Fyfe asked him again to go to the Warners, Tom agreed providing Fyfe found him a better horse. And so on this second visit he
rode upon a horse which Fyfe alleged he had borrowed from his friend Hodgson. But as Tom told his mother:

... when someone said, that horse is not Mr Hodgson's but belongs to Mr Warner the Surveyor — Oh, never mind Archer, says Fyfe, do you ride my horse, I'll ride his. Oh no, says I, you don't know Warner, which I do and can consequently appease his wrath better than you, so off we went just as the full moon got up and a more lovely evening I don't recall seeing, the sky was clear over the river (along which the road winds for some distance) and the river was as smooth as glass ... so away we went at a thundering pace, when we met a person on foot — this was the Lieutenant Governor, the Commandant, who had been down to meet a vessel in the Bay ...

Away we went again and kept galloping and trotting and talking when Woh! said I, we must pull up a little or Warner's horse will have some disagreeable symptoms about which Warner may not like, so we performed the rest of the journey — 7 miles — at a more moderate pace. We passed a camp of Blacks where I saw our friend Billy Gray, our Blackfellow who is with the dray in general — Hullo Billy! what are you doing here? Why don't you stay with the dray? Why, blubbered he, that man ... he threatened to break my ribs, I don't like him at all; well, I said, you had better not let me catch you here in the morning ...

Well after leaving the Black's camp we rode up to Warner's place — here we found a Mr Newcastle (squatter) one of the richest in the district. Mr Warner and he came out and after saluting I said to Warner, you see I have brought you your horse down from Brisbane town — how can that be, says he, when my horse is feeding out there in the paddock. I am much mistaken, said Newcastle, if that horse is not mine ... Yours, said I, yes said he, and what's more he has a galled back, and I borrowed another to come here today on purpose to save him ... and Newcastle, being a very gentlemanly sort of fellow ... we easily appeased him ...

Nor was that the end of Tom's involved story. After about an hour at Warner's they made up 'a strong party' of riders to return to Brisbane. Dr Stephen Simpson (Commissioner for Crown Lands) and Henry Stuart Russell, a Darling Downs squatter, rode ahead of Tom, Fyfe and Newcastle. Fyfe remained at the Aborigines' camp 'as he wanted a black boy to accompany him up to his station'. If there was a more sinister reason, Tom was innocently unaware. Then just as Simpson and Russell rode out of sight around a bend in the track, a shot rang out, just at the spot where they had seen men running into the bush on the way out. 'I hope they
have not shot Simpson and Russell', exclaimed Tom. But it turned out to be men shooting owls (so they said) and there were no casualties.

Back at their lodgings, and after an hour's sleep, Tom became alarmed as Fyfe had not returned. The valiant Tom called for volunteers, made sure they were all armed with pistols, and set out to look for Fyfe. He mistrusted the two men who claimed to be shooting owls. They had only gone a short distance when up trotted Fyfe — 'we held up our pistols and told him to stand, which he did instantly, not knowing us'. Fyfe said he had stayed to watch a fight among the blacks. At the end of this adventure story Tom added:

But my dear Mother you must long be tired of this egotistical nonsense — I would not let David or Jack see it for a trifle; they would be quoting from it and quizzing me for a week ... but I have tried to give you a sketch of "Town Life", at least of mine, for I don't know how Jack and Davie amuse themselves down here ...  

David and Jack were less forthcoming on how they spent their time in Brisbane. Given David's more serious nature and Jack's reputation for keeping his own counsel, it is unlikely they experienced any Tom-style adventures. On one occasion in 1842, however, Jack witnessed the return to Brisbane of a government expedition from Wide Bay with two 'runaways' (escaped convicts). These men had lived with the Aborigines, one for thirteen years, the other for about four. Tom would have made much of this, for the men were James Davis (known to the Aborigines as 'Duramboi') and David Bracefield or Bracewell ('Wandi'). Both men were given their freedom as they provided valuable information to the government on the nature of the northern lands and also the Aborigines.

William Archer from his Norwegian stronghold at Tolderodden, liked not only to hear of the activities of his sons, but he also questioned them about neighbouring squatters. 'This being Sunday and of course a leisure day with us, I have rigged up one of Mother's steel pens, and sat down to write ... what I intend shall be a long letter', began Tom to his father on 24 March 1844. He then wrote a long and detailed description of the 'squatocracy' (sic.) in the vicinity of Durundur. He promised he would be 'as lenient as the villainous desire of human nature for running people down will allow'. He then listed them in geographical order, south to
north. (The list was not published in the 1937 Collected Letters.) What follows is a shortened version:

King. '... what we call one of the old hands — that is one who has been in the Colony for upwards of 12 or 15 years — he is a man who has raised himself by industry from a servile situation to be as independent as most of us can boast of these hard times ... a rough and honest hospitable sort of man'.

Captain Griffin of North Pine — a former sea captain who had made a little money, 'bought sheep, came into the bush and is likely to lose it all again being perfectly ignorant of the management of a station'. Even so, Tom thought him 'a very dear little fellow'.

Mr Gregor. 'An Aberdonian and a very bad specimen he is'. He was both ignorant and 'mean and stingy' and lived in a very rough way. Though he had been settled for two years he did not have a decent hut 'nor a decent morsel to offer a traveller'. He even used his saddle cloth for a sleeping blanket. (This was the Gregor murdered by Aborigines in the following year.)

The Archers 'next on the list and very fine fellows they are — but the less I say of them the better'.

Evan and Colin John MacKenzie. (Unrelated to R.R. MacKenzie.) '... are of the good old stock'. They came to the colony about 1840–41 with 14 thousand pounds but were already in debt. Their downfall began when they 'fell into the hands of a Sydney merchant named Thomas Backer who made a business of selling colonial experience to new hands'. Through his advice they bought a lot of stock at high prices. Most of their cattle died on the road north and many of their sheep also — the rest caught the scab. Tom assessed their continuing problem as a combination of mismanagement and bad speculation in Brisbane property. 'They are both very nice fellows and Colin in particular a very amusing companion, but their misfortunes I am afraid have caused a good deal of recklessness, and sharpness in business which is not at all pleasant'.

John Balfour was a middle aged man, son of an Edinburgh merchant. He had spent much of his life in Italy and France 'and has imbibed a great many of the notions prevalent in those countries — more so than is consistent with our notion of morality and propriety, and he is thought
no desirable companion’. His brother Bob who died a year or so earlier was ‘the very opposite of old John’ and much missed by his friends.

_Graham and Ivory._ Graham was the son of an Edinburgh professor, while Ivory’s father was Lord High Advocate of Scotland. They were ‘both very nice fellows and well off’.

_The McConnells._ These were sons of a rich Manchester manufacturer, and though ‘not very elegant they are plain, sensible and shrewd fellows — just such as are apt to get on in the world and they appear to be doing so’.

_Frederick and Francis Bigge._ ‘Almost the only persons in the district with whom we can be said to be on intimate terms, and almost the only ones I am ambitious of calling friends’. They had some rich relatives, one of whom had died recently and left them ‘the very respectable sum of 6 thousand or 14 thousand pounds, it is not decided which yet, the smallest is not to be sneezed at’. Frederick had ‘a first class education’ and was a true gentleman. Francis, a former midshipman, was ‘not so clever and polished’ as his older brother, but pleasant and good natured. Tom admired him for being game enough to beat off three bushrangers ‘armed to the teeth’. This, he assured his father, was ‘down the country — we have no bushranging in our neighbourhood’. These brothers were known among their friends as ‘Bigge and Little Bigge’.

_Scott Brothers._ They had only a small cattle station, but Tom’s ‘leniency’ evaporated in describing the older brother as ‘a complete sot and [he] appears to be killing himself fast’. The other was ‘a pleasant chap’. They came from ‘the upper class of Scotch farmers’.

_Oliver and Borthwick._ ‘I don’t know much, but they appear to be decent caring Scotsmen — very kind and hospitable to strangers’.

_Wingate._ ‘One of the world’s unfortunate men’. He had been a midshipman, left the Navy, then purchased a farm on the Hunter River which nearly ruined him. He then ‘took to the bush with a lot of cattle’ but the Aborigines killed most and almost killed Wingate. Since settling down in their vicinity ‘he has been served in much the same way — he has been forced to sell his station and I hear he is going to India to try his fortune’.

_Ulr._ Tom did not know him well, but understood he had been many years in the colony, had ‘risen from nothing’ and, unlike the majority of
their neighbours, was married. He had a great deal of stock, was kind to strangers and very hospitable.

*James Canning Pearce.* Although Tom did not term him ‘a top sawyer’ he obviously was one — ‘a nephew of the great Canning who inherits a great deal of his relative’s qualities — he is very witty, has an astonishing memory, is a man of great information and tells a capital story’. But despite these qualities he was also ‘a grumbling, discontented, miserable Englishman [sic.], a regular John Bull — he has been in almost every situation — supercargo, planter, pig proprietor and squatter and equally unfortunate in all’. After all that, perhaps he should be classed as a ‘bottom sawyer’.

Tom did not name the squatters on the Logan River south of Brisbane, but described them as ‘all very fast fellows, that is, very dissipated and therefore the less I know of them the better’. His brief biographical sketches clearly show that men who came to the country with capital funds were not necessarily successful. Colonial experience could not be purchased, as Evan and Colin MacKenzie found to their sorrow. It had to be earned through hard work and genuine experience on a station as the Archers well knew. Tom himself was the very epitome of the jackeroo system — one who was capable of undertaking any task on a sheep station from treating scabby sheep or splitting posts and rails to setting up and managing a new station.

There were standards of behaviour which the young Archers maintained despite their primitive housing and equipment. Tom, newly arrived at their outstation Waroongundie on Emu Creek in July 1845, described their temporary household ‘furniture’ as:

... one tin teapot, two tin pots for cups, six tin plates, two large tin dishes for meat, one half dozen knives and forks, ditto spoons, and two tin candlesticks ... Someone on the road up here who was at the camp, asked us a riddle: “Why are the Archers like rich men?” Of course no one could answer such a poser, and he was obliged to do it himself — “Because they have lots of tin” — and he might have added, circulating paper [money], for the salt and pepper were going round in a bit of old newspaper ...  

During his time as manager of Waroongundie, ‘Tom the handsome squatter’ knew how to relax at the end of the day. According to Charlie, ‘after supping and filling his pipe and dispensing himself in his easy chair, he made the remark “Well, I can certainly take the most unconscionable
belly-fulls on days when I can get them”’. After coping with day to day problems, he needed to relax. He complained to David about the poor standards of the two latest station hands sent up from Durundur. One ‘took to his bed’ on the second day ‘where he has continued with little intermission ever since’. Tom considered that a man ‘who eats his mess and smokes his pipe’ could not be very sick and added that ‘he might as well have been in his grave for all the good he had been’. As for the other ‘gentleman’ — he was sent out to look after a flock of sheep and ‘amused himself’ by cutting the throats of twenty lambs. When their value was docked from his pay, ‘he walked off to Dr Simpson [Crown Lands Commissioner] so Charlie and I may look for a summons one of these days’. He begged David to send up two sets of working men for the shearing and to ‘set up a couple of sheep stations’ to cope with the increased numbers of sheep.¹⁰

Tom, having ‘set up’ Cooyar in 1846, then expressed his restlessness in 1847 through exploration, first westward to Fitzroy Downs, and then north to the Burnett and their three runs, Mundouran, Coonambula on St John’s Creek, a tributary of the Burnett, and Eidsvold on the Burnett itself. The town of Eidsvold was later established a short distance from the homestead. Tom again took up the day to day duties of a frontier squatter. Comfortably settled at Coonambula in July 1849, he described their life-style to his mother. ‘The Norwegians would stare to see a skikkelig mands barn (the son of a respectable man) dressing and working as we do here ...’ But compared to their neighbour Bouverie their own style of living was princely. Bouverie ‘though not an “Earlie’s son” is an Earlie’s nephew’, he quipped, yet he dressed and worked like a dockhand ‘up to his middle in the river washing sheep, packing wool and going with his drays as bullock-driver’s mate’. He preferred this life-style to ‘a life of idleness at home’. And as Tom well knew, a squatter had to work extra hard when wool was ‘half its former value and labour twice its former price’.¹¹ If his mother ever tut-tutted over her sons’ way of life, she would be comforted to know that they shared it with the English aristocracy.

On an earlier occasion Tom had visited Mr and Mrs Wade in Brisbane, and met James and William Leith Hay, sons of Sir Andrew Leith Hay, Baronet. They had just arrived from Scotland and intended to ‘enrol themselves in the most honourable corps of squatters’.¹² Tom accompanied
them as far as the Darling Downs and they parted with mutual regret. Charles and Willie would later have much to do with the Leith Hays in the Port Curtis district. On the same evening that Tom met the Leith Hays there was also present a young man named Hunt. He had been sent to the colony where he was 'turned adrift ... with 20 pounds in his pocket to push his fortune without a single friend or acquaintance'. This reminded Tom of what might have become of himself in similar circumstances, and how grateful he was ‘to have entered life under better auspices’.

The experience of forming the new stations on the Burnett after almost twelve months of what Tom himself identified as a ‘roaming and unsettled life’ was to satisfy him for the time being. He and Charlie had arrived in this part of New South Wales at a most interesting time in history. Tom was aware of this, for it brought to their notice the advantages of being only 100 miles (160 kilometres) from Port Curtis (the port of present day Gladstone). Addressing his letter to his father from ‘Burnett River, North Australia, 22 August 1848’, he wrote:

My dear Father,

You see that I have at last fairly worked my way out of the old Colony altogether and have pitched my tent in the district which was at one time intended by the Government to be erected into a separate Colony, for the reception of convicts; for which purpose they commanded a Depot at Port Curtis, within 100 miles of this spot. When Mr Gladstone resigned the Colonial Secretaryship, and Lord Grey assumed it, the scheme was abandoned and so was the settlement, after several thousands had been expended on materials, freights, salaries, etc. One good result attended the attempt — the Port has become better known than it was formerly and has been by competent judges declared to be the next best to Sydney on the Coast, so that we anticipate ere long to have a Port near us, from whence we can ship our produce direct for England, and thus effect a great saving both in freights and risk. After shearing is over I intend to make a push for the coast and try if I can find a good road to the Port. If one can be found within 150 miles it will add 50 per cent to the value of the runs in the neighbourhood ...

The Colony of North Australia in fact had been proclaimed at Port Curtis, its capital, in January 1847, and then abandoned. This new colony included almost all of present day Queensland (north from about Wide Bay) and the Northern Territory. But, as Tom indicated, a change of government in Britain led to the abandonment of the settlement at Port Curtis three
months later. Neither Tom, his fellow squatters, nor anyone else in the whole of New South Wales knew that North Australia remained legally intact until about March 1848. Due to British bungling, Queen Victoria’s Letters Patent creating the colony had not been revoked. Governor Fitzroy told the Legislative Assembly on 17 May 1847 that the colony was once more part of New South Wales. His mistake was not discovered for some months.

The Proclamation of November 1847 signed by the Queen did not reach New South Wales until three or four months later. Tom and his fellow squatters knew they were outside the boundaries of the proclaimed squatting districts, but did not realise that as they took their flocks and herds towards the Burnett River, they were also beyond the jurisdiction of New South Wales. Governor Fitzroy himself had been on tenterhooks, pointing out to those close to him that ‘this circumstance might give rise to very serious doubts as to the validity of acts done in execution of the Charter of Commission, whilst the Letters Patent were in the course of transmission to the Colony’. Fortunately the rapacious media of that time remained as ignorant of this as the squatters.

The Burnett Pastoral District was not proclaimed open to occupation until 1849, so the Archers and about fifty others were grazing their flocks illegally, in a technical sense, but with the tacit consent of the government. As Tom explained in August 1848, without a Lands Commissioner to define their boundaries, if they did not stock their runs adequately they risked losing some land — ‘if anyone should come past who was black-guard enough to infringe the code of honour laid down by the squattocracy in these matters’. They held their runs by ‘priority of discovery and occupation’. Meanwhile they paid no licence fees, nor did they receive any protection. In relation to Aborigines he added, ‘the Blacks have been so perfectly quiet that common precaution is protection enough, and even should we need it, we can protect ourselves much better than a troop of drunken Police headed by an indolent Commissioner’. If ever proof were needed of the destructive effect of the Native Police system, it lies in this statement.

The squatting rush to the Burnett in 1848 confirmed Tom’s opinion that they had claimed Coonambula, Mundouran and Eidsvold not a day too soon. The code of honour laid down by the squattocracy was put to
the test in July. Their nearest neighbour, Bouverie, ‘a brother of Prince Albert’s equerry Colonel B. and nephew or something of the kind to the Earl of Radnor or some such splendid individual’ was considering exchanging his present run with the Archers for a larger though inferior run further up the river. Another squatter, Trevelyan, had taken up ‘the heads of the No-Go’ — a river which Tom named when out exploring with Jacky Small. Trevelyan thought this was the Dawson. With Patrick Mackay’s run adjoining Eidsvold on the other side, they were already surrounded. In this rapidly changing scene Tom was frequently host to three or four squatters for the night — a tradition of Archer hospitality begun by David at Durundur which would reach its climax at Gracemere.

That year of change ended on a quiet note — the still moment before the storm of change in forty-nine. And as always with Tom, a quiet brought vivid memories of home. Early in that year he told Mary that her picture of life at Tolderodden was ‘so good and natural’ that he looked forward with ‘tenfold anxiety and pleasure’ to the time when he would take his place at the fireside. But by the end of the year there were compensations in Australia. With Davie selling both Durundur and Cooyar and joining Tom and Charlie on the Burnett ‘it will be so huggelig (snug) to be near each other’, Tom told his mother. Meantime Charlie was to send home ‘a sort of scrap book he kept in the bush at lambing’ which included a sketch of Tom:

… taken from the life, which, though not flattering, is recognised by the blacks, and whites too, so I suppose it must be like, and it will give you an idea both of the appearance and mode of living of your dutifull son Tom. I must call attention however to the fact that I there appear in my hverdags dragt [everyday clothes] which you will perceive corresponds with the “hverdags” appearance of everything about me.18

The following year began normally enough with the usual squatting chore after shearing: carting wool by bullock wagon. They made three trips from Eidsvold to Wide Bay, the new port on the Mary River. Maryborough by now supported a population of 300. Then came a cataclysmic change in the life of ‘the handsome squatter’. David prepared his parents for the possibility of Tom taking part in the Californian gold rush, and then Willie confirmed this in July 1849. Tom, on his way to Sydney, had paid Willie a flying visit at Eton Vale on the Darling Downs,
the station he managed for Hodgson. Willie confessed to ‘aiding and abetting’ Tom in the hope that he would meet their brother ‘poor Archie in that part of the Globe’. No one had heard from Archie for so long they feared the worst. Willie also stressed that as Tom was ‘naturally of a restless temperament’, his experiences in a different part of the world might convince him that ‘New South Wales is not the most dull and miserable spot on the face of the earth — an idea which he has lately taken in his head’. But in quoting Tom’s own reasoning that California was ‘at least one step towards Norway — the goal of all our aspirations —’, he hit the mark exactly.

Tom’s decision was taken in the presence of a party of squatters enjoying Coonambula hospitality. Among these was Ned Hawkins whom Tom had first met about the time he and David left Wallerawang on the northern trek. Tom’s recollection of that evening recaptures his white-hot excitement:

When we had finished our meal and filled our social pipes, the following conversation took place:

Hawkins: I say, Tom, have you seen in the papers all about the new gold discoveries in California?

I: Yes, I have read about it.

Hawkins: Well, what do you think of it?

I: I don’t believe a word of it.

Hawkins: Ah, but I know it’s true, for a ship has just arrived in Sydney from San Francisco bringing a lot of gold dust, and the ship belongs to Hort, a friend of Mocatta’s, who knows it’s all quite true.

I: Well, suppose it to be true, what about it?

Hawkins: Only that I’ve made up my mind to go to California and try my luck at gold-digging, and want you to go with me; will you come?

A pause of about half a minute, during which it flashed upon me that California was more than halfway home! I glanced sideways at Charlie, whose face wore a puzzling expression, but a rather encouraging smile, and then I answered: “Well, I don’t mind if I do; when do you start?”

Hawkins: I start from here tomorrow for Sydney and from there we will sail as soon as ever we can get a ship to take us —

Here Charlie broke in with: “Oh, but suppose I put a veto on your going, Master Tom?” This was, however, said with such a smile of approval on his face that I made bold to reply: “Oh, you be blewed” (or something to that effect), and so the affair was settled.
Charlie had already been primed by Ned not to object, so Tom asked for one day’s grace to have his clothes washed, and they were off on the first stage of their adventure, with a visit to Willie along the way.

Tom’s restlessness was to be life-long. Thus far in his life he had proved able and resourceful, first as a young colonial gaining experience while ‘educating himself’, then as an overlander with stock, as a pastoralist explorer and finally revealing skills in setting up and managing new stations on the northern frontier. But he never became a contented part of what he called ‘the squattocracy’. He was a prime example of what one of his great-grandsons 150 years later termed a ‘boys’ own adventurer’.
In his later years Thomas Archer wrote and published, for his family alone, his *Recollections of a Rambling Life*. His brothers' and his own occasional letters during his time as a 'forty-niner' serve to complement his recollections. Because he was in a kind of a limbo between Australia and Norway during those years, a brief account of his experiences demands its own space in the overall narrative.

Tom and Ned Hawkins spent several weeks in Sydney, with Tom 'engaged principally in raising the “needful”'. As he had only 10 pounds left in his Maryborough account, and was notoriously hopeless in money matters, it is likely that the Walkers again came to his rescue. The evening before their departure on the *Elizabeth Archer*, a group of squatter friends entertained Tom and Ned and Ned's nephew, Alick MacKenzie, to dinner at Petty's Hotel. There is no record of who entertained the rest of the travelling party — Tom's two Aboriginal friends, Jacky Small and Davy, also two other Aborigines (one called Sandy) and two Chinese employed by Ned.¹ The voyage passed pleasantly enough, the would-be miners reaching San Francisco in early October 1849.

Through a lucky coincidence Tom found that among the estimated 800 ships anchored in the bay, one was captained by his brother Jack. It happened this way. Tom, having struck up a conversation with a young man from Hobart, and given his name, received the reply, 'If your name is Archer, you must be a brother of our captain'.² Tom was soon aboard the *Harriet Nathan* to Jack's great surprise. He also heard news that Archie had
gone as Mate on a vessel bound for the west coast of Mexico. Tom’s letter to his father from San Francisco admits that they were foolish to bring 10 tons of goods with them from Sydney, carriage to the goldfields being exorbitant. Consequently they went from door to door selling their goods at cost price. Gold dust was the chief currency and with 200 dollars worth Tom purchased a long-boat to transport their party more economically. ‘Thus you see my early practice in boat navigation is likely to stand me in good stead at last — which I at one time thought never would again’, he told his father. Tom’s navigation was to prove superior to the boat itself. Meantime he expressed himself much impressed by the Yankees and chortled that he intended ‘to become one slick’.

Making their way out into the bay, Tom realised the long-boat with ten people aboard (a friend of Ned’s named Hicks had joined them) was overloaded but thought there was no risk as ‘it was all inland navigation’. After three days they reached the mouth of the Sacramento River where they anchored for the night. Towards morning the man on watch called out, ‘the boat is sinking’. It gave one lurch and they were all thrown into the water dressed in heavy clothing and boots which made swimming any distance impossible. In the darkness behind him Tom heard voices and made out some of the party clinging to or getting astride the overturned boat. MacKenzie, Sandy, Jacky Small and Davy helped Tom out of the water and they began calling for Ned and the others. Hicks, who could not swim, would have sunk immediately, but as Ned was a strong swimmer his disappearance was puzzling. ‘For many years I bitterly regretted his loss, and still look back upon its cause with sorrow, not unmixed with blame for the share I had in it’, he later recalled. He had lost one of the ‘most manly, most generous, and most kind friends I ever had’.

These comments were made many years later, but Tom also wrote a contemporary account of the tragic accident to Willie who was at Eton Vale on the Darling Downs. Charles was relieved to receive this, for he had heard a rumour that Tom also had been drowned. ‘Bad as the truth is, it was to me like good news’, he told Willie. Having also read reports in the Sydney Herald from returning disappointed gold seekers, he feared ‘poor Tom is placed in a very awkward position … if we had him safe back again I should take care he only left Australia to go to Norway’. Almost two years passed before Tom received Charlie’s letter enclosing 50 pounds
and advising him to return to Australia. Tom was then on his way back to San Francisco after striking it rich at Humbug Gulch.

In his *Recollections* Tom devoted seven chapters to his Californian adventures. The merest outline must suffice here. The tragedy in the bay which affected him so deeply was the first in a series of misadventures and, at times, great dangers. In his letter to Willie on the boat mishap, he omitted the terrible predicament in which he and MacKenzie found themselves when daylight came and they swam and waded ashore. Three of the Aborigines began the swim with them. They had all first shed their boots and heavy clothing. When the two white men reached shore there was no sign of the Aborigines and they believed them drowned. A local workman took pity on the two shivering white wretches, took them to his boarding house and wrapped them in blankets. Even then it took two hours to thaw their bodies. An equally kind store-keeper took Tom's word that they would repay him for a suit of clothes each. This they did a few hours later by selling the wrecked boat and cargo for salvage. They then worked their way back to San Francisco on a sailing ship and into the comforting presence of Jack Archer on the *Harriet Nathan*.

After a few day's rest they 'pulled an oar' in a whale boat as a means of reaching Stockton where they worked as labourers for $8 a day each to equip themselves to mine on the Stanislaus River. It was at Stockton that Jacky Small and Davy were reunited with an unbelieving Tom. They had been rescued from the upturned boat by a passing vessel — Sandy had drowned. By December 1849 the two black and two white men shared a tent in 'an elevated and rather chilly region' where Jacky Small and Davy saw snow for the first time, clapping their hands, 'cooeeing' and 'kindabarring' in utter amazement. After three months misery at this place, McLean's Ferry, they had very little gold to show for their labour.

Tom and his party would have starved at McLean's Ferry if McLean — who had known Archie in the South Sea Islands — had not given them credit. In the spring they moved from under 'the aptly named Sierra Nevada that loomed over our heads covered with snow' down to a plateau where at last they struck pay-dirt. Within a month at Scorpion's Gulch, Tom was able to repay McLean the $500 owed and to provision the party with such luxuries as pickles, sardines and fresh beef. Even so, 'Madame Fortune' smiled ironically, for it was here that they learned that their
previous campsite on the high mountain 'was literally surrounded by masses of gold [the Colombia Mine] and that [we were] sleeping a few feet above it'.

Tom's early vow to become 'a slick Yankee' suffered the fate of many a human resolution, for his impulsive decisions often benefited others, not himself. Eventually returning in disgust to San Francisco, stony broke, he received hospitality from Sydney acquaintances, Hort and Montefiore, who were in business there. And it was there he met another disappointed digger, Charles Fogg, who agreed to a partnership to prospect Mount Shasta about 400 kilometres to the north-east. Inevitably there were adventures on the way out, including a night watch for Indians at each of their camp sites. Tom admitted having 'closely studied Fenimore Cooper' in his boyhood and therefore expected 'the last of the Mohicans' to come crawling along the ground in the disguise of a bear or wolf'. Before long, though, it was the real thing. They were attacked in daylight by twenty Indians armed with bows and arrows, also several stolen rifles. When the chief and several other Indians were killed and the others fled, Tom was disgusted to see one of his companions scalp the dead 'braves'. This was far from the end of their troubles with Indians. A little later Tom was one of twenty volunteers to join the Mounted Rifles in a skirmish which was part of the so-called Indian wars. This differed from the Australian Native Police in that both officers and 'irregular' troops were white.

That skirmish over, Tom and Fogg eventually reached Humbug Gulch (about 450 km north of San Francisco) where they joined five others in pegging out a large claim which immediately proved very profitable. Tom's brothers would have been amazed to know that he was appointed treasurer, but while he was careless with his own money, he carefully guarded that belonging to the whole party. Their claim was about 8 kilometres from Shasta township. When winter snows stopped their work, Tom read aloud to his entranced mates from 'David Copperfield', for by this time they were affluent enough to share a cabin. Then, in one of his impulsive actions which he later regretted, he sold his share and returned to San Francisco carrying in his body belt 12 pounds weight of gold for himself and several of his former partners. An additional regret that only came with hindsight was his leaving behind his two Aboriginal friends, Jacky Small and Davy.

It was during Tom's trek back that he met Fogg who had earlier pulled
Californian Interlude: Tom

out, but was now returning and carrying mail. This included a letter from Tom’s young brother Colin (on his way to Australia by this circuitous route) and one from Charles telling him that nothing had been heard of him for months and ordering him to return to the colony. While he had no intention of obeying Charles, he was astonished to learn that Colin, 18, was in California, and wasted no time in getting to San Francisco and ridding himself of his golden money belt. He then set out to find Colin, not an easy task, but eventually he found the appropriate ‘gulch’ and tent:

I at once tied up my horse, walked down to the tent indicated, and peeping slyly round the entrance flap, beheld a young man sitting alone, and enjoying a luxurious repast, probably consisting of beans, bacon, biscuits and coffee or tea, who, on seeing me, got up and stared at me, with wonder and (I hope) admiration in his glance. His garments and hat were somewhat besprinkled with mud, but the glance of the eyes and the expression of the face convinced me that the “burly chiel” I saw before me was the same individual that I had left nearly fifteen years ago in Laurvig, a four-year-old boy ...

As Colin refused to leave until he had sold his claims, Tom once more returned to San Francisco. In a letter to his father he told of their mutual sorrow at parting after a couple of days together. He found that Colin was a great favourite and ‘when the people found out that I was his brother, I was perfectly lionised’. Back in the city, Tom invested a large amount of his gold ‘in a promising venture’ with Montefiore and his partner Burgoyne to ship goods to Panama. Julia Archer must have wrung her hands in despair — here was Tom acting in the same optimistic spirit as his father in taking on a new business venture. But as it happened this venture appeared to be a winner. He and Burgoyne took their goods to ‘a profitable market’ as Panama City was crowded with Americans awaiting shipping to California. Then came Tom’s downfall. In the month he remained there finalising his business he spent so much ‘in this extravagant place that my profits had, I fear, vanished ere I could get away’. He did, however, leave with a reasonable sum of money, though much less than his share in the value of gold he had carried down in his money belt.

Returning to Europe via New York and Boston, where he booked his passage on the America, Tom arrived in England in June 1852. After two weeks in London he ‘took the train to Perth’ to visit his Aunt Ann Walker and his brother Sandy who was a clerk in the office of J.& R. Morison.
Sandy introduced him to the Morison family which included daughter Grace. Tom’s own account of his rambling life ended when he and Sandy left for Norway in the summer of 1852, but this was far from the end of his restlessness. The humdrum routine of Tolderodden, once the novelty of homecoming was over, was hard to take after so many years on the move. While the summer days were glorious with sailing and fishing, he was nearly driven mad by inactivity during the short days and long dark nights of winter. He could not occupy himself with carpentry or bookkeeping as Davie did, for as he later confessed to his mother:

… my want of confidence in myself and my fear of making a mess of anything I undertook, always made me backward in putting myself forward … Indeed Dear Mother, I am far from being pleased with myself when I take a review of my conduct, especially latterly, while at home. I fear I was often petulant and apt to be vexed with trifles which ought never to have given me a moment’s annoyance …

There was another cause for anxiety in Tom’s mind during those long winter months. Having fallen in love with Grace Lindsay Morison he had to overcome her parents’ misgivings about his unsettled life, and their daughter’s future in the Australian bush. At the time of his engagement to Grace, the Morison Press was a Perth institution. But as Grace inherited her father’s ‘force of will’ she was able to convince him that her future lay in Australia with Tom. During Tom’s time in California, and later while trying to adjust to life without adventure, his brothers Willie and Charles were steadily working their way northwards, with considerable assistance from Colin after his arrival in the colony near the end of 1852. Charles was to take on Tom’s former mantle as ‘great explorer’, and in doing so, honourably record his name in the history of the future Colony of Queensland.
When Charles arrived at Durundur in 1843 at age thirty to learn the trade of a squatter, he had already travelled a very different path from his brothers. Having specialised in commercial subjects at Laurvig Grammar School, he left in July 1830 to take up an office position obtained for him by James Walker in Tobago, West Indies. Tobago, one of the Windward Islands, had been a British possession since 1763.

Charles lived in stirring times in the West Indies. The emancipation of Negro slaves which had recently taken place when he wrote to his father in June 1835 (after two year's silence) followed the British Act passed in August 1833. On the estate of Charles' employer the change took place without any disturbance, but in Demerara some of the slaves had thrown down their hoes and 'decamped into the woods'. Charles found the new system of apprenticeship so successful that the cane harvest that year was far more advanced than when the Negroes were slaves. Now they had two days a week off to cultivate their own gardens and sell surplus produce. By this time Charles had exchanged his office work for management of the rum making department. 'There are 70 vats on this Estate and I generally make 4 puncheons of Rum every week', he told his father.¹

But he grew tired of this dead-end occupation and then almost died from a tropical fever. On his return to Europe he had to be carried ashore at Glasgow where he lay close to death for two days. After arriving in London and recuperating at his Uncle John Archer's home, in 1839 he
assured his mother he would soon be well again under her loving care and in Norway's bracing climate. And so he was.

Soon after a Christmas celebration at Tolderodden with all the family, including Kate's bairns and his own little brothers, Charles sailed for London where he had a reunion with brother Archie whom he had not seen for eleven years. He then took up an office position with William Walker & Co. in Sydney. He obtained board and lodging for 30 shillings a week with an additional shilling 'tip' for servants and extra for laundry. This represented 75 per cent of his salary. He found the Walkers hard masters. They rewarded their servants 'but poorly', paying lower salaries than other Sydney merchants. There was no friendship between Walkers and their clerks. He didn't care, he told Kate, how soon someone else turned up to enable him to leave their employ. The Walker brothers Thomas and Archibald, nephews of William and James Walker, managed the firm at that time. Thomas was usually kind to his relatives, but they all found Archibald 'very different' and of a peculiar nature.

It is probable that Charles would have moved to Durundur long before 1843 but for David's financial problems. In the end it was Jack's decision to return to the sea that made an opening for their eldest brother. His introduction to bush camping over, he received a glorious welcome from Tom at Durundur. Charles was one of two artists among the brothers. He spent his first morning there in sketching the hut and out-buildings and also the occupants for the benefit of Tolderodden. He thought they would get a better impression of it than any description could provide. He then proceeded to identify the various features and human beings:

The figures in the foreground are intended for a group of aborigines. Look to the left, as the penny showman says, and you will behold John Archer working at his canoe. The building behind him is the store — the centre building is the dwelling hut — then comes the oven, next the fowl house, and the building on the extreme right, of which only an end can be seen, is the kitchen. The gentleman with the spade in his hand, is no less a personage than the Laird of Durundur himself, but he protests it to be a lie on his personal appearance, so we will call it Sandy the gardener.

Charles continued from time to time to send sketches home 'to amuse and interest the young folks'. David told him in 1845 that he should 'turn his abilities in that line to account' as he thought the sketches might be
useful to a good lithographer. Charlie declined, believing his work to have no value outside the family.

Old William Archer never lost his interest in timber, the sinews of his father's Perth business. Charles' exceedingly detailed account of the various timbers of the Moreton Bay district was written for him. He told how the Aborigines used the stringy-bark for making ropes and roofing gunyahs and by the whites for roofing huts. He listed many others, adding that the Bunya-Bunya was the wonder of that part of the colony. While others at Tolderodden might have thought trees an uninteresting subject, they all enjoyed Charlie's description of himself in summer dress:

In this hot weather a shirt, breeches and gaiters are the only clothes used; a strap around the waist supports the unmentionables and a brace of pistols; my rifle is slung light cavalry fashion. A slouched straw hat, and a beard several inches long, nearly hiding everything except my nose, which from constant exposure to the sun, is of a fine deep tan colour, complete my costume. Fancy this figure mounted on a strong grey horse followed by two powerful dogs, and you will I daresay allow it would have a startling effect on any of my Norwegian friends.

Tom was particularly pleased with their thirty-year-old eldest brother whom he scarcely remembered, being only six or seven when Charles left home. He told Kate in the year after Charles' arrival at Durundur that although he owed more to Davie than any of his brothers, he could not help 'being more fond of Charlie ... he has such a mild and attentive manner'. Tom discovered that he was not the only one in the district with this preference. Charlie, on a visit to their neighbour, Bigge — 'by no means renowned for great liberality' — had returned with a fishing rod, reel, gut and everything complete. Tom could not conceal his astonishment.

Charles was the most versatile of all the brothers. He began by adapting easily to the ways of the bush and to station routine. While he had gifts and abilities beyond Tom's, he shared several qualities with him — a sense of humour, a love of literature and, later, the excitement of exploration. His description of Christmas 1845 which he shared with Tom and several neighbouring squatters illustrates not only his enjoyment of life, but also provides a peep into the man's world which existed on the frontier. He shared this with his sister Kate:
On Christmas Eve, Tom and I left this [Waroongundie] for Graham and Ivory's, determined, if possible, to have something better than damper and mutton for our Christmas dinner. We found Graham had gone to Sydney, but Ivory was at home and just on the point of starting for McConnell's on the same errand as ourselves. We went with him and there we found Little Bigge, also on the lookout for a Christmas dinner, and we immediately held a council of war to determine where the attack should be made. Balfour was known to have some good sherry, and Ivory had some bad brandy, and it was unanimously carried that Balfour should suffer. It was further decided that one of the party should ride over to Balfour's immediately after breakfast, and order dinner at 6 o'clock; but who should make their appearance but Balfour and his superintendent Donald MacKenzie — Christmas dinner hunting. Another consultation was then held, and as Balfour had two bottles of wine in his holsters, we decided the festivities should take place at Ivory's.

Balfour, after being duly installed into the office of head cook, went off with Ivory to prepare dinner ... The party consisted of Ivory, Balfour, McConnell, Mort (McConnell's superintendent), Little Bigge, D. MacKenzie, C. and T. Archer. We had a capital dinner and the wine was unanimously approved of ... After tea we attacked the brandy, and good stories and songs became the order of the day. Balfour, Ivory and Tom were the only good singers ...

The last song gave the conversation a sentimental turn, and McConnell was accused of being in love with one of the Miss Jones's — and what was still worse, paying his addresses to the young lady through the mediation of her mother. It was determined to try him on this grave charge, and Balfour and Bigge were appointed judges. Ivory, the only tipsy man of the party, had the difficult task of keeping order ... and I was entrusted with the Prosecution. McConnell was refused the benefit of counsel, and was therefore obliged to defend himself, which he did in such a lame way that he was declared guilty — and sentenced to give a champagne dinner within a certain time. I must say the witnesses, Tom and Mort, behaved like trumps, and it would have required a clever fellow to overturn their evidence.

As there was no shorthand writer present the speeches have sunk into oblivion, but as they made us laugh mightily, I suppose, amongst a lot of nonsense there were a few sparks of wit. After this we had a "Viva la Reine" and then to bed — that is to say, those who could get a bed. I was one of the fortunates, the others slept on wool bales ...

Charles' easy-going nature, demonstrated here, provided a foil to the sober David as well as good companionship for Tom. His sketches conveyed visual reality to the Norwegians in that age of the camera's infancy. As the brothers moved northwards, Charles carried his sketch-pad, pencils and water colours with him. On a letter to fifteen year old Colin,
he sketched a shearer at work and a man pressing the wool — for a boy who had never seen a sheep.8

Charles’ inventive mind also made for greater comfort within the hut. In 1846, he promised to make Willie a ‘rustic armchair’9 — what is now known as the Queensland squatter’s chair. Charles Archer is credited with its invention. In its original manufacture, made with bush timber and part of a woolsack as seating, it was a primitive form of today’s popular item made from polished timber and bright striped canvas. Charles also made a chess board and set of chessmen which he described as ‘not very elegant as you might imagine, since it took only four hours to manufacture them ... but Tom and I generally have a battle at night, I giving the Queen as he is only a beginner.’10

Cooyar provided an engineering challenge for Charles. Sheep washing was an important prerequisite to shearing, but it was also a tedious and unpleasant task if carried out in the bed of a creek or washpool. In 1847 Charles and David decided upon a spring as the best means of ‘collecting and raising the water’ so that the sheep could be washed under a spout. Selecting the site was a joint decision, ‘rendering the dam tight’ was a personal challenge to Charlie. He described it as ‘just the sort of job that suits my taste, I daresay I shall hit upon some plan that will answer’.11

Charles and Tom left Cooyar on 14 May 1848 to form their new stations at Coonambula and Eidsvold in the Burnett district. Tom had 4,300 sheep belonging to himself and Willie, while Charles was in charge of 3,000, the property of David Archer & Co. Charles kept a record of each day’s progress and problems in a journal which has survived. Each brother had the assistance of two shepherds, a hut-keeper, a bullock driver and one station hand. In addition they had ‘Harvey who cooks for Tom and Me — two black boys, “David” and “Jacky Small” and one blackfellow, “Mr Nigue”, making ourselves 16 in all’. Each dray was drawn by ten bullocks and between them they carried 2 tons of flour, 1500 pounds weight of sugar and two and one half chests of tea and a supply of bush tools. ‘Few expeditions have started with a better working outfit and fewer superfluities’, he recorded at the end of the first day. They then pitched their tent and after a long chat ‘we wrapped our possum cloaks around us’ and slept.12 Winter chills came early in that year.

The magnitude of this operation far exceeded that of the original trek
north from Wallerawang eight years earlier. Charles and Tom only narrowly avoided a similar disaster with diseased sheep. Fortunately Tom discovered that sheep at Ferriter & Uhr's Barambah Station were ‘dying by the dozen with catarrh’ so they took a circuitous route to avoid contact. On 3 June the brothers climbed a small rugged peak and saw beneath them the valley of the Burnett. 'Here and there a black's smoke is curling up from amongst the timber which (with the exception of our dogs barking at the camp) is the only indication that the valley is inhabited'.

In mid June they formed the out-station they named Mundouran where, with help provided by Aborigines cutting bark, they erected the first buildings ‘which are the most primitive kind and are called Bandicoot Gunyahs’. They moved on again in mid July, reaching their Eidsvold run a week later. With true pioneering 'luck' the bullock driver capsized the dray within 200 yards of journey’s end — ‘nothing broken but everything topsy turvey’. Coonambula was about 20 kilometres south of Eidsvold on St John’s Creek. It takes its name from native pines near the hut — ‘Goonam’ pine, ‘bula’ two.

It is unlikely that Charles had ever used a construction tool before he began his pioneering life five years earlier. But at Eidsvold it was Charlie who not only formed the new station, but also selected the prettiest site on the Burnett River and then erected the necessary buildings. First priority, as always, was the woolshed — ‘the most extensive we have ever raised’, he told the family back home, ‘and I look upon it as my chef d'oeuvre in bush architecture, both as regards solidity of construction and adaption to the purposes for which it was erected’. Two or three months later he built the dwelling hut — ‘the best building, although I did most of the work myself. I begin to be very expert with the adze and saw and, by the time I have made the furniture, expect to be as good a cabinet maker as Willie’. He assured his mother that although their houses were built of rough slabs, they were eminently suited to the climate. When the slabs of green timber shrunk, the breezes air-cooled the interior. As usual with Charles, he made a sketch of the new dwelling huts to provide visual reality for the family at Tolderodden. But there was one task connected with home-making that Charlie refused — cooking. At one time he was ‘actually starved for the want of a good cook, with a store full of good raw
Charles’ aversion to domesticity found its antithesis in his belated fascination with exploration. It seems to have been almost accidental. In December 1849 in a letter to his mother he agreed with her hope that this was their final move:

… I am heartily tired of travelling with stock, and fancy I have reached an age [36] at which that sort of roaming life ceases to be exciting. I also agree with you that some of us ought to get a good wife, and nothing could occur in this country that would give me greater pleasure than to see some or all of my Brothers married. For my own part I am already and intend to continue, an old bachelor …

During the winter of 1850 Charles had for company one of Willie’s friends who not only assisted in the station management, and played chess with him in the evenings, but also suggested an expedition into country unexplored by Europeans on the lower part of the Dawson River. Leichhardt had named this river in 1844 and twice travelled along its upper reaches. And so the two men went out for ten days searching for a run — ‘the country we found is perhaps the very finest in N.S. Wales, [but] it is so badly watered as to be unavailable for grazing purposes’. This was the true beginning of Charles’ interest in exploration. Meantime Willie, who reluctantly was to be co-opted for Charles’ most significant expedition into unknown territory in 1853, was enjoying (except for the long, dark winter weather) his long awaited visit to Tolderodden. Because he did not join David and Tom on the trek north, there has been little mention of him in the saga so far, so his experiences deserve a chapter to themselves.

materials. I think we have all inherited our father’s “afsky” [aversion] for the kitchen …’

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William the Second

Had William and Julia possessed the Scottish gift of 'second sight' they never would have given their fourth son his father's name. Of all their children, Willie grew up to be least like their father in nature or business ability. While he seems to have been a 'sickly' youth before leaving for the colony in 1837 (his mother worried about his health), he grew into a robust and handsome man. All references to his physical appearance in Australia confirm this, from Charlie's 'fine, strong, good looking fellow' in 1841 to Jack's 'a regular stunner' in 1854.¹ His photograph taken about that time shows this to have been no exaggeration.

At the time of Jack's marriage in 1845, Willie, 26, admitted his own was 'a consummation devoutly to be wished but postponed to some future very remote and indefinite time'.² Women were attracted to Willie. While on his first visit from Wallerawang early in 1846 he met the Misses Jones in Brisbane. Their reception of Willie was 'highly flattering' according to Tom.³ Willie himself was reminded of this in the year his sister's forlovelse (engagement) was announced. He commented that the gossips of Moreton Bay had him 'on the verge of entering into a contract, which I trust I never by word, or look, or deed gave any foundation for'.⁴ Undoubtedly the lady was one of the Misses Jones. In those years his determination to save Tolderodden by sending as much money home as possible meant that even had he fallen in love, he would have felt honour bound not to show it. All his spare money was sent home to Tolderodden. He took an interest in family life, telling his mother that Mrs James Walker of Wallerawang: 'is
bringing up as nice a lot of spoiled children as you would wish to see'— but with the admonition 'this must not be repeated'.\(^5\) It would not do for this to get back to his employer.

After David and Tom left for Moreton Bay in 1840, Willie's life was often solitary, as in the winter of 1842 when he wrote from Walker's out-station, Loowie:

... I have been leading the usual routine of an Australian bush life, travelling in company with my black boy from station to station, gathering, branding, weaning and driving sheep and cattle; and with the exception of a month's stay at Wallerowang, from whence I have just returned, again outward bound for the stations, I have seldom been two nights in one place. From long habit I have now become so accustomed to this migratory life that I feel uneasy, almost uncomfortable, when the nature of my duties require that I should remain stationary for any length of time. When spreading my opossum cloak for the night, by a blazing bush fire, under our beautiful climate, I often reflect with thankfulness that I am engaged in a pursuit so congenial to my taste and conducive to health, with the prospect of earning an honest living ... \(^6\)

With all their differences in personality and ability, the young Archers actually liked one another — friendship beyond the ties of blood. 'Poor Jack' came in for criticism from time to time, but by and large they enjoyed one another's company. When Charles arrived in Sydney to work, James Walker whose kindness was unfailing, gave Willie a week's leave to meet his brother. 'It was the happiest week I have spent since I came to the Colony, I shall ever look back on it with tender recollections', he told his mother.\(^7\) Willie was only twelve years old when Charles left home and this was their first reunion. In January 1843 Willie had a further week of 'unalloyed pleasure' with Charlie and Archie in Sydney. Archie had come out with the intention of taking Willie's situation with Walkers. By this time the Wallerawang umbrella covered eighteen stations in the District of Bligh in central New South Wales. Owing to the depressed state of affairs in the colony, Walkers advised Archie to join Archer & Co. at Moreton Bay, offering him a loan (at the usual high interest) which he declined. This proved a fortunate decision in the long term, although it subjected him to many more years of uncertain living in the South Pacific Islands.

While David was in Sydney in 1844 making arrangements to take Walkers' cattle on agistment at Durundur, Willie suggested he return via
Wallerawang, which he did. ‘As you may suppose, we had many a crack about you all’, he told his mother. But what he failed to confess, in case she thought him extravagant, was his request to Davie to do shopping for him in Sydney:

I wish you would order for me from Pate & Preston a suit of Colonial tweed similar to the one supplied by that firm last year, & 2 pairs of moleskin trousers — in case they have not got my measure, the clothes in charge of Mrs Bolsover are my fit. I wish you would also procure me 2 pairs strong boots, 2 pairs cotton drawers, 6 pairs worsted stockings & 2 worsted sailor shirts …

The worsted sailor shirts ordered were ancestors to the collarless flannel ‘blueys’ popular in the bush for generations. Whether or not Jackie Howe, the Queensland ‘gun shearer’, was the first to rip the sleeves out for greater comfort, for the past century they have been ‘Jackie Howes’ — eventually becoming sleeveless navy blue cotton singlets. Willie’s work shirts became fashionable for females 150 years later as ‘grandpa shirts’.

It was Willie who unknowingly created the title for this book when he explained to his father in 1845 how difficult it was to communicate with each other and with the family at Tolderodden: ‘We are now however so much scattered over the face of the earth and ocean, that this is a matter of no small difficulty’. Their father could scarcely comprehend the great distances between the several locations of his Australian sons. So much of Willie’s life was spent in bush camps that letter writing was virtually impossible — a situation hard to grasp by those sitting comfortably in the big sitting room at Tolderodden. In May 1845 he was forced to postpone his planned trip to Moreton Bay because of ‘an abominable law suit in the Supreme Court in Sydney’ which he was obliged to attend as a witness.

The long anticipated visit to Durundur took place early in 1846. Willie spent a whole month with his three brothers during which the Norwegian families ‘formed an almost endless topic of conversation’. This visit was another highlight in the lonely man’s early years in the colony. ‘God grant that we may ever continue the bond of peace …’ But he confirmed that Durundur’s ‘rich flats and steaming climate’ were most unsuited to sheep. He approved of Waroongundie and Cooyar, leaving Waroongundie on 4 March 1846 to return across country on horseback to Wallerawang, a ride of 22 days. He described the Darling Downs as the finest piece of country he had seen in the colony, and Liverpool Plains as perhaps the best fattening
country. He surely regretted David’s belief that the Downs were all taken up in 1841, but charitably forbore from telling him so. But in rejoicing ‘with the whole Colony’ in Leichhardt’s safe return, he drew Davie’s attention to the country ‘not far north of Cooyar’ which the explorer likened to the Darling Downs. This was the Peak Downs country (Central Highlands west of present day Rockhampton) which Charlie and Colin would explore in the future. Willie himself would also have an important role at that time, but back at Wallerawang he soon returned to his ‘old jog trot of habits’ doing the rounds of the eighteen stations with ‘the old gentleman’— James Walker. He completed his contract with the Walkers at the end of 1847.

Willie’s journey north had more than social significance, for it was then that the firm of Wm. & Thos. Archer was established. With an injection of 150 pounds from Willie and the proceeds from the sale of Waroongundie, they had enough according to junior partner Tom ‘to float us with flying colours’. Tom’s proposal to establish their station in the vicinity of Mitchell’s Fitzroy Downs, however, soon after was aborted in favour of the Burnett. Willie’s life took another turn at this time. He was appointed manager of Hodgson & Crawford’s Eton Vale Station on the Darling Downs. Tom identified Hodgson as one of the ‘top sawyers’ in the colony. Eton Vale was only about 80 kilometres from Cooyar, so Willie no longer felt isolated. He was able to accompany David on ‘a long exploratory journey’ to Tom’s new country on the Burnett. Having seen it, Willie advanced 100 pounds to allow Tom to set up huts at Eidsvold — those ultimately erected by Charlie after Tom left for California.

An influx of immigrants in 1849 meant lower costs for wool growers and more competition in the labour market. Even so, at Eton Vale there were ten Chinese whom Willie had imported to work as shepherds and watchmen. He believed they were better suited to this work than the Europeans formerly employed, mostly ex-convicts. He described the Chinese as ‘queer looking people’ who reminded him of those on his mother’s ‘mock China cups and saucers [manufactured in England] with unmeaning faces, long tails and wide trowsers’. But despite some improvement in economic conditions, Willie was not over-optimistic: ‘In this country changes come on so rapidly that it is useless to speculate on the future’. Nobody in 1849 dreamed of the greatest change of all which
was just a year or two in the future — the official discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria.

On Hodgson’s return from England, Willie was free and sufficiently financial by 1850 to take his long deferred trip home to Norway. This was very different from his voyage to the colony in 1837. He booked his passage on the *Panamania*, a ‘softwood barque’ built in Nova Scotia in 1848. This was the second leg in her maiden voyage and on leaving Sydney Harbour she almost ran upon the rocks at South Head. Her route took her so far south of New Zealand that Willie saw ‘two splendid icebergs’, while many small ones surrounded the ship. It was so cold that he lost the use of his feet from broken chilblains which did not recover until they reached the tropics.

Willie had more than his colonial wool suit and cotton drawers in his luggage. There was a plant case containing rare Moreton Bay plants which he hoped to sell in London. He had, too, a New Caledonian cockatoo which he had got from Tom Bolsover in Sydney to take back to Tolderodden. Its repertoire on board ship caused much amusement and possibly a good deal of odium before the voyage ended: ‘Cocky Joy, Cocky Joy, get up, get up, eight o’clock old Boy’. Cocky survived, as did only two of the five budgerigars which kept him company. As for Willie’s human companions, his fellow cuddy passenger was W. Falkiner, a solicitor brother-in-law of the Blaxlands of Sydney. The other was a ‘stocket squatter’ who was always denouncing the colony, the more vehemently because he was going home to a rich inheritance’. As for Willie and his hopes of making money on his plant collection, in the end it caused him much expense and trouble hawking it from one plant nursery to another.

In London Willie stayed with the William Walkers of Hyde Park (Edward’s father and step-mother) — ‘such grand quarters … being a violent change from Bush life, but being rather for the better I manage to accommodate myself very well’. He then went ‘down’ to Scotland to see his Aunt Annie Walker, his nineteen year old sister Jane Ann and twenty-one year old brother Sandy. He expected to gain about 200 pounds for his 20 bales of wool being sold in London along with another 50,000 bales from the colony — ‘the most that ever was brought into the market at one time’, he told his father.

Back in London, Willie found the hustle hard to adapt to after thirteen
years in the bush. At Tolderodden he found it even harder to 'rub along' in the boredom of the long winter once the excitement and novelty of reunion had passed. When summer came the days were a sheer delight with sailing, and fishing, but as he confessed to Kate after his return to the colony:

... you have no idea of the effort it sometimes cost me to keep up the little spirits I had left, during the cold and gloomy winter months — and to this account you will please [forgive] any peevish and unreasonable temper, of which any of you were the victims. I don't forget the scene with little Kate on the occasion when the flag was hauled down, when I rather think I lost my temper; a frame of mind considered highly derogatory in an Archer.16

As a confirmed bachelor of thirty-three, Willie was not his best with children — as his comments on Mrs James Walker's spoilt children indicate. His first visit home appears to have been an anti-climax and the Australian bush not so bad after all. 'A voyage home is very delightful', he said, 'but after all there is nothing like a steady settled pursuit to give zest to life' — even the 'jog trot' of a New South Wales sheep station. A winter in Norway certainly made him appreciate the ‘delightful climate’ of the Burnett region in winter — ‘nights to make one appreciate an eiderdown quilt’ and beautiful clear sunny days.

The year of Willie's return to the colony, 1852, was one of great change for the brothers as well as the colony itself as a result of the gold discoveries in New South Wales and Victoria. Young brothers Sandy and Colin both arrived in October of that year — Sandy in Melbourne on his way to the goldfields, Colin in Sydney on his way to the Burnett from the Californian goldfields. Tom had left California for Europe and marriage, Jack had long since returned to sea-faring. David was already in Sydney by this time, preparing for his return to Norway.

Willie had left the colony in 1850 as ex-manager of Eton Vale, identifying himself in London as 'gentleman' — one who does not work for salary or wages. In February 1853 he had entered the ranks of the 'squattocracy' when he purchased half Edward Walker's sheep, thus giving him a one-quarter share in David Archer & Co. The 'flourishing colony of Archers' referred to by Tom had come to the end of its first phase. The years ahead to 1861 were to bring even greater changes than those
experienced during the first twenty years. In a personal sense the greatest change came for Willie in accepting national identity.

On his return to Australia in 1852 Willie typified the formerly homesick European migrant whose dreams of home dissolved in the reality of long, dark and cold winters indoors. Several years later he no longer thought of himself as a naturalised Norwegian or as Scottish by birth. Writing from Sydney on 26 January 1855 he identified the day as ‘our Anniversary and great Regatta day’. The delight of this ‘poor fellow from the bush’ (as he described himself) in the gaily decorated ships in ‘our lovely harbour’ and the streets crowded with people in holiday costume, provides a fitting climax to this first phase of Willie’s life in the colony. He was now a dinkum Australian.
You will have learnt before this reaches you that I have made a fresh start in life and have taken to my old trade again. I have got charge of a vessel in the cattle trade between this place [Twofold Bay, Southern NSW] and Hobarton. The cattle belong to persons indebted to Wm. Walker & Co. and I dispose of them on their account and remit them the proceeds.

I have been for the last fortnight laying here under repair, having sustained some damage in the winter gales off Cape Howe — which is noted among coasters as a particularly stormy place. Fortunately there are neither Lloyds' agents nor Norwegian merchants here so my expenses are not very great ... I am at present laying in the mouth of a small river where there is just room for a small vessel to hove down. There is no town here, although a person named Boyd whose name you have probably seen in the Sydney papers, has bought a quantity of land and is doing all he can to puff it into notice ...

This letter from Jack to his father on 8 October 1844 was his first communication with home since leaving Durundur earlier that year. Benjamin Boyd was a flamboyant entrepreneur who had arrived in the colony in 1842 in his famous yacht *Wanderer*. He immediately began to build up a great commercial empire both on land and in coastal and Pacific Island trade — including 'blackbirding', the term for enforced importation of Island labour. Like many other capitalists, he became bankrupt in 1849. Several years later he and *Wanderer* mysteriously disappeared. It is believed that Boyd was murdered by Solomon Islanders. ¹ Boyd 'puffed up' his land at Twofold Bay enough to establish a township there named Boyd Town.

Jack was the first of all the brothers to find a wife. He married Eliza
Jane Cooke of Stroud, in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales, on 4 March 1845. Her father was employed by the Australian Agricultural Company, a wealthy English venture formed in 1826 following a government grant of one million acres. It began operations north of the Hunter River in 1832. Jack had been forlovet (engaged) for two years, but had not so much as hinted to his parents or brothers that he planned to marry. This clearly indicates how different in nature he was from the others, especially Tom who could never keep a secret for five minutes. Sister Kate was told:

Great news! Great news! Jack’s been and done it! Jack is married!!! This I daresay will not be news to you [it was] but it was so little expected by us that I thought Tom was quizzing—but he produced Jack’s letter (which is rather a curiosity in its way) announcing the affair. It ends like the advertisements for death in Norwegian newspapers—condoloren frabedes [condolences unnecessary] ...

Jack was not completely without a sense of humour. A few months after his marriage he advised David to ‘apply the fable of the fox that lost his tail’ to him. (The fox persuaded all the other foxes to do the same.) He made a home in Hobart for his nineteen year old bride whom he described as ‘not a beauty’. Jack was then trading between Port Albert (Gippsland, Victoria) and Launceston (Tasmania) in another Walker vessel. The great number of convicts still imprisoned in Tasmania meant a high demand for beef and mutton. Jack, back in Hobart in February 1846 announced the birth of his first child—‘an immense girl’...to be named Julia after his mother and Eliza after his wife. Willie thought his brother much happier ‘under the new regime’ and then added: ‘...I think I have heard Mother say that all first-borns are a kind of lusus naturae [miracle of nature], I, of course, take his description with the usual limitations. Poor Jack, he is a kind, disinterested fellow’. It was the occasion of Julia Eliza’s birth which inspired Tom to forecast a flourishing colony of Archers in the southern hemisphere.

Jack again became a landsman in the year of his child’s birth when he accepted a position as manager of a Gippsland station (Port Phillip Colony) running 8,000 sheep and a few cattle. His salary was 60 pounds a year, but with house and rations provided. While this was minimal it gave Jack and his wife ‘much satisfaction’ as they could live together as a normal family. ‘Little do you bachelors know the sorrow of parting, the anxiety of
absence, and the joy of meeting’, he told David whose own long-drawn-out love affair with Annabella Innes was not yet resolved.6

Jack’s felicity was short-lived. Eliza died three weeks after giving birth to a son in October 1847. Jack was ‘stunned and stupefied’ by his wife’s death after only 24 hours illness. A neighbouring settler was caring for Julia and he had obtained a wet nurse for ‘little Willie … a lively, healthy child with dark hair and eyes … when I look at him I always think how his mother would have loved him’.7 To his sister Kate who had lost her husband after eight years of marriage he wrote: ‘Although it is long since you experienced the feelings which oppress me now you cannot have forgotten them. You know what it is like to be left alone in the world’.8 Kate had her extended family at Tolderodden, Jack’s brothers were a thousand miles away. While people had been kind to him in his distress, he reminded her that he was ‘a stranger in a strange land’. He thought it best to send the children to Hobart where friends would look after them.

He did this some time before 1849 when, in response to the call for transport to the Californian goldfields, he became captain of the Harriet Nathan carrying passengers and freight to San Francisco. Writing to David after two week’s observation of this gold rush town of about 30,000 he revealed as much about himself as the citizens:

... the bulk of whom are American or Mexican, [they] are the most savage looking set of men I ever saw — unshaven, ill-dressed, always in a hurry and with a cigar in the mouth, every man looking as if he was going straight into a gold mine … Gambling is carried on in an immense scale. Every hotel and public house has its gambling establishment, open night and day …

On the whole San Francisco is the least desirable place of residence I ever visited, but the place where money may be most easily made. With my usual management I shall probably return to Hobart Town about as rich as when I left it … 9

While Jack did not resemble his father physically, he certainly inherited his lack of business acumen. Nor could he respond to the bustle and excitement of San Francisco as Tom did. This letter of October 1849 was the last any of his family heard from him for a long time. When he wrote to his father in March 1851 he was back in the Bass Strait trade, had remarried and again been widowed. His second wife, eldest daughter of
Frederick Miller 'one of the ministers of this place', had given birth to a boy in January 1851 who died a few hours later 'from an organic defect of the heart'. When his wife recovered from childbirth, Jack left on a voyage to Port Albert. On the following day she developed scarlet fever and died three days later. They had been married for only eleven months. 'Is there not some fatality attending those who intermarry with our family?' Jack asked his father. His children, 'poor things', he left in the care of the Millers. As for himself: 'I am very solitary and feel as if I wanted somebody to care for me'.

Captain Archer set out from Hobart in the schooner Eliza on 23 March 1851 for the Arctic Ocean. He reached the Aleutian Islands (off the Alaskan Peninsula) at the end of May where 'ice was closed to the leeward'. With the Eliza hove to, the crew got the boats out and picked up some drift ice. It was impossible to land. Jack noted in his Journal on 30 May that 'about 70 sail were on the edge of the ice trying to make a passage'. By mid June the clear water extended considerably, but they were still unable to get ashore. After pulling the boat for about eight miles it became completely jammed in ice. They were obliged to push through by main force. From other captains he heard of ships wrecked in the vicinity and men drowned.

At last, on 28 June, Jack and crew landed in the Bay of Archangel Gabriel where they found a primitive hut — a large boat turned on its side — and several Inuit women and children. These indicated by signs that the men were away whale hunting. Near the hut walrus hides were stretched on poles to dry and all around lay the remains of whales, walrus and deer horns:

The natives are evidently of the true Tartar breed... My first impressions of them is that they are peaceable, honest, shrewd and dirty... they are wholly dressed in skins, well cut and neatly sewed, a loose frock, tight trousers and moccasins, with a belt round the waist — men and women alike, and as the men have no beards they are not easily distinguished...

At one of the islands Jack thought the natives had a mixture of American Indian blood with the Tartar. He described them as more ragged and dirty than his first contacts, and so simple he believed he could have bought everything on the island for a keg of tobacco — and no doubt less honest traders did so. Several days later he landed on an island where the huts
were built from a mixture of stones, driftwood and earth, resembling a
dung heap. Putting his head inside one, he quickly withdrew it as the
stench was unbearable. And here Jack made a comparison to the advantage
of Australian Aborigines who were ‘far more cleanly in their habits and
persons ... although they are far inferior to them in the manufacture of
fishing and hunting implements’.

The Eliza sailed for St Lawrence Island in Bering Strait, between Alaska
and Russia, and not far from the Arctic Circle, in early August. But so did
all the others — ‘the trade is spoiled here as elsewhere by so many vessels
trading for want of a better occupation’. A month later heavy ice ‘appeared
to be setting out of the Arctic’ on a strong southerly current. Jack read the
signs correctly, weighed anchor and ran down the coast for St Lawrence
Island with increasing winds. ‘Here ends this chronicle begun in hope and
ending in despondency’ recorded Jack on 23 September 1851. The Eliza
departed in a gale which drove the schooner before it in the heaviest
weather he had ever experienced on one passage. After surviving this, he
sat down and identified three causes of failure in this trading venture. In
the first place there was a shortage of whales, and the whalers getting no
whales, they could buy no Tasmanian potatoes (part of his cargo). Secondly,
among the great number of strong, heavy ships, a small schooner had little
chance, ‘for they kept ahead of us among the ice and swept up the trade
as the ice cleared off’. Finally, towards the end of the voyage the weather
was so bad that eight days out of ten it was impossible to get ashore to
trade. On board were quantities of trade goods such as kegs of tobacco,
seal and walrus skins. And so it was that Jack left the Arctic ‘with a broken
voyage and ill health’.

There is no reference to the Eliza being named for Jack’s first wife, but
if so it was an unlucky name. As he did not return to Sydney until July
1852 it seems probable that he either returned to San Francisco or tried
trading in the Pacific Islands. If he sent any letters to Norway or the
Burnett between 1851 and 1854 they have not survived. Fortunately his
Arctic Journal has been preserved. Apart from its eye-witness account of
the native people of that region before ‘civilisation’ changed their lifestyle,
it suggests that Jack was born under the same unlucky star as his father.

William Walker & Co. financed the Arctic trading venture and, despite
its failure, agreed to Jack resuming stock trading between Twofold Bay and
Tasmania. As the cattle came from Walker's extensive pastoral holdings in the Twofold Bay area, he did not face commercial competition from other trading vessels. There were also personal compensations at Twofold Bay in his friendship with two families. The redoubtable fundamentalist, Edward Walker, had joined his two much younger brothers William and James who had been managing family properties, Pambula and Kameruka. Even more important was Jack's friendship with the Sub-Collector of Customs, Stewart Mowle and his wife Mary Braidwood Mowle. The town of Braidwood (between Canberra and Bateman's Bay) was named for her father Dr Thomas Braidwood Wilson, the earliest white settler in that area. The Mowles arrived at Twofold Bay in August 1852, and on 4 March 1853 Mary Mowle recorded in her Journal: 'Capt. Archer of the 'Fair Tasmanian' was here the greater part of the morning — asked him to dinner ... went on board the 'Fair Tasmanian' after dinner, to look at the berths — they are small & close but I still think I shall go to V.D.L. in her ...'

Not only did Mary Mowle find a kindred spirit in Jack (a confessed born-again Christian) through their religious discussions, but she thought him 'much better read and informed' than one would normally expect from a coastal steamer skipper. When the *Fair Tasmanian* returned to the Bay on 20 April, Jack brought his five year old son Willie (usually referred to in letters as Willie Minor) with him. While the ship was in port, Willie Minor stayed with the Mowle family — with children close to his own age. This was the first step in a close association between Mary Mowle and Jack's children. And from this time on, Jack often dined with the Mowles.

Mary Mowle and her children, also her younger brother James Wilson, were passengers on the *Fair Tasmanian* in May 1853. They were to spend an extended holiday with their uncle and his family in Tasmania. It was an extremely rough passage and on the second night the ship pitched and rolled so violently that Mary prayed that 'Capt. Archer might come down to the cabin'. He did, bringing her wine and assuring her that they were in no danger. In Hobart Jack brought Julia and Willie Minor to meet Mary and the children and spend the evening with them. While in the country with her uncle, she wrote to Jack requesting him to purchase 'two little articles' for her, which he did. Patricia Clarke, author of *Colonial Woman*, thought 'there may have been some physical attraction to the "bold" captain', but a letter from Mary to her husband from Tasmania addressed
to ‘My very dearly loved Stewart’ suggests that any attraction elsewhere was sub-conscious. As the ship entered Twofold Bay in a heavy squall on their return, it ‘keeled over dreadfully … & Capt. Archer lost his hat (over which by the bye he made bitter lamentations)’.\(^{15}\)

Later in that same year, Jack’s boy Willie Minor was living with Edward Walker who Charlie thought was one of Jack’s few friends. They not only shared similar fundamental Christian beliefs, but also their great-grandfather Walker. But this friendship came to a sudden end when the Manning Brothers bought Pambula and Kameruka for 75,000 pounds later that year. As Charles commented, ‘three years ago it would have been worth 20,000 — such is the effect of the gold discoveries on pastoral property.’\(^{16}\) It also meant that Jack’s boy was ‘turned adrift’ again. Charles and Willie thought that both children should be sent to Tolderodden, but Jack was ‘so much wrapped up in the boy that he cannot make up his mind to part with him’.\(^{17}\) As he told his sister Mary, he had a certain bias towards the children that could not be expected of bachelor uncles. His opinion is confirmed when bachelor brother Willie came to visit and saw the children for the first time:

We have of course had many confabs as to [the children’s] disposal — but Jack, like all fond, foolish, and I may say selfish parents, is loth to have them removed to any place where he cannot see them as frequently as the nature of his occupation will permit, and he has promised to leave them with Mrs Mowle for 12 months … Should, however, nothing more eligible turn up … Grace [Tom’s wife] had offered to take them in charge — though this is a burden which Jack is unwilling to impose on her.\(^{18}\)

Willie also failed to persuade Jack to get the command of a ship to England, and take the children home. He thought his brother very undecided and difficult to move out of the beaten track. He criticised the children’s upbringing by Mary Mowle, and Jack’s failings as a father.

… Julia in particular stands much in need of a good home. Though of a most affectionate disposition, there is nothing in her appearance or manner to engage a stranger in her favour, and I fear she will be neglected. Willie, on the contrary, is a bold, lively boy, with a most engaging manner, and consequently a general favourite with everybody … and poor Jack dotes on him with a too apparent partiality.\(^{19}\)

Willie also had other business to discuss with Jack. David Archer & Co.
lent Jack the money to purchase a half share in a vessel, the *Retriever*, with himself as captain. But as usual with unlucky Jack, his first year as an independent trader was unsuccessful. Jack wrote to his mother in January 1855:

Well, it is settled at last that Julia [aged eight] accompanies Tom and his wife home, and you and Mary will have the making or marring of her. Owing I fancy as much to mismanagement as anything else, Julia has till within the last twelve months been kept in the background and I must confess to an undue partiality for Willie. Of late she has however improved so much in every respect under the good management of Mrs Mowle of Twofold Bay, that the tables are turned and her affectionate and confiding disposition has quite won us all, and I believe Mrs Mowle takes her departure to heart quite as much as I do. I just point out her good qualities in case you might not discover them when she arrives. Of the others you will find plenty ... an incorrigible indolence appears most prominently ...

I feel myself almost at home [at Twofold Bay] now. You know I have not the knack of being at ease among strangers — but the people here have been so kind to me and the children, that I could look for no more among my relatives. [Brother] Willy brought some Norsk music from Sydney with him and we had Gamle Norge etc. in great style. Music, boat sailing and yarning were our principal occupations, and, with an occasional ride and the usual quantities of eating and drinking the days wore away quickly.\(^{20}\)

Jack’s praise for Mary Mowle with five children of her own was well deserved, especially as she confirmed that Julia and Willie Minor had ‘been so much neglected that they now require constant watching & care & cause me more trouble than all my own little ones put together’.\(^{21}\) But she also recorded that she was sorry to part with Julia when the time came. As for lonely Jack, being accepted by Stewart and Mary Mowle at this time brought peace to his troubled life. He described his first wife to Mary and told her a great deal about his early life, bringing her comment: ‘... poor fellow he has known great trouble. May his future be brighter’.\(^{22}\)

The Mowles left Twofold Bay in August 1855 on Stewart’s transfer to Sydney. They lived at Balmain, taking young Willie Minor with them. Jack also transferred his operations to Sydney and Newcastle and continued to visit the Mowles and his young son. But he now had a further interest. At Twofold Bay he had met Anna Maria Blest, thought to have been governess to Edward Walker’s children. She appears to have been about Jack’s own age — forty-two when the marriage took place on 18 November 1856.
Charles Archer and Stewart Mowle were witnesses to the marriage. Charles was then on his way home to Norway after establishing the firm's head station at Gracemere on the Fitzroy River. We now leave Jack in the felicity of his third marriage and follow the trail of his brothers from Eidsvold to the Fitzroy in what was to become Queensland.
The Great Pioneers of the North: Charles, William, Colin

Among the fraternal changes which took place in 1852 was the arrival in the colony of the second-youngest brother, Colin, 20. Willie, during his visit home to Norway in the previous year, had a hand in fixing Colin's early destiny. The Walkers' role in scattering the sons of William and Julia over the face of earth and ocean had come to an end. It was now the older Archer sons who assumed this influential position. Thanks to the booming economy in the sheep and wool business following the Australian gold discoveries, they were in a position to pay for the outfitting and travel expenses of the young ones.

The decision to send Colin to the colony arose from two unrelated but fortuitous sets of circumstances. The family at Tolderodden had not heard from Tom who had been on the Californian goldfields for almost a year. They feared the worst and, as Willie and his father heard news of a sailing vessel about to leave for New York, they decided there and then to dispatch Colin to Australia, via California, in the hope he could find out what had happened to Tom. His brief meeting with his long-lost brother is described elsewhere, but it seems that on the goldfields Colin had a modest 'find' and sensibly chose not to linger there. He took ship for Honolulu and from there joined Archie on the Island of Kauai where he spent several months awaiting passage to Sydney.

Arriving at Coonambula at the end of 1852, Colin must have had a
sense of *deja vu*, for from early childhood he had been familiar with the descriptions, particularly from Tom and Charlie, of the lifestyle and environment of their various sheep runs in New South Wales. Within a few weeks he stepped as easily into exploration with its inevitable hardships and dangers as he had formerly stepped into a boat to sail on Larvik Fjord.

In February 1853 Charles, accompanied by trainee-explorer Colin, spent three weeks in extensive exploration in the Callide Valley. Charles marked out runs (between present day Biloela and Gladstone) which were given the names of Kroombit and Kariboe and applied for in Colin's name when the Pastoral District of Port Curtis was officially opened for settlement in January 1854. It is probable that Colin, born and educated in Norway, chose the name 'Kroombit' for the rugged country in that vicinity, for its meaning is 'crooked' or 'curved'. 'Kariboe' suggests that the young Colin might have had tender thoughts of a young Norske girl named Kari, for the derivation here is 'Kari's cottage'.

Charles had no intention of moving stock to the Callide Valley as it was badly watered, but was determined to explore much further to the north-east. He had a map of the coastline based on Matthew Flinders' chart and also Leichhardt's Journal with its plotted course to the north. Most significantly, he had Leichhardt's 1846 letter to David in which he expressed the belief that his Dawson, Comet, MacKenzie and Isaac rivers eventually joined to form one large stream to empty into Keppel Bay (east of present day Rockhampton). Charles, on his expedition with Colin in February did not attempt to cross the coastal ranges, but was already making plans to do so. He was much too preoccupied to write letters home at this period, but Colin's to David, 12 March 1853, fills the gap:

... when I see by Willie's letter that 1,000 pounds are at your disposal from this poor place alone [Coonambula] I begin to wonder what we want with the Dawson, or any other such place besides. I should think you would be able to make palaces of half the houses in Laurvig with such an immense capital as that ... Charlie has, however, discovered that the Burnett District extends much further north than supposed, and he and Willie are going out, I believe ... to look for more country.

Don't you think Charlie has a great deal of brass in his composition, when he, the great pioneer of the North, has been out on the Dawson these several times and has hardly found a place worth the trouble of putting sheep on; and
here are the Hays, just past this with their 20,000 sheep, who, in a ten days journey from Perrys, in spite of all [Charlie's] prognostications, stumbled across a fine, well watered run for their sheep, after travelling over the very country he had seen on his journeys; and still he is quite cool and collected, and looks as innocent as if nothing had happened; so much so, that I am hardly game to tackle him on the subject.

Charlie's lack of agitation concerning the Leith Hays involved his grand plan to overland to the region of Keppel Bay. James and Norman Leith Hay were younger sons of Sir Andrew Leith Hay of Leith Hall, Scotland. They squatted on two tributaries of the Dawson, to which they gave the Scottish names of Don and Dee, then named their head station Rannes. This was the estate of the Hay family before they became Leith-Hay and the owners of Leith Hall in 1838. Tom Archer had first met the Leith Hay brothers on their arrival in Brisbane in 1844. Five years after taking up a great many blocks, including Rannes, in the names of Hay & Holt, their squatting career ended.

Charles persuaded Willie to accompany him on his most ambitious expedition yet, an attempt to reach Keppel Bay in what was to become Central Queensland. Although Willie had spent many more years in the colony than Charles, he had not taken part in any exploration. Conservative, dependable Willie shared neither Tom's restless nature nor Charlie's scientific interest in geology and exploration. He hated being in the saddle for days and fervently wished that Charlie had carried out his original intention to strike out for Keppel Bay in February.

Charles and Willie headed northeast from Eidsvold on 12 April 1853 accompanied by an Aborigine named Jammie. Charles was mounted on his favourite stallion, Sleipner. One pack-horse carried all their provisions along with quart-pots and pans. Each man carried a rolled blanket on his saddle pommel and a rifle slung over his shoulder.

When the party stopped at the Leith Hays' property, Rannes, on 1 May, it was increased by 'Mr Spencer and a black boy'.

On reaching the creek which he supposed to be the one he and Colin had earlier named Callide, Charles led the party over flat country until they climbed a sandstone ridge. It is almost certain that Colin named Callide Creek, for in that good season the creek was in flood and he would have used the Norwegian words — *Kall eide* — 'call the ferryman'. On topping the sandstone ridge, Charles realised that they had 'hit upon what

Julia Archer (1791–1880): Original portrait donated by the Archer family to Mitchell Library, Sydney. (Photo, courtesy Mitchell Library.)
Mary Archer (1826-1908) as one of the young 'petticoats', long before she nailed her flag of independence to the mast.
(Courtesy, Mrs Julie St Quintin, England.)

Tolderodden, Larvik, Norway, home of several generations of Archers, 1827-1939.
(Photo, courtesy Mitchell Library, Sydney.)
The widowed Kate Jørgensen (1811-1865), ‘dearest Kate’ to her brothers in faraway Australia from the 1830s to the 1850s. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)

Jane Ann Archer (1831-1912), the youngest sister who remained a ‘petticoat’ to the end of her life. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)
Tolderodden interior, showing a corner of the sitting room with piano, chairs, and portraits. (Courtesy, Mrs Anne Anderson, England.)

The Summer House on the ‘tumbled rocks’ in the Tolderodden garden. (Courtesy, Mrs Anne Anderson, England.)

Postcard of an old engraving showing Laurvig Harbour c. 1830s, with Tolderodden on its small peninsula. (Courtesy A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)

'Bestemoder', Julia Archer aged 78, with son David from England and his four eldest children, Alice (Sissie), Robert (Bobby), John (Jack), and David (Dadie), also Tom's daughter Julia (Dooie), on holiday at Tolderodden in July 1869. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)
Tom, David and Captain John (Jack) Archer as young colonials, c. 1844 when the art of photography was in its infancy. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)

David Archer’s ‘Durundur’, Moreton Bay district, in 1843. From line and wash by Charles Archer. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)
Self portrait by Charles Archer relaxing with his pipe at ‘Waroongundie’, a little further west than ‘Durundur’.
(Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)

‘Camping at Noon’, from Charles Archer’s Bush Studies. Scenes such as this were daily occurrences when Charles and Tom drove the sheep northwards to Eidsvold Station in 1848.
(Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)

Tom Archer’s map showing the route for his first major expedition, west from the Moreton Bay District, in 1847. He marked out a run to which he gave the ‘Tory name’ of Wellesley Downs in the vicinity of today’s town of Roma.
(Courtesy, Bernard Crew.)
Charles Archer’s water colour showing the original living quarters at Eidsvold Station. (Original, Miss Else Archer and Mrs Karen Archer Saether. Photo, James R. Archer, Norway.)

Grace Archer who, with husband Tom, lived at Eidsvold for about a year from 1854. Her bachelor brothers-in-law were so enchanted with her that they changed the name of the new station on the Fitzroy River from ‘Farris’ to ‘Gracemere’. (Courtesy, Mrs Alison Forster, Brisbane.)
Captain John (Jack) Archer (1814-1857) returned to seafaring in 1844 after taking part in the great trek from the Blue Mountains to ‘Durundur’ in the upper Brisbane Valley. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)

Jack Archer’s only children, Julia Eliza and Willie Minor, about 1853. They became orphans in 1857 when their father and his third wife, Maria Blest, were lost in a shipwreck off the west coast of New Zealand. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)
Charles Archer (1813-1861) who, with his brother William, became the first Europeans to reach the Fitzroy River and future site of Rockhampton in May 1853. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)

William Archer (1818-1896) on one of his occasional visits to Sydney which were, according to Charles, 'to smooth his face'. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)
The Royal Hotel, George Street, Sydney, where William stayed for nine days in May 1860 for a total cost of 8 pounds. This included sherry and whisky to entertain his friends. (Archer Papers, Mitchell Library.)

On that same Sydney visit, Willie spent 2 pounds on 'a pea jacket, 5 silk handkerchiefs and a silk necktie' at Scrivener’s shop. (Archer Papers, Mitchell Library.)
Jamie Archer (1836–1919), one of the ‘young shoots from an old tree’ who arrived in the colony in 1855, in bush dress c. 1861. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)

A more urbane Jamie Archer photographed in London, possibly on his first trip home to Norway in 1863. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)
Simon Jørgensen (1836-1925), only three months younger than his uncle Jamie, also arrived in 1855 as one of the ‘young shoots’. Sandy Archer’s 1861 sketch of Simon at Gracemere in 1861 taking advice from overseer, Ned Kelly. (Original sketch, Mrs Sidsel Øien, Norway. Photo, Per Jørgensen, Norway.)

Simon Jørgensen about the time of his return to Norway in 1865 after ten years in the colony, much of it at Gracemere. (Courtesy, Mrs Sidsel Øien, Norway.)
Aborigines of the Warrabura clan at one of their seasonal camp sites not far from Gracemere homestead. The Archers, unlike most squatters, allowed these original Australians to remain on their traditional land. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)

Sandy Archer’s 1861 sketch of one of the young Archers hoping to bring home something more interesting than mutton for dinner, much to the amusement of two Aboriginal children. (Original, Mrs Sidsel Oien, Norway. Photo, Per Jørgensen, Norway.)
Scrubby Creek, Gracemere, sketched by Sandy Archer, with Jamie perched high on a log (right), Lionel Rice (left) catching butterflies, and Willie and friend (foreground) devouring a bird they have just roasted. (Original, Miss Else Archer and Mrs Karen Archer Saether. Photo, James R. Archer, Norway.)

Extract from Sandy Archer’s 1865 letter to ‘Dear Dooley’, his nine year old niece, Alice Julia (Sissie) Archer, in London. (Courtesy, John Oxley Library, Brisbane.)

This is a small cutter we met in Pumic Stone channel on our way home. We supposed she was in search of a cargo of oysters and probably the black fellow & his two guns were packed off the second to help in cleaning - The Glasshouses from another point of view in the distance - . It is said that this channel derives its name from the fact of Pumic Stone being found on its shores. But it is merely a misnomer at least we saw none of it as far as we know.

Colin Archer (1832-1921) about the time he left Gracemere in September 1861 to return to Tolderodden. He was then aged twenty-nine and quite unaware that in the years ahead he was to become a distinguished naval architect. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)

Gracemere homestead in the early 1860s, showing original wood shingled roof. ‘Bachelors’ Hall’ is just visible on the left. (Courtesy, Mrs Sidsel Øien, Norway.)
appeared to be the only opening to allow them to continue on the planned course. Next day they came to a mountain which he named Mount Spencer. (Archers never named features after themselves.) After considerable difficulty in pushing through brigalow scrub and vines they reached the top of a hill which he thought must be at least 1,000 feet (305 metres.). From its summit they saw ‘an immense flat valley of scrub’ extending to the north-west. With Leichhardt’s description in mind, Charles thought that the northern point of what he considered ‘the western range of the Dawson’ ended so suddenly that it might be where the MacKenzie joined the Dawson.6

The party made little further progress on the following day, but 4 May proved to be momentous, not only for Charles and Willie, but also in the history of what would later be known as Central Queensland. Charles recorded the event in his Expedition Journal:

4th May: Left camp at 45 minutes past 7. Rode for four hours before making a general course of N E /22 and about 9 miles as the crow flies. Still following up the main branch of the Stanks [Scottish word for ‘pools’]. P.M. followed the main branch to its head, which is about 2 miles from our noon camp. Upon topping the range a most astonishing view lay beneath us. Through a large and apparently open valley — bounded by table-topped pyramidal sandstone peaks, a large river wound its way towards the sea. We supposed this river to be the Dawson and MacKenzie joined and the sea before us to be Keppel Bay. Returned to our noon camp.

5th May: As our view to the southward and eastward was interrupted by a projection of the coast range, we determined upon getting a view from it further to the southward in the hope of being able to determine our exact position in relation to Port Curtis, but we found the ground so impracticable to travel over that we were obliged to abandon this plan and camped at 2 o’clock upon the highest water we could find in the Stanks, determined on giving our horses a spell before proceeding to examine our new discovery.

6th May: Willie and I left camp after breakfast and rode to the range to take bearings and attempt a sketch of the valley of the Fitzroy (as we had named the river). The day was unfavourable for sketching …

7th May: Ran the Stanks up to the range and descended into the valley of the Fitzroy. The range is very steep upon the Northern side. About 4 miles from the foot in N.N.W. direction we came upon a chain of waterholes where we stopped for lunch and marked trees “A”. Three miles further in a Northerly direction we struck the Lake, which to our surprise was — for this country — a most magnificent sheet of water; near its Western end we found a well
watered creek, with scrub upon its banks, which extended itself a few hundred yards to the edge of Farris, as we named the lake ...

8th May: At two and a half miles N.W. from the last camp over flat, low country, generally timbered with gum, we struck another lake which had more the appearance of a swamp; it was covered with wild fowl. From this lake we rode five miles in a N.N.W. direction over some beautiful downs ridges from the top of the highest … bearings were taken …

One and a half miles E.N.E. from Downtop brought us to the Fitzroy, a fine navigable stream, the tide running up strong — water fresh.

Charles made no more journal entries, but spent a little more time in the Fitzroy Valley marking “A” on trees to indicate the proposed boundaries of the run. The run, like the lake, was originally called Farris after a beautiful lake of that name near Larvik. It was a particularly bountiful season in 1853 with the antipodean Farris filled to over-flowing and the whole countryside studded with brimming lagoons in the midst of lush grassy plains. The brothers were not to know that during long periods of drought, their Lake Farris (later re-named Gracemere) would dry up completely — as it did for long periods in the 1990s.

In naming the Fitzroy to honour the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Charles Fitzroy, the brothers adopted a tradition among explorers in paying respect to the governor of the day. Unknown to them, Governor Fitzroy had just announced his intention to establish a township at Port Curtis. But the river they called Stanks was in fact the headwaters of the Leith Hays’ Dee River.

Before leaving the Fitzroy, Charles exercised his scientific bent by taking longitudinal readings, first from the point on the range where they first saw the Fitzroy, and then from Downtop — in the vicinity of today’s Alton Downs. They were unable to linger as provisions were running out, but the extensive country they had stumbled upon with such astonishment made them the first Europeans to encounter the Fitzroy River. Flinders in 1802 had failed to identify the chief of the three streams emptying into Keppel Bay.

The exciting news they brought back was no excuse, in Charles’ opinion, to rest on their expeditionary laurels. While Willie might have been sated, Colin was eager to return with Charlie to his ‘perfect paradise’. This second expedition during July–August 1853 took them further west of the original route to the junction of the Dawson and Fitzroy, and then
along the Fitzroy to its sweeping northern bend before flowing in a south-easterly direction to Keppel Bay. Leaving it at its junction with the creek they named Alligator (the saurian they sighted there was actually a crocodile) they again turned north-east and after emerging from the scrub followed along the plains. The high range on the coastal side they named File Fjeld for its Norwegian original (later corrupted to Byfield). The highest point they named Mount O'Connell for the Commissioner of Crown Lands in the Burnett District, but soon to be Government Resident at Port Curtis. The creek which flows into Broadsound was named for their companion Thomas Herbert. Riding back towards the Fitzroy and Farris, they saw Aborigines for the first time, though it is certain that they were often seen by the indigenous people:

We came suddenly upon 2 Blacks near the edge of the plain who whenever they saw us squatted to avoid us. [When] Jemmy went up and parleyed and induced them to accompany us to the water they expressed great surprise at our proceedings, supped with us — went to their own camp for the night and brought up a lot of their sable brethren in the morning to see us — these latter we kept at a respectable distance. Neither of our Blacks could understand them.

The people of the Darumbal language group thus made their first contact with Europeans. They did not feel threatened by these men whom they had seen come three months earlier and then ride away again. On this occasion Charles and Colin ‘made the Fitzroy at a point where it comes close under the Etna [Berserker] Range at the highest part, a high hill which we named Mount Sleipner. Named the highest peak … Mount Berserker’. Surveyors later renamed the whole chain Berserker Range. Colin, fresh from Norway, would have had great fun suggesting names for these features which are an integral part of Rockhampton’s natural environment. Sleipner was surely Charlie’s contribution, for not only was this his favourite horse, but itself was named for the favourite steed of the Scandinavian god, Odin. Berserker commemorates the legendary Norse hero who always tore off his tunic in rage before going into battle. On certain still days the dark blue Berserkers have a distinctly brooding appearance as though contemplating ‘going berserk’.

In addition to Charles and Colin, the party included Thomas Herbert and their friend from the Burnett, Patrick Mackay, and two Aborigines.
A Flourishing Colony of Archers 1834–1861

(This was the same Mackay who had featured in David Archer's silent courtship of Annabella Innes.) On leaving the Fitzroy, the white 'pathfinders' used approximately the same southern route as that taken by Aborigines for countless generations. About half way they passed from the lands of the Darumbal to those of the Bayali. Charles and Willie had attempted to reach Port Curtis on their return from the first expedition, but went too far inland and were foiled by broken ranges, scrub and, on nearing the coast, mangroves. On the second occasion they had no difficulty in finding Port Curtis.

Just a week after their return, Colin wrote an account of the trip for David, then at Tolderodden. He included a glimpse of Gladstone, to be proclaimed in the following year:

At the Port we found a surveying party consisting of 19 men, who have been sent to survey a township, and Mr Willmott, who came up in a small boat from Wide Bay and has established a store at Gladstone. We stopped two days to recruit ourselves and our horses, and had a delightful cruise on the Bay in Mr W's boat. The harbour of Port Curtis is very fine and I believe well adapted for shipping purposes ... unfortunately ... there is not any extent of good grazing country at the back of the Port, so the harbour is the only thing that is likely to make the place of any importance.¹⁰

This letter is significant for more than Colin's accurate assumption concerning the port, or his pleasure in a sail on its harbour. Pencilled on the back is a map of their route, presumably drawn by Charles who had begun producing maps to send home during Tom's exploration and on each subsequent move north. What makes this map so important is that it is a copy of one which Charles sent to the Surveyor General in Sydney. The first official map ever published of the central coastal hinterland (in January 1854) freely acknowledges its Archer source. Charles used semi-professional methods during his exploration to obtain accuracy. He described how the main features depicted in this map were 'laid down from a chain of cross-bearings, carried out through all my expeditions, and as these rough surveys brought me back, with but small error, to my original starting points, a fair idea of geographical features may be gathered from the map'.¹¹ This valuable statement confirms his professionalism in contrast to Tom's enthusiasm for adventure. But as the Archers could not abide self-promotion, Colin's facetious description of his eldest brother as
‘the great pioneer of the North’ is about the highest praise conveyed in letters concerning the modest Charles Archer, European pastoralist–explorer and original cartographer of the central coastal region.

Charles did not see any more country worth taking up, but reaffirmed his satisfaction with Farris, the future Gracemere. The momentous year of 1853 had almost ended before he found time to write to his father, but he supposed that Willie and Colin had given particulars of their ‘various bush expeditions’. Charles’ own description of Farris and his chosen site for a homestead beside the lake reveal his dream for the future:

The country which Willie and I found on the “Fitzroy” (a river of our discovering) is so fine and in such an advantageous position, that we must not by unnecessary delay risk losing it. “Farris” the locality pitched upon for a head station, would be a beautiful place in any country, but here, where fine scenery hardly exists, it appears a perfect paradise to my partial eyes ... There is a beautiful site near the middle of the Lake (which is shaped thus [sketch] for a house, but before it can become a pleasant residence some roughing it and hard work will have to be encountered ... 12

Back at Eidsvold, preparations for the arrival of Tom and his bride, formerly Grace Morison of Perth (Scotland), kept everyone in a bustle. Willie set out for Sydney to meet them, Charlie went to Brisbane on the abortive task of finding a town house for them, and then (with a change of plans), Colin received orders ‘to have a couple of draught horses and a lady’s riding horse in Maryborough’ by the middle of January. Charles then rode to Maryborough where he ‘kicked his heels’ for seventeen days awaiting their arrival from Sydney. Grace had insisted upon living at Eidsvold rather than in Brisbane. Charlie’s account of their few days on the track to Eidsvold shows how rapidly he came under young Grace’s spell. He told his sister Julia:

Grace and I usually rode on ahead of the cart in the morning, and camped in about 8 to 10 miles — lit a fire and waited the coming up of the cart, which was drawn by two horses driven by Tom. On his arrival we turned out the horses — put down quart pots to boil water for tea, laid out the bread, butter, eggs etc. upon a towel spread on the grass under a shady tree — threw a mattress on the ground for Grace to recline upon ... After a couple of hours we again harnessed the horses, and Grace generally did the afternoon journey in the cart, which we arranged so that she could either sit up or lie down at pleasure. At the approach of sunset we kept a lookout for a convenient camping place...
... The horses were unharnessed, hobbled, and turned out for the night — trunks etc. taken out of the cart which was converted into a nice bedroom for Grace. After supper we had long yarns lying by the fire. In the course of these I extracted a lot of Norwegian news from Tom ... When we got sleepy, Grace and Tom retired to the cart, and I wrapped my plaid around me, took my saddle for a pillow, and threw myself upon the ground before a blazing log, and slept like a top till day dawn ... Du kan tro jeg on glad at hende og elsker hende alrede næsten som af dere. [As you may well believe, I am fond of her — she is already almost as dear to me as one of yourselves.]

How different this journey was for Charles compared to those all-male expeditions in which camping out was a routine necessity, completely devoid of picnic atmosphere. At Eidsvold, Grace cheerfully endured the comfortless conditions until the drays arrived some weeks later with luggage and furniture sent from Scotland. Colin came up from Coonambula early in April (1854) on invitation ‘to see all the grand things they have got up and also help them floor the verandah of the house’. But it was Charlie who expressed their admiration for Grace being ‘so easily pleased’ with her bark-roofed, slab dwelling:

Now that I see how well we get on and how happy Grace appears to be with our simple and rough arrangements, I can’t understand how I could have got the stupid idea into my head, that they ought to stop in Brisbane, till greater preparations had been made for her here.

The piano got up in wonderfully good tune and we have had lots of music in the evenings — principally Norwegian and Swedish. Willie comes up frequently [from Coonambula] and Colin as often as he can, and we have cosy little family reunions, and I think we are all indebted to Tom for marrying such a gruelig anil [exceedingly amiable] little wife. She is a sort of standard for the family to rally around ...  

While Grace enjoyed the novelty of her new environment, Tom tended to be depressed by the daily routine as he had when his ‘great explorer’ era ended. Grace’s attempts at a flower garden, for instance, induced Tom to comment: ‘I fear the result will hardly induce her to repeat the experiment’. But what did impress him, having left for California in 1849 while the brothers were struggling financially, was the great improvement in their financial situation since the Australian gold fever had erupted. He not only expressed his amazement to David, but also took a little credit
himself, and in commenting on the situation in Europe, demonstrated how letters catch contemporary history alive:

By the bye, what a rich fellow you have turned out after all. Why, it sounds fabulous that a live Archer should have such a swag. It all comes to my roving propensity which secured you such undeniably good runs. But for that you would still be chasing those Russians of cattle thro' the Durundur scrubs to this day. Talking of Russians, what are the gallant Norsk Kjemper [warriors] about that they don't turn out and lend a hand to thrash them. Some of the officers were blaming England not long ago when I was at home for not going to war, but they seem to think discretion the better part of valour themselves, altho' the danger menaces them more nearly ... Our last news is the bombardment of Odessa, and the evacuation of Aland. This last must be a great relief to the "Gossar blaa" [blue boys — the Swedes] ... 15

Britain and France declared war on Russia in March 1854 (news that had not yet reached the Burnett in August at the time of Tom's comments) in what was to become known as the Crimean War. At the outbreak King Oscar declared Sweden and Norway neutral, but in November 1855 signed a treaty with Britain and France which bound him to cede no territory to Russia in return for their assistance in the event of Russian aggression.16

Tom was correct in claiming that his exploration had led to the modest affluence of 'a live Archer', but the mantle of 'great explorer' had already been assumed by Charles, with lesser mantles on the shoulders of Willie and Colin.

Charles, in his letter to Julia Arentz shortly after Tom and Grace's arrival, told her that he had been 'a great rover of late'. He certainly had. When the Pastoral Districts of Port Curtis and Leichhardt were proclaimed on 10 January 1854, Charles and Willie were surprised to find that Port Curtis was classified as 'settled'. This had nothing to do with population, but its proximity to the coast. Farris was within the Port Curtis District and therefore subject to insecure leasing conditions and possible resumption. In the brothers' opinion there was only one course open — to search for suitable country in the adjoining Leichhardt District, further inland and classified 'unsettled'. And so in April 1854 Charles prepared for yet another expedition — this time into the Peak Downs country described by Leichhardt. Colin was to accompany Charles on this expedition, Willie had had enough of long days in the saddle. Once more all was bustle at
Eidsvold (Charles and Tom) and at Coonambula (Willie and Colin). Willie took horses to the township of Gayndah to be shod, while Colin made a pack-saddle. These were practical necessities, but Colin's description of Charlie's preparations indicate his scientific bent: 'Charlie had got a pocket sextant up from Sydney ... as a makeshift, he uses for an artificial horizon a pint pot three-quarters full of water with a layer of oil floating on top'. With this he was able to take the latitude of a place. As well as this he was taking with him the compass their father had sent out some years earlier in order to 'do the whole thing scientifically, surveying the country as we go along'.¹⁷

No map of their route has survived, nor the sketches Charles made of the Peaks, but it seems that they headed towards the MacKenzie and followed it up to its junction with the Comet and Nogoa. In following Leichhardt's tracks from the junction, they became the first white men to reach the Peak Downs since his aborted expedition in 1847. Other squatters were not far behind. When the brothers arrived back at Eidsvold about the end of May they had covered about 600 kilometres in seventeen days, and marked the boundaries of nine blocks. Each block of 25 square miles had to be named and its boundaries described. If leases were granted, an annual rental of 12.5 pounds on each block had to be paid, and each stocked within eighteen months. Charles applied on 4 June 1854 on behalf of Charles and Thomas Archer for six runs: Capella, Boree, Upper Crinum, Lower Crinum, Belcong and Laguna. Colin's applications for Abor, Colinby and Retro provided the final security in their insurance policy.¹⁸

Charles was obliged to justify this new move to David who, with his usual caution, had just replied to news of their first expedition to the Fitzroy. 'From the drift of your last letter to Willie', he wrote, 'I gather you did not at all approve of the pioneering mania which had laid hold of the family again'.¹⁹ He explained that the new runs applied for on the Peak Downs were 'a place to fall back upon, should we be turned out of Farris'. Charles was hurt by Davie's criticism, much in the same way as Tom had been when he discovered 'Wellesley Downs'. Even though Charles at 41 was the eldest brother, Davie at 38 claimed supremacy as the original pioneer. His advice to Charlie and Willie was 'to be content with small things and leave pioneering to younger hands'. This drew Charlie's acidic reply that it was not expectation of personal gain that urged him on, but
increasing responsibilities. ‘Tom has now got a wife and is naturally anxious to gratify her’ and possibly return to Europe later. ‘This can only be done by extending our operations [from the Burnett] to the Port Curtis district. My present plan is to take out 6,000 dry sheep, after shearing, to Farris’. David would change his tune after he acquired a wife in the following year.

Yet another impetus to Charles’ exploration was his increasing boredom with routine station work such as shearing, wool carting and lambing ‘... if we are to remain in this country and follow squatting as a profession, I see nothing else for it than keeping on the move. The life would hardly be worth living in the humdrum routine of a settled station when better lands are to be had for the taking’. Within two years of joining his brothers at Durundur the moves, first westward, and then northward had begun. This had become a way of life to Charles. Even so, the opinion expressed in this letter which appears to lay him open to the ‘greedy squatter’ charge, arose chiefly from the uncertainty of the squatting regulations regarding tenure. At that time they could not even secure the title of the land on which their huts and woolsheds were built. By a strange irony, it was not the experienced Willie who later obtained more secure tenure for all leaseholders, but their elusive brother Archie.

Soon after applying for the Peak Downs blocks, Charles was off to the new township of Gladstone to see what facilities there were for shipping their wool from the Fitzroy. On this occasion he was ‘partly on the spree’, for their friend Maurice O’Connell (formerly Crown Lands Commissioner on the Burnett) had been installed in March as Government Resident for Port Curtis. During his absence Tom again managed Eidsvold, but without enthusiasm. While he claimed still to have ‘the old go ahead leaven’ strong within him, he contradicted himself by advising Charlie that he need not expect any personal aid from him in forming a new station. Tom had finished with pioneering. He now required a well organised establishment with plenty of home comforts. As a married man, his fate was decided, and the Morison’s worst fears were realised when Grace had ‘a very bad confinement’ in November 1854. It was a home birth far from medical assistance and with an untrained midwife. Grace’s baby died soon after birth and her life ‘was almost despaired of’ as Willie told David in
December. Tom and Grace at last agreed to Charlie’s and Willie’s advice to return to Scotland.22

Willie took control of travel arrangements. He went to Sydney to book their passages, then to Twofold Bay to use his powers of persuasion on Jack to send Julia Eliza ‘home’ with them. When Tom and Grace arrived in Sydney from Moreton Bay, Willie escorted them to Wallerawang to spend a refreshing holiday in the mountain air with the James Walkers. And when the time came, he saw the travellers (including eight year old Julia Eliza) aboard their ship for ‘home’ before returning to the Burnett in April 1855. At Eidsvold there was ‘an air of desolation about the place’. Not only did Willie miss Grace and her home-making presence, but also Tom’s company. By August Charlie had ‘removed to the Fitzroy’. There were no more happy groups gathered around Grace’s piano singing Norske and Scottish songs. Willie was the most dependable of them all in an emergency and in his element in organising the affairs of family members. Provided he could take an occasional trip to Sydney ‘to smooth his face’, as Charlie described these absences, he was happy with bush life.

The brother-shuffle between Australia and Norway had been made much easier by their greatly improved financial situation, since it began with Willie in 1850. At the time of Tom and Grace’s departure early in 1855, David was in his second year at Tolderodden. He was to remain there, as a result of their father’s declining health, until Charles could relieve him. But with the move to the Fitzroy, Charlie determined to form the new station himself, leaving Willie to manage Eidsvold. Colin was in charge at Coonambula. The move north to the Fitzroy was commenced after shearing. Charles set out with the sheep, plenty of men, and wagons to carry camping and cooking gear and essential supplies for the trek. He did it in style as ‘commandant’, with his tent pitched every night for him and a ‘well cooked dinner’ provided by the cook.

Colin was to bring fresh supplies from Maryborough in the ketch Ellida which he had adapted for this purpose. Once more, with his love of Scandinavian legends, he chose a name from folk lore — Ellida was the magic ship in Frithiof Saga. Colin sailed up the Fitzroy River (named by Charles in May 1853) to the future site of Rockhampton, then part of Gracemere Station but 11 km from the homestead. For the first time in
all their squatting ventures, the Archers had a station with ‘a nautical flavour’.

Colin reached the agreed rendezvous just below a rocky bar across the river on 1 September 1855 to find an anxious Charles, mounted on Sleipner, on the lookout for much needed supplies. He and his party of nineteen had been camped on the site of the future homestead beside the mere since 10 August and had run out of food, except mutton and rice. Worst of all for these bushmen, their supplies of tobacco were exhausted. And so it was that the first cargo landed at the future port was a box of tobacco.

It appears to have been the decision of all three brothers to change the name of the new station from Farris to Gracemere in affection for their sister-in-law, perhaps after their emotional farewells. Charles himself upon arrival there must have thought it a more appropriate name than that of the very large Norwegian lake. The much drier year of 1855 had converted his ‘lake’ to a ‘mere’, a small lagoon. His first letter home from the new station is headed ‘Gracemere, 11 November 1855’ without further explanation, suggesting that Willie or Colin had already conveyed this news. But there had been no change of heart regarding the region itself or ‘the perfect paradise’ he had chosen for the homestead as his letter to his father reveals:

It is the only part of New South Wales (Sydney excepted) where I have ever seen anything that could be called scenery, and the climate, although very hot, has not the arid heat of the Burnett ...

I have often wished that you could get a glimpse of this spot where I have fixed the head station, as I am sure you would be delighted with it. The buildings, some of which are finished and others in progress, stand upon a small peninsula that juts out into the mere ...

In providing this description for his father’s benefit, Charles unconsciously echoed old William Archer’s romantic response in 1819 to the splendid setting of Larvik. In choosing the homestead site and planning its garden to run down to the water’s edge, Charles had the Tolderodden garden in mind. He not only inherited his father’s appreciation for scenic beauty, but also his creativity as a landscape gardener. While it was Willie who later laid out and planted the garden, Charlie planned it. Gracemere’s setting is on a much smaller scale than Tolderodden, but the resemblance
is striking. The advantage of a well-watered sheep run with a river port eleven kilometres distant was not the only attraction for Charles, but also his vision of an antipodean Tolderodden.

Colin was to be the architect of the permanent homestead built after Charlie’s return to Norway, but on 26 March 1856, Charlie wrote to Kate to express his pleasure in her son Simon Jørgensen who, in company with Jamie Archer, had recently arrived in the colony. He then gave a progress report:

It is nearly eight months since we arrived on the run, and the station begins to assume a settled appearance. The greatest difficulty I have had to contend with … is want of bark roofing, for although there is plenty … of the timber that grows the best bark, yet the season has been so very dry that it won’t strip from the trees. My sitting room is a detached building, or rather shed, neatly thatched, and the sides closed in with Chinese matting. It is delightfully cool, and altogether the most comfortable room I have inhabited in the bush.

The Archers had been so long isolated from any commercial centre that on settling at Gracemere they assumed the same would apply. Charles therefore had a shed and primitive wharf constructed on the southern bank of the Fitzroy and from this the schooner Albion sailed with their first woolclip in December 1855. The Ellida continued to bring supplies from Gladstone with Colin at the helm — after his move to Gracemere early in the following year. With their friends the Elliots now settled north of Gracemere and other squatters on the move from the south, there was increasing river traffic.

In mid 1856 the government requested W.H. Wiseman, Crown Lands Commissioner for Leichhardt, to find a suitable site for a township on the Fitzroy. In consultation with Charles Archer and Richard Palmer, it was decided that the rocky bar across the river which made this the head of navigation was the natural site for a township. Wiseman suggested it should be called ‘Charleston’ to honour its founder, but he modestly declined. Richard Palmer who had already built a rough bush store on the river bank also rejected ‘Palmerston’. There were no other residents to consult. Wiseman then chose a name symbolised by the rocks in the river, with the specific suffix ‘hampton’ — the old English word for a town near water. Archer and Palmer approved. With the addition of Parker’s Bush Inn early in 1857 and a Native Police Camp, Rockhampton acquired a population
of about eleven, but was not officially proclaimed until the gold-rush of 1858. By that time Charles was in Norway. The ‘great pioneer of the north’ in deed as well as word, left Rockhampton in the *Sable Chief* at the beginning of October 1856. He was in Sydney to witness Jack’s marriage to Maria Blest in November and sailed for Europe soon afterwards.²³

Charles’ significance outside the family lies in his role within Queensland history as the first European to encounter the Fitzroy River and virtual founder of the City of Rockhampton. Charles Archer on his steed Sleipner, sculpted by Arthur Murch and cast in bronze, has gazed down the river since its unveiling in 1981, just as he did in real life on 1 September 1855 while anxiously watching for Colin’s arrival in *Ellida* with much needed supplies for the first settlers. This fine sculpture now symbolises the relationship between past, present and future.
16

Young Shoots from an Old Tree:
Colin, James, Simon

'There is no fear I shall be left alone in my old age with so many young shoots from the old tree in Norway, besides those that may spring up in Australia', commented Charles to his mother in 1849. His metaphorical language with its hidden irony was truly prophetic. In the late twentieth century Australian 'shoots' continue to spring up. In the 1850s the young Norwegians from 'the old tree' were on the move towards the colony — Alexander (Sandy) and Colin in 1852, James and Simon in 1855. (Sandy's life story is told in Part III.) James, thirteenth and last child of William and Julia, who was variously known as Jamie, Jimmy or Jammie, shared his squatting apprenticeship with his nephew, (Kate's son) Simon Jørgensen, three months his junior.

Jamie and Simon, like the other younger family members, had grown up on the legendary exploits of their seniors, and occasionally received letters addressed to them with stories of bush life. But before the two nineteen year olds became jackeroos themselves, they had a few weeks holiday in London in the summer of 1855, visiting such wonders as the Crystal Palace, Windsor Castle, and attending a performance of Norma at Drury Lane. More importantly for those at Tolderodden, Jamie met David's forloven (fiancée) Susan Stubbs, whom he thought 'a most pleasant young lady'. Her sister, 'though amusing ... speaks so very OIRISH that I for my part don't understand more than half of what she is saying'. Preparing to sail early in July 1855, Jamie described himself as
... a lucky dog ... [we] are going out in one of the best vessels in that trade and in a cabin large as a little room, with every comfort one can have at sea, and besides this I have got an outfit that I hope will last for many years, and at the amount of which I am quite putrified, as we heard a certain lady say in the theatre. Fortune seems to smile on me in every way and I hope her favour will last ... ²

In Australia preparations were being made for their reception.³ On arrival in Sydney Jamie received a note from James Walker of Wallerawang: ‘I see your name & your nephew’s in the newspapers as safely landed in this country’, he wrote. ‘Although we have never met we are not strangers to each other, and it would afford Mrs Walker, my young folks & myself much pleasure to commence a personal friendship with our Norwegian kinfolks’. This rare reference to blood relationship by either a Walker or an Archer, despite friendships between some, shows James Walker as a more feeling man than some of his relations. He continued: ‘Time had been when your brother Thomas was my “Master of the Horse” — I could have sent horses for you both, but things have changed now, and you have a very fatiguing & unpleasant journey to take — and a very expensive one — considering the badness of the vehicle & the discomforts of the journey & it is not improbable you may have to finish it with a walk of 15 miles from Hartley to this place ... ’⁴

It seems that Walker having issued the invitation, then did his best to discourage the two young men. As it happened they found a coastal vessel leaving for the north almost immediately and took passage to Maryborough, taking Willie and Colin by surprise. Colin had just returned to Coonambula with the drays after taking wool to the port, thus depriving the boys of an introduction to bullock driving. Willie sent Robert Pacey, a station hand, to Maryborough with horses, a superior form of transport.⁵ Simon expressed a low opinion of his horse:

It sensed that its rider was inexperienced. I gave it some rather sharp lashes with my whip in my over flowing enthusiasm and the horse was not inclined to bear this with any patience. It showed its disapproval by standing first on its hind legs and then its front legs and soon managed to throw me off. Then it threw me a scornful glance and started to nibble the grass. The bystanders all laughed and made me feel even more humiliated. As I mounted the horse again it was with soothing words and a vow never again to take advantage of my power to hurt its feelings ...

We arrived at our destination, Coonambula, early on the third day ... They
were all busy with shearing and I arrived in time to see this most important event in the year. It can be compared to harvesting in other countries ...6

No allowances had been made for the two ‘new chums’ on horse-back. Consequently for the first couple of days at Coonambula they were too uncomfortable to sit down — so ‘dined at the mantle-piece’ or its bush equivalent. Even so, Willie referred to them as ‘riding up in state’.

Soon after their arrival, Willie took Simon to Gladstone to meet Charlie, then settled at Gracemere. He had sailed in Ellida down the Fitzroy River and through The Narrows (between the mainland and Curtis Island) to spend a short holiday in Gladstone with his brother and nephew. While there, the three competed in Ellida in the second annual Port Curtis Regatta. On their return they landed at the future site of Rockhampton, then the boundary of the Gracemere run. This gave it, in Willie’s words, ‘a nautical air’.

Charlie wrote to Simon’s mother:

Gracemere
26 March 56.
My dear Kate,

I don’t know whether I have written to you since Simon was at the Mere. I know I intended doing so and telling you how much I am pleased with him. He is sensible, straightforward, affectionate, well mannered and good looking. This last is a quality which will only ensure a favourable first impression, which is no mean advantage in this world, but the others will serve him in the good opinion of everyone whose good opinion is worth having. He does every credit to your bringing up, and I am proud of such a nephew ...

My last intelligence from Coonambula is a letter from Simon. Willie was in Sydney and Colin and Jamie with the team upon the road taking the wool to Maryborough — so that Simon was in all the dignity of a swell in full charge. A swell means a new chum whose position on a station cannot be exactly defined. We had a merry time of it when Willie and he were here, made several excursions to the outskirts of the run on horseback, and had lots of boating on the river. You would have laughed to have seen and heard the three of us, stretched upon the banks or the floor of the “Ellida” singing Norsk songs. I don’t know whether you would have admired the music, as we did not know the words, and were not quite agreed about the tunes, but we acquitted ourselves entirely to our own satisfaction, which, as we had no other audience, was all that could be desired. I have no doubt that Simon has given you a full and particular account of this ... the fix he was in when the [bot fly] stung the skittish horse he was riding, and how he was nearly swallowed by a
crocodile etc. I felt rather down-hearted and lonely when they left me ... Believe me my dear Kate, Your affectionate brother, Charlie.

Simon had written to his mother a couple of weeks earlier while in charge at Coonambah — 'the sole master of the Station. Imagine, tyrant over 20,000 subjects, sadly they are all stupid sheep'. He had the honour, he said 'to work for the famous establishment of D.A. & Co. [it] is like an “Open Sesame” down here. If I enter a public house without carrying money and tell them I am an employee of Mr Archer, I will get as much liquor etc. as it is possible to drink'. But there were drawbacks in the bush. 'What I miss most is music, the only musical instrument in the house is a [mouth organ] which Jamie got from one of the blacks. I often try, but with poor luck, to make a tune that other people can recognise. Ask Malla and all the others that expect letters from me, not to be angry. I confess my sin, and ask for forgiveness. I must write to Uncle W this afternoon, and as it is 10 o'clock in the evening I have to end the letter this time'.

While he does not say so, this is the letter of a homesick young man trying to come to terms with a completely strange life-style. Simon was storekeeper at Coonambah and thus avoided bullock driving. Meantime Jamie had earned Colin’s praise for being able to yoke up and drive his team of bullocks himself within three weeks of his arrival — a rare accomplishment. But within six months, Jamie like every other true bushman, was heartily sick of bullock driving. He had already made three trips from Coonambah to Maryborough and another lay ahead before he and Colin could set out with a large mob of sheep for Gracemere. As sheep travel only eight or ten kilometres a day, this would take a month or more as against five day’s riding. Jamie told his sister Jane Ann that he was looking forward to seeing ‘that pretty place Gracemere’, and also sailing in Ellida which he described as a little larger than a Norwegian pilot boat. She was not the only sailing craft to navigate the Fitzroy. ‘One day the people at Gracemere were surprised by the sight of a schooner which had come right up to Charlie’s run to take the wool to Sydney’, he concluded. Twentieth century central Queenslanders would think this a figment of Jamie’s imagination, since Gracemere homestead is 11 km southeast of the Fitzroy River.

Jamie and Simon were kept busy opening boxes which Willie brought
back from Sydney — 'a great event here and everyone is on his toes to see what comes next', Jamie told Jane Ann. 'But no one watches more closely than the Blacks who at each item exclaim gindi gindi, a usual expression of wonder'. The two boys also exclaimed when a few bottles of sherry and some port wine, 'grog as it is called here', were unpacked. He thought the fluids far superior to the monotonous diet he had grown as tired of as bullock driving. Both Jamie and Simon were still writing home in Norwegian, not yet being weaned from their mother tongue.

Colin and Simon were each owners of about 3,000 sheep by 1856 — Colin having 'earned' his in lieu of wages. Simon, however, brought capital funds with him which Willie invested in sheep. The 'expeditionists', Colin and Jamie, had moved all the sheep to Gracemere by July so that there were 25,000 to shear and almost 10,000 to 'lamb down'. This was a term later used for bushmen spending their annual cheque on a spree, but here refers to shepherds taking separate flocks of lambing ewes under their care on the unfenced run. About the time that the remaining flocks were moved from the Burnett to Gracemere, an amalgamation between the firms of David Archer & Co. and Charles & Thomas Archer took place. David, by this time married, and in his own words, 'living at ease thousands of miles from the scene of action' in Dublin, agreed to this. He also approved of plans to establish breeding herds of stud cattle at Gracemere, although he had despised them at Durundur. The river made all the difference at Gracemere, allowing a heifer station, Nankeen, to be set up on the eastern side. Gracemere would become one of the most important beef cattle studs in Queensland.

Charles' departure for Norway towards the end of 1856, leaving Willie, 38, Colin, 24, Jamie and Simon, 20, in the colony, led to 'a new state of things at Gracemere'. Willie told David that it was quite unnecessary for him to return to the colony. 'There are plenty of us here to carry on everything, even if I should take it into my head to come home in 12 or 14 months hence — and if matters continue as prosperous as they have for the last three years, I see no difficulty in providing you with funds to live at home in a moderate way'. The young shoots from the old tree were proving themselves as good as their seniors, but under far more comfortable circumstances.

Just as they all settled down to what appeared to be a bright future, they
were devastated by family tragedy. In 1857, five months after his third marriage, Jack left Newcastle in the Retriever with a cargo of sheep for the South Island of New Zealand. He took Anna Maria with him on this voyage, dreading a repeat of the last occasion on which he arrived home to find himself a widower. Everything was looking bright for him. A New Zealand ordinance of 1851 allowed depasturing of sheep in the high country, increasing stock numbers dramatically. Captain Archer and his brig Retriever contributed substantially to these numbers. But on this voyage of April 1857 if any sheep were landed, they were carcasses washed ashore on the wild west coast in the vicinity of Milford Sound. Retriever, her captain and his wife and the entire crew disappeared without a trace. Jack was an experienced seaman, not only on the rough seas of Bass Strait, but also on his Arctic voyage of 1851. The storm which wrecked the Retriever must have exceeded greatly that described by him in 1851 as ‘the heaviest weather ever experienced in one passage’. Poor Jack, poor Anna Maria, poor orphaned children. Jack’s rhetorical question to his father after the death of his second wife in 1851 applied once more: ‘Is there not some fatality attending those who intermarry with our family’.

John Archer’s epitaph might be summed up as ‘poor Jack’ — unlucky in business, unlucky as sea captain, unlucky in the ‘fatality’ of his three marriages. In his last few years there had been happy times at Twofold Bay. There he saw his children ‘much improved’, and in his friendship with Mary Mowle his introverted nature found release. There, too, he had happy fellowship with his brother Willie on several occasions and, briefly, with Edward Walker. While the ‘separateness’ of their Christian faith isolated them to some extent, it also provided comfort in times of stress. When Jack’s first wife, Eliza, died in 1847 he had told his sister Kate, ‘... I thank God that now I can look forward to the time when we shall meet again with all the rescued of God ...’ There were no human witnesses, other than drowning sailors, to Jack’s final, terrible moments in that fatal shipwreck in 1857, but one senses that he died in the certainty of becoming ‘the rescued of God’.

Letters referring to Jack’s disappearance and death appear not to have survived. That the family were devastated by this final tragedy in Jack’s unlucky life is not in doubt. Meantime his son Willie Minor remained with the Mowle family in Sydney. Four months after the shipwreck, Mary
Mowle gave birth to her sixth child. Two weeks later this woman who had been like a sister to Jack, herself died, worn out by poor health and child-bearing. Young Willie Archer, nine years old when he lost his remaining parent, was still with the Mowles in September. Although there is no written evidence, Uncle Willie would have taken arrangements into his own capable hands. He had twice visited Twofold Bay and expressed decided opinions on the up-bringing of Jack’s children. He was the only uncle the boy knew, and the only senior member of the family in the colony. He appears to have sent the child to England with Walker relatives, and from thence to Tolderodden. Colin was left to manage Gracemere. Willie’s name seldom appears in Colin’s Journal commenced in May 1858, nor in correspondence during that entire year. It seems that the senior partner spent much time in the south. All business letters were addressed to Colin. The ‘young shoots’ had a most momentous year in 1858, not only in developments on the station, but as ‘bit players’ in the history of Queensland.

The year began with Colin drawing up plans for the permanent homestead on the site chosen by Charles overlooking the mere. And not before time, as Jamie wrote:

We have a houseful of people here again, besides the seven of us belonging to the place there is an old friend of Charlie’s here at present. His name is Crooks, at the present time so bad with rheumatism he can hardly move. Besides him we are continually pestered with travellers who generally stop two or three days, when they go away they are soon replaced by new arrivals. Having as yet little room to stow people away in, they are a great bother and beds have to be made up on the floor, table and anywhere where there is six feet of room to spare.

We have had some very nice music here lately. There is a Mr Wilmott here who came up from Port Curtis. He brought his guitar with him and having a very nice voice, he with Mr Teague who was here gave us some very pretty duets. Simon and I occasionally assisted but as far as I am concerned I think my ear for music is getting worse and worse ...

At last on 19 July 1858 Colin recorded their move into the new house, without any particular jubilation, but much quiet satisfaction. With good reason: this ‘gentleman’s residence’ constructed of ironbark slabs was still standing and still occupied by Archers in the last decade of the twentieth
The isolation which the brothers experienced from 1840 when the great trek northwards began was broken down to some extent from 1856 by the ever-increasing north-flowing stream of would-be squatters, most using Gracemere as a convenient hostel — as Jamie bemoaned. Soon after the new homestead was completed in mid 1858 the stream became a flood during a Californian-type gold rush. An old prospector named ChapPELL found gold on Canoona Station 60 kilometres north of Rockhampton. Captain Maurice O’Connell — the Crown Lands Commissioner for Port Curtis Pastoral District — took out a prospecting party and found sufficient gold for a limited number of diggers. By August between 200 and 300 men working there were doing quite well. When this report reached Sydney, what Colin described as ‘an unaccountable mania’ seized the people. Gracemere was no longer isolated, but situated in the midst of an on-going frenzy. Colin committed his thoughts to the pages of his Journal on 8 October, in the midst of the frenzy, thus ‘catching history alive’:

... all Sydney was seized with an excitement almost amounting to madness, and many hundreds of people have left good situations & comfortable homes to seek their fortunes on the Fitzroy, thinking they would have nothing to do but pick up the gold which they deluded themselves into the belief was to be found in nuggets on the surface of the ground. All disposable vessels were immediately laid on for Rockhampton among another 7 steamboats — some of them too large to navigate the river are discharging their cargoes in the Bay into smaller vessels which are kept trading up & down for that purpose. Probably about 3000 people have landed at Rockhampton. Those who arrived first proceeded immediately to the diggings, but what must have been their disappointment & chagrin to find that the diggings consisted of a few acres of ground in a gully ... Hundreds of them have returned without putting a spade in the ground thus deterring others from going at all, and Rockhampton is consequently crowded with disappointed and disaffected diggers ... There are a great many who are unable to pay their passage back, and are consequently left destitute & suffering ... The most distressing part of it is that we understand this is only the beginning of the rush ...

Colin’s forecast was an accurate one. An estimated 15,000 landed within three months, with about 5,000 in the embryo township of Rockhampton
at any one time. There were as many as fifty vessels in Keppel Bay in one count. Government officials and demountable buildings were sent up from Sydney to deal with the emergency, while Gracemere lost one square mile of its riverside land to Rockhampton which was surveyed and officially proclaimed ‘a town or village’ on 28 October 1858. Soon afterwards Gracemere’s boundary on the town side was relocated at Scrubby Creek, a couple of kilometres from the homestead. In November, Willie, Colin and Simon attended the first land sale of town blocks, Willie purchasing five ‘almost in the middle of the town’. But there was another side to the rush affecting Gracemere. ‘We are finding work for a number of [indigent diggers] here’, Colin recorded, ‘such as digging wells on dry stations, trenching the garden etc.’ The stone retaining wall which these men built in the garden remained in the 1990s as a memorial to the Canoona diggers of 1858.

Simon noted that some of the disappointed diggers blamed the squatters ‘for having knowingly deceived them in order to get workers for the stations’. There was plenty of food as storekeepers had set up business, ‘but many had no money to buy and it led, understandably, to people helping themselves’. Although the situation looked threatening at times, there was little violence, he said. As for Rockhampton with its two buildings when the rush began, Palmer’s store and the Bush Inn, it had changed too. Simon described it thus: ‘The whole thing resembles a scene where the population of an entire town has been picked up and set down in the middle of a forest. There were tents instead of houses, but otherwise it looked much like a market day [in Norway]’. During this frenzied era in the colony’s history, there were compensations for the three young men at Gracemere. They were invited to dine with Wiseman at his newly erected slab house, ‘Mount Athelstane’, on the outskirts of Rockhampton. There they enjoyed roast fowl, ham, plum pudding and champagne. Their host, the Crown Lands Commissioner for the Leichhardt Pastoral District, obviously had a superior cook. According to Colin, Wiseman thought them ‘horrid dull fellows’. A letter from Wiseman, 25 November 1858, refutes this:

My dear Colin Archer,

... I have no news to give you since last evening except that I am still partially living, which is miraculous as the mosquitoes made a great attempt last evening
to carry me bodily away. I was in my office this morning at 5.30, there alone I find neither flies, and I was going to say mosquitoes, but there is now one on my left hand, but here are very few.

Your brother William told me to ask you for some stone wedges, if you can spare them please let my messenger have them.

Please to recollect you Gracemere gentlemen that I dine now at 3pm or so, when I trust if any of you are passing and are hungry that you will be pleased to turn in.
Yours sincerely, W.H. Wiseman.

Colin and Jamie accompanied Wiseman to the Peak Downs in July 1859 to identify the runs marked out in 1854. Both had been there before, Colin with Charlie on the 1854 expedition, and Jamie was out again with Charlie before his departure at the end of 1856. On this occasion they took the route via Henning's Marlborough Station and then followed up the MacKenzie before veering off to the Downs. During one day's ride of ten hours before finding water, they called their camp "Khosh Bulduk" — meaning 'well found' — see 'Romance of the Harem' Colin noted. (His nephews, Jim and Alister Archer were to have great fun in the 1930s trying to locate this book after reading Colin's Journal.) Colin had first seen the Downs in his 'colonial experience' period, but now as an experienced station manager he could more readily appreciate their 'splendid qualities'. Even so, the brothers declined to take advantage of 'first choice' in the land, except in the sense of speculation. They were to sell all the blocks originally applied for, also land which Jamie took up on this expedition. They were out for four weeks, but the day after returning to Gracemere and finding everything in order, they attended 'a horse race between Robert Gaden and Larnach, at which all the beauty and fashion of Rockhampton were assembled'. How life had changed!

The Canoona gold rush ensured Rockhampton's rapid development both economically and politically. It also had national implications. Canoona was the first payable goldfield discovered in what was to become Queensland on 10 December 1859 but was then identified as northern Australia. It was also one of the most notorious in the history of Australian gold mining, not only for its alleged dearth of gold, but for the hysteria it created in the minds of thousands of people. It changed the course of history for the people of the Fitzroy region, not least the Archers. Rockhampton residents in 1860 petitioned the government to resume
140 square miles from the Gracemere run as municipal land. The government rejected this as ridiculous and proclaimed the usual five square miles as the Municipality of Rockhampton. A long letter of protest from Colin as manager of Gracemere, pointing out that the claimed boundaries included a large area of the homestead block, probably assisted in determining a reasonable area. The town population at that time was about 700.

Such dramatic change and upheaval within several years of settling Gracemere must have seemed unbelievable to Charles in Norway. While the establishment of the town just eleven kilometres from their door meant the end of peace and tranquility for Colin, Jamie and Simon, the instant population provided a market for their beef and mutton, also regular shipping services and the convenience of government departments and retail outlets. But living was not cheap in the young town. Colin paid 20 shillings for two lunches and 10 shillings for wine at Skardon’s Hotel in 1861 — the equivalent of a working man’s wages for two weeks. While he was able to buy two pairs of drawers locally, also ‘a pair of fancy ball pants’ for 1 pound 15 shillings, he had to send to Sydney for a white drill jacket and 2 pairs of trousers.

Charles’ vision of a garden laid out to the water’s edge, as at Tolderodden, gradually took shape after the homestead was completed. Early in 1859 Colin recorded that a good paling fence was ‘carried down to the water on both sides in a line with the back of the house, the stone wall forming a terrace has been extended to opposite the wharf [on the mere] and looks well from a distance … Most of the walks have also been dressed with stones and shingles so that they are nice and dry in wet weather’. Several years later Willie ordered large quantities of trees, flowering shrubs and roses from Sydney. These included ‘Bougainvillea Spectabilis’, the ancestors of some of today’s nineteen varieties which make a glorious display in the garden.

The Aborigines who had lived and hunted for thousands of years on the lands which became Gracemere Station continued to make both summer and winter camps overlooking the mere (padygole to them) after 1855. These people belonged to the Warrabura clan of the Darumbal language group. This peaceful co-existence continued on the same lines that David set down at Durundur — they must lay down their spears and nulla nullas before approaching the homestead. Even so, grazing sheep and
cattle disrupted their food gathering, while their belief that domestic animals were there to be hunted like kangaroos or wallabies, led to much misunderstanding with other squatters. With the establishment of Rockhampton, life became extremely difficult for nearby clans. Colin continued to live in harmony with the Warrabura clan. He was disgusted and incensed when a German employee at Gracemere shot and killed 'Kitchen Billy' in March 1859. The case went before a magistrate but the white man pleaded 'accident' and was not charged. Colin thought he should 'get a good thrashing or some similar severe punishment that would make him more cautious with firearms in the future'. The Aborigines were justified, he said, in not trusting white man's law. The Archers were obviously at odds with white community opinion in this.

In the following year there was a more serious incident involving the two races which demonstrates how impossible it was for the clans to continue their normal life. A white woman, Fanny Briggs, was murdered by blacks in November 1860 and her body found in scrub on Gracemere. Wiseman sent an urgent note to Colin expressing his disgust: 'Popular feeling appears to be running tempestuously against all Blacks'. Commandant Morisett of the Native Police wanted all Aborigines on the stations 'dispersed' — a euphemism for 'shot'. He even asked Wiseman to expel his faithful black employees, Dickie, Starlight and Joe 'so that they may be shot at by the Native Police when away from my place'. Wiseman believed it was his duty to protect them, and so he did. Because Gracemere Aborigines were under suspicion, he asked Colin if he intended to give up their protection. Colin remained firm, and just as well, for the murderers were found to be Native Police troopers.

European settlement in Australia had begun officially in 1788 with high ideals in relation to the indigenous people, but in most cases these were abandoned by the 1850s. In what was to become Central Queensland there were few squatters who adopted the same humane policies as the Archers. Among those giving evidence before two separate inquiries into the Native Police, Charles Archer in 1856 and William Archer in 1858 were almost alone in admitting two sides to racial conflict. When asked if it was true that the Native Police 'tyrannised over the tribes' by taking women, Charles replied that 'white men are just as bad; you cannot control white men in this respect, and it is the cause of half the murders that are
committed by the blacks upon them'. It is unlikely that he would have spoken in this manner if he had been responsible for fathering an Aboriginal child at Durundur.

The 'young shoots' Jamie and Simon were now experienced bushmen. In March 1859 Simon was given charge of a droving outfit of four white men and three Aborigines. They had nine riding horses and two draught horses to pull a dray load of supplies 700 kilometres all the way from Gracemere to Moreton Bay to take delivery of a large mob of cattle. Simon and party arrived back on the Fitzroy on 12 June with the cattle in good condition and no losses. 'Simon deserves credit for having managed it so successfully', commented Colin. During his absence great preparations were under way for their reception, including a tailing paddock and a two-room hut at Wanyoweilem on the marine plains south of Gracemere. Wanyoweilem, the Aboriginal name for the area, was later corrupted to 'Upper Ulam' on European tongues. The cattle station itself was soon identified as the 'Fifteen Mile', indicating its distance from the head station. Simon had won his colonial 'spurs' in carrying out this long cattle drive so successfully.

Early in the following year, Jamie explained to his mother the complicated terms under which he and Simon were employed:

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Thanks to my brothers I am as rich as Croesus. When we came out to Gracemere [from Coonambula] in July 1856, Simon and I were engaged for 3 years at the rate of 20 pounds per annum and at the end of 3 years we were to get 800 ewes apiece, which as that kind of sheep is now worth 12 shillings, was at the rate of 180 pounds per annum. When Colin and I last went out to the Peak Downs, we found some country which he gave me and which I have since sold for 800 pounds, which money I intend laying out in the purchase of sheep that will be kept here on terms.

Colin and Simon I suppose you know are partners in the great Firm [David Archer & Co.] and if I could fall on some more country in a few years I might have a chance myself, but there is very little hope now of finding country close to this as there are a great number of parties looking for runs.
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Jamie also added an item of news for his eldest brother, still at Tolderodden: 'Tell Charlie it is Roper's Creek [on the Peak Downs] which he despised so much that is now for sale, it is now likely to fetch some 1800 pounds, as there are a great many applicants for runs up there'. Charles might well have commented that James had the advantage of hindsight, something denied himself five years earlier.
Jamie and Simon — now about 24 — set out for their first holiday in the south in February 1861, including a visit to Sandy then managing the Bank of New South Wales at Kyneton in Victoria. Their Rockhampton neighbour Wiseman farewelled 'My dear James Archer' and hoped they had letters of introduction to people in Sydney and also would see there his ‘chiefest friend’, Christopher Rolleston. His letter concluded:

Hoping you will return safe, improved by travel but not altered in that noble simplicity of character which is so peculiar to your family and which is such an honour to your Father. I beg you excuse this advice from one who

My dear Jimmie [is]
Yours very sincerely,
W.H. Wiseman.

During their absence, Gracemere homestead had plenty of brothers to take their places. The long lost Archie, 41, had at last arrived from the South Seas, via Norway, to take up residence there and Willie, 43, had also returned from his second spell at Tolderodden. Colin, 29, remained as manager. A letter from young Annie Boyce, who was staying with their friends the Jardines in Rockhampton, to her sister in Brisbane, gives an up-to-the minute account of the brothers entertaining a party of ladies to luncheon at Gracemere in May 1861. While she was high in her praise of Colin and impressed by the dignity and kindness of Willie, she liked 'Mr Archibald Archer the least of any of them; he is the clever one of the family and a great talker but not so nice looking as the others ...' They were expecting James and Simon, accompanied by Sandy, to arrive by the next steamer. 'These two last branches of the Archer tribe [Jamie and Simon] are the same age, 24, and the dancing men of the family ...' Annie Boyce's comment on Archie as 'a great talker' was prophetic, given his future career as a Queensland politician. After the return of the two 'dancing men', she had news of them for her sister:

We had a visit from Jamie Archer and Mr Simon this morning. They were invited to dinner at the Larnach's and are coming here to tea. I expect they will be here presently, it is nearly 5 o'clock. They brought us such a lovely bunch of stephanotis with William the Conqueror's respects and love, the first for me, the second for Mrs Jardine. I hope we shall have the felicity of seeing him again before my departure.
‘William the Conqueror’ was still winning hearts it seemed. When Jamie and Simon returned from their southern holiday, they made up the greatest number of family members ever to assemble inside the solid walls of Gracemere homestead to that time — five Archers and one Jørgensen. Sandy was on official business for the Bank of New South Wales, establishing a branch in Rockhampton. But he also enjoyed holiday weekends sailing in Ellida and sketching to his heart’s content. When it was time for him to return to Victoria, Colin accompanied him on the first leg of his own trip back to Norway. In a letter to his mother Willie describes the effect of their departure on himself and the others:

We are very loathe to part with them, but our loss as regards Colin will be your gain & his own comfort. I only wish he had been sent off shortly after I returned to the Colony, but there were many reasons why we thought it desirable that he should remain until I got him thoroughly initiated into the work of the station which is now much more complicated than our ordinary squatting. Up until last night when we got a letter addressed by Charlie ... we were not aware that our dear Father had failed so much since I left & that Charlie had been ailing so much as to make it necessary for him to seek a more genial climate ... Poor Sandy has just said goodbye. He has enjoyed his stay so much & leaves with a heavy heart, he still looks forward to seeing you all about 12 months hence ... 28

When Colin reached London he was greeted by David with news that Charlie had already died and been buried in the Tolderodden graveyard — the first burial there. Charlie had been at home when news of poor Jack’s shipwreck and disappearance reached them. Now they found it hard to realise that Charlie, too, was gone from them. It was intended that Colin would take his place at Tolderodden for several years until relieved by one of the others but fate, with a little help from his mother and Karen Wiborg, was to decree differently.

The ‘young shoots from an old tree’ had all acquitted themselves well in the colony since Colin’s arrival in 1852 and Jamie’s and Simon’s three year later. James had many more years ahead of him at Gracemere, Simon another four after Colin’s departure. Colin had become extremely versatile in his nine years in Australia. As well as managing the large workforce needed to look after 30,000 sheep and 4,000 beef cattle, he was personally skilled in such diverse activities as branding calves, repairing the woolwash machinery, cutting a cancer from Wiseman’s horse, breaking in horses by
the Rarey method, drawing up architectural plans for the homestead and supervising its construction, and dealing with all correspondence and business connected with David Archer & Co., this with the help of book-keeper, W.H. Risien. He somehow found time for reading such books as Grant's History of Physical Astronomy and was 'much entertained by it'. Like his modification of Ellida and his experience in piloting Jenny Lind up Raglan Creek, most of these activities contributed to his future profession as a naval architect in Norway.

The 'colony of Archers' envisaged by Tom in 1846 continued in reality until Gracemere was established, the homestead built, and the town of Rockhampton founded on the station boundaries. The brothers were no longer on the frontiers of settlement but, from 10 December 1859, in the midst of the new Colony of Queensland. The firm which came to be known as Archer Brothers had already entered a new phase of stability which would bring the second generation to Queensland. It was this generation which founded Australian-born families without ever loosening the strong bonds which linked it to Norway.
PART III
Settling Down 1861–1905
Land exploration in eastern Australia almost came to an end with the deaths of Bourke and Wills in 1861, the last officially funded major expedition in eastern Australia. The Colony of Queensland was then less than two years old, but the exploits of Ludwig Leichhardt, Thomas Mitchell and Edmund Kennedy since 1844, with more than a little help from pastoralist explorers such as the Archer brothers, had revealed most of its secrets. Land settlement had expanded rapidly in the colony following the Canoona gold rush and new towns were soon established at Mackay and Townsville in the far north. Just as this was a ‘settling down’ period for the colony, so it was for the Archer brothers. Gracemere was no longer on the frontiers of settlement, but less than an hour’s buggy ride from the growing town of Rockhampton.

The Archers could no longer claim to be ‘a colony’ in their own right, but part of a social community. Archie had not long joined them at the time of Colin’s departure in 1861, while Sandy visited Gracemere for the first time in that same year. The years of travelling northwards had reached their natural end in the valley of the Fitzroy.
The new colonial age which began on 10 December 1859, and was confirmed when the first Queensland Parliament met on 22 May 1860, brought greater stability to the pastoral industry through its land legislation. Archibald Archer was to play a significant role within the new colonial government. He and his brother Alexander (known respectively to family and friends as Archie and Sandy) were the only two of the nine brothers to escape what Charles called ‘pioneering mania’. But each made an important contribution to the development of Queensland’s political and business life from the 1860s to the 1890s.

Archie, born in Scotland in 1820, made Queensland his home from about 1860 after a hazardous and adventurous life. Sandy had a far more conventional early life following his Norwegian birth in 1828. He was the only one of the nine boys to receive his secondary education in Scotland and to be trained in a profession rather than a trade. In nature as well as training these two were complete opposites: Archie, man-of-the world, hard-bitten and talkative, trained as an engineer in Scotland after completing studies at Laurvig Grammar School; Sandy, an academic achiever educated in accounting, but with artistic gifts as a sketcher and water-colourist, he was also nervy and emotional. Despite these differences they appear to have been good friends after Archie’s arrival in Queensland. Sandy, however, had a greater need for family contact. (His story is told in chapter 20.)

Archie began his transition to adult life in much the same way as each
of his older brothers — as a student at Laurvig Grammar School (1831–34). But as a schoolboy he had a fierce loyalty to Scotland. According to family legend, Archie while a student at the Grammar School,

... took a thrashing rather than respect the famous ballad on the “Sinclair” raid, in which a band of Scottish Mercenaries, attempting to march across Norway to assist Gustavus Adolphus against Denmark ... are depicted as committing outrages on the peasantry, who ... ultimately almost annihilated the Scots.¹

Archie, five years old when the family went to Norway, never lost his broad Scottish burr. His five year apprenticeship in engineering and black-smithing in Scotland did nothing to diminish this. On completing his training he returned to Tolderodden for a holiday, later eliciting the comment from Jack: ‘From what you say, Archie must be a strange sort of chap’. Jack thought a few months in the colony would soon ‘rub the corners off him’.² When Archie first arrived in Australia in January 1843 aged about 22, at the very nadir of the wool depression, David had no employment for an engineer at Durundur and his blacksmithing was done in Brisbane. When Willie spent his week of ‘unalloyed pleasure’ in Sydney with Archie, he was kinder in his assessment than Kate — ‘... he appears to have well grounded notions of men and matter — qualifications rarely met with in this colony’.³ Just the very qualities to make a good politician two decades later.

Archie was the most elusive of letter writers during the many years he spent among the Polynesian islands as planter or trader. On more than one occasion his brothers feared that ‘poor Archie’ had lost his life on some remote island. This fear was almost realised towards the end of his Polynesian life. During his brief initial visit to Sydney in 1843 he was persuaded by a Scottish friend, Captain Dunnett, to join him in a copra venture in the South Seas. This failed, but then led to his first dangerous adventure. He was in Moorea when he wrote to his mother on 10 August 1844. He described this as one of the loveliest islands in the world — an opinion still held by travel writers. The harbour reminded him of ‘the small vigs which run up the larger fjords in Norway’, except for the lush tropical vegetation. His engineering skills had taken him to the island to repair a sugar mill, but ended in undreamed of consequences:
I do not know if you have seen in the papers an account of the French taking possession of Tahiti and the desperate resistance made by the natives. The French have therefore kept cruisers to prevent the inhabitants of the other islands from going to their brothers in Tahiti, and as bad luck would have it, I have got into a scrape with one of them. The vessel I came over here in was a brig bound for the Sandwich Islands that touched here for ballast before proceeding on her voyage. When I was landing here in C. Parker’s boat (who was likewise a passenger and who resides here), a French schooner came in and took possession of the boat until the Captain of the brig showed his clearance from Tahiti. He had none, and C. Parker’s boat and all my clothes, and goods on board of C.P.’s to the value of 60 pounds, were all taken and the brig ordered over to Tahiti ... Thus I am left with one shirt and one pair of trousers, and am quite at a loss whether to go to Sydney with the “Countess Wiltshire”, to sail in a few days or stay and try to get my clothes back.

Archie stayed, he accepted the management of ‘the sugar works’ — his clothes having been recovered in Tahiti. The pay was not great but there was a comfortable rent-free house. He was to regret this decision. When French hostilities broke out a second time, he was unable to obtain a single man to cut cane and so it rotted in the ground. The owner then decided to convert to cattle raising and so Archie was commissioned to purchase cattle on Raiatea (Society Islands). He obtained the cattle, but while waiting for a ship to take them to Moorea, the French blockaded Raiatea where Queen Pomare and her court had taken refuge. There ‘she thought herself safe from the French, who attempted to get possession of her person’. And there Archie also remained for nine months, with the French ‘cruising around the Island, that they might annoy the Queen, who had taken refuge in a fort in the mountains and would not trust her person in their hands’.

Willie, on receiving this account of his brother’s detention, referred to it in the usual bantering tone adopted if they thought one of their number might be in danger of boasting. He told Charlie six months later that he had heard no further news ‘from the Court of Raiatea ... but from the tenor of his last letter [I] should not be surprised to learn that His Excellency ... that is, “the blue nosed Mandrill” — had turned up in Sydney’. Archie’s nick-name, Old Bluenose, was said to be a legacy from a school-days fight — perhaps that in defending the honour of Scotland at Laurvig Grammar School.

Archie eventually returned to Moorea where his engineering skills
were again in demand, this time to build the ironwork on a vessel of about 90 tons. He was so dispirited by all his misadventures of the past two years that he could not bring himself to write to his parents. Like Jack in similar circumstances, he thought no news was better than bad news. In the end he wrote to Willie whose 'kind letter' had helped overcome his 'painful feelings' for causing so much anxiety at home. He had already shipped as Mate with his old friend Tom Dunnett on a voyage to Manila. 'He is altogether a singular compound', commented Willie. He was singular enough to refrain from writing for another two years.

The family hoped that Tom would track down Archie on his 1849 trip. 'The chance of Tom falling in with him, either among the Islands or in California, was in fact what reconciled us ... I do not think [Archie's] disposition would naturally lead him into bad ways ... ', Willie assured his mother in October 1849. While Tom did not meet up with Archie, he at least heard that his elusive brother had left the Sandwich Islands as Mate on a vessel bound for New Mexico and thence to China.

It was nineteen year old Colin, on his way from California to Sydney in 1852, who finally caught up with Archie, at that time 'hard at work among his coffee trees' on the Island of Kanai (Hawaiian Islands). A year later he had abandoned coffee and was growing tobacco in a partnership styled 'Messrs. Archer & Gruber'. He had borrowed money in Honolulu for this venture with the intention of manufacturing cigars. When Willie heard this, he had 'already lost all confidence in the resources of his country in the hands of an Archer'. But he was wrong in one respect. The Agricultural Society of Honolulu awarded a silver cup to Archibald Archer in 1854 for the best tobacco exhibited. On the strength of this success he returned to Norway for a holiday. This was the occasion on which he purchased the mortgage on Tolderodden.

Returning to Polynesia Archie again entered the copra business and nearly lost his life as a result. He and a companion were put ashore on an atoll to collect coconuts, but were abandoned — whether by the wreck of the cargo vessel or simply being forgotten, is not clear. For a long unspecified period they existed on coconuts and raw fish. Rescued, eventually, by a passing ship, Archie arrived back in London 'reduced almost to a skeleton'. While the diet might have been nourishing if monotonous, it is probable that tropical fevers were responsible for Archie's emaciated
condition. This traumatic experience finally convinced him that it was time to heed his brothers’ advice and settle in Australia. After convalescence under his mother’s care at Tolderodden in 1858–59, he took passage to the colony and was with Sandy at Kyneton in the following year. Colin described the forty year old Archie at this time as ‘mad but not a bad fellow’.  

Several years later Sandy reminded Archie of his ‘jolly time’ in Kyneton:

... you will not have forgotten the week of excitement and dissipation which shortly preceded your departure from this place ... which culminated in you jumping your horse (the gallant little grey) into a deep ditch, pipe in mouth, & one of the excitements you will remember was a bazaar in which you played a prominent part, and I was reminded of it ... by a similar event in the same place ... but it wanted the gay abandon of the first & though there were just as many unfortunate young females, and some of them much prettier, still there was not the same go in it because we had not the same choice spirits properly organised ...  

Archie might have been ‘Old Bluenose’ to his brothers, but it seems he made a good impression upon Sandy’s female friends. When Jamie spent a few days with Sandy in 1862 he told Archie that ‘all our friends here ... inquire most anxiously about His majesty of the Cannibal Islands and all are disappointed that you did not come to see your loyal subjects’.  

Settling down at Gracemere soon after it became part of the new Colony of Queensland provided more serious challenges for Archie than those involving pretty girls and grey horses. Gracemere had been taken up by the Archers under the New South Wales Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1847 — ‘concocted by Lord Grey’ in England according to Charles. Uncertainty of tenure had caused Charles to seek other land in his Peak Downs expedition in 1854. When the first Queensland Parliament met in May 1860 legislators were determined to avoid the bitterness arising from ‘the land question’ in the older colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. Sir George Bowen, first Governor of Queensland, announced that the colony had ‘settled that long quarrel between pastoral and agricultural interests’ which occurred in all new countries. Not quite. There were almost as many major Land Acts between 1860 and 1869 as there were years. Early optimism soon gave way to controversy. Archie was to play a
leading role in the legislation of 1868–69, while Willie would become an innocent victim.

Archie was forty years old when he arrived at Gracemere, and as an engineer earned his bed and board by keeping the sheep-washing machine and its centrifugal pump in repair. As there was no longer a shortage of station hands plus a few ‘swells’, including several of Edward Walker’s sons, Archie and Willie could at last ‘live like Scottish gentlemen’. ‘I read with interest all you say about station affairs’, David told Willie in 1862, ‘and I almost envy you your mode of life as contrasted with my mill-horse existence’.14 David, now 46, had established the mercantile firm of Johnson & Archer in London. Married for nine years, he already had four or five children.

Later in the year Willie had his first brush with the Minister for Lands. He had applied for pre-emptive rights on 640 acres at the head station in order to secure the woolshed and other improvements. The Minister reduced this to 200 acres. Archers were then forced to purchase 290 acres at public auction and pay 10 pounds an acre — an exorbitant price in the money values of the time.15 Initial optimism soon gave way to rage. Rents were fixed and as quickly altered. By 1865 the squatters had had enough.

Archie and Willie were among those calling for a separate colony for the central districts. Rockhampton became the focus of the Queensland Land League, formed in 1865, which sought reformation, and the Separation Movement which attempted rebellion. William and Archibald Archer’s names appear as committee members and supporters of the former group.16 Early in 1866 the League published the Land League Papers, an eighteen page pamphlet containing articles by ‘Sagittarius’ which had appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald. The basic tenet was that freehold land should be made available to both agriculturalists and pastoralists at two shillings an acre. While the League did not convince the legislators, some aspects of the 1868 legislation showed its influence. By this time Archie was a member of the Legislative Assembly. He was generally assumed to be ‘Sagittarius’, but David contradicted this in March 1866: ‘It was a relief to find Archie was not the writer of the Land League Papers ...’17 David did not think it appropriate for an Archer to assume such a public role, but Archie would be in the news often enough in the future.

Tom arrived at Gracemere on a visit in 1867. He was delighted with
the lifestyle there, so different from his memories of Durundur or Coonambula. David commented to Willie:

By Tom’s account you are an enviable set of fellows with no family cares to depress you, a moderate share of work, just enough to keep away the cobwebs under a sort of terrestrial paradise to wile away the fleeting hours in. Gracemere must by all accounts be a pleasant place & the proof of it is that you are able to make the pot boil, when so few are able to do more than hold their own — and a great many cannot do that much ... 18

The ever cautious David was amazed, however, by ‘the cattle speculation’ as they built up their stud herds. ‘Where shall you be if the Govt. resumes the land?’ he asked. He thought the most they could expect would be occupation for a few years, during which Gracemere would yield a fair capital return. He envisaged Archie, not as the King of the Cannibal Islands, but proclaiming from the verandah overlooking the mere and to the hills beyond, ‘I am monarch of all I survey’.19 But Archie had no time to sit on the verandah. He was standing for the new seat of Rockhampton against two other contenders. Tom described him as ‘a rare electioneer’. In Rockhampton he attracted the biggest crowd ever at a political meeting. In June 1867 he won the seat.20 David thought Archie was about to begin a period of second youth.

Among those who encouraged Archie to stand for parliament was Arthur Hunter Palmer who in 1866 had become the Member for Port Curtis — which then included Rockhampton. ‘We went to Gracemere on Sunday evening and staid to dinner. It is looking very charming and the Archers were as kind as ever’, he told his wife Cissy in June 1867.21 By this time Gladstone was central to Palmer’s electorate, but he owned Beaufort Station on the Belyando, also an interest in Cawarral Station, so he was in Rockhampton from time to time. His friendship with Archie was enhanced by their parliamentary concerns, but he and his wife counted all the Archers among their friends.

Archie’s chief concern on taking his seat in parliament was reformation of land legislation. He and his supporters lost no time in presenting and passing the new bill. As early as March 1868 a public meeting and complimentary dinner to Archie was held in Rockhampton in approval of the bill. Archie, with tongue in cheek, expressed pleasure in the fact
'that those who opposed him at his election should now congratulate him'.

While the electors were happy, Archie himself still had doubts, as Colonial Secretary Arthur Palmer told his wife: 'I have had two long letters from Archy Archer in which he says all sorts of nice things about you. He is not quite satisfied with the Land Bill which he took so much trouble in helping to pass, [he] finds it does not suit Gracemere so well as expected.' Archie’s disquiet over some aspects of the Land Bill concerned the fragmented family ownership of various blocks on Gracemere, rather than being in one name. Palmer then relayed some news and gossip: 'Jamey Archer very nearly lost his life in trying to save the man of theirs [Robert Pacey] who was drowned in crossing cattle over the Fitzroy. Had he reached the man who sank when Jamey was within ten yards of him, no doubt he would have shared his fate. Among other work tomorrow I have to read the whole of the Judge's notes in Griffin's case ... Miss Ottley is going home in the Queen of the Colonies, she came up from [Moreton] Bay on Saturday with Sandy Archer and a party who were down and they tell me was quite jolly — heartless brute.'

Tragedy of a sinister kind touched Miss Ottley of 'Rocklands' near Rockhampton. She had been engaged to Thomas John Giffin, Gold Commissioner, who was to be hanged in Rockhampton Jail on 1 June 1868 for murdering the Clermont Gold Escort. After his arrest it was discovered that he was already married. Palmer's letter was written just three weeks before the hanging. Did his facetious 'heartless brute' refer to Sandy or Miss Ottley who was 'quite jolly'? Palmer's reference to the Land Bill was to have serious implications for the Archers. The Under Secretary for Public Works, W.A. Tully, telegraphed the Rockhampton Land Agent, George Ranken, on 11 September 1868: 'The Crown Law Officers having given an opinion to the effect that the consolidation of 12 runs [held by the Archers] is illegal, the proclamation of 26 August declaring the resumed half open for selection will be rescinded ...' Willie explained to Colin 'the bit of a muddle' they had got into in applying for consolidation: 'We applied the usual way to have the 12 blocks on this side of the river consolidated into one ... all went well, the run was consolidated & a description of the resumed portions published in the Government Gazette'. Then there was a dissolution of
parliament and a fresh election in which Archie was opposed by ‘a clever Brisbane Lawyer’ who made an election cry of ‘the Gracemere Job’. Brisbane and Sydney papers took it up, as well as the two Rockhampton papers. In Willie’s words:

The Opposition of course say we are twisting the Act to suit our own purposes — whereas as you may suppose we have gone to work in the most strictly legal way — & that any mistake … lies entirely with the Govt. in not calling at the proper time upon us to bring all the blocks under the same name (which we had powers of attorney to do). I should have liked you all to have heard Archie at a meeting in Rockhampton, indignantly demolishing the lies that have been told about us — and three days later he was again returned, by a large majority … thus vindicating himself and all connected with the station from the foul aspersions that have been put on our fair name. I, even I, got somewhat excited & was goaded into writing a few lines to the local paper — a thing I have never before done in my life …

This matter dragged on from 1868 until in 1874 the Archers exercised their democratic right to petition the government to rectify the situation. All seven remaining brothers in Britain, Norway and Queensland signed the petition. In 1875 Willie notified his intention to apply for an Act of Parliament in order to obtain pre-emptive rights over the leased portions on Gracemere on which there were 10,000 pounds worth of improvements. A Select Committee was appointed and Willie was called to give evidence. He presented an unsolicited petition from 126 free settlers in the district strongly supporting the Archers. ‘The Gracemere Pre-emptive Bill’ was tabled 30 June 1875. In moving its second reading, W.H. Buzacott, owner of Rockhampton’s first newspaper, affirmed that ‘the Archers would never stoop to anything that was not strictly honourable’. Arthur Palmer who had been Colonial Secretary in 1868 when Willie had offered to give up the land, staunchly added his support. If the Archers had not been thoroughly conscientious men, he said, they would have gone to some unscrupulous person and got the land without trouble. Instead ‘they came to the House openly and boldly, and said “There is our case; we ask to be allowed to select the land to save our improvements, and we are prepared to pay a higher price than other selectors; we pay in one year, they will have ten years”’. Charles would have been astonished to know that his ‘perfect paradise’ had become a political pawn.
At the beginning of this period a letter from Archie to Colin, 24 October 1868, reveals the social scene before it became ruffled by political controversy, and also includes news of Colin’s old friends the Jardines. John Jardine had been appointed Police Magistrate and Gold Commissioner at Rockhampton in 1861.

I took tea last night with the Jardines. Kate is now a young lady within 2 days of her 17th birthday & Charlie has grown into a fine looking strong boy. Alice who is much above both Frank & Johnnie in all good qualities is working hard in the roads department & will I think get on well. The other two are at Cape York which is one of Sir G. Bowen’s failures. The settlement of Somerset was formed there with the usual flourish of trumpets — was called the Singapore of the South & other stupid names & now after several years the settlement is inhabited by six white and three black policemen and F. & J. Jardine.

Lizzie Jardine is down in Brisbane waiting for Mac Henry to come and marry her, but alas he cometh not. Jardine was speaking to me about it last night. “I will have to go to Sydney after that fellow yet”, he said. You may fancy the look on his face & the grinding of his teeth as he spoke. There are lots of young fellows that I would rather have a row with than old Jardine. Mrs Jardine is as jolly as ever & time makes wonderfully little change in her looks. I suppose she, like other people, feels her troubles — but she certainly does not show it ...

Gracemere was not only a social haven for visitors during the 1860s, but also a school for young men gaining colonial experience — ‘swells’ as they were called at that time. David’s mentor, Edward Walker, sent his eldest sons to the colony after his remarriage in order to make space for another nine children. Three of these Walker boys were at Gracemere, Tom, Willy and Ted. The Archers and their book-keeper, H.W. Risien, sometimes ran out of patience with them. The very young Ted Walker after a couple of years at Gracemere confided in Jamie Archer in January 1863:

I remember some of your last warning words before I left Rockhampton were to advise me not to get spliced when I went down [to Melbourne] but you see fate willed that I should. I am now in rather an embarrassed state … being confoundedly “hard up” & upon sending a telegram to my Uncle William in Sydney to inform him of my marriage and asking for some funds … I received the following telegram which I give “verbatim”: “You have acted like a
Edward Walker later set up each of his sons with a property in New South Wales. Among the youngsters arriving at Gracemere in the 1860s was one who would prove himself dependable and remain there for the long haul — poor Jack’s son, Willie Minor. Educated at Laurvig Grammar School and ‘finished’ at Whitgift Grammar School in London under David’s sponsorship, Willie Minor’s troubled childhood appears to have left him without psychological scars. When about 18, he joined the swells at Gracemere about the time that Simon Jorgensen returned to Norway in 1865. Simon, like Colin, had come through his ten years in the colony with full marks for resourcefulness and dependability. David suspected, however, that Simon’s colonial experience ‘would stand him in little stead’ in obtaining a position in Norway. He was wrong. Simon later became a banker in Oslo. Shortly before departure from Gracemere he was entrusted with the inspection of Wolfang Station on the Peak Downs as a possible inland location for the sheep which failed to thrive in the humid coastal climate. His uncles declined the purchase on Simon’s advice that it was grossly over-priced. He was correct. If they had bought it the effects of the great economic slump and drought in the late 1860s could have bankrupted Archer & Co. as it did so many others.

A giant step towards ‘settling down’ at Gracemere was taken in the late 1860s when fencing commenced. This enabled them to dispense with the shepherding system carried out at the twenty-four separate lambing-stations. When the sheep were moved to Minnie Downs (600 km south west of Rockhampton) in 1873, the fenced paddocks were occupied by beef cattle. By 1874 fencing costs made up a high proportion in the value of improvements both at Gracemere and the Fifteen Mile Cattle Station. The total of 11,000 pounds in improvements included four houses for employees, several huts and a hotel in the township which had been established on Gracemere after the railway was built from Rockhampton to Westwood — opened in 1867. Quarterly station records were sent to David in London, now the company accountant. He was ‘astounded by a profit of 14,000 pounds in the three years to 1874’. Fortunately he was unaware that the ‘fat years’ were almost at an end.

Jamie had his ‘spell’ at home, 1863 to 1865, accompanied by Sandy on
a year’s leave from the bank. On returning to Gracemere it took Jamie a while to settle down. Life was dull compared with the delights of Norway he told Karen Sofie Wiborg in 1867. A letter dated 3 July 1871 to brother Willie, portrays change both in Jamie and Gracemere:

... You would be surprised if you could transport yourself onto the verandah and see the change that has taken place in the garden ... Cairns and his two boys are at work in it now, some half dozen of the orange trees have been entirely demolished and most of the others pruned down very close so that in consequence the garden looks quite bare. This has opened up the view to the mere ... looking lovely now, there is a deal more clear water than there used to be and it is perfectly covered with wild fowl of every description from the gigantic crane to the little dabchicks. I counted some 25 black swans on it the other day. I should think there would be several months delightful study for a naturalist even confining himself to the birds on and about the mere. At the present it is so calm that a pelican looks like this [sketch of pelican reflected upside down in the water] ...

Much to Sandy’s delight he had been transferred to Brisbane in 1864 as manager of Queensland head office of the Bank of New South Wales. In a different way he had proven himself as trustworthy and able in his profession as his brothers had in their various responsibilities to the family firm. Sandy needed, perhaps more than any of the others, a close relationship with his kin. This was made possible by Archie’s parliamentary duties in Brisbane which provided a bonus for each brother.

Archie returned to Europe in 1870 -via the United States of America to visit friends from his Polynesian years. When he left London for Norway in July he took with him David’s two eldest boys, Bobby and Jack, future custodians of Archer Brothers in Queensland. Archie was a great acquisition to his mother and sisters — ‘he dashes off Norwegian in a most unusual way’ according to David. ‘Fortunately for him he preserves to old age [he was then 50] the wish for all the pastimes of youth’. Archie spent long days sailing on the fjord in Colin’s Maggie along with other summer visitors and also enjoyed fishing at Bommestad.

Archie was preparing to leave for Gracemere in 1871 when the Queensland Government, with Arthur Palmer as Premier, appointed him as Agent General in London. As the greatest part of the population of Queensland was (and still is) centred on Brisbane, Archie’s appointment
was 'very unpopular in the south'. Not only in the south. W.H. Risien reported to Willie:

As I anticipated the acceptance of the Agency by Mr Archie has raised a great cry over all the country and he is by far most abused here at present. I send you a couple of slips from the "Bulletin" and the "Argus" by which you can form some opinion of the state of feeling here ... He would have been very foolish to refuse the 1000 pounds & those that are abusing him the most would have jumped at it for 500 pounds a year.

When the Central Queensland Separation Committee, of which Archie was a member, asked him to lead a delegation to Lord Knutsford he was placed in a difficult position. As Agent General he could not speak against his government's negative attitude to Separation, but as accredited spokesman for the Separation Committee he was bound to support the petition. He did the honourable thing, he resigned as Agent General. The Rockhampton Bulletin commented that in doing so he 'closed the mouths of his political foes'. Archie therefore sacrificed his own career to serve what he believed to be a righteous cause. If he felt any bitterness when Lord Knutsford indicated that he was 'decidedly opposed' to Separation, he did not express it publicly. His letter to the Bulletin stressed only the need for 'more unanimity than has hitherto been evinced'. Archie was in no hurry to return to Queensland after this debacle. Jamie confirmed the 'general satisfaction' in Rockhampton concerning Archie's actions: 'He is now lauded up to the skies by both papers which I hope will be gratifying to him', he commented to Willie.

The gradual changeover from sheep to cattle on Gracemere which had so alarmed David was a natural progression. In his experience wool was a viable commodity, cattle of no use except in bullock teams or boiling down for tallow. All this changed in the late 1860s — not only because sheep did not grow high-grade wool in the coastal country, but more importantly through the development of the meat canning process and establishment of Laurel Bank Meatworks at Rockhampton in 1868. Australian canned meats first reached British markets in 1867 and in 1870 Laurel Bank exported preserved meat to London. 'Australian preserved meat may now be looked on as an established item of commerce' commented David in that year, although he thought it had an unpleasant flavour. Tom also tried it and thought it contained too much fat. 'English
domestic servants’, he said, ‘look upon fresh killed meat as their due and will not as much as look at the Australian canned product’. Tom had obviously tried it out both upstairs and downstairs.

When David acquired a prospectus in 1870 from a new London based company, the Central Queensland Meat Preserving Co., which was about to build meatworks at Rockhampton, he had no confidence in ‘such a company managed from this side’. His prophecy which had implications for Tom was fulfilled within two years. The Lakes Creek Meatworks on the Fitzroy River just below Rockhampton began processing in June 1871, but with inexperienced English management it was soon in trouble. The London owners then persuaded ‘old colonist’ Thomas Archer to attempt a rescue operation and ‘strengthen the confidence of the colonial public’. And so Tom, Grace and family (who had been living in Scotland and London) accompanied brother Willie (who had been at Tolderodden) back to Rockhampton. They arrived in June 1872 and moved into the manager’s riverside residence at Koongal, near Lakes Creek. In 1873 David tried in vain to sell the company’s canned meats, not only in England, but also Norway.

The London directors’ faith in Thomas Archer’s ability to increase confidence among cattle producers was well founded, but the problem of unsaleable canned meat in Europe was beyond him. Sir Charles Nicholson, one of the wealthiest of the London directors, praised the product but it is unlikely that he ate it. Neither Nicholson’s propaganda nor Tom’s colonial experience could save the venture. As David knew, the London market was glutted with Australian canned meat. And in Central Queensland the high demand for cattle (a novel situation) had forced prices beyond an economic operational level for processors. Most damaging of all, some of the English directors resigned, among them Sir Charles Nicholson. ‘A case of a rat deserting a sinking ship’ was David’s final judgement, though he was obviously echoing Tom’s opinions. At the end of 1873 the works closed, not merely for the Christmas break, but forever as far as the original company was concerned. Archie, back at Gracemere again, was one of a committee appointed in 1874 in an attempt to form a local company to buy the works. So far his ‘settling down’ was rather ‘unsettled’.
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Tom’s life-long restlessness already had sent him exploring and gold-digging. Then, after marriage, he went back to Eidsvold, and in the early 1860s was farming in Scotland. Having failed in that, and at a loose end in London, the invitation in 1872 to manage the Lakes Creek Meatworks at Rockhampton was a godsend. The company’s collapse again left him without a settled occupation. And so it was that early in 1874 he and his family, with the addition of baby Frank born at Koongal, moved to Gracemere homestead. The slab house, occupied by bachelors since 1858, rang with the sound of children’s voices. Prior to this an eastern wing comprising two large and one small room, with verandahs on both sides, had been added to Colin’s original design.

It was a bonus for Willie Minor, now 26, to have several teenage cousins for company, but not for long. He had been a valued stockman at Gracemere since his arrival in 1865. When, in 1873, the family firm purchased Minnie Downs, near Tambo in south-west Queensland, Willie Minor was entrusted with droving the sheep, in several separate trips, from Gracemere to the outback station.

The Archers were fond of the diminutive in their use of first names. Tom’s and Grace’s youngsters enjoying life at Gracemere were Margaret (Maggie), Julia (Dooie), Charles (Cha), James (Jim), George, Grace (Gracie), Annie and Frank (Fa). Their eldest brother William who had been left at Edinburgh University when the family sailed for Australia was yet another young Willie.
Travelling out to Minnie Downs with 3,500 sheep in three flocks, Willie Minor wrote to Dooie on 24 June 1873 from his camp on the Dawson River. Dooie was then a bright fifteen year old, Maggie one year older. Dooie appears to have been young Willie Minor’s favourite, but it was the widowed Maggie he was to marry many years later.

Tom, now the father of nine children, was still prone to restlessness. ‘I am glad to hear that Tom is able to employ himself for the station’, wrote David to brother Willie, ‘he requires stated employment more than you, who can knock about & amuse yourself in the garden’. Tom had novel employment when twelve ‘Kanakas’ (South Sea Islanders) arrived at Gracemere en route to Minnie Downs. Each man had the letter ‘A’ branded on his trousers, bringing the comment from Risien that this was ‘uncommonly like a mild sort of slavery’. While the earliest imports of Island labour were ‘blackbirded’ against their wills, by the time these men reached Gracemere they were controlled by government regulations. They were indentured for three years and returned home at the end of the period, having been paid 6 pounds a year, housed and fed. Minnie Downs, in the arid interior, must have seemed like the face of the moon to these men from lush tropical islands such as Vanuatu (New Hebrides at that time). Tom’s literary son, young Willie, said of them in 1877: ‘The more I see of them, the more I am convinced that the outcry of “slavery” ... must be absurdly unjust. They are in the fullest sense of the word voluntary, paid labourers, and in the great majority of cases happy and contented labourers’. He saw the Islanders on Mackay sugar plantations, an environment more like their own than Minnie Downs.

As there were as yet no secondary schools in Rockhampton in 1875, Tom took Dooie and Maggie to Sydney ‘to put them into school for twelve months’. The younger children had lessons at home. In the following year their eldest brother, young Willie, arrived for a year-long visit to Gracemere, having spent four years at Edinburgh University. He would later become a noted drama critic and author in London, but at the age of twenty-one was an unpublished travel writer. His account of his experiences during his year away from Britain was not published until 1977, exactly a century after it was written. Read simply as a travel book, it remains a fine example of nineteenth century narrative, but in the light of his father’s and uncles’ frontier experiences, his description of the relaxed
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life-style at Gracemere shows just how far the first generation had travelled in time and space. Young Willie gained a better understanding of his father's early life when he accompanied him on a horseback trip of several weeks to the Peak Downs and Mackay.

Young Willie himself emerges from his narrative as a slightly pompous young intellectual. His father certainly thought he needed toughening up. While the ride to the Peak Downs had hardened his seat in the saddle, it was still not the real thing. Tom then sent young Willie out with five station hands more than 300 kilometres south to bring up a large mob of bullocks. They carried their supplies on two pack-horses and had two riding horses each. Young Willie admitted to no enthusiasm for 'muscular exercise', so this was scarcely the exciting adventure of his father's youth. His mother Grace Archer wrote to a friend:

When Mr Archer will be home I know not — he left about three weeks since on very short notice to inspect cattle south of Gladstone but he had no idea it would take so long & just when he had fixed on the cattle & telegraphed to send men & horses for them on comes the rain. The creeks are rising and mustering is impossible — another telegram comes, "Stop the men until further orders". The men had started two days earlier and one of them is our new chum Willie who thought he would try a turn at droving before leaving the colony. I wish now I had discouraged him but we had no idea the rainy season was upon us and we think he sticks too closely to his books so that a little roughing it in tolerable weather would not have been a bad thing. Now I fear men & horses must be stuck between swollen creeks & we have no means of hearing from them ...

Young Willie eventually returned alone. They had been delayed too long for him to try his hand at droving — so he said. He obviously inherited more genes from the bookish Morisons than the adventurous Archers. His travels in the bush made him even more determined for a career in literature and the theatre. While at Gracemere he reached a compromise — he would read for the English Bar 'to satisfy his parents by eating dinners and passing examinations, provided that his doing so did not seriously interfere with the work on which his heart was set ...

Tom's own sense of adventure was reborn in middle age, for while at Gracemere he spent five months riding from Rockhampton to the Flinders River which empties into the Gulf of Carpentaria, accompanied only by a groom. As in the days when his brothers teased him as 'Tom —
alias the great explorer', he slept under the stars unless forced by rain to pitch a tent. As an adolescent he had a dream of exploring the continent from Spencer Gulf to the Gulf of Carpentaria. While it was left for others to do this in one expedition, Tom had by degrees and over many years ridden all the way from the Blue Mountains in New South Wales to the Gulf of Carpentaria in northern Queensland. His adventure in the late 1870s was just the kind of activity which soothed his restless spirit.

Tom’s and Grace’s second son, Charles (Cha), was by this time attending school in Perth, Scotland. James (Jim) was at the Toowoomba Grammar School. When homesick he would find refuge with family friend James (Jamie) Walker who managed the Toowoomba branch of the Bank of New South Wales. He and his wife were close friends of both the Tom and Sandy Archers. Grace wrote to Jamie Walker in May 1878: ‘We are very glad … that our boy makes himself so many kind friends more especially your wife and yourself whose interest in him has reconciled him very much to being so far from home’. The family at Gracemere had just returned from Emu Park (Rockhampton’s favourite ‘watering place’) with their other six children. Grace’s letter to the Walkers continues:

We were all greatly pleased with Emu Park — our old folks had not expected very much and rather made an effort on account of the young ones but I rather think we enjoyed it quite as much as they — it is many years now since I have been at a bathing place but to me it appeared as if I had never been at one combining such charming bathing with such beautiful scenery — always excepting some places on the west coast of Scotland and even in this case the climate is with us here.

I found myself walking miles and climbing hills before I was even aware I had done anything unusual although a stroll to the orchard and back is looked upon as a rather fatiguing walk [at Gracemere]. I did thoroughly enjoy the bathing and the young girls and I hardly ever missed our two bathes a day, the big girls [Maggie and Dooie] were not at all so enthusiastic about it, but enjoyed fishing and oystering and expeditions from which they returned in a most dilapidated condition, well saturated with briny elements — as the penny a liners would say. It was a great mistake that we did not remain another fortnight … but we thought we must be at home to receive Archie, and the very morning we returned we had the pleasure of hearing that he would have to go into quarantine …

Grace in referring to herself and Tom as ‘old folk’ conceals the fact that the youngest of their nine children, Rockhampton-born Frank (Fa), was
only four years old. Nothing demonstrates the close personal link between the Archers and the Jamie Walkers as a letter dictated by this little boy in January 1878 to ‘Mr Walker’:

Thank you for those nine-pins. Fa is very glad. Fa got a box of bricks from Mama and papa. Fa got a sore foot. Jim does play the piano to Fa & he gives Fa lollies too. Fa can play Twinkle Twinkle and Hot Cross Buns. Fa’s brother you know. Gracie & Annie play with Fa. Fa likes Gracie best & Fa likes Annie too. Fa is a coward, he can’t swim yet, but he stands on the top step and Papa pours water on him. Gracie swims right out at the post. Fa can work upon the swing and Gracie can too. Fa can sing Lill’s a Lady and Ten Thousand Miles Away. Have you any little boys at Toowoomba? Are you coming here?

Tom’s decision towards the end of 1879 to return to England, ostensibly was taken for the sake of his children’s future, but also because there was no valid occupation for him at Gracemere. The second generation of Archers were about to be groomed for management. David’s Robert (Bob to the family), trained in book-keeping, was due to arrive in 1880, his brother Jack also. With Archie at Gracemere and Jamie at Minnie Downs, trying to economise because of a slump in station profits, a large family at the homestead made this difficult. But there was another reason for Tom’s decision, though not a new one as Jamie told Sandy in the previous year: ‘Tom is as ever on the lookout for pastures new. I have left it to him to do as he thinks proper having stuck up for this place [Minnie Downs] as far as I dare without taking too much responsibility on myself’. In November 1879 Tom set off on a round of farewell visits to David Morison (Grace’s brother) in Melbourne, the Thomas Walkers at Yaralla (Sydney) where Jamie Walker’s unmarried sister Kate was then a guest. She and her sister lived near the David Archers in Croydon (London) and were their close friends. She took a great interest in the young Archers and her chatty letters to her brother Jamie in Australia often provide a running commentary on their movements.

In Brisbane Tom farewelled Sandy and Minnie (MacKenzie), married in 1871. He then returned to Gracemere for Christmas where they were joined by Jamie and Willie Minor ‘who came in from up country’ (Minnie Downs) to say goodbye. Sandy commented to David: ‘Gracemere will be bachelors’ hall again but not the bachelors’ hall of former times, though I daresay Archie’s old friends, male and female, will take pity and quarter
themselves on him now & then'. As for Tom’s family, Maggie and Dooie did not like the idea of returning to Europe, he said, ‘they have come to look upon Gracemere and Rockhampton as home’.

The family sailed south from Keppel Bay aboard the Scottish Knight on 7 January 1880. On the following evening, near the northern tip of Fraser Island, the vessel grazed the bottom and sprung a leak. Next morning the captain told Tom that there was six feet of water in the hold. Tom urged him to ‘to put about for land’, which he did, but the water had reached the cargo of wool (some of it from Gracemere) causing the ship to list. As they approached Bustard Head 50 kilometres southeast of Gladstone with guns firing and distress signals displayed ‘the ship was in a pitiable plight, rolling helplessly from side to side and shipping tons of green water over the rail whenever her side was turned towards the sea’, Tom later wrote in a graphic account of events. No pilot was available so on they rolled to Rodds Bay in attempting to reach Port Curtis Harbour. Tom was unhappy with the captain’s decision as the seas were now lapping the decks on each roll of the ship. He accepted the captain’s offer to launch a lifeboat, crewed by three men, to take the Archer family and some others ashore at Rodds Bay.

As the Scottish Knight ran before a gale towards Gatcombe Head, the leaky lifeboat and its terrified passengers were driven further out to sea. With Tom at the tiller and the three exhausted men rowing for some hours they gradually neared the shore. Then the mast smashed down on top of Jim and George, knocking out one of George’s teeth. After a marathon struggle they eventually ran ashore, the men jumping overboard to beach the boat. One by one Tom carried Grace, Maggie, Dooie and the younger children ashore. There in a makeshift camp and on very short rations they spent nineteen hours before being picked up. News of the wreck was telegraphed from Gladstone to Rockhampton, prompting Archie and Jamie to find means of reaching the coast as quickly as possible. Meantime the pilot ship picked up the castaways and from that vessel Archie and Jamie in Polly rescued the family and then retrieved their luggage from the Scottish Knight which had run aground in the mouth of the Boyne River. They then returned to Keppel Bay, boarded the Lady Bowen and returned to Rockhampton just one week after departure. It was a very
bedraggled but thankful family who entered Gracemere homestead soon afterwards.

All Tom's adventures as a young explorer faded into insignificance compared with this near escape from death. On this occasion he was also responsible for Grace and the children. As a complete anti-climax to all the farewells, they were obliged to remain at Gracemere for another four weeks as Tom had to give evidence at the inquiry in Rockhampton. They finally left on 12 February to join the Duke of Edinburgh in Brisbane, reaching England in May to learn of the death of Tom's mother at Tolderodden. More than forty years earlier he had thought his heart would break as he faced years of separation from parents and home, now he would never see Julia again.
By the time the Tom Archers left Gracemere in 1880, Willie senior — a bachelor in his sixties — already had plans to retire to Norway. It is probable that during the six years enlivenment that the children brought to the homestead, Willie would have been unamused by little Frank’s winning ways or by noisy children’s games. He was notoriously critical, not so much of children, but their parents’ spoiling of them. Even Grace admitted that Frank could always get his own way with her. Willie, however, had other things on his mind. In 1874–75 he was plunged into the serious problems concerning Gracemere and ultimately the ‘Gracemere Bill’. Even before this he was becoming weary of station management, escaping as often as he could to Sydney where he usually stayed at Yaralla with Thomas Walker and his daughter Eadith (later, Dame Eadith Walker, a noted philanthropist.) In 1871 and again in 1877 he took long holidays in Norway. Much more responsibility was now on the shoulders of Jamie.

Jamie was left wholly in charge during brother Willie’s earlier absence, recording in his diary on 14 February 1871: ‘... my reign commences from today. Do not feel cheerful at the prospect’. His promotion included occupation of William’s bedroom, the best and airiest in the house. Even so, he rather hated leaving the room he had occupied since 1859. His letters home continued to be a mix of personal and station affairs, from visitors arriving from Rockhampton — by train since 1867 — to the ‘terrible downcome in the sheep capital’ when 50 went missing on Lion
Mountain. He already exuded a world-weariness towards Rockhampton social life, as in a letter to brother Willie on 3 July 1871: 'The great social event of the month has been Miss Kate's wedding [Jardine] which everybody seems to think went off splendidly. To me it seemed the greatest piece of vanity I have ever witnessed. Mrs and Miss Coburn came up for the occasion and Miss Jardine spent a couple of days here last week.'

Willie perhaps would have been more interested in the latest town scandal — a daytime street fight between two leading citizens, Bourcicault of the *Northern Argus* and Knox D'Arcy, a lawyer and later millionaire from Mount Morgan gold. 'Bourcicault got the worst of it, having got his eyes converted from their pristine blue to a shade of beautiful black'.

As already indicated, both Jamie and Willie Minor were involved in Minnie Downs Station. This was sheep country 600 kilometres south west of Rockhampton which was named for Sandy's bride. While Australian husbands or sweethearts occasionally named properties for their ladies, the Archer bachelors liked to honour the girls their brothers married.

As Jamie's chief interest at Gracemere had been the two beef cattle stud herds, he was not overly enthusiastic about the sheep on Minnie Downs. And so between 1876 and 1880 over 3,000 head of cattle were brought there from Gracemere. During his first two years on the western station he lived in the old Elizabeth Creek homestead (the station's original name). It comprised one large room with timber slab walls, stone flagged floors and thatched roof. There was a verandah on one side, a store room and a separate kitchen. Furniture was as basic as that at Durundur or Waroon-gundie thirty years earlier — half a dozen three-legged stools, the boss's chair and a kurrajong table. The new house built in 1877 was not much better. The walls were round gidgee timber laid horizontally between uprights. Only the dining-room had a floor. While Gracemere itself is of slab construction, its design, size and finish made it 'worthy of a Scottish gentleman'.

Of much greater significance at Minnie Downs were the two decrepit old mules which died there in that year (1877). They had been found on the property when Berkelman & Lambert stocked the run in 1863 and were believed to have been survivors from Leichhardt's fatal expedition of 1848. Local Aborigines told Berkelman that Leichhardt died while the party camped beside a waterhole in Elizabeth Creek and that his com-
companions were murdered while camping on Myall Creek, both included in the Minnie Downs lease. Archibald Meston investigated this claim about 1900 and published his findings, but like so many others, they could not be proven.

Willie’s and Jamie’s decision to sell the western property after only nine years was made without family consultation. The run comprising almost 7,000 square miles and stocked with 29,000 sheep, 6,000 cattle and 200 horses was sold to Irving & Co. in 1882 for 63,000 pounds. David was disgusted, arguing that they had ‘parted with the portion of the property that pays [Minnie Downs] and retained that which does not pay — or at all events pays very little [Gracemere]’. The sale was indeed an error of judgement made after three very dry seasons. The Gracemere sheep after only two seasons at Minnie Downs had cut 2 pounds weight extra wool, and the cattle also had done well. By the early 1880s there was only Jamie, of the original partners, in Queensland. In his mid fifties, he was growing tired of the life, while Willie already preferred to live in Norway. Archie returned again to Gracemere in 1878, but his life was concerned with parliament, Sandy’s with banking. Jack’s Willie Minor was in those years trying to grow sugar at Mackay and David’s sons, Bob and Jack, who joined the firm in 1880, were still novices. David himself realised that the old ways of running the family firm were no longer good enough.

As a result of the Minnie Downs sale, 30,000 pounds was remitted to those family members who had made loans to the firm. While this pleased David, he was not sure ‘that it is desirable to lock up one’s capital in land’. Never having seen Gracemere he had absolutely no sentimental attachment to it and, as a London business man, he had a different attitude to capital from that in his Durundur days. It was obvious by 1882 that Willie would never return to Queensland for more than a visit; he could no longer stand the climate. He used 3,500 pounds of his share of the sale money to purchase from the Walkers their farm and fishing lodge at Horstad in northern Norway where he then spent the summers. David felt that the future of Gracemere depended upon Jamie’s willingness to return as manager with young Robert as second in command. While Jamie had arrived on holiday from the colony ‘in good settle’, events were shaping up which would affect his destiny and that of Gracemere.

While the future of Charlie’s ‘perfect paradise’ hung in the balance,
Archie again was drawn into politics. When he returned in 1878 he was quarantined along with crew and passengers of the liner at Peel Island near the mouth of the Brisbane River — much to Grace's dismay, having cut their Emu Park holiday short in order to welcome him. His old friend Arthur Palmer went down in his yacht to talk with Archie and to persuade him to stand for the seat of Blackall — an electorate adjoining Rockhampton. When PE MacDonald who had been Member for Blackall for five years declined re-nomination, Archibald Archer was nominated and elected. He held the seat from 28 November 1878 to April 1886. During this time he held office as Colonial Treasurer and Secretary for Public Instruction from January 1882 to November 1883.

Archie had told his electioneering meeting in 1878 that he 'would not become the slavish follower of any government' and that he would oppose any move to interfere with the present system of free education. Unlike so many politicians, he kept his promise. In those days before political parties (in the modern sense) individual members had to be strong to withstand lobbying on matters they opposed. Archie soon built up a reputation as 'a very tolerant man of even temper but of strong will and a very good speaker …' In January 1886 he announced his intention to resign the seat of Blackall in order to visit his family in Norway and Britain. But he had not finished with Queensland politics and was, for a second time, to play a leading role in yet another bid for central separation. Meantime Gracemere itself was in the hands of the second generation, with a little help from the pioneering uncles.
Archie might have been considered by Annie Boyce in 1861 to be 'the clever one' among the brothers at Gracemere, but this accolade was bestowed on Sandy very early in his life by parents and Walker relatives. Unlike his eight brothers he was never enrolled at Laurvig Grammar School, but from the age of eleven lived with his Aunt Annie Walker in Perth and attended school there from 1839. Two years later his uncle, Colonel Archibald Walker, told the Australians that their young brother 'was giving much satisfaction'. Such high praise from the stern Archibald led Willie to comment to his mother that he feared Sandy would 'become the genius of the family — I say fear because I agree with you that geniuses in a family are not desirable …'!

Sandy was trained in accounting and business management and eventually went to work in the office of J. & R. Morison, lawyers and leading citizens of Perth. It was through this connection that Tom, on his return from the Californian goldfields in 1852, met and fell in love with Grace Morison. Hearing Tom's stories of his adventures as a gold digger made Sandy restless and discontented with his office work. He was then 24 and ripe for change. He accompanied Tom to Tolderodden to break the news of his imminent departure for the Australian diggings, news of which had set much of Europe aflame. Grace's brother, David Morison, joined him and they reached Melbourne in October 1852.
Sandy found Melbourne in ‘a most astonishing state’ with property and living costs inflated by hundreds of per cent. A letter awaited him from a Scottish acquaintance, a banker named Larnach, offering him a position in the Bank of Australia on a salary of 175 pounds a year — much higher than the average wage. Sandy declined. As he told his mother, he came to Victoria in the hope of making a living ‘by some other means than quill driving’. Sandy and David Morison, on the advice of ‘people they adjudged to be knowledgeable’ decided they could not do better than ‘take a turn at the Diggings during the summer months’. They teamed up with three Scottish shipmates from the Emily and set out like so many others to make their fortunes. Sandy, like his older brothers, had a dream of returning to Tolderodden with sufficient money to ensure a comfortable old age for his parents.²

The party set out from Melbourne for a new field called the Ovens ‘about 180 miles up the Sydney Road’. The Ovens (Beechworth) provided Sandy with a good living, not as a digger but as a gold buyer for the Bank of New South Wales. Like so many others, he found no fortune with his pick and shovel, and by 1853 was quill driving again. Willie, visiting Sydney, heard that his brother was ‘weekly sending down satisfactory quantities of gold … proof that he is in the land of the living’.³ As an accountant Sandy was on a salary of 300 pounds a year. He was appointed manager of the bank’s new branch at Kyneton, about 75 kilometres northwest of Melbourne, on the road to Bendigo, in 1854, exchanging his tent on the goldfields for a solid, two-storey stone building. He lived in the comfortable quarters above the banking chamber. His ability is confirmed by his managerial appointment at the age of twenty-six. William Walker, the bank’s inspector, told Willie that Sandy had ‘one of the most comfortable berths in the district, away from all the turmoil of the diggings — in a rising agricultural community, where he is highly appreciated …’ He promised to use his influence to get Sandy’s removal to Ipswich or Brisbane.⁴ Sandy had to wait another ten years for this.

While Sandy was settling into his responsibilities at Kyneton, his brothers in the same continent were literally ‘a thousand miles away’. He acutely felt his isolation from family. From time to time he suffered fits of depression in which he felt inclined ‘to chuck it up’ — that is, banking. This disturbed David in particular whose years of virtual subsistence-living
made him look upon a fixed salary as a luxury not to be taken lightly. Willie was a little more understanding. He advised Sandy that if he could not content himself ‘to out it and come on here’.\(^5\) That Sandy did not ‘out it’ was providential for his future career.

As the brothers became more prosperous, they each spent some time at Kyneton with Sandy. Then in 1861 the Bank sent him north to open a branch in Rockhampton. Staying with Willie, Archie, Colin, Jamie and Simon at Gracemere while attending to business in the town on weekdays, sailing and sketching at weekends restored his low spirits. His sketches of the homestead and garden, also work-place activities around the station, have survived. His sketches and scenes at Keppel Bay, The Narrows and Port Curtis Harbour possibly gave him greatest pleasure, because they involved sailing. His classic water-colour painting of *Ellida* sailing in The Narrows was created at this time when he was about 33. But when it came time to leave Gracemere, accompanied as far as Melbourne by Colin returning to Norway, he found it hard. ‘Poor Sandy has just said goodbye — he has enjoyed his stay so much and leaves with a heavy heart — he still looks forward to seeing you all about twelve months hence’, Willie told his mother.\(^6\) Sandy’s salary was raised on 1 January 1863 to 700 pounds per annum, and the bank granted him twelve months leave of absence. His joy was unbounded. He and Jamie (returning for his first spell home) travelled together — two brothers, age 35 and 27 — and by April were enjoying themselves in Scotland along with Colin and Jane Ann before sailing for Norway.

It was a never-to-be-forgotten summer. When David arrived at Tolderodden for his annual summer holiday he found that his mother was already at Sandefjord ‘taking the waters’, but the house was full of guests and visiting brothers. Tom, Sandy, Colin, their friends ‘Hobby’ Elliot and his sister were all there as well as Kate. After giving David a noisy welcome, most of the party set out for a trip to northern Norway. Sandy later sent David an account of it:

... after Tom and his party left the main body at Elsted the main column continued its advance up Gulbrandsdal then thro' Romsdal and on to Molde (our extreme north). Here we took steamer to Bergen where the party was further reduced by the secession of Mr & Miss Elliot who proceeded by sea to Christiania ... The party now consisted of Kate, Colin, Jamie and self and it was only then that the real hard work commenced. We scrambled up
Hardangerfjord and spent about a week there and Skeggedal. Hence we worked our way by land and water to Sognefjord and at Laerdalsørn we bade farewell to the fjords and fairly commenced our homeward progress and kept together to Hoksund near Drammen where Colin and Kate took the steamer home, leaving Jamie and me to go to Riukan via Kongsberg and that was the last grand sight we saw ... the kind not to be forgotten ...

Sandy spent his final two months at Tolderodden, fishing, sketching and painting. As the time drew near for his departure on the last steamer before the harbour froze, both he and his mother became 'low spirited'. His father William was now failing in mind and body. After a short time with David and family in London, he was back in Kyneton by March 1864. After spending nine months in Norway he was able to bring Archie up to date with contemporary events, such as the war then being fought between Denmark and Sweden. Having expressed the opinion that 'a general scrimmage is the only thing that will bring Europe to her senses again', he referred to the Italian conspiracy against Napoleon. 'I wonder what will be the next episode in French history', he mused. He received his answer a mere six years later.

Fresh from Tolderodden's garden, he began forming stone-walled walks in the bank garden. He then planted a row of 'native and other trees' on either side — 'all very rough & therefore picturesque & very pleasant in the doing. It is my colonial substitute for fishing'. Sandy did not see his garden mature. He was appointed manager of the Brisbane Bank of New South Wales (Head Office) in 1864 and in 1867 was appointed as its Queensland Inspector as well. His promotion was agreeable in a personal sense, but extremely stressful in its business pressures, especially during the economic recession; which affected both government and private enterprise so drastically in 1866–67.

Away from the cares of work, Sandy's favourite recreations were sketching and sailing — sometimes the two combined as at Rockhampton in 1861. Within six months of arriving in Brisbane, he wrote a twenty page diary-letter to David's eldest child, Julia Alice (then nicknamed 'Dooley' but for most of her life 'Sissie'). He commenced this on 30 April 1865 and completed it during May:

As I think it would amuse papa I will tell you something about a trip four of us took to the Bay a few days ago when we were very near some places well
known to him when he lived here many years ago ... it is not only school boys and girls who are fond of holidays — some old people like myself [37] enjoy them nearly as much as when we were boys ...

In a four-oared gig fitted with two small sails they spent four days sailing and rowing down river and across Moreton Bay to Bribie Island. Almost every page of Sandy’s detailed description includes illustrations — some superimposed on the narrative, others a full or half page. His sketches feature a sailing race (which they won), campsites at Sandgate, Redcliffe and two on Bribie Island. There is a delightful and amusing self-portrait of Sandy, with arms akimbo, confronted by a huge kangaroo. The caption reads: ‘Intense astonishment of uncle Sandy when the big kangaroo hopped round the corner’. He told ‘Dooley’ that it was not quite as big as it looks in the picture which would make it ‘about 17 feet high’.

A full-page landscape reveals Sandy sketching the Glasshouse Mountains (Durundur was in their vicinity) from a muddy, mangrove shore, with the boat moored by a very long rope. He compared the mud there with that at Sandefjord which was noted for its curative properties. The final scene shows the Bay at the river’s mouth with a dredge at work, several Black Ball liners (immigrant ships) and the Moreton Island lightship. ‘This is the end of our great trip to Bribie and I shall not be sorry to have another’, concluded the man who never lost his boyish delight in holiday excursions — nor in sketching people and places visited.

Not only did Sandy see the Gracemere brothers from time to time, especially after Archie entered parliament, but there were also family friends in Brisbane such as the Arthur Palmers. And as later events confirmed, he was often a visitor to the home of the Premier, Robert Ramsay MacKenzie, where he fell in love with the eldest daughter Mary Louisa, always known as Minnie. Archie’s opinion of MacKenzie — the first Colonial Treasurer in the Queensland Government — was not high. Writing to Palmer in July 1868 Archie commented: ‘Now I feel the MacKenzie Govt. without you would not last a week after the House met, and I daresay Mac knows as much himself ... MacKenzie of course I have long had a down on as a man without either judgement or decision ...’

MacKenzie had arrived in the Colony in 1832 as a 21 year old. He was a younger son of Sir George Steuart MacKenzie. His father financed him in a New England property, but he lost this in the depression of 1843.
Arriving in Brisbane soon after, he married Louisa Alexandrina, daughter of Richard Jones, in 1846. He had also invested in ten pastoral blocks in the Burnett District and, later, in the Leichhardt Pastoral District, but was an absentee squatter. He entered Queensland politics in 1860 and was appointed Colonial Treasurer in the first parliament. He served as Premier from 1867 until resignation in 1869. During these years the family lived at 'Kinellan' in Brisbane. Archie's opinion of him as Premier is confirmed by Bernays, Queensland's parliamentary historian: 'His best friend would not accuse MacKenzie of mental brilliance, but he was a man of high character and genial disposition …'\(^{11}\)

Sandy's feelings, however, were not politically motivated. Robert MacKenzie unexpectedly inherited a baronetcy when his eldest brother died childless in 1869. Sir Robert left with his family to live at the family estate, Coul, Scotland. When Archie was in Britain in 1870, he and Tom 'went up to Coul together where we found Sir Robert settled for good. It is a beautiful estate with lots of fishing & shooting … We found all the family well & Sir Robert busy making improvements particularly in the gardens which are very fine …'\(^{12}\) The eleventh baronet no longer frustrated Archie's political ambitions. It seems that at that time Sandy conducted his courtship of Minnie MacKenzie by letter for in August 1871 David had news:

Sandy has sent her a proposal of marriage & … she has accepted him with the consent of her parents. I haven't seen Miss MacKenzie but everyone speaks so well of her that I doubt not the marriage will be a great gratification to Mother & all concerned — for we had an idea that something of this sort was necessary to fill up the blank Miss MacKenzie's departure from Brisbane had occasioned.\(^{13}\)

One of fate's ironies: Minnie's mother, Lady Louisa Alexandrina MacKenzie, was the same Miss Jones Tom had imagined himself falling in love with in 1846.

Sandy must have been fairly confident of Minnie's response to his proposal, for in the previous year he had commissioned Colin to build him a small boat to be called *Nina of Coul*. After their marriage at Coul in 1871, Sandy took his bride to Tolderodden where she met not only the Norwegian Archers, Jørgensens and Arentz's, but also Tom and some of his family, David and some of his, also Archie and Jamie — all on summer
holidays. David revealed that all the women were 'tremendously excited' by Sandy's marriage, and that Minnie seemed 'altogether devoted to Sandy'.

Soon after this the couple left for London and after a week with David and Susan, sailed for Australia in the P&O liner Mongolia on 7 September. Brisbane-born Minnie was returning to a familiar social scene, but determined to be with Sandy as much as possible. She planned to accompany him as far as Gracemere and remain there while he inspected branches in the far north.

Sandy and Minnie lived at first in the Brisbane bank premises, a two-storey colonial style house with banking chamber at street level and residence upstairs. Now that the manager was a married man it was 'prettied up with wall-paper' and a garden established which became Minnie's particular delight. Sandy confided in Colin just weeks after their return that he did not miss the old bachelor days 'as much as might have been expected in such an old fogie'. He was then forty-one. Minnie was not 'straightlaced about the proprieties' and so he could 'roam about the premises pretty much as he liked — even the old pipe is not kicked out of doors'. Sandy had found release for his sometimes troubled spirit in domestic comfort:

Minnie is sitting opposite writing away for bare life as is her natural way — her fingers covered with ink — & she herself looking better & stronger than ever. We have just been out to the garden moistening the parched throats of some of the plants. We have lately started bees & Minnie says she is going to make 70 pounds a year out of them!

Sandy was more reconciled to 'quill driving', at least for the time being. As for Minnie, she continued for the rest of her life to write 'for bare life'. Her letters are seldom dated with anything more than the day of the week and her rapid writing is extremely difficult to read. Minnie was a most caring person, most of all for Sandy, but also anyone connected by relationship or friendship. This is evident in her letter in 1878 to J.T. (Jamie) Walker, then manager of the Toowoomba branch, but appointed Assistant Inspector for Queensland later that year. Minnie's concern on this occasion was for Tom and Grace's son Jim, then attending the Toowoomba Grammar School:
We hear such dreadful accounts of the fever in Toowoomba that we are feeling very anxious about Jun — if you think he seems at any risk, & that it would be a wise precaution, please send him down here at once, I could manage somehow to let him keep up his lessons. I have said nothing to his people [at Gracemere] about it as I did not want to frighten them — we leave it to you to do whatever you think best.  

They were by this time living in their own home, ‘Arley’, overlooking the Brisbane River at Toowong (site of the ABC TV studios in the 1990s). Archie’s return to Queensland in that year provided another opportunity for Minnie’s kindness and for Sandy to ponder the nature of Queensland politics. When Archie was quarantined at Peel Island, Minnie sent him ‘potted meat, tobacco, grog, mosquito nets, books, papers, fishing tackle etc.’ The tobacco and grog were Sandy’s contributions. He thought it would be ‘a great treat to see the dear old fellow again’, but as he did not much care about politics, he hoped Archie would not stand again. But as he told his mother on this occasion:

... it was very different when he was a MP before — I think the House has degenerated much in tone since then, & such a congenial measure as the Crown Lands Act of 1868 with which Archie’s name is always associated, can never come in his way again. I daresay William remembers how proud we both felt that night Archie made his maiden speech — one does not hear speeches like that nowadays here ...  

Archie had not finished with politics, nor would he until 1896. Meantime Sandy and Minnie in true Archer fashion set about planning and making the garden at Arley in its lovely river setting. ‘Our magnum opus here, the main terrace, is nearly finished’, he told David in 1879. They had planted trees and landscaped the garden down to the river. The death of his mother Julia Archer in April 1880 took Sandy’s thoughts back to the garden which had been the pattern for Gracemere, and now for Arley. When Sandy took a year’s leave in 1883 on half pay and they spent most of the summer in Norway, ‘old Odden’ was not quite the same. The ‘magnetic pole’ was missing so there was no need to spend most of the time in Larvik.

Sandy and Minnie, accompanied by Julia Arentz, her daughter, and one of Colin’s daughters, set out for an extended holiday in northern Norway. The most significant collection of Sandy’s water-colours were created at
this time. They went first to the Lofoten Islands beyond the Arctic Circle. There they saw ‘the midnight sun and much grand scenery’. They spent six weeks at Willie’s fishing lodge at Horstad — just south of the Arctic Circle. Norwegian and Scottish relatives joined them there. Sandy was able to sketch and paint to his heart’s content. Minnie was in her element with Norway’s woods and flowers — ‘many of which she has painted … with her paint box and book on her lap’. The only thing that hampered her was a broken collar-bone which took three weeks to knit. Sandy told Jamie Walker, acting manager at Brisbane, that they were completely shut off from the outside ‘world and a glorious time we had of it’.  

It was during this holiday shared also with Jamie and Archie, that Sandy and Minnie compiled a sketch album titled, *All on a Summer’s Day*. Sandy’s sketches and paintings of scenes around Tolderodden and at Horstad were complemented by Jamie’s verse narrative. Minnie decorated each page with dried flowers and leaves, while Archie ‘laid down the law’. A photograph of the four forms the frontispiece:

ARCHIE SANDY JAMIE
THE LEGISLATOR THE ILLUSTRATOR THE AUTHOR
MINNIE
THE WREATHMAKER

This most memorable holiday ended all too soon. They spent a week with Minnie’s sister in Brighton, England, and found it ‘too civilised’. Worse still, they arrived back to a hot and dry Brisbane on 31 January 1884, ‘rather a contrast’ to the Arctic Circle.

Minnie’s over-protection of Sandy must sometimes have irked him, but he tried to save her from worry whenever possible. On one occasion he asked nephew Robert (at Gracemere) not to disappoint his aunt — ‘It is her nature to worry where her affections are much concerned and this is one of her worries just now’. Sandy himself, so often over-worked, was her chief worry. J.T. (Jamie) Walker — whose family was not related to the Archers, but both were related to Dame Eadith Walker of Yarra — became Sandy’s assistant. Minnie frequently appealed to him, as in September 1885:

I want to beg you to urge Mr Archer not to go in before Monday if he should want to — I think he has had a lesson but the minute he feels better he thinks he must go to work — he has had 3 relapses of his fever — he was really very ill last Friday — his temperature 103 [degrees Fahrenheit] & quite wandering
Two years later when Sandy had bronchitis after suffering pleurisy ‘twice in six weeks while he was so over worked’, Minnie confided in Walker: ‘I am in such a state of despair about him (on the sly) I write to ask if you would explain to Mr Miller for me …’ She was sure the bank did not want Sandy to sacrifice his life, but in his present low-spirited state ‘with nothing but worry’ she thought she must make him resign. ‘I feel I can’t see him killing himself, and it’s killing me too’. Minnie’s post-script to this letter confirms historical opinions concerning pressures on bankers in the 1880s: ‘I am in such a fright that they will be asking Sandy why work is not done & then it’s all up with him! lately one remark was made and you should have seen him worry …’. Minnie’s letters to Walker ‘dashed off for bare life’, with their under-linings and exclamation marks, reveal a woman at breaking point as a result of her husband being at breaking point.

The break almost occurred when Sandy was called to give evidence in the Maryborough Court. Sandy thought he had testified so badly that the bank would lose the case and he would be responsible. He walked up and down their hotel room all night ‘beating his breast and talking to himself’. But it all ended well and Minnie decided she would ‘not make him resign yet awhile’. Sandy himself was embarrassed by Minnie’s nervous reactions to his troubles. On one occasion he apologised to Jamie Walker for putting him to so much trouble: ‘It all arises from my dear wife’s over anxiety about me. There is no getting away from the fact, however, that I am getting old and less able to throw off the various ailments that the flesh is heir to’.

These were the low points in their lives together. There was no time for Sandy to go sailing or for Minnie to gather ferns. At such times Horstad, where they were ‘completely shut off from the outside world’ was only a dream. But in the midst of all the over-work, illnesses and worries, Arley retained its hospitable reputation. Visits from relatives and friends from afar, afternoon teas and evening parties there were all part of Brisbane’s social life. House guests sometimes stayed for many weeks. David’s eldest daughter, the ‘Dooley’ of Sandy’s early illustrated letter, who had long been ‘Sissie’ to the extended family, arrived for a visit in January 1887. She had been chaperoned on the voyage out by her Uncle Willie. Sissie’s diary reveals that in her first week at Arley, Lady O’Connell and Miss Grant
came to tea, Mr Jamie Walker called and his English niece, Nellie Bell, visited also. Sissie had the 'loveliest moonlight row' on the river, she made calls with her aunt on Mrs Thomas Jones and Mrs Ferriter (Minnie's aunts) and attended a polo match with Mrs Jamie Walker and Nellie Bell. And all this in one of the hottest, steamiest months in Queensland.

In later weeks there were picnics on 'One Tree Hill' (Mount Coot-tha), tea with a variety of people from Lady O'Connell to Archdeacon Jones, visits to the Botanical Gardens and the Acclimatisation Gardens at Bowen Park. And on Sunday 13 February, 'a lovely, brilliant, dewy, foggy morning ... Uncle Sandy and Aunt Minnie & I [had] a lovely sail ... Fire flies in the evening!' At Arley evening visitors were 'in raptures' over the new piano, but to Uncle Sandy it was 'an infernal machine'. At a farewell party for Sissie, 'Aunt Minnie looked sweet'. On 5 March Sissie sailed in the coastal steamer *Barcoo* for Rockhampton. She spent much of that year with her brothers Bob at Gracemere and Jack at their recently acquired property Torsdale in the Callide Valley.

When Jamie and Janette Walker moved to Sydney in 1887, both Minnie and Sandy were deprived of their key support. The long friendship with this unrelated branch of the Walker family had begun with Jamie's time at the Rockhampton bank, 1862–66. Gracemere had been a second home to him, and he later named his second son Alexander as a compliment to Sandy. In 1885 Jamie Walker became the first General Manager of the Royal Bank of Queensland, but resigned in the following year, on the death of the wealthy Thomas Walker of Yaralla, to manage the Trusteeship. Sandy, also related to the Yaralla Walkers, was appointed a trustee, but had some reservations as he told Jamie Walker: 'With your help I must hope to be able to go through the duties of that important office without any blunder'. He obviously believed his mental powers were failing as well as his physical strength.

Walker's removal to Sydney led to a resumption of his and his family's long association with the Bank of New South Wales. He was a director, 1888–1922 and President from 1898 until elected a Senator of the first Commonwealth Parliament in 1901. Descendants of both the Walker and Archer families remain friends to this day.

When Sandy, now 60, applied for a year's leave in 1890, another of fate's ironies occurred. Minnie insisted that they should return to Europe via
the Torres Strait on RMS Quetta in February 1890, in order to call at Gracemere to see Robert's and Daisy's first child, Joan Marie, the first Archer born in the homestead. Sandy had again been suffering from 'that horrible depression' which so frightened Minnie. Sandy's leave was granted, the Bank inspections completed, and their passages booked when, shortly before departure, the death of 'Mr Little ... nearly stopped us from going for a year'. (The significance of Little's death is unclear.) Advice came to Sandy from all quarters including their old friend, now Sir Arthur Palmer — ' ... everyone even young Little says it is absurd and there is no necessity in the world — and I say I am going in the “Quetta” and [Sandy] can't let me go without him', Minnie assured Jeannie Archer at Tolderoden in her last letter from Arley. 'Our new niece is getting on well — & so is Daisy, she seems so strong. I have made Joan a little trousseau! and am well on with that of the expected Miss Archer'.

Joan's baby clothes were lovingly presented, but not those intended for the 'Miss' who proved to be a 'Mr' — James and Louie Archer's son Alister, born in Larvik on 6 June 1890.

Minnie told Jeannie of their plans on arrival, first a visit to Coul and then over to Bergen with friends. There 'whoever likes from Tolderoden' could join them. The Quetta left Brisbane on 18 February and after their visit to Gracemere (while the liner was anchored in Keppel Bay) Archie joined their ship in the Bay and travelled with Sandy and Minnie as far as Cooktown. He farewelled them on 27 February and the ship sailed for Thursday Island. At 14 minutes past 9pm on 28 February 1890, on a clear, calm, moonlight night, Quetta struck an uncharted rock and sank within minutes. On the following morning her captain telegraphed Brisbane from Thursday Island:

"R.M.S. Quetta" struck an unknown rock at 9 o'clock last night. She filled and sank within three minutes from the time of striking. About one hundred souls were rescued and are now on Mount Adolphus Island. It is anticipated there will be appalling loss of life amongst the European passengers. The islands in the vicinity should be thoroughly searched for any of the crew and passengers who may have reached them.

The truth was far more devastating than the captain could have imagined. Of the 292 people on board, 133 were drowned, and of 115 Europeans only 15 were saved. Sandy and Minnie were not among the
fifteen. When David Archer (London) wrote to Jeannie on 5 March he said that up to this time they had been hopeful that Sandy and Minnie might have been picked up by the vessel searching for survivors, but as nothing had been reported he thought they must abandon all hope of seeing them again ‘in this world ... and so our joyful expectation ... is turned to mourning’. 27 David spoke for all the family in expressing ‘the affectionate esteem’ in which the couple had been regarded both in Australia and Europe. Sissie, writing three weeks after the tragedy told her Uncle Willie (at Tolderodden) that their ‘first stunned feeling’ had passed, but the effects of ‘those terrible days that seem so endlessly long ago ... have taken much of the brightness out of our lives. Of how few could it be said as we can of them, that their death has been the first sorrow they have given any of us’. 28 Ironically that very day, Sissie had received Aunt Minnie’s letter posted at Townsville ‘full of hope and happiness in little Joan ... and the thought of getting Uncle Sandy away from his work’. Like all who loved them, Siss was thankful that ‘they went together’. 29 Sandy and Minnie, perhaps more than any other couple within the extended family, were especially beloved. The fact that they had no children made them especially affectionate towards their nephews and nieces and their children — evident in Minnie’s ‘little trousseau’ for the baby Joan at Gracemere and the other which never reached the expected baby in Larvik.

The Board of the Bank of New South Wales recorded their tribute to their late Queensland Inspector on 7 March 1890, expressing: ‘... their deep regret at the lamentable occurrence, which has deprived the Bank of a well-tried, faithful and efficient representative, whose long service of thirty-seven years shows an unbroken record of earnest, honourable and intelligent action in the Bank’s interests, and who leaves behind him in the community a name free from reproach ...’ 30

If only ‘poor Sandy’ had known how highly the bank valued him before he boarded the Quetta to get away from its pressing demands and his own sense of inadequacy, how pleased he would have been, and how happy Minnie also.

One hundred years after the wreck of RMS Quetta, descendants and relatives met at Thursday Island for a memorial service and to retrace the route of the doomed ship and pay respects to all who lost their lives in
Queensland's worst single shipping disaster. At the Cathedral Church of All Souls and St Bartholomew Quetta Memorial the refurbished Quetta bell was rededicated. Among the memorials in the Cathedral is a stained glass window depicting 'The Stilling of the Storm' in memory of Alexander and Mary Louise (Minnie) Archer, with the moving inscription:

LOVELY WERE THEY IN THEIR LIVES,
AND IN DEATH THEY WERE NOT SEPARATED.
At the time that this shipwreck devastated so many lives, Archie Archer had already returned to parliament as Member for Rockhampton. He had been elected on 5 May 1888. Once more he played a leading role in the Separation movement, this time the well organised Central Queensland Territorial Separation League. When he addressed a public meeting in Rockhampton on the subject in May 1890, the local press supported him fully. He did not come ‘flushed with the hot enthusiasm of a newcomer’, but fortified by the calm assurance of one long acquainted with the matter. ‘He has not only been an advocate of Separation’, reported the Capricornian, ‘he has been a martyr’.1 Archie’s experience spoke when he warned against ‘the forces of vast power’ which confronted the movement, both in Brisbane and London. How right he was. It was these combined forces which in 1899 finally defeated the justified bid to form a separate colony in Central Queensland.

Archie retired from the Legislature on 4 April 1896. He was then seventy-six years old, but his decision to retire was influenced by more than age. In Norway Willie’s health was fast failing. He died on 25 June 1896. This brother was closest in age to Archie and closest in friendship. They had spent many years together, much at Gracemere but also on holiday at Tolderodden or Willie’s fishing lodge and farm at Horstad. When Archie’s retirement was announced, Spencer Browne of the Brisbane Courier summed up his nineteen year contribution to Queensland politics: ‘I knew Archibald Archer well and firmly believe that Queensland never
A Noble Band of Brothers: Archie

had a finer parliamentary representative. A very high minded man ...' His departure was a distinct loss to the colony, Browne said, he was one of 'a noble band of brothers' and 'the best known today'. He was also the last of the original nine Archer Brothers to leave the colony: two had perished in shipwrecks, the others had settled in Norway or England.

Archie had enjoyed political life despite frustrations and 'martyrdom' associated with the Separation movement. His long friendship with Arthur Palmer was a bonus. Archie had written to him in November 1868: 'I can't bear to think that you & I should take different sides of the House on any important question'. Each respected the other's personal qualities and political skills, and in private life the Archers and Palmers retained their social links. Archie's home base at Gracemere was the closest he ever came to 'settling down'. His great-niece, Joan Archer, had a childhood memory of Uncle Archie returning late at night from the Rockhampton Club, slightly inebriated and singing merrily as his horse carried him towards the homestead. He had been the last of the nine to arrive in the colony, and the last to leave. At seventy-six it was time to enjoy the years left to him at Tolderodden. 'Uncle Archie is out fishing at Bommestad', Willie Minor told Robert in September 1896, 'and as I have to drive him home in half an hour I must finish this'. And so life continued pleasantly until 1901 when a severe kidney infection was the beginning of the end. The man who had begun with the family nickname of 'Old Bluenose' and progressed to 'King of the Cannibal Islands' before becoming the respected Archibald Archer MLA, died peacefully and was buried in the family gravlunden beside his parents and brothers Charles and Willie.

Alexander Archer's contribution to banking in Queensland and Archibald Archer's to the political life of the colony paralleled the pioneering achievements of their brothers. While neither Sandy nor Archie had to confront hostile Aborigines or ride through the trackless bush, one performed a pioneering role in the commercial life of Australia from 1853, the other in public life from 1867. While there are no public memorials to them as there is to Charles in Rockhampton, Sandy's delightful sketches survive to reflect life in the Australian bush and also in picturesque Norway. Archie's 'monuments' are found in the Crown Lands Act of 1868, his martyrdom to the Separatist cause, and his term as Treasurer in the McIlwraith Ministry of 1882–83, a difficult period which included the
controversial annexation of New Guinea. Archie's final departure from Queensland in 1896 as the last of 'a noble band of brothers' symbolised the parts played by all nine in Australian history.
When David arrived at Tolderodden in 1853 after nineteen years in the colony, he intended to stay only a couple of years. He began his home spell at Tolderodden by putting the household accounts in order and then taking on some paid book-keeping for several ship owners. Life continued in a quiet and business-like way until a matter concerning the religious Separatists took him to England and eventually to Ireland. He told Willie that he wished Edward Walker would be ‘more conciliatory and scriptural in the language he uses’ to those who have left the church — ‘our good cause has been injured by the intemperate language of those of our brethren who have attempted to defend it’.¹ Despite this, Edward’s influence on David was far from ended, not only in religious matters but ultimately in his marriage.

When David’s ‘tender affair’ with Annabella Innes ended in 1847, Edward had told him of ‘the very good girls’ among the brethren in Dublin. It was his wish that David might ‘pick up a wife’ among them.² Perhaps it was matters connected with ‘the brethren’ which took David to Dublin, but while there he did indeed ‘pick up’ his future wife. And so it was that after what Willie referred to as David’s ‘curt courtship’, his engagement to Susan Stubbs of Dublin was announced while Jamie and Simon were in London on their way to Australia in mid 1855. The marriage took place in Dublin and for the following year or two the couple lived at 105 Upper Rathmines Street. Writing to Willie some time after the birth of Julia Alice (Sissie) in 1856, David revealed that he had not only gained a wife and
child, but also a mother-in-law and a father-in-law in medical practice. He had already found his independence under attack:

My Irish connections had got it into their heads that a passage to Norway would be attended with great dangers to little Alice in consequence of some injudicious talk by the wily doctor, and although I have got them convinced ... that the risk is not greater than being caught in the rain it has fretted poor Susan very much [to go against] her mother & sister who almost idolise the baby ... we are off in about a fortnight, as soon as we can after having the baby vaccinated ...

Edward Walker did much more than guide David in the choice of a wife, he had also introduced him by letter in 1850 to his future business partner. 'Brother Johnson is one you would like to know ... modest & most exemplary in all his conduct — but poor fellow, his chief trouble arises from the domineering manner of that strange being Archibald Walker'. This was not Colonel Archibald Walker, David's uncle, but the man who was then managing William Walker & Co.'s London office where Johnson was chief clerk. Edward persuaded Johnson to write to David while he was still in the colony and eventually the two met in London. There is no evidence in the letters as to when the business of Johnson & Archer was established, but David's first existing letter from 31 Lombard Street, London, is dated 24 July 1861.

In choosing to make their homes in Scotland or England, rather than Australia, both Tom and David were influenced by their wives' families. David's 'Irish connections' were appalled that he should take a young baby to Norway, but to take Susan and the baby to a slab hut in the Australian bush, or even to Gracemere, was unthinkable. Economic conditions in Norway ruled out the possibility of setting up business there, nor could David support a family on his income from the Queensland operations. For Tom and Grace, the Morison's forebodings were realised when Grace lost her first baby at Eidsvold. Their return to Scotland seemed the only alternative. Tom, like Willie, owned a four-sixteenth share in Archer Brothers, David a lesser share and Colin, Jamie and Simon a mere one-sixteenth each. As, one by one, the partners returned to Europe, economic conditions in the Queensland pastoral industry declined. All depended on the family firm for part of their income. Both David's and Tom's families grew steadily with each welcoming a new baby every
couple of years. They had more reason than their bachelor brothers to look for financial viability in the firm. David never again returned to Australia, but this did not prevent him exercising influence by remote control.

Although in the earlier years of their marriages, David’s and Tom’s children lived in London and Scotland respectively, they shared summer holidays at Tolderodden. Tom’s first son, young Willie, at four years of age spoke Norwegian fluently during the time the family lived in Larvik. But for the most part they lived in Scotland, first at the farm ‘Andean’ near Dollar. It was there that young Willie began his schooling and a third son, James, was born — the second had been named Charles for his uncle. ‘Tom calls his son Jim, and consequently intends walking into Jamie for a handsome present’, quipped David. Twelve months later he told Willie that Tom’s ‘farming speculations turn out even worse than my mercantile ones’. While David at least made interest on his capital, Tom had ‘sunk money’ every year and had little prospect of doing any better during the terms of his lease. Both men were finding that the cost of raising ever growing families was the downside of the felicity of marriage. ‘The family I now have cannot be kept for much less than 1000 pounds a year’, David told Willie in 1864. He and Susan would eventually have ten children, Tom and Grace nine.

While Tom would always have problems managing his money, Johnson & Archer as a mercantile firm proved successful after a few years. Its business largely depended upon commerce with Queensland and therefore reflected that colony’s economic ups and downs, while European influences affected it too. Johnson was an older man than David and his experience in Walker’s office proved invaluable to the new business. David, on the other hand, with his knowledge of wool sales and wool quality was the more practical of the two. All Archer Brothers’ business from wool-selling to shipping freights or obtaining station hands was transferred from Walkers to the new firm. ‘I have written to the Emigration Commission inquiring whether they propose dispatching a ship either to Port Curtis or Keppel Bay’, David told Willie in July 1861. Whether he had any influence is doubtful, but the first direct migrant ship from London to Keppel Bay, the Utopia, reached its destination on 6 November 1862. David considered the possibility of chartering a ship to carry 400 migrants to the colony and back-load with wool. And having heard of ‘a batch of
Spitalfield weavers’ being sent to Port Curtis, he hoped Willie would pick up some as shepherds. The Spitalfield weavers were victims of England’s growing industrialisation,

David’s business and family responsibility did not blind him to national events or international affairs. Still mourning Charles’ death in December 1861 he noted ‘the great deal of unwitting blasphemy committed’ in national mourning for the Prince Consort. More importantly, ‘the prospect of a war with America also looms over us and as a nation we are not in a merry mood this Christmas’. Nor did he fail then, or later, to have his say in the running of Gracemere. ‘Is your present site the best on the run for the woolshed & stockyards? Would it not be worth while to move them & oblige the Rockhamptonites with a few “suburban sites”’, he asked in April 1862 on hearing of the municipal claims on their land. Never having seen Gracemere, he imagined the yards and woolshed several miles from the homestead, as at Coonambula. At Gracemere they were merely a stone’s throw away, hardly desirable for suburban sites. While it was Tom who chose the bulls to be sent out in the Prospero in 1864, David handled the shipping arrangements and kept an eye on Archer Brothers’ finances as well as Britain’s economy, as his letter to Willie confirms:

The magnitude of your intended purchases of sheep and station supplies rather startled me. I hope the alternative you mention of getting a corner somewhere in the meantime for our ewes may have been adopted for there is every appearance here of a crisis in the money market & I think it very likely that the English capital which is seeking investment in Queensland will be withdrawn & prices of stations and stock will be much lower in a short time. There are now symptoms of the bubble bursting here too …

David’s forecast came true in 1866–67 when the ‘bubble burst’ with a bang in Queensland. It was about that time that he complained of business languishing in England — ‘people are distrustful of one another and of course politics — such tremendous preparations for war are made everywhere’. In Europe, he said, it would take only ‘a little spark to create an explosion’. And so it did, but not until 1871. Tom, having found himself much pleased with Gracemere in 1867, despite drought, was less pleased with England on his return in November: he was quarantined because of yellow fever in the crew. A worried Grace, staying with David and Susan, was decidedly averse to Tom having anything more to do with farming.
What else he is to do, I know not', remarked an equally concerned David. In the following spring Tom and Grace and children were again at Croydon with David while searching for a house. 'I hope he will get some occupation to tether him, for he is very unsettled and restless and frets the very flesh off his bones'. Tom would never change. He had to be on the move in some way. And so in the summer of 1869 he sailed his yacht, Lark, from Yarmouth to Norway, where he hoped to get the Norwegian government to buy her. He had no luck.

After a glorious summer in Norway, Tom was again toying with the idea of settling there. David astutely judged this to be nostalgia from 'sailing about enjoying himself in the summer weather', and thought he would change his mind as soon as autumn's chills returned. This was so:

Tom has just heard for the hundredth time of the very place that will suit him & goes down to Danecourt [near Dover] tomorrow ... Grace is slowly gaining strength but will not be able for the fatigue of furnishing a house this autumn, so Tom proposes spending the winter in furnished lodgings ...

... Tom has taken up the idea unfortunately that farming is only to give him his occupation, not profit ...

Furnished lodgings with a gaggle of children aged from twelve down to a baby in swaddling clothes surely tried Grace sorely. While neither her letters nor Tom's describing their family life have survived, David's vivid descriptions of his family perhaps echo those of his restless brother.

'The children are my great resource', he told Willie in 1869, then added for the sake of honesty, 'They are a great annoyance sometimes, but they liven one up and drive away the cobwebs'. In the following year he provided Willie with a close-up view of family life:

... At Croydon we are all jogging along much as usual. Alice (Sissie) will soon be as tall as her mother & she is not 13 yet — they say she plays pretty well for her age & she is also deep in French & German. I think of sending her to some educational institution to learn to be a teacher — everyone should do something for their living. The two eldest boys are at school — the best I could find in Croydon — but I don't think much of it. Bobby is superficial and careless & fond of play, Dadie is painstaking but slow. The next one Jack is a regular dunce at books but wide awake about everything else ... Charlie who was six years old a few days ago promises to be the smartest of the lot, & Susie the next one seems to have all her wits about her too & little Colin has got quite strong of late ... Susan expects to be confined about midsummer — I
look forward to the event with some apprehension after the illnesses which have debilitated her a good deal ...

When Susan gave birth to another boy in July, there was some difficulty in choosing a name — 'after going through the list of names it was decided by the female branches of the family that neither Tom, Arch'd or Sandy would do & so they have called the baby Jamie'. Before the baby was a year old he was 'Jim' and described by his Irish grandmother as 'a broth of a boy'. The middle-aged father was sometimes bemused by his children, whether the antics of the little ones or Sissie at thirteen and on the threshold of womanhood. He was surprised to find her 'making out lists of guests and a programme for dances etc.' for their forthcoming children's party.

Neither the David Archers' Separatists nor the Tom Archers' Glasites (they later became Separatists in Croydon) showed any signs of wowserism. On the Sabbath day a house-meeting was held, comprising bible study, prayer and a sermon. After this, the rest of the day was for recreation. Such activities as dancing, theatre-going or sport were all enjoyed by their young people. Nor did they believe in 'obtruding' their views on other people. They hardly needed to for almost all the Archers, Walkers, Morisons and their various Scottish connections belonged to one or other non-conformist sect. They attempted to carry out in their lives, according to Edward Walker, 'the divinely commanded discipline of the primitive churches'. David and Edward eventually made up their religious differences and in 1871 the new Archer baby was named Edward Walker Archer. One of Walker's many sons had already been called David Archer Walker. The 'female branches' appear to have had no part in either choice of name. But when Edward's daughter Harriet married without her father's sanction in 1873 — her fiance having declined to give explanations of his financial position — David thought it an 'unholy case'.

By the time his older boys were in their teens, David revised his earlier opinion on their scholastic abilities — 'Bobby & the others keep steadily at school & I think are getting on pretty well', he conceded in 1875. Perhaps as a reward they went during the Easter holidays to watch the hounds meet at Ramstead — with Bobby mounted on their 'horse of all work, the rest on foot'. Nor was higher education confined to the boys. 'Siss is to attend a course of lectures & music at the Crystal Palace. She
has taken a rather strong interest in music lately which I'm very well pleased at ...'. As to education generally: 'The system of teaching nowadays does more to expand the mind than that of 20 or 30 years since, so I think it can advantage a boy, whatever he is going to do afterwards, to keep him longer at school than used to be considered desirable ...'19

Whitgift Grammar School, attended by all six boys, appears to have been a-typical in encouraging open minds in its students. David, comparing and contrasting this with Laurvig Grammar School was also a-typical as a parent in praising a new system of education.

When the boys returned to school in January 1876 they went without Bobby. At age seventeen he had begun his working life in the office of Johnson & Archer. David wisely hoped to get him into some other office where he would be among strangers. He had allowed Bobby to leave school because 'it was his wish'. And so the pattern of education for David's sons was set, with six eventually going to Australia where 'Bobby' became 'Robert' and in 1880 began his grooming for the management of Gracemere.

David served as family 'emigration agent' in those years, placing as many young relatives as possible at Gracemere — much to the chagrin of the incumbents at times. As well as Jack's Willie Minor and Billy Arentz, the several sons of Edward Walker were there in the 1860s at David's behest. It seems his duty to his 'religious brother' was life-long. Even relatives with no stake at all in the family firm seemed to look upon it as their right. 'Cousin Kate [nee Archer] is a good deal disappointed that you will not take her boy at present', David told Willie in 1864.

The 1870s were ushered in for David with two major concerns — the war between Prussia and France, and the news that Archer Brothers' Queensland enterprise was in debt. On the first he commented, 'my own feeling is we will not have durable peace for many a long day', and on the news that the Gracemere firm was, for the first time, in debt: 'Were we rid of borrowed money, the concern might yield us all fair dividends again', he told Jamie in August 1871. Having himself survived the financial crashes of the 1840s, he believed (probably correctly) that this was because he had no commercial loans. His debt to the Walkers had been in a different category. But station accounts, like Tom's or Sandy's spirits, had their highs as well as their lows. David could scarcely believe 'the astounding result'
of 14,000 pounds profit in 1874 for the preceding three years. ‘Like Simon [Jørgensen] I cannot believe it until I have spent a lot of it to convince myself that it is a substantial gain & not just on paper’. Fortunately he was unaware that this was almost the end of ‘the fat years’.

The eight years which Tom and Grace spent in Queensland with all their family, except young Willie, were among the most stable in their children’s lives. When they returned in 1880, their eldest sons were already either working or undergoing further training: young Willie was building up a fine reputation as a drama critic and translator from the Norwegian of Ibsen’s dramatic works, Charles was at Sandhurst training to become an officer in the British Army in India, and Jim had begun his life’s work, first with the Oriental Bank in London, later with the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank in Japan. But as usual by the end of 1880, Tom was ‘hard up for something to do’. Like the rest of the family, however, he was enjoying son Willie’s success. David informed Colin: ‘Tomorrow is to be a great day. Willie’s translation of Ibsen’s *Samfundets støtter* is to come out at the Gaiety Theatre under the title Quicksands or The Pillars of Wisdom. Tom & Grace and a strong contingent of the young people are going to be present.’

The extended family’s pride in Willie was not reciprocal. With his parents back in London the young man felt he had lost much of his freedom. ‘I am once more in the bosom of my family. There are moments when I feel rather as if my family were in, or on, my bosom in the form of an incubus …’, he told his friend Edward Dibdin. During those eight years of freedom he had shed many of the fixed ideas of his parents, he had already become a liberal thinker and would (much later) be a professed atheist. Because he could not bear to hurt his parents’ feelings, Willie was obliged to live a double life.

The Queensland Government appointed Tom as its Agent General in Britain in 1881, thus solving the problem of a suitable occupation for him. ‘Tom is very jolly & likes his billet as you may suppose’, David reported to Colin in September. The period of Tom’s office, 1881–84, was one of high migration from Britain to Queensland, with many ships going direct to Keppel Bay. Tom carried out his duties with distinction until made redundant by a change of political leadership in Queensland. For Tom, surely a highlight was his personal presentation in 1882 of a picture album
to Queen Victoria from the Queensland Government commemorating the visit of her two grandsons.

Tom's sons, unlike some of David's younger ones, had no trouble in finding suitable occupations and retaining them throughout their working lives. George was the only one to become an Australian — arriving at Gracemere in 1885. His brother Jim wrote family news to his friend and mentor, Jamie Walker, in May 1882:

You will have heard of my brother Charlie having passed very well into Sandhurst. His time there is nearly up and he will probably get a regiment soon after he leaves. He intends if possible to get into the civil service after getting out to India. Willie is at present taking a holiday in Italy and will stay in Germany studying for the law this summer. The rest of us are going on as usual here, Georgie and the younger girls going to school and myself at the Oriental Bank where I am at present serving three years apprenticeship of which I have done the greater part. My object of course is to get abroad finally ...  

Young Willie fell in love with his future wife, Frances Trickett, while in Italy. Almost as significant was his meeting in Rome with Henrik Ibsen, whose work, or some of it, he had already translated. After completing his law studies and passing his exams in December 1882, he was not called to the Bar until November 1883. He had fulfilled his promise to his parents 'to eat his dinners in Inns of Court' and so felt free to continue his own career as writer and critic. He never did practise as a barrister.

There were great changes for other Archers about to be (once more) scattered over earth and ocean. This was the time when Minnie Downs was sold, when Jamie Archer returned home, and all the family loans were repaid. Tom's Charlie embarked for India; David's second son, 'Dadie' (William David) passed his entrance exam for Greenwich College and began training as a naval architect; and at Tolderodden Mary and Jeannie invested some of their money in Norwegian real estate — a novel situation for the former 'petticoats'.

The exodus of young Archers of the second generation which had begun in the 1860s with Willie Minor and Billy Arentz (who later returned to Norway), almost became mass migration in the 1880s. It began with David's Robert and Jack in 1880, later followed by brothers Jim (a seaman like his uncle Jack), Charlie, Colin, Edward, and Tom's George.

First appointed as Queensland Acting Agent General in London in July
1881, Tom had received permanent appointment on 19 October on an annual salary of 1,500 pounds. He worked hard for his salary, lecturing to such bodies as the Royal Colonial Institute on the future of Queensland, and in other ways promoting migration to Queensland. He also had a finger in the Queensland Government's annexation of New Guinea. In December 1882 he advised Premier McIlwraith of an article in a German paper advocating the annexation to that country. McIlwraith instructed Tom in February 1883 to 'urge the Imperial Government to annex New Guinea to Queensland'. Tom did so, but no action followed. McIlwraith, with permission from the Queensland Executive Council, went ahead and on 4 April 1883 the annexation was proclaimed in Queensland.

The Imperial Government declined to accept and confirm this and in November 1884 Germany claimed the north-eastern portion of the Island with Britain belatedly annexing what was left — the south-east section. But months before this took place the Griffith government in Queensland was looking for a reason to get rid of Thomas Archer. In February 1884, they sent him on three months leave. Then, having replaced him, he received as compensation an Imperial Honour, Companion of St Michael and St George (CMG). But as his irreverent son Willie joked, 'I don't expect the companionship of these two pious parties will do much to relieve the tedium of his expected idleness'.

Tom not only lost a congenial occupation, but also his city office. David referred to this in a letter to Bob on 22 February 1884: 'Uncle Tom is writing in the next office [Johnson & Archer], it is a great comedown from Westminster Chambers. But he bears it well'. He was also humble. There is not one mention in existing letters of his CMG.

George Barnard, a London banker in the 1880s but formerly of Perth, was a connection of the Morison family, as were the Bells, Sandemans, Waterstons, Lyons and Glas's. And if not blood relations or marriage connections of the Walkers and Tom Archers, these Perth families usually belonged to the brotherhood of Glasites, Sandemanians or Separatists. Barnard in a letter to Jamie Walker not only demonstrates this, but also provides a word portrait of Tom and Grace and their family in 1886 when Tom was about 63:

The Tom Archers have, for them, been a long time at Dulwich, and the younger ones have in consequence had a chance of steady education. The head of the
family is as restless and unsettled as ever. It was very unfortunate that he had to give up his appointment as Agent General, as it gave him what he so much requires — occupation. His health too is by no means strong. His wife is, as ever, energetic and hard working. The amount she manages to get through amazes me. Willie seems quietly making his way in the literary world. Besides writing in several Papers, Magazines etc., he now & then brings out some book of his own, and is taking his place as a critic. He has a very nice wife, who has done him good, and one child. Charlie pursues his career in India, and writes very fine letters home by almost every weekly mail, some of which we are allowed to peruse. Jim has had bad luck, being thrown back a good deal by the failure of the Oriental Bank. But for this he would certainly have been in India some time ago, but Trade in his as in most other lines had been depressed, & promotion is very slow at present, so there is nothing for him but patience. He is a nice fellow & quite a favourite with us. Goes in for cricket & tennis extensively — dresses well and in fact is quite a desirable young fellow for any description of party.

Frank is still a bit of a “pickle”, but I think a clever little chap and will no doubt be brought into shape in due time. As for the girls, Maggie and her husband [Frank Sandeman] are a cool […] couple. Both very nice in their way, and I believe most attached to one another. I am afraid their religious views must clash a little, for as you are no doubt aware, Maggie is a “Separatist” and Frank was for a short time a Glasite. Perhaps it may end in him going over to his wife’s views. They have one little girl — a great pet of course. Of Miss Dooie you will have heard & perhaps seen something during her recent visit [with Tom to Australia] . I fancy she is a bit spoilt as I fear she is rather too fond of flirting. She certainly is an attractive young woman and manages to turn the heads of a good many young men. The feting of the Colonials this year has been a famous opportunity for her, and she and her father have been “swelling” about “no end” at the Marquis of This and That. By the bye, what a time the Colonials have had of it this year. Royalty, Peerge & wealthy commoners have vied with one another to honour them … But to return to the Archers. Annie and Gracie are fine girls — the former pretty but quiet & studious and doing well at school, the latter handsome, powerful and quite a character …

Regarding politics and friendship, George Barnard continued:

I never was a very strong politician and have no patience with people who get so angry over these questions and allow their feelings to carry them quite away when discussing them. With Tom Archer & his wife for instance, especially the latter, I always avoid the subject for this reason. When people lose their tempers over discussions they (the discussions) are better avoided …
The Colonial and Indian Exhibition, May to November 1886, featured the Queensland Government's demonstration of gold mining and crushing methods. It is likely that this prompted Tom to take shares and become a director in the Etheridge Gold Mining Co. of North Queensland. Both Willie and Archie were in England in May and no doubt were among the colonials being 'feted' along with Tom and Dooie. Barnard's reference to Dooie accompanying Tom to grand functions rather than Grace confirms family legend that Grace persuaded Tom to decline a knighthood, as 'plain Mrs Archer' was good enough for her. This seems more in keeping with her known character than losing her temper on political questions. But as her husband and brother-in-law had already been victims of political change, perhaps she had good reason for her attitude.

As the first generation grew older they continued their practice of making joint decisions. While Archie was home in 1887 he, Tom and David discussed whether he or Tom should go out to Gracemere. In the end Archie sailed in the Jumna and arrived back in time to be re-elected to Parliament. The custom of always having one of the partners at Gracemere was queried by the ever-restless Tom who thought if one were needed 'he could be summoned by telegram and be on the spot in a couple of months'. It was obvious by this time that none of the pioneers relished having permanently at Gracemere. David even thought they should get rid of it. Perhaps they would have if his son Robert had not been keen to make it his life's work.

That Queensland's Agents General were political puppets is confirmed by Tom's re-appointment to the office in 1888 after Griffith's resignation as Premier. Tom was well aware by this time that there was no certainty in the position. Grace told Jamie Walker in the following year, 'Mr Archer is pretty well & busy but always feeling that he may be condemned to idleness any day, so insecure does he feel in the tenure of office'. Tom's forebodings were not imaginary. He resigned on 4 December 1890 when Griffith again became Premier — in a coalition with McLlwraith — thus saving himself humiliation.

Although Grace referred to her husband as 'Mr Archer', she addressed her letter to J.T. Walker as 'My dear old friend, for I feel it is altogether too stiff to address you as "Mr Walker"'. It was a very chatty letter, telling how 'terribly cut up' they were when Jim left to take up his bank
appointment in Japan. Her youngest, Frank (the Fa who could play Twinkle Twinkle on the piano) was still what Barnard described as a 'pickle'. Grace’s explanation: ‘I don’t know whether this is to be attributed to his being the Colonial, but he is the greatest happy-go-lucky careless young rascal we have had experience of …’ She was afraid he would never take ‘those terrible exams’ seriously, ‘which are the aim & object of everything nowadays’. Frank, then fifteen, later went to university and passed his exams but failed his public service examination. He eventually became a school master.

Tom’s restlessness overcame him again in 1891. His brother Willie commented: ‘the spirit of adventure in exploration [is] still strong in him to the last, he is already preparing to visit Queensland’. And so he was off again, with plans to visit Jim in Japan on the way home. During his absence Grace had to cope with the death of a son-in-law and the marriage of a daughter. First she was off to Glasgow to be with Maggie and seven year old Grace following the premature death of husband and father, Frank Sandeman, on 19 October 1891. In the summer Maggie took little Grace with her to Tolderodden and into the loving care of her aunts Mary and Jeannie and cousin Eliza. Maggie was anxious to realise on Frank’s shares in the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Co. It happened that Willie Minor (Jack Archer’s son) held the scrip on Frank’s behalf. As Willie Minor was then managing Thylungra Station in far south-western Queensland, he asked Bob to search his trunk at Gracemere — ‘there are no love letters in the box so you can take a good look through’. He referred to Sandeman having been in Mackay, some time after 1883 when Willie Minor was growing sugar cane there.

Early in 1892, Dooie’s marriage to Harold Parsons took place. They took up their quarters ‘at a Fort near Queenstown, Ireland, where Harold Parsons … has been appointed to some military post’. Blissfully free from all the ‘bother’ himself, Tom on his last ever visit to Queensland and Gracemere, sailed from Townsville in the Changsha for Hong Kong, then to Yokohama for a week or two with Jim before returning via the Canadian Pacific. But with news of one daughter widowed and another married while he was in Australia, Tom was not pleased to hear of his son George’s engagement in New South Wales to Miss Black ‘while in a state of impecuniosity which must prevent the wedding coming off for many a
George's financial problems at that time, while trying to establish himself as a farmer, fade into insignificance compared to his later worries through his wife's chronic ill health and his only daughter crippled by poliomyelitis.

While Tom's family were all settled in their careers or schools by the late 1880s, David had some difficulty in finding occupations for his younger sons. Jim began his apprenticeship at sea and so seemed set for life. When Charlie left for Queensland in January 1885 David was not displeased 'as the life in Australia will I believe suit one of his disposition better than life in the office here'. He told Robert that he and Jack 'must try to do the best you can for yourselves'. In 1887 when David's fifth son, named for his Uncle Colin, reached Gracemere there was no suitable work for him. A letter from David to 'Bobby' soon afterwards provides the first hint of life-long trouble regarding the young Colin as well as concerns over Jim's restlessness:

I had a few lines from Col last mail ... [he was] unable to find employment at Mackay ... it is very bad for him to be knocking about idle & I have been thinking if Uncle Willie would give him employment at Gracemere as book-keeper & store-keeper (if there is a store). It looks as if we wanted to monopolise Gracemere so I don't like to say much about it, but if Charlie is to manage after you leave [on holiday] , he may require some help with the books & correspondence & you would have to break Col in before you leave ... [if you don't agree] do your best to get him a job somewhere, ... there was some talk of Jim 'chucking the sea' but better councils prevailed. I don't think Jim would settle down to anything ashore now ...

David later became aware that Jim 'had difficulty getting on with people'. His comment to Robert: 'His long association with sailors naturally imbues him with their ideas and sense of their wrongs (for which the latter there are good grounds)'. These rankled with Jim 'till he has a bitter grudge against all shipowners, and looks upon them as the oppressor of the sailor'. David might have been more serious than some of his brothers, but he was surprisingly liberal in accepting Jim's left-wing views and in fact listening to any of his children.

David and Susan's Charlie was one of their six to go to Australia. He was also a favourite. When he returned home for a holiday in 1895 and left in the following year, his father supposed he would never see him again...
— 'the parting has been a sad one for me at my time of life (80 yesterday)', he told Robert. But Charlie preceded his father to the golden shore. Just a year after his return to Queensland he had 'broken down again' as a result of what David referred to as the family tendency to tuberculosis. By the end of 1898 Charlie was in Toowoomba too weak to be moved. 'I hope Ted [youngest son] got away in time to be with our dear Charlie at the last', wrote the father who had lost one son in childhood and awaited news of his adult son's death. Weeks after receiving the news by telegram, the poor mother received his last letter to her. She told Robert that she wanted to know 'where my Charlie is buried & I want a stone with his name, death etc.'

David's second son, William David, always known as 'Dadie', was the only one to remain in England and the only one trained in a profession. His father followed with pride his career as a naval architect. While a student at Greenwich College he had amused himself during the Christmas holidays of 1883 'making a half-model of a steamer for passengers & cargo with a speed of 12 knots'. Twelve years later while working at Clyde Bank, Glasgow, he was still concerned with speed. 'He has some trouble with Torpedo Destroyers he has designed — They have got to do 28.5 knots, but want 1.5 more'. In 1897 David Jnr. (Dadie) declined an offer from the Japanese government to teach naval architecture in that country for 700 pounds per annum. But he left Clyde Bank in 1898 to take a position with the Board of Trade in London. He was so highly thought of in Glasgow that he was farewelled with a gift of 150 pounds, a very large sum for that time. His decision to decline the Japanese offer and accept that in London was in line with his concept of duty. He lived at 'Coravante' in Croydon with his ageing parents and two unmarried and often ailing sisters, providing them with the firm support they needed. His office hours from 11am to 5pm, with time out for lunch, were not arduous but his extremely responsible position often left him mentally exhausted. Cycling holidays, usually with a friend or two, provided his favourite recreation.

Ted was the last of David and Susan's sons to make his home in Queensland. But first, in a bid to become independent of Archer & Co., 'he made up his mind to give Canada a trial for a year or two more' his father told Robert in April 1896. 'I don't like to influence Ted one way or
the other about going to Australia. He will be none the worse for a year or two more in Canada’. But by the end of that year Ted had had enough of ‘low-paid slavery’ on a Canadian farm. He left Vancouver for Queensland 3 January 1897, his passage made possible by a 15 pound gift from his Aunt Lizzie Stubbs, and 10 pounds from his father. 48 Like his uncles Jack, Charles and Archie, he had tried another way of life before succumbing to the call of Australia — even though ‘the bush’ no longer held the same aura of romanticism as it had for the original migrants. After a visit to Gracemere, Ted went to ‘Torsdale’ in the Callide Valley, the cattle property which Robert and Jack had taken up in 1885 and which Jack managed. ‘I am glad to hear Jack likes having Ted with him at Torsdale’, wrote David in May 1897, ‘bad as Australia may be, I can’t but think that life must be more endurable there than Canada.’ 49 He was sure that Ted would be an acquisition to his brothers for he was ‘an awfully good natured fellow’. Ted would later distinguish himself in the manner of his Uncle Archie as a politician, his good nature a distinct advantage.

The two daughters of David and Susan — whose pet names, Sissie and Toonie, remained throughout their long lives — appear to have accepted their Victorian fate as dutiful daughters. The family letters reveal nothing of Sissie’s more than cousinly early bond with Tom’s son young Willie. But in Willie’s letter to his friend Dibdin in 1881 he said in relation to Sissie: ‘I am neither going to get married nor get lugged up for breach of promise, but things have taken a turn half pleasant, half unpleasant’. 50 Much of the evidence relating to this romance is found in William’s confessional poetry with reference to ‘Julia’. Family legend confirms this love match and suggests that Willie and Sissie themselves decided that marriage between first cousins was too risky. David would have been unlikely to thwart his daughter’s wishes. Unlike Victorian heroines of romance, Sissie did not go into a decline. It was Toonie who slipped into ill health, having inherited that disease which David identified as being rife in the Walker family — apparently tuberculosis. Sissie accompanied Toonie to a Norwegian sanatorium in 1890, and apart from one month at Tolderodden, they spent the entire winter there. But there was no cure for Toonie who remained a partial invalid beyond her three score years and ten.

The pattern of life in Britain for both David and Tom, despite marriage and a large family for each, confirmed those characteristics first evident as
young colonials: David, steady and reliable, Tom ever restless and seeking excitement in new ventures, whether exploration on the Australian frontier or gold mining in California.
During the 1890s the two British benedicts, David and Tom, were gradually approaching that 'golden shore' where all earthly worries would be shed and heavenly rewards attained. Meantime they and their wives enjoyed their status as grandparents. In each large family, however, their respective youngest sons, Ted and Frank, were still in their teens in 1890. Susan Archer's letter to her four year old grand-daughter Joan at faraway Gracemere in 1894 also provides glimpses of Tom and Grace's grand-children:

We had two small children here last Sunday — little Grace Sandeman and Tom Archer — both your cousins — and they did kick up a row — he is such a funny boy, & tells such funny stories — and they both fight with Uncle Ted & when he locks them out of the schoolroom, where he wants to smoke, they kick the door to get in ... ¹

A few months later David sent a riding saddle to Joan and with his usual caution warned her not to be in a great hurry to ride alone. If she were to be thrown from her pony he would be sorry he sent the saddle.²

While no letters survive from Tom or Grace to grand-children, there is plenty of evidence that Tom's namesake, only son of Willie and Frances, was indeed 'a funny little boy' and one with a fertile imagination. He referred to himself as 'Tomarcher' and as an only child he surrounded himself with imaginary characters. Robert Louis Stevenson, a close family friend, commented to Willie in 1892 (six years after Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde):
'I am glad to hear that Tomarcher is beginning his education on such excellent matter, but where the devil did he get hold of Peona?' He concluded, 'Give my love to all his brothers and sisters as well as the less interesting humans who surround him and doubtless interfere with his diversions.' George Bernard Shaw, William's exact contemporary and friend, whose 'Shawesque' correspondence referred to Tomarcher from time to time, took the boy's father firmly in hand in 1895. Willie considered ten year old Tomarcher too young to have a balloon-tyred bicycle. Tomarcher appealed to Shaw and not in vain. Shaw told the father that he 'might as well send him to bed with a tallow candle and mufflers on the grounds that he is too young for the modern article' as to buy him a solid-tyred bicycle. Shaw went further than providing moral support for the boy, he ordered the latest model machine as a gift for Tomarcher, deriding his father's conservatism:

... Tom shall toe the 1895 line. Tom's attitude on the question seems sound and intelligent: his father's feeble and superficial. I consider that I am giving him an excellent start in life and I trust he may never learn that his unnatural parent attempted to put him back by five or six years out of mere wanton shrinking from the front seats. Impress on him the motto "Always up to date", and bid him take warning by you and me, who at forty are only where we ought to have been at 22 if only we had the courage. GBS."

As is so often the way with parents, Willie seems to have forgotten his own rebellion against what he considered Tom's and Grace's over-strict standards. When young Tomarcher was a sixteen year old secondary student his father attempted to coerce him into a line of study which he thought appropriate. '...it would be a great pity if you fell short of this success through thoughtlessness, or aimlessness, or failure to take a firm and purposeful grip on life'. Young Tomarcher was keen to follow his uncle, Colonel Charles Archer, and become a professional soldier, but lacking his father's determination as a teenager, he became a student at Oxford University to please him.

Tom and Grace with five sons and four daughters produced only eight grand-children. David and Susan with eight sons and two daughters did little better with eleven. The large families of the Victorian era did not persist in the twentieth century—at least among Archers. The two families lived in fairly close proximity in suburban London, even when David
moved to 'Coravante' in Crohamhurst Road, Croydon. Sissie described this in 1895 as 'in the country'. It was so lovely, she said, that they were no longer 'wild' to get off to Norway in summer. They also took great interest in each other's family news. Sissie was quite excited when Tom's daughter Gracie became engaged to 'a Mr Stedman ... a friend of Jim's in Japan who has just been home on a trip when the mischief was done', she told Cecelia Jones, soon to be Cecelia Bancroft, in Brisbane. Gracie was to go out to her sister Doogie Parsons in Singapore in the autumn and perhaps be married there. 'Mr S. is in tea in Yokohama, pretty well off ... everyone seems pleased & Jim not least'.

When Gracie 'went out' her mother accompanied her, spending a month with Jim in Japan and then going to Doogie in Singapore. Jim was stationed in Kobe with the Chartered Banking Co, the Stedmans in Yokohama. Jim said of his mother who was usually the stay-at-home while Tom travelled: 'It was a great treat for me to see her strong & interested in everything in this strange land'. Just as well, for on her return to London she was to be increasingly tied down by Tom's failing health.

The great surprise for all the Archers was Maggie Sandeman's second marriage on 7 November 1896 to her bachelor first cousin Willie Archer — Jack's Willie Minor. He had spent the past thirty years in Queensland, first at Gracemere and Minnie Downs, then growing sugar at Mackay and finally managing a western Queensland sheep station. Returning to Europe for a holiday early in that year, he spent a few weeks with Doogie and Harold Parsons in Singapore, describing Doogie's 'very fine baby' as the pride of the garrison. The officers dubbed him 'Hardi' — and like other Archer childhood names, it was his for the rest of his life.

Willie Minor then spent the summer at Tolderodden where Maggie and daughter Grace were also holidaying. The marriage took place in London and instead of returning to Queensland, Willie began looking for work in London. Maggie and her eleven year old child were provided for under Sandeman's will. Willie Minor was then in his late forties, Maggie just ten years younger, but as well as their rides together at Rockhampton or Gracemere, they would have met as children at Tolderodden. Willie Minor's disrupted and unsettled childhood seemed to make him more attached to family as an adult.

While the younger generation married or remarried, the patriarch
David began to dwell on death. Having married in middle age, he was an old man by the time his youngest son reached adulthood. He confided in his eldest son, Robert, in 1895:

"Writing of earthly possessions — deceitful riches — which make to themselves wings and fly away — reminds me of the treasure, the true riches, laid up in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt nor thieves break through and steal ..."  

David, as the young ‘Laird of Durundur’ certainly had no deceitful riches, and the little money he did have very soon ‘took wings and fled away’ in repayments to William Walker & Co. Now 79, like his former mentor Edward Walker, he was comparatively affluent, and that after raising and educating ten children. Edward raised two large families, but he had a wealthy father; David’s modest success was all his own.

In the following year, 1896, Donald Larnach’s death at the age of 78 — ‘just my age’ — prompted one of David’s rare early recollections. Larnach had been ‘one of the magnates of the Financial world of the Bank of New South Wales’. Mrs Larnach had been a Walker so it is possible that nepotism was involved in her husband’s position. David knew them well in the colony and travelled home with them in 1853, but had seen little of them since. Memories such as this were a relief, for in these final years he was much troubled by his son Colin’s instability and Jim’s personality problems. Robert, by this time firmly established as the manager of Archer & Co., was his distant mainstay, the one who took over the burden of Colin. The father had no worries about steady Jack at Torsdale, nor the good natured Ted, but he confided most in this eldest son — always ‘Bob’ to him. At home he was comforted by son David’s steadiness and sense of responsibility. He not only shared the Sunday meetings, but was right there at Coravante. Susan thought it must be dull for Dadie ‘with a house full of invalids’, but he seemed not to mind. A contemporary suggested that the younger David ‘had been born old’.

In the summer of 1899 David took his parents to Crowborough for a holiday. Back home, a bout of influenza left his father weak. This was the beginning of the end. The man dubbed ‘The Laird of Durundur’ by his younger brothers claimed his heavenly ‘treasures’ on the golden shore on 8 January 1900. Weeks after his death Susan referred to ‘the great blank’ in the home which she found ‘hard to bear’. But when she heard in May the
very distressing accounts of the unfortunate Colin, [she] felt ... that his poor Father was mercifully saved from such sorrow’. She had often dreaded something of the kind with Colin. ‘He always seemed so weak minded & unable to restrain his extravagant ways ... ’ she wrote to Bob. On this occasion Susan and son David sent 130 pounds to Robert to help pay his brother’s bad debts. Colin’s problems were to haunt Robert and later his nephew Alister.

There was one family secret David carried to his grave. Ted had told his father, but no one else, of his secret engagement to Jessie Rhoades of Hastings. It was not until November 1900 that this was revealed by Dadie in a letter to Bob:

Ted’s letter to Mother was a surprise to us all. We had not the slightest idea when he left home that he was leaving anyone behind that he cared for, outside this household, but I am not surprised that he told no-one but Father as we naturally should not have taken the matter so seriously as it no doubt was to him. However I hope all will go well with them now & that the young lady whose name we haven’t yet heard will make him a good wife ...

Jessie came to Coravante before sailing for Australia and was much liked by all the family. She and Ted were married on 8 May 1901 and went to live at Targinnie Station near Gladstone, Queensland.

David took over his father’s role at Coravante, even attempting to get the station accounts up to date. Then came the second blow. Susan had written to Bob on 8 January 1901 — ‘This day last year dear Father was taken from us — our life is changed since then’. Three months later she herself was dead from ‘a dreadful disease ... she is spared any greater or more acute suffering’, David told Bob. The evening before her death she talked to Dadie about how much their minds ‘were taken up with the things of this world’. She reminded him of the struggles their father had when they were children to get them up early enough each morning so he could ‘have a [Bible] reading before going to business’. David the son was to become a more determined Separatist than his father in the sense of being less understanding of those who left ‘the meeting’.

While old David’s mind was clear until he lapsed into coma, Tom’s was already failing at the time of his brother’s death. When Dadie cycled over to Sydenham to see his uncle after Tom and Grace returned from Norway at summer’s end in 1900, he was distressed to notice his uncle’s ‘mental
faculties gradually growing weaker'. He thought Bob should continue to address Archer & Co.'s letters to him, but also send copies to their Uncle Colin. One of Kate Walker's chatty letters to her brother Jamie at the end of 1903 tells more about Tom's family and his sad state of health:

Yesterday Eva & I called upon Maggie, Mrs Willie Archer, for the first time on her day "at home" in her new house at Sydenham — it is a very pretty & convenient one & she and her daughter Grace Sandeman looked well & happy in it! Charlie Archer & his nice American wife left for India via Marseilles last Saturday — their visit has given great pleasure to my old friend Grace & to Annie her only unmarried daughter; poor old Mr Tom Archer has lost his memory so entirely that I question whether he had pleasure or pain in parting from "Cha": he comes here occasionally still & knows his way! but our names are all forgotten! — his grandson Tom, son of William Archer (Dramatic Critic) is a clever & promising lad of 17 or 18 — he is trying for a scholarship at Oxford early next month — at "Baliol" I believe — he has been captain of Dulwich College for 2 years & Mr Gilkes the headmaster is proud of him, as he was of his Uncle Frank some years ago.

I called this morning at Coravante & saw Toonie Archer — she is again recovering from illness — her only sister Alice [Siss] has an anxious time & their Aunt Miss Stubbs is very delicate — it is well that young David Archer is a stay-at-home brother & in Government & good work in London. I think you know his brother Robert at Gracemere …

Kate Walker commenced this letter with the astonishing news that her brother's Australian letter post-marked 20 October had reached her on 21 November 1903, 'one of the quickest in transit that has come to me'. Most took up to six weeks.

When Tom's son Jim returned home on leave at the end of 1904, his father scarcely knew him and was so ill that Grace could not leave him. Thomas Archer's 'rambling life' ceased for ever on 9 December 1905. His last few years had repeated the pattern of his father's senility in the 1860s. For Grace it was a great comfort that 'the three eldest of her scattered family could be with her at the end'. Jim, in Japan, was not completely isolated from family. 'Gracie and her man' — Ben Stedman were there, also his sister Annie who had become 'Mrs Scott'. She had married a widower and become 'a most satisfactory step-mother … she has done credit to her upbringing', according to Kate Walker. Jim was the only one of Tom and Grace's family not to marry. George Barnard who had praised him as a very young man, described him in 1905 as 'a splendid
fellow — unselfish & unspoiled in an uncommon way ... I would like to see him mated to a woman worthy of him’. This was not to be.

Tom’s eldest son, William (young Willie), the most distinguished Archer of his generation, was neither happy in his marriage nor in the duplicity he felt obliged to practice during his parents’ lives. Had they been aware of his privately professed atheism, or his extra-marital affair with the actress Elizabeth Robins, they would have been more devastated than David and Susan were by Colin’s weakness in money matters. While H.G. Wells could address him in an undated letter as ‘Dear Atheist’, William did not publish his anti-God articles until after his mother’s death in September 1911. And it is probable that only his brother Charles knew of his discreet affair with Elizabeth Robins.

Shortly before Tom Archer’s death, William exchanged letters with his long-time friend and literary sparring partner, George Bernard Shaw, whose levity sometimes astonished the more serious Archer. His letter to GBS on 18 November 1905 illustrates this aspect:

My dear GBS,

I never in my life read a document more utterly beside the mark than your letter. Man alive, I agree with you on every point, and tried to say so ... [but] I seem to have confused you by passing from the subject of incest to family affection. They are entirely distinct in my mind ... In short my analysis of family affection is exactly the same as your own. It arises from habits of companionship, common memories, common vanities, common tastes ... and a score of other perfectly natural and tangible causes ... But whatever its source, family affection is a great and potent fact in human relations: and it is your persistent denial (in relation to incest) of this fact that seems to me sociologically unscientific and artificially tedious. Now make a great effort & try to concede that I am not an idiot. WA.

Willie’s denial of any connection between incest and family affection perhaps reminded him of his ‘emotional relationship’ with his first cousin, Sissie Archer, prior to 1881. Shaw had assessed Willie’s fraternal relationships as ‘strong affection’ for Charles, ‘benevolent affability’ for Jim and ‘apologetic indifference’ to the rest of his brothers. When he learned a few months later that Willie Archer had seen a good deal of Henrik Ibsen without telling his friend, he chided him on ‘the gross secretism of your disposition. Apparently the only person you ever tell anything to is Charles’.22
It was this ‘gross secretism’ in Willie’s nature which enabled him to conceal from Tom and Grace his antipathy towards their religious beliefs and practices. Apparently he did not consider himself hypocritical, merely considerate of his parents’ sensibilities. While there are occasional references to Willie and Frances in David’s and Susan’s letters, there is no hint of criticism or disapproval. They carried the hurt of son Colin’s weakness in money matters to their graves, while Tom and Grace appear to have lived in ignorance of their eldest son’s apostasy while remaining proud of his literary success.

The times through which David’s and Tom’s families grew up in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century were years of economic insecurity, not unlike those experienced by William’s and Julia’s sons in the first half. Just as their sons became scattered over earth and ocean, so did all but one of David’s and Susan’s sons in migrating to Australia, while all but three of the Tom Archer family, daughters as well as sons, lived abroad in such diverse locations as New South Wales, Singapore, India, Pakistan and Japan. Whether on land or sea, in the civil service, banking or the British Army, they were virtually forced overseas by lack of employment opportunities for the well educated in Britain. While Tom’s scattered family provided occasional excuses for jaunts abroad, David’s Australian sons depended almost entirely on letters to keep in touch with their English home. The two British benedicts ended their lives in modest comfort. This was well deserved. In earlier years they had contributed first to William’s and Julia’s financial survival, and later provided pensions for William’s poverty-stricken brothers, John and Sandy, in London. David and Tom had come a long way in time and circumstances since their rough bush lives on the frontiers of Australian settlement from the 1830s to the 1850s.
There were Archer descendants living in England in the early 1990s who had clear memories of the sons and daughters of both David and Tom. Tom's family, well scattered in the course of their chosen careers, or in the case of the girls, following their husbands to outposts of empire, lived in retirement close to one another in Surrey. One of Tom's great-grandsons, (Sir) Anthony Parsons, a distinguished British diplomat, had vivid memories of his grandmother, Dooie (Tom's and Grace's second daughter Julia), also of most of her brothers and all but one of her sisters. In childhood and early teens, these were the 'children's voices' at Gracemere in the 1870s. Extracts from Anthony Parsons' recollections 'bring to life' most of Tom's offspring, but more importantly provide a realistic picture of polite life in rural England between the two World Wars:

'My Archer senior relations — my maternal grandmother (Julia-Dooie), and her brothers and sisters ... stand out most clearly in recollections of my childhood and youth from the 1920s to the 1940s ... My grandfather, Major General Sir Harold Parsons, was only 61 when he died of a sudden heart attack the night after a successful golf tournament. He woke in the middle of the night, sat up and said to my grandmother, "My God, Dooie, I feel bloody ill" and was dead. My grandmother used to surprise us by telling this story; it was amazing to hear her say "bloody", even to realise she was aware of the imprecation! There is a folklore tale that my grandmother regarded it as incredibly bad form to phone a doctor in the middle of the night. So she lay beside her dead husband until a respectable hour in the morning.
'I think that the independence of mind which had led to the original Glasite breakaway in the 18th century had evolved into a kind of left-wing liberalism exemplified by rationalism, support for the League of Nations, membership of the Fabian Society and of the Left Book Club. The Archers, particularly my grandmother, were patriots but they certainly were not Blimps or True Blue Tories.

'By the time, say the later 1920s, that my memory comes into focus, my grandmother was newly widowed and had moved into Ramley [their house in Surrey], with her brother Charlie [Cha] whose American wife, Aunt Alice, had also died.

'At the Archer homes there was an air of tranquillity and of uneventful contentment ... Materially, they all lived without ostentation. They were, I suppose, what is called "comfortably off" by dint of sharing (as my grandmother and Uncle Charlie did) ... I cannot remember excess but there was no question of denial, only an aversion to waste and extravagance. The quality of the teas [Archer homes] at Ramley and especially at Tyting will always remain in my memory!

'My grandmother was for us the central star in the family constellation. Even as a boy I used to regard her marriage to my grandfather as an improbable union. In spite of the stories of breaking wild horses on Gracemere station when in her teens, she was a living emblem of Victorian prudery and avoidance of contact with life's unpleasantness. "Good God, Irene, I've been married to your mother-in-law for over 25 years but I've never seen her with so little on," my grandfather remarked when he met my mother in the passage in the middle of the night wearing a nightie, shortly after my parents were married in 1919. My mother, who loved the Archers with an amused affection, nicknamed them "the Ostriches" because of their habit of pretending that disagreeable things had not happened and did not exist ...

'I think that [my grandparents] met through the agency of Uncle Charlie who had been at Sandhurst with my grandfather and had gone to India as an officer in the Dorset Regiment in 1882 the same year that my grandfather joined the 2nd Queens in Calcutta. Uncle Charles had transferred to the Punjab Regiment and my grandfather had returned to India in the mid 1880s from the Burma campaign. I have a photograph
of my grandmother with her father and Uncle Charlie in Simla in 1885 ...

'From photographs she was no beauty while he was very much a Kiplingesque "dashing young officer." He was three years younger than her, a fact which she concealed until her 80th birthday when pride in longevity overcame discretion and she owned up. These remarkable opposites married in St Peter's Church, Dulwich, in 1892 ...

'The marriage was, at least to outsiders, an amazing success. Their only child, my father (Colonel H.A.J. Parsons MC 1895–1945) was born in Singapore and my grandmother lived the life of a peripatetic army wife until my grandfather's retirement in 1923. Singapore, India, South Africa were three of her many stations. She worshipped him and enshrined him and the Parsons family. Her vast scrapbook ... is fuller of Parsons than Archer memorabilia even though her brother William outclassed everyone else in public fame. Harold the Great, as my brother always called him, was equally fond of her although I doubt that passion entered into the equation. There was a nice Irish dressmaker, whom we used to see at Ramley fairly frequently between the wars, who, I am convinced, was my grandfather's mistress. She, much younger, was a friend of Grannie whose discretion was absolute ...

'The two great tragedies in her life were the premature death of her husband (she was a widow for 35 years) and of her son (whom she survived for fourteen years) ... He died of a tumour on the brain in March 1945, some months before his 50th birthday ... Her outward stoicism was admirable. I never saw her give way ... I last saw her in 1959 in her 100th year shortly before she died ...

'Uncle Charlie transferred from the British Army to the Indian Political Service in the 1880s and served almost exclusively in what is now Pakistan, in remote places such as Dir, Swat ... and Chitral, but mainly in Baluchistan where he rose to the high rank of Revenue and Judicial Commissioner. He retired in 1916 at the normal retiring age and held a desk job at the War Office [London] until 1918. Only a year or two ago I found in my papers a cutting from the "Baluchistan Gazette" of 1930 reporting the opening of a new Infant Welfare Centre in memory of Aunt Alice and paid for by Uncle Charlie years after his retirement. I never remember him mentioning this singular act of generosity. To me he was either writing
his biography of his brother [William Archer ... Allen & Unwin, 1931] or engaged in the customary Ramley pursuits: he and my grandmother were formidable croquet players ...

'Uncle Jim (James Archer, 1863–1953) was an engaging peripatetic figure. His career had been in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in Japan. On retirement, most un-Archer like, he had taken a lump sum rather than a pension on the ground that it would hold out for a lifetime. It only just did ...

'Uncle Jim was a great traveller and a renowned amateur photographer. Unmarried, he had no fixed home in Britain: his temporary headquarters was the National Liberal Club in London. He would disappear for months at a time — to Afghanistan, New Zealand, India — with a minimum of impediments ... he never took more nor less than three socks in his travels. This meant that he always had one clean and one available. After Uncle Charlie died and Uncle Jim's war work of collecting sphagnum moss in Scotland was over, he moved into Ramley for the last years of his life ... He was a great favourite of ours as children and often spent Christmas with us. Being an Archer and a Glasite he was a lifelong Liberal. Not to vote Liberal was a dereliction of duty ...

'Aunt Annie (Mrs Stenhouse Scott, 1868–1961) ... was in her youth the most beautiful of the sisters ... Her husband, Uncle Sten, was either a retired school master or an official in the Department of Education. He was a morose figure who never smiled. My grandfather nicknamed him the side-splitter, a characterisation which stuck: even my grandmother used to say it with a self-disapproving chuckle. By the time I remember her, Aunt Annie also appeared to be, in Wodehouse's phrase, "nursing a secret sorrow." Folk lore had it that she and the future Earl of Winchester had fallen in love when the latter was a jackeroo at Gracemere years before. My great-grandmother [Grace Archer] with the implacable inverted snobbery which had prompted her to discourage her husband [Tom] from accepting a knighthood, is alleged to have scotched the affair on the grounds that her daughter must not marry out of her class. [As Annie was only twelve years old when the family left Gracemere in 1880, the alleged 'falling in love' must have taken place some years later.] She and Uncle Sten lived in a relatively small house on the outskirts of Guildford. They
had no children and, according to my brother, were the leading left-wingers of the family ... 

‘Aunt Grace (Mrs Ben Stedman, 1870–1961), the chatelaine of Tyting Corner, must also have been beautiful in her youth. She is so described by a Norwegian cousin. She was un-Archerish in that she was rather noisy, laughed a lot and was rather good fun. Visits to Tyting were treats ... Uncle Ben had spent his active life in Japan where they were, I think, married ... They had no children. Folk lore ... had it that, on the wedding night, Uncle Ben made some exploratory move. “Ben, what are you doing? Never do that again.” It seems that he obeyed ... 

‘Uncle Frank (Francis Archer, [Fa], 1874–1960) was also a genial, hearty extrovert (by Archer standards). My grandmother regarded him, 15 years younger than her, as a somewhat wayward little boy. “Frank is a very wild croquet player” was one of her favourite comments, delivered with an indulgent smile. Uncle Frank was the only one of the brothers and sisters who went to Oxford (Wadham) after which he pursued a career as a schoolmaster in Bolton, Lancashire. [His eldest brother William was a graduate of Edinburgh University.] Like the rest he was very musical and was an accomplished violinist ....

‘I have scarcely mentioned the most famous Archer of all, Uncle Willie ... I do not remember him personally although his fame and accomplishments permeate all Archer houses. I probably learnt about Ibsen before I heard of Shakespeare ...

‘I do not remember my Aunt Maggie (born Margaret Archer in 1859) [nor did he ever meet George]. Her daughter Grace, again very musical, married another musician, Hugh Horne of the China and Japan Consular service. In 1923 Aunt Grace took her three children, Lindsay aged about 13, Margaret (Itta) aged about 11, and Alan aged about 4 to collect their father from the consulate for lunch. The great Japanese earthquake of 1923 struck, the Consulate was demolished and Hugh was killed ...’
provided between them a good balance for their children. William was the only one to be free of this influence during adolescence and early adulthood. He was also the only one to crack the Archer mould of conformity. Because he died before Anthony Parsons was old enough to remember this great-uncle, a letter from Willie to George Bernard Shaw in 1923 provides clues to his character at the age of sixty-seven, a year before his premature death. He had been debating publicly with English theologian Dean Inge on the subject of rationalism. When Shaw accused his friend of reaction against the beliefs of old William Archer of Tolderodden, Willie replied:

You have got my grandfather on the brain. He is Your Old Man of the Sea. I believe the old gentleman would find a certain malign satisfaction in haunting you if he could only know it. His theology was very simple, and to my mind much more respectable than Dean Inge’s. It started from this simple premise: All that the Bible says is true. He was by education and environment incapable of conceiving anything else, or of perceiving that the Bible contradicts itself at every turn. When the reason with which, in daily life, he was by no means ill-furnished, [challenged him] he recognised in it the voice of the Devil, & promptly believed it. Dean Inge believes neither in the Bible nor the Devil, but stifles the voice of reason ... Therefore it amuses me to argue with him ... ²

Shaw had long since abandoned any hope of the ‘Archerisation of Shaw ... or the Shawation of Archer’ ³ but continued to enjoy witty arguments with his friend. On this occasion he replied:

... what rationalism means in practice is the belief that the discovery of knowledge is a ratiocinative process, the discovery coming at the end of reasoning as a result of it ... But if you appreciate your new discovery, you set to work to find reasons for it, and always find they have been staring you in the face all your life, just as all the reasons you advance against Dean Inge were staring your grandfather in the face, and were even applied by him very cannily in other directions ... I am not a rationalist ... ⁴

Old William Archer whose life began in 1786 and ended in 1869 was, according to Shaw, influencing his grandson in 1923. Willie, the avowed rationalist, defending the old man’s fundamental religious beliefs against those of the celebrated Dean Inge is almost as remarkable as his wish that his grandfather should haunt George Bernard Shaw.
Colin Archer's grandson, Dr Simon Archer, son of Justus, who went to school and university in England, regretted that he had not met his 'swashbuckling' great-uncle, Thomas, whose published *Recollections* (1897) he so greatly admired. But he did succeed in finding Tom's last resting place in the Crystal Palace Cemetery. More importantly, he had also met Tom's famous eldest son: 'I have memories of William, about 1920, when, with my mother, I heard him lecture on the League of Nations at the English-speaking Union in London'. He had also visited Dooie Parsons and Jim Archer at Ramley — 'he had a passion (most improbably) for Marx brothers films'. It was Frank, the youngest and only Queensland born offspring of Tom and Grace, who kindled a love for classical music in Simon by presenting him with ten Mozart records and a copy of Einstein's *Mozart*. It was Frank who became his brother William's literary heir, a bequest which in 1948 was to lead to conflict with the Ibsen Estate. He told Erling Archer that William had been 'Ibsen's prophet' in England, suggesting that otherwise he might have been unknown.

Simon Archer was also to be reminded of the tragic irony concerning the young Tomarcher (William's son) in his marriage to Alys Morty on 23 February 1918. Five weeks later Lieutenant Thomas Archer left with the King's Own Scottish Borderers for the battlefields. Having come unscathed through four years of war, he was killed on 25 April 1918. Alys, Willie and Frances did not know of his death until after the Armistice. They had hoped he might be a prisoner of war. The irony is that Alys lived until 1984. She was then 102 years old. Simon Archer and his wife Susan grew fond of 'dear old Alys':

When we first met her in Berkhamsted in 1978, she was then 96 and had been widowed for nearly 60 years — a truly remarkable old lady ... Her flat was the essence of “Edwardiana” with lace curtains, red plush 3-piece suite, protected by antimacassars, tea trolley with antique silver service, cucumber sandwiches and Dundee cake! ... We used to drive her out into the lovely local Herefordshire countryside & give her tea at a cafe in her favourite old village of Aldbury, near the Chiltern Hills. She retained an incredible zest for life & one of her favourite pastimes was watching snooker on TV. She knew the names of all the star players & the intricacies of the rules ...  

What on earth would her father-in-law, William, have thought of Alys’ ‘incredible zest’ for snooker? Poor Alys! She had experienced ‘a deliriously
happy honeymoon in Ireland' with Tomarcher in 1918. She had only the memory of it for another 66 years.

David Archer's son 'Dadie', described by one of his cousins as 'old at the age of six', lived in retirement in Birdhurst Rise, Croydon, with his two spinster sisters. Having no nieces and nephews of their own in England they depended upon Tom and Grace's descendants, also Norwegian cousins, to fill the gap. Maggie and her second husband, Willie Minor, who lived comfortably in London, often attended Dadie's Sunday house meetings. Strangely, when Maggie returned from Japan after Willie's sudden death in Yokohama in 1921, she was less welcome than formerly. She had deserted the meeting and was no longer a 'sister': 'Siss and I think it would not be right to ask her to stay with us', David told Robert. They were far less tolerant than their own father. In 1855 he had criticised Edward Walker for not being 'more conciliatory and scriptural' to those who 'left the fold'.

Dadie died in 1938, Toonie in the following year, leaving a bereft Sissie. When she celebrated her eighty-seventh birthday in 1943 she had Norwegian relatives staying with her — Lajla Arentz who held the position of 'companion' and Valborg Jørgensen. Ironically one of the last people to visit this frail old lady before her death in 1945 was Joan and Alister's son, Cedric, then serving in the Royal Australian Air Force. 'Curiously enough Cedric arrived there while Lajla was away in London, which made Aunt Siss pull herself together and realise he was her great-nephew', Jamie's son Alister at Gracemere commented to Tom's son, George, in Sydney. Did she also recall that her own father as a young man had established the 'colony of Archers' in Australia? Or that her grandfather William had founded a 'colony of Archers' in Norway? It seems unlikely. While her earthly body remained, her spirit was on its way to the golden shore for a reunion with her parents.

While Dadie and his sisters had remained firmly anchored to English soil, their cousins had experienced life in Asian or other 'exotic' countries. Here we have seen them in retirement in England's 'green and pleasant land'. The pattern of their lives, as observed by the next generation, reflects a between world wars' peaceful lifestyle of croquet and cucumber sandwiches — at least, for the 'comfortably off'. It was soon to be shattered by the Second World War, which brought half a dozen young Archers to
Europe to call upon the old people, some of whom had been children at Gracemere in the 1870s. As Shakespeare truly said, 'The web of life is of mingled yarn, good and ill together'.
PART IV
Norwegian Anchorage 1861–1939
In following the experiences of two generations of Archers in Australia and Britain, those in Norway have remained as shadowy figures. It is now time to return to ‘the old tree’ from which ‘the young shoots’ evolved.

The male protagonists have already played their various parts in the ‘colony of Archers’ in Australia. They appear again as holiday guests at Tolderodden from time to time or return, like Colin and Jamie, to make permanent homes in Larvik, or, like Willie and Archie, spend their final years in retirement in Norway. As for the former ‘petticoats’, they were liberated in a manner previously undreamed of: travelling abroad, studying music in Oslo or, in Eliza’s case, studying in Copenhagen. But it was Mary who benefited most, through her declaration of independence as a person in her own right, instead of merely being a dutiful daughter and sister under male domination.

The new order ushered in during the 1860s did not bring unalloyed contentment. Charlie’s death in 1861 and Kate’s in 1865 dealt sad blows to Julia and all her family. The third bereavement provided a great relief to all in releasing the earthly body of old William Archer from a long dead intellect.
Charles Archer (1813–1861) was born during the Napoleonic Wars in Europe and died during the American Civil War. ‘The prospect of war with America also looms over us as a nation & we are not in a merry mood for Christmas’, David commented on Christmas Eve 1861.¹

While the American Civil War was far away, the Tolderodden folk were devastated by Charlie’s death. This was the first Archer death in Norway and so much more real than that of poor Jack, unfocused as it had been in 1857 with no corpse and no grave mound. ‘How everything is changed at Tolderodden within the last year’, wrote Julla Jørgensen to Susan Archer in April 1862:

I can’t describe the feeling of emptiness which one feels going about in the garden and house. We must be thankful as long as we have Bestemoer with us ... It was such a comfort to have Uncle Charlie buried in the Lokke, it will be such a pretty place by and by. Mary has got out a great many trees from Scotland which are to be planted there.²

Norwegian law had allowed private burials for dissenters since 1845, and so Charlie’s last earthly resting place was in a sequestered corner of the Tolderodden garden which was soon to be fenced and later identified as the Gravlunden. Charlie’s death provoked more than ‘melancholy memories’ in the long-term. As is so often the case this involved his will. Just a month after his death David advised Willie that their mother had a life interest in the whole of Charlie’s estate and that there was also provision
for their four sisters. These were the terms of the draft will which Charlie had prepared shortly before his death, but as this had not been witnessed it was not legal. At Gracemere Willie found his brother’s legal will made in 1856 in which the chief beneficiary was their father, but there were also a number of family legatees. David pointed out, however, that ‘the income of the Tolderodden people’ depended on decisions relating to conflict between the two wills and especially Charlie’s last wishes. ‘I suppose it goes by law to Father who of course cannot make a Will and so I fear it will be a complicated business’. And so it eventually proved to be.

Meantime all the profits from Charlie’s Queensland flocks of sheep were at their mother’s disposal. David described these as so liberal ‘that Mother is quite frightened and thinks there must be a mistake somewhere. She has gone so old in the habit of strict economy that she cannot reconcile herself to the idea of plenty’. Discussions took place from time to time as to which will should be obeyed. Some of the younger legatees resisted giving up their shares. Eventually in 1868 David reported that all agreed to substitute the draft will for the legal one. Willie, still at Gracemere, favoured the legal document and so ‘rather unsettled the minds of some’. In the end it was resolved amicably, unlike the majority of disputed wills. It was their united love and respect for their mother and grandmother which swayed the gentle rebels.

Colin’s return to Tolderodden just weeks after Charlie’s death lifted Julia’s spirits, but her rheumatic complaint had almost crippled her physically. As the cheerless winter drew to its end, Colin persuaded his mother to ‘take the waters’ at Sandefjord during the summer. When David arrived in August and found his mother had already left home, for the first time ever, he could hardly express ‘how dreary and desolate Tolderodden was without her’. Twenty-five years earlier he had seen his mother as ‘the magnetic pole’ which attracted them all to the old home, and now he described it in reverse.

For several years Colin’s stay at Tolderodden was simply an extended holiday. Any suggestion that he should return to Gracemere was opposed by his mother whose comfort he did increase with some alterations to the old house, but even more through his placid and uncomplaining nature. Both Willie and Tom had admitted to being bad-tempered during the
long, dark and cold winter months. They all agreed that Colin was the only one who could stand the life year-long. Even the winters were made bearable for him by the weekly musical evenings despite some differences of opinion among the group's members. Jane Ann, who by this time was usually referred to as 'Jeannie', was the most accomplished of the family musicians.

Jack's orphaned boy, Willie Minor, who had been sent to Norway after his father's shipwreck and Mary Mowle's death was, not surprisingly, a disturbed child and a continual trouble to his grandmother and aunts. His final report from the Grammar School in 1861 indicates 'good abilities' but with a lower grade for 'moral conduct'. His weekly reports record such indiscretions as 'interrupting the teaching', fidgeting, being late for school, losing his books, forgetting his Norwegian history and scribbling in his exercise books. On one occasion he was one of three boys late for school with the excuse that they 'had been by the stream to look for Th. Olsen's cap'. He became too much for his Norwegian relatives and was bundled off to England where David put him into school at Croydon.

When Jamie returned from Queensland in 1863 for his first spell at home, accompanied by Sandy on a year's leave, that summer was the liveliest in years, if not ever. When the glorious summer of sailing and travelling to northern Norway in company with Colin, Tom and their friends the Eliots, also Kate Jørgensen, came to an end, Jamie had to re-adjust to the long winter ahead. He seems to have managed much better than Willie or Tom. A long letter to Willie provides glimpses of female activity:

...Jane is busy sewing the cover for your Dyne [eider-down quilt], she complains of the want of light; she tells me to say that she envies you the stuff very much and wishes she could have it for a gown, and I must say I think it would be more appropriate to show off Jane's sylphlike figure, than as a covering for your huge proportions ...

I suppose you heard Eliza [Jack's orphan daughter] is going to stay in Copenhagen this winter. Mary & Sandy & I followed her down ... Mary & I spent a very pleasant 10 days there. Copenhagen is a jolly, lively place, splendid theatres with firstrate actors and music. The chief sight is of course ThorvaldSEN's Museum and under Mary's guidance I became quite an enthusiast for his works. We brought casts of several of them home to Moer's disgust & everybody else's delight ...

Julia [Arentz] was here last night playing frandissimo (Archie can instruct
you in the game) till one o’clock in the morning and it’s the greatest fun in the world playing with her when the fates are against her and she makes many blunders; she all but goes into hysterics. Kate [Jørgensen] is of course very busy with her new house, the purchase of which you will have heard. Simon had better lay up a pile as there will be no end of money wanted to supply the highly cultivated tastes of his sisters ...8

Jack’s orphan daughter Eliza was not the only one to benefit from Archer Brothers’ increased prosperity. In an undated letter to Jamie at Tolderodden, Jane referred to her music studies in Oslo, asking ‘how long am I to be allowed to remain here ... I have just had 9 lessons from Kjerulf and I don’t think my progress has been miraculous’. But it was not all work — there were social occasions with Norwegian friends:

Olea is especially kind. On Malla’s birthday she sent up chocolate, coffee and a splendid large kringle and we had quite a party in the forenoon ... after which Ole Bull called & volunteered to come & play in the evening if we were not engaged, which we happened to be to Fru Stephansen but sent a refusal — we had a very pleasant evening.9

Halfdan Kjerulf was a noted Norwegian composer and Ole Bull made his name internationally as a violinist. No wonder they put off their visit to Fru Stephansen. According to family tradition, Ole Bull played at a private concert at Tolderodden. There is a romantic picture of Mozart performing which is dedicated to Malla Jørgensen by Ole Bull and an earlier one to her Aunt Mary Archer. Another name was mentioned in Jane’s letter which was more significant within the family than those of famous musicians — Karen Sofie Wiborg. ‘What does Colin mean by reports about Sofie?’ Jane inquired, ‘she has not been behaving worse than usual lately’.10 The lively young Sofie (later identified by her first name) had been a guest at Tolderodden the previous Christmas and attracted both Jamie and Colin. She was obviously an extrovert, and they had enjoyed teaching her to skate during that winter. Jamie ‘had a very pretty time of it’ skating with her on Oslo Fjord, as he told Colin in the winter of 1864:

Froken Wiborg, who is as eager as ever, has been my companion for an hour or two every day, likewise Lassen who is also becoming an enthusiast. Saturday evening we were at Ole Bull’s concert. It is delightful to hear him. He played a beautiful concerto of Beethoven; I can’t say I admire his own compositions so much; they appear all to be written for effect and to enable him to show
off ... We heard him at Frøkerne Olsen's the other night. He was in capital humour and played wonderfully, but talked a tremendous lot of bosh, very amusing for once in a way but would undoubtedly be tiresome in the long run ... 

I didn't get any of your music to exchange ... so I'll have to buy what Mary wants. No chance of practising the flute here.¹¹

Jamie returned to Queensland in the following year, and it was then Colin who enjoyed Karen Sofie's company on her occasional visits to Tolderodden.

When David arrived for his summer holiday in 1865, Jane was the only sister in good health. Kate was more seriously ill than they realised, but she and her girls in their 'really nice home' were pleased to have Simon home again after his ten years in Australia. What might be called David's 'annual report' to Willie in August of that year reveals the family in a time-warp:

A visit to Laurvig is no longer the almost unmixed pleasure it used to be. I found Father feeble ... a walk up the garden is as much as he can manage without a rest. Mother is a wonder to us all — her spirits are so good & her mind seems just as clear as it ever was. [She] walks in the garden and more than once has driven down in her carriage to see us off on picnics. Poor Kate looked very badly when I first came out. Simon does not yet know what is the matter with his mother — letting him know [that she is dying] cannot answer any good purpose. Mother has been told but not Julia as in her nervous state it might do her harm. Julia has been better of late, she looks well and is generally ready for any fun that is going. The arrival of the new piano the other day gave her & the others great pleasure. Mary only returned from [Gøteborg] 8 days since — the course she underwent has benefited her somewhat but I don't think she is strong. At present she is labouring under one of those violent attacks which amount to a disease — the object at present is a Frøken Zahle, a little lame lady who keeps a school in Copenhagen. She is here at present & seems a sensible & I am told a clever person — but she is no great favourite with the rest of us because she has bedravt [bewitched] Mary.

Jeannie is as merry as a cricket — she is as fond of a romp with Simon as she was 12 or 15 years ago. She & Marianne, Colin & Simon leave today in an excursion to Bergen & home by Christiania. They go in the same steamer as me as far as Christiania & expect to be away about 3 weeks. The sluggish life Colin leads here is telling on him. None of us except him could stand it. I hope this excursion will brighten him up a little. Having Simon with him this winter is a great matter for him. They intend going through a course of
bookkeeping & gymnastics through the winter, to keep themselves from falling into lethargy. Julla seems pretty well for her ... the rest of Kate’s girls are much as usual.

Eliza is now grown to be a young woman. She isn’t much altered from what she was as a girl — still she has ceased to be the trouble & annoyance to Mother she used to be & may slip through life as well as the rest of us. Willie [Minor] will shortly give you a taste of his quality now. He is to leave for London next week & I propose despatching him to Brisbane by an early ship, failing a vessel to Rockhampton direct. He is not held in high estimation here. His character is rather self-willed, indolent ... but I believe he can use his hands pretty well. You must keep him at work if he can be trusted out of sight ...

Jack’s children, considering the loss of their mother, father and two step-mothers, and their up-bringing in locations as diverse as Gippsland, Hobart, Twofold Bay, Sydney and Larvik, and their reputations as difficult children, did in fact ‘slip through life’ as useful and dependable citizens of Norway and Queensland respectively. Willie Minor’s school reports provided no indication of his future dependable character. At least Willie and Eliza appear to have had good health, something lacking in most of their aunts according to David’s assessment at that time.

Kate Jørgensen died on the morning of 15 November 1865, just three months after David’s visit. Surely Simon was told of the nature of her illness. David ‘feared she suffered much latterly’ and believed her family would at first feel relief that this was ended. He rightly thought ‘she will be much missed by our Mother’. Kate was laid to rest beside her husband Simon in Larvik Churchyard, not the family graveyard. This was another sad Christmas. Kate, named Catherine in 1811, had been in her mother’s words, ‘a kind of miracle, like all first-borns’.

David’s comments upon Mary and Frøken Natalie Zahle in his Tolderodden report of 1865 might have been a little cruel, but unknown to him, this was the beginning of the most significant friendship in Mary’s life. Already seen as one of the ‘petticoats’, she appears to have been the ‘odd one out’ in her brothers’ estimation. She was also physically different — tall, bony, and in her later years, mannish in her dress, but also non-conformist. The first hint of Mary’s ‘difference’ in character was revealed in Jack’s letter of 1854 in which he asked her for a description of herself — ‘physical, mental — and eccentric — something I already gathered from Willy’. Mary’s eccentricity at that time was probably no
more than her love of sailing alone and solitary outdoor life in preference to the indoor domestic pursuits expected of ladies. There are no references to this sister sewing a dyne.

David again referred to Mary’s spirit of independence during his summer visit in 1867: ‘Mary is very jolly all things considered. She lives out of doors, she has taken possession of the Bølgen [the family yacht] since Colin built his new boat & cruises about in her all alone’. He also had news for Jamie (back at Gracemere) which must have dashed his spirit: ‘Among the visitors at Tolderodden was your friend (if not more) Miss Wiborg — as gay & irrepressible as ever — certainly not broken hearted ...’

Jamie had returned to Gracemere a little in love with Froken Wiborg, but when she did not reply to his letter he thought it a case of ‘out of sight, out of mind’. Then in 1867 he received her ‘long promised letter’. While his reply is scarcely a love-letter, there is a hint of future pleasures in Norway beyond sailing or skating:

With us out here our pleasantest recollections are all from the time we spend at home, and no wonder, the contrast between it, and the life we lead here, is so great and so much in favour of home life, especially those delightfully dreamy days at “Odden” when one is too lazy to do anything but just enjoy mere existence surrounded by everything beautiful in nature: only now and then rousing ourselves from the state of lethargy to have a sail in Bølgen or a scramble among the rocks ...

There is nothing I can write about in this part of the world to interest you except ourselves. We were fortunate enough to meet all together (five of us) for one whole day, in Brisbane where my brother Sandy is staying. One result of our meeting you will see in a photographic group that Tom takes home. Tom, Sandy and I were there for nearly a month together and spent a delightful time of it, picknicks [sic.] on the river, balls, parties and little social gatherings. Our evenings at home and all alone were perhaps the pleasantest of all, recalling all the reminiscences of our stay at home, and singing all the Norske danske og svenske [Norwegian, Danish and Swedish] songs we could think of probably with more feeling than taste.

We are now again dispersed all over the world probably never all to meet again together. Such is ever the fate of the Archers. At present I am the only one of us on the station. William is in Sydney and Archie attending to public duties in Brisbane. He is made “Stortingsmand” [Member of Parliament]. The responsibility of looking after the place, thus rests on my shoulders and it is no light weight ...
You are kind enough to say you still feel the result of the lessons I gave you. Is it the English [sic.] lessons or those in skating you more particularly refer to? I fear my mind was generally more occupied with the pupil than with the lessons to have done you much good. I would give a good deal to be able to fly on "Niord's Vinger" as we used to on Fritzøe Kilen and the lovely Christianiafjord. The time may yet come again when we shall again enjoy those things together …

Now that you have commenced the correspondence I hope you will be kind enough to keep it up and remember that everything from your part of the world has an interest to us.

How is Lassen getting on? Are you still his "veninde"? [best friend]. By Jane's last letter I see she has been to Christiania for some time this summer, she describes a trip you took to Frognerseteren and I daresay you have had many more in that delightful neighbourhood.

Jeg mindes vel et sted gid jeg var der igen,

If you write again tell me about all the places to which the above lines are appropriate and in the meantime, med mange hilsener til venner I Norge.

Believe me, yours very sincerely,
Jamie Archer.

Five months later, Karen Sofie and Colin Archer were engaged. Writing with the news in February 1868, David admitted that 'all who know the lady think well of her' but although he had met her several times, he was less than enthusiastic in his comments: 'Her manner did not impress me favourably. By all accounts — Jim can tell you about her — Never mind Jim — there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it'.

Simon Jørgensen's engagement to Wilhelmine (Mina) Behrens took place about the same time. 'The event seems to give general satisfaction' according to the family sage, David. He again brought Willie and Jamie up-to-date in his letter of 20 May 1868: 'Colin's and Simon's marriages have occupied the people in Norway so much that I doubt you will hear much from them. The former was to come off on the 18th of the month at Christiania. Colin was to at once set off on a wedding journey to Copenhagen, and Simon has set up house in Christiania'. On Willie's estimation, Simon's share of Gracemere Station was about 4,000 pounds, but it seems likely that he converted it to shares rather than taking a cash payment.

The marriages of his second youngest son and eldest grandson were beyond the understanding of old William Archer. He had already reached
that state in which the body continued to function but the intellect was
dead. From 1864 he seldom left his room. This was a great relief to Julia
who formerly feared his outbursts when downstairs and in company.
Finally, on 2 March 1869, the old romantic breathed his last. ‘This mail
will bear the intelligence I daresay you have been looking for for years’,
wrote David to Willie. ‘Mother and Mary (who has been a great invalid)
stood the shock better than would have been expected’, he concluded.21
It is more likely that they felt relief rather than shock. The man depicted
by his son Jack as ‘born under an unlucky star’ and by Charles as ‘wrecked
upon the shoals of poverty’ suffered the final irony during his last years.
His Australian sons in the 1860s were prosperous wool growers and with
their usual generosity had increased Tolderodden’s share.

William Archer’s lifespan, 1786 to 1869, covered an era of tremendous
social change: first the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars; then the
beginning of the steam age and industrial revolution with worsening
economic conditions as machines replaced craftsmen and women. These
developments all contributed to social dislocation, especially through
migration. Every one of these changes affected William’s life and that of
his family. The sons’ affection and respect for their father never faltered
despite the financial and emotional strains he placed upon them from time
to time. David provided an early clue in a letter to Kate in 1837 at a time
when failing business enterprises made William dependent upon scholar­
ships for his sons’ education. Having just heard news of ‘late calamitous
events’ in his father’s business, he could still comment on how blessed they
were to have such parents:

Not only have they painfully struggled to bring us up respectably during our
helpless childhood, but what interest they now take in us in our more mature
years. I have seen something of the world since I left you, but such a woman
as my Mother, no not one, nor such a man of more honourable feeling and
upright principle than my Father.22

There was the other side of the relationship as well. William, ‘unlucky’
in business, was doubly fortunate in his marriage to Julia Walker and for
their sons’ generosity. They had been their father’s keeper in a financial
sense since the late 1830s, and would continue to ensure their mother’s
and sisters’ comfort for as long as they lived.
Mary Hoists Her Flag

The Archer women were now in the old home without a man for the first time: the old patriarch William was dead, and Colin was married and living in his own home, Lilleodden, built in the grounds of Tolderodden. Julia, Mary, Jeannie and Eliza appear to have enjoyed the change. 'Mary, Jeannie and the Jørgensens are all thriving', reported David on his summer visit in 1870. And before long news of Sandy’s proposal to Minnie MacKenzie was ‘exciting all womankind’ — Archers at least. David himself was more concerned about the Franco-Prussian War, ‘the horrid war’ in which he thought the Germans would not fail in taking Paris — ‘but the question is, what then? Then there is the Russian business. My own feeling is that we shall not have any durable peace for many a day ...’¹ His judgement was to be proved sound. Meantime he had problems to solve closer to home — those involved with the changing lifestyle at Tolderodden. Mary had already hoisted her flag of independence and there was revolution (of the female kind) in the air as David confided in Willie in 1874:

I fear there is no way of limiting the expenses at Tolderodden without changing the system altogether. The price of most things has increased much of late and the scale upon which people live has also risen so that the same relative style cannot be kept up without increased expenditure. Then there is the old story of bad management — this I see no cure for except at the expense of a complete revolution which would not be expedient at the present time. Have they not a right to spend the 1750 [pounds] profit on C. Archer’s estate if they desire it ...²
Mary made her most revolutionary demand in the following year as it involved money — men's business entirely up to this time. 'Mary is desirous of having the money at the deposit of Tolderodden in the Savings Bank in Laurvig in Mother's name so they can draw on it as required', reported David who was well aware that it was Mary not Mother who would handle the income from Charlie's estate. Mary thus signalled her intention to become the 'man of the house' from this time. Money continued to be credited to her mother's account — almost 900 pounds in 1879 — and to be administered by Mary.

Julia Archer, thanks to her family's decision to annul Charles' legal will, no longer required her other sons to make sacrifices on her behalf. She could sit back and enjoy her grandchildren — Colin's and Karen's five children all born by 1879 and living next door at Lilleodden. Then there were David and Susan with their ever increasing family. David usually brought some of the older children to Tolderodden with him each summer. Archie, Jamie and Sandy (and Minnie) all had holidays there during the 1870s and Tom and family also before departing for Australia in 1872. Archie was there occasionally and Willie more often than in his young days. And always there were the Jørgensens and Arentz' each producing great-grandchildren for Bestemoer.

Tolderodden and its 'magnetic pole' faced the greatest change of all in April 1880 when Julia Archer's springtime illness proved to be fatal. She was in her eighty-ninth year, having outlived William by eleven years. Unlike him, her mind remained clear to the very end. Willie was there with Mary, Jeannie and Julia Arentz, Archie and Colin. Tom was on his way to Norway (having just returned with Grace and family from Queensland) but arrived too late to see his mother. Jamie was at Gracemere, Sandy in Brisbane and David in England. Sandy in a letter to Colin no doubt expressed what all felt about their mother:

... It is touching to see that up to the very last she was true to that forgetfulness of self and consideration for others which was peculiar to her. What cause for thankfulness ought to be to us that she was spared any acute bodily suffering, and now that it is all over it is surely cause for thankfulness also that she did not survive the capacity of things which used to afford her pleasure. I did not think the end was so near in spite of Willie's recent warnings. What a blow it must have been to Tom, poor fellow. Archie tells me he was looking forward to seeing her ... It will be a terrible blank for many a day and it is impossible
that such an event can be without important influences in the future. What these may be only time can show, but I do not think any weakening of our love for our old home should be one of them. With those of another generation it may be different, but to all of us the dear spot is full of associations which can only die with us, I should think, though the central figure is gone. I suppose with William that the best tribute we can pay to her memory is the continuance of that unitedness which has no doubt been influenced in the past by what she was to us. Let us keep her memory green and to remember that her greatest happiness was to see her children united.4

After their mother's death, Mary was the senior member of the household, and as such, enjoyed more financial and social independence. This enabled her in 1886 to build a holiday cottage which she named Meheia (May Hill or Springtime Hill), above Moholt in a beautiful valley 25 kilometres from Larvik. There she and Natalie Zahle and other friends could spend peaceful summer holidays, travelling from Larvik on the Farrisbåten, the steamer named for Lake Farris on which it plied. There was a short walk from the wharf to Mary's cottage.

Back in 1863 when Jamie and Sandy accompanied Mary and Eliza to Copenhagen, Jamie described the 'very pleasant 10 days' they spent there in sightseeing, but he omitted one detail: their meeting with the Danish educator, Natalie Zahle, who became their guide. Mary had insisted upon meeting her. There was instant rapport between the two strong-minded women. Zahle spent Christmas of 1864 at Tolderodden and was again a guest there during David's summer visit in 1865 when he described Mary as 'bewitched' by the 'little lame lady'. During Mary's visit to Copenhagen in the winter of 1866 the two friends were photographed together — the strength of character clearly visible in each face. The caption on Mary's gift of this photo: 'For Natalie Zahle as a memento of the week 21–28 October 1863'. This was the momentous beginning of a life-time friendship.5 From 1886 onwards, they spent many summer holidays at Meheia in its lovely valley with mountain walks and relaxing picnics beside still lakes.

While there is no contemporary account of very early holidays at Meheia, one written in the summer of 1903 by a female relative of the James Archers, Eleanor Berkeley, depicts the beauty and peace of the cottage environment:
The Sunday before last Lullul and Mary [Colin’s daughters] Frøken Mynt (a young Danish girl of 25) and myself left Larvik at 8.30 am by the steamer. We steamed up Farris lake amidst the most beautiful scenery for 2 hours, arriving at last at a valley called Slemdal where old Miss Mary has a little wooden house. To this Lull & I walked, Mary and Frøken M. cycled — then we unpacked our basket of sumptuous repast of salmon, potatoes, bread & butter, marmalade & jelly, buns & cakes & cream & milk & had dinner, rested a little, then set out for a little inland lake called “Black” on account of its colour … [we] then walked to another beautiful lake … and lay down on a high bank to drink in its beauty … We arrived home at 9pm and were regaled with delicacies at Tolderodden (it was Miss Mary who paid for us all) & then went out to the assembled families in one of the summer houses to recite our adventures …

In 1889 Mary’s name had headed the female signatories asking for the interest on their money invested in Archer Brothers. As well as Mary and Jane Archer, their nieces Julia (Julla) and Marianne Jorgensen and Amalie (Malla) Elligers signed the document. This indicates that the females by this time provided part of the financial rescue package for the Queensland firm which had fallen on bad times due to drought and economic depression. William in his retirement (now restored to his full name to distinguish him from two nephews, Jack’s Willie Minor and Tom’s young Willie) spent his summers at his farm and fishing lodge at Horstad and his winters at Tolderodden. It is unlikely that Mary deferred to him regarding financial matters.

Most importantly for Mary in the years following her mother’s death, she was free to live the kind of life she most enjoyed, out of doors, travelling with Frøken Zahle or holidaying with her at Meheia or spending time in her school community in Copenhagen. Natalie Zahle was a Danish intellectual and teacher who founded the first secondary school for girls in Denmark in 1877. David had referred in 1868 to the two women ‘knocking about Scotland together’ and returning via Paris and Switzerland. While it was Charles, not David, who referred many years earlier to women as ‘petticoats’, David’s view of their place in the family was the accepted conservative one as daughters and wives. It was also customary for a brother or other male relative to accompany the unmarried sisters when they travelled from home. Mary broke the Archer female mould in this as in other conventions.

Twentieth century readers might interpret Mary’s being ‘bedravet’ or
bewitched by Zahle as a way of describing a lesbian relationship. In reality it appears simply to have been instant rapport and the beginning of a life-long friendship in which two independent, like-minded single women enjoyed each other's company while travelling or during leisure time at Tolderodden, Meheia or in Copenhagen.

Danish historian and Zahle's biographer, Dr Birgitte Possing, noted that Mary Archer was Zahle's closest friend for forty years. In researching her two volume biography she found no evidence to suggest a lesbian relationship. Her Danish readers thought otherwise, but she counters this by describing female relationships in Scandinavia based on social grounds:

Not only [Zahle and Archer] but a lot of unmarried, partly independent and highly skilled women from the period lived together and/or had devoted mutual relationships. Whether or not these relationships were erotic isn't the most important question as far as I am concerned. The important thing is that they were friends, travelled together, supported each other and exchanged ideas. In that respect they made themselves and each other able to have a way of living that otherwise was reserved exclusively for men.\(^8\)

The same kind of living arrangements were common in English speaking countries prior to the First World War and subsequent 'liberation' of women into the wider workforce. Natalie Zahle continued to visit Tolderodden — she is in the midst of the family in a photograph taken at the old home in the 1880s. Mary's name disappears from the family correspondence during much of the 1880s and 1890s, indicating that she was often away from home. It reappears about the turn of the century.

References are made from time to time of Mary travelling first to Goteborg and later to Copenhagen for homoeopathy — a kind of immunisation by small doses of drugs which in a healthy person would produce symptoms like those of the disease.\(^9\) Her complaint is not identified but possibly was a 'weak chest'. Mary, as a Separatist, shunned traditional medicine and medical practitioners in the same manner as she shunned churches and clergy. Those of Mary's brothers who adopted Separatism mostly used homoeopathy, while Edward Walker after one trial of traditional medicine for his consumptive first wife Harriet, took her to a homoeopath. She died several years later after bearing nine children in her short life span. Mary Archer, however, was to enjoy life well beyond the Biblical three score and ten.
David's summer visits to Tolderodden were infrequent after his mother's death and the migration of his older sons to Australia. Throughout the 1880s he wrote every month to Colin on business which was usually associated with Archer Brothers or Colin's Tolderodden boatyard, but other than sending love to 'all at Tolderodden', there is little news of his sisters. Likewise letters to his son Robert, managing Gracemere from the mid 1880s, refer to Mary, Jeannie and Eliza only when they are his house guests at Croydon. The most significant events which affected all the Archers, 1880 to 1890, whether in Australia, England or Norway, were first their mother's death, then the marriage in 1885 of James Archer to Louisa MacKenzie and their removal to Larvik several years later.

It was about this time that Tom's son, young Willie, brought his wife Frances and their two year old son Tomarcher for a visit to Tolderodden. The family found Frances 'sweet, charming, intelligent, but full of fads. Their conservatism was disturbed by her Socialistic principles, and the practicable application to which she put them'. At the time of her marriage to Willie in 1883, she was described as 'an unusually clever and accomplished woman'. One of Willie's cousins commented, '... as a family we were pleased to discover that "the Critic" had married someone who had very independent ideas of her own and was not afraid to express them'.

Surely Mary Archer would have experienced rapport with Frances during that visit to Tolderodden.

James and Louie's arrival in Larvik and the births of their first two children provided events for rejoicing, but in February 1890 they were all devastated by the deaths of Sandy and Minnie in the wreck of the Quetta in Queensland waters. As already indicated, they had been on their way home to Tolderodden for another of those memorable holidays such as that in 1883 when Sandy's paintings and Minnie's 'wreaths' had decorated their 'Norske Album'.

Mary appears to have been away from home — possibly sharing the school-house with Zahle in Copenhagen — when the shocking news reached there. Minnie's letter from Brisbane on the eve of departure telling of their holiday plans is addressed to 'dear Jeannie' and so are David's two letters after news of the tragedy reached London. When Mary heard of it, perhaps her mind went back to 1863 when Sandy was home on leave and built a summer-house in the garden especially for her. Jamie's description
of it for Willie's benefit suggests that Sandy was well aware of Mary's need to separate herself at times from the noise of the family:

[Sandy's] principal job since our return from our grand tour has been the building of a summer house for Mary and a stunning job he has made of it. It is built on the ledge of rocks on the Høie Bjerg just above where the Gyngebenk [hammock] used to stand. It is six sided, the pillars of birch with the bark on and the lower part closed in with small fir saplings in the rough, and a peaked shingled roof. Since he finished this he has been busy making a large water-colour picture of the Rjukan [famous waterfall] …

Mary's summer house, in its construction materials, bore some resemblance to an Australian log hut with shingled roof, with birch and fir trees substituted for ironbark logs.

The ties of friendship between Mary and Zahle naturally enough exceeded those of married brothers by 1890. The reasons are clear enough for a woman who found domesticity stifling, and intellectual discussions with Zahle stimulating and challenging. Birgitte Possing in her Viljens styrke — Natalie Zahle — En biografi om dannelse, køn og magtfikkenhed (1997) throws much light on this subject. Zahle was almost the exact contemporary of Mary. She was born one year later in 1827 and died five years later in 1913. But as her parents had died when she was a child, she had a vastly different upbringing from that of Mary with her twelve siblings. Her intellectual growth was obviously not hampered or forced into a 'Scottish mould'. A brief quotation from Possing's 'English Summary' gives some idea of Zahle's contribution to the education of girls and their future emancipation, as well as personal satisfaction in her friendship with Mary:

[Zahle's] main contribution to Danish history was to open up for women the portals to a universe that, until the mid-nineteenth century, had been the exclusive domain of male citizens. Her efforts were crucial to a many-faceted democratisation of access to knowledge, and to contemporary pedagogical, cultural and feminist circles …

… in the 1860s she initiated her life's most fascinating and enigmatic friendships: on the one hand with a similarly minded woman personality from Norway, Mary Archer; and on the other with Povline Goul, who periodically lived with her and kept house for her. Her correspondence with these two women, apart from a single letter, has been systematically lost or removed … 11
Zahle established her school for girls in 1877. She wished it to have 'the status of a national women's school, high school and teacher training college for adults, and finally boarding facilities and associated specialist schools'. While she saw herself as 'a solitary culture builder', Possing points out that she was in fact part of a wider movement — 'that of women's emancipation'. Even so, within that movement her own attitude was ambivalent, 'since on the one hand she asserted the inward and outward equality of women with men, and on the other hand she wanted them to assert their “true femininity”'.

Mary Archer — though not a public figure like Zahle — had her own ambivalence within the family circle. She eventually asserted the same kind of independence as that enjoyed by her brothers — managing the household budget and travelling unchaperoned — yet remained (as long as her parents lived) a dutiful daughter. It is evident that her Danish friend liberated Mary's mind in the same manner that Mary herself liberated her body and spirit by sailing alone or in her solitary walks. Family legend, supported by photographic evidence, confirms that Mary in her later years smoked cigars and dressed in mannish clothes, not only in Copenhagen, but also at Tolderodden where behind her back she was referred to as 'Mary Man'. While this outward form of dress and relaxation did not necessarily apply to Zahle, Possing sums up her position in a retrospective that in some aspects could also be applied to Mary Archer:

While with her work [Zahle] had elevated women above their age, she herself lived like a man of her time, and chose to accept the costs that the social norms for women imposed on her self-expression: in public she could not formulate her own vision of life, and she renounced her personal dream of closeness. Her existence became a paradox of power and marginality.

Both women were Christians, each in a private and non-evangelising way, and in Mary's case at least, unorthodox. Given the insights on Zahle which Possing reveals in her biography and the set-up of her school with its kind of lay-women's community, it becomes apparent that the absence of Mary's name among those referred to at Tolderodden during the 1880s and 1890s suggests that she was often a member of this community. While there is no evidence to confirm that her thinking on women's education and emancipation matched those of Zahle, it stands to reason that their friendship would not have survived for forty years if they had not been
like-minded. Within the Archer letters there is fragmented evidence to show that Mary, like Zahle, believed in a society "where unmarried women had equal status with men in everything from private to public privileges and responsibilities, while married women were to take up their position as the inner power centre in the home and society ..."14

Mary's final years, like those of Jeannie and Eliza, were so much part of Tolderodden that they are told in a later chapter on the history of the house itself. There they are seen in their relationships with Colin's children and grandchildren, Jamie's children, and visiting family members from England, as well as the two brothers firmly 'anchored' in Norway, Colin (from 1861) and Jamie (from 1888). In her final years Mary remained as she was so often seen in the 1860s and 1870s, solitary and out-of-doors. Jack's Willie Minor, in letters to his cousin Robert Archer at Gracemere in the early years of the twentieth century, provides two glimpses of Mary in old age which reveal that her flag of independence was still flying freely. At the age of 76 in 1902 when the summer weather was so cold and uninviting that Willie Minor 'didn't do much boating ... A[unt] Mary was out pretty regularly'. Four years later, in mid-winter, 'All the old folks are much in their usual, A[unt] Mary walking or driving [out] every day'.15

As far as the correspondence is concerned, Mary remained as elusive, either as writer or recipient, as she had been in her young days. As one of the young 'petticoats' she had been completely overshadowed by her older married sisters Kate and Julia, and when the two youngest brothers, Colin and Jamie, went to Australia their letters were invariably to Jane Ann, closest to them in age. There is no way of knowing whether Mary, having received letters, then destroyed them. Birgitte Possing confirms correspondence between the two friends, twice each week, but also the absence of archival proof.

The local people accepted Mary as 'different'. Writing in an Oslo publication twenty years after her death, 'Sphinx' had this to say:

... Just a word about Mary, "Lady Mary", the eldest [sic.] daughter, tall and erect. Like all the Archers she took long strides and her clothes had something masculine about them. In those days no woman smoked, but Mary Archer smoked Havannahs — she could do it without shocking anyone because she was Mary Archer, a sovereign personality in all her goings and comings. There was an air about the Archers of Tolderodden.16
Thomas (Tom) Archer (1823–1905), a keen reader himself, introduces his young children to books. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)

Tom Archer and wife Grace, settled for the time being at Gracemere, photographed in 1872 with three of their children, Sandy’s wife, and a nephew. Back, L. to R. Grace, Jack’s son Willie Minor, Minnie, Charlie. Front, L. to R. Margaret (Maggie), Julia (Dooie), and their father Tom. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)
Maggie Archer, at about age fourteen, with her horse Hardie at Gracemere in 1872. (Courtesy, Mrs Anne Anderson, England.)

Louie and Minnie MacKenzie, sisters who married two Archer brothers: Louie to Jamie Archer in 1885, Minnie to Sandy Archer in 1871. (Courtesy, Mrs Alison Forster, Brisbane.)
Alexander (Sandy) Archer (1828–1890) settled in Brisbane in 1864 as manager of the Bank of New South Wales and in 1867 became its Queensland Inspector. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)

Archibald (Archie) Archer (1820–1902) who settled at Gracemere in 1861 and became Member for Rockhampton in the Queensland Parliament in 1867. He served in later governments, retiring to Norway in 1896. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)
William (Willie) Archer, who had arrived in Australia as a nineteen year old in 1837, retired to Norway in the early 1880s. He divided his time between Tolderodden and his farm and fishing lodge in northern Norway, just below the Arctic Circle. (Courtesy, Mrs Alison Forster, Brisbane.)

David Archer (1816-1900) on holiday with wife Susan and unmarried daughters Alice (Sisie) and Susan (Toonie) and son David (Dadie), relaxing in the English countryside. (Courtesy, Mrs Julie St Quintin, England.)
Part of the extended family at Tolderodden in 1880: Back, L. to R. Annie Archer, Eliza Archer, Kitty Elligers, Maggie Archer, Dadie Archer, unknown, Natalie Zahle (seated). Front, L. to R. Tom Archer, Susan Archer, David Archer, Eivind Jørgensen, Mary Archer. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)

Three generations of Kate Jørgensen's family in Larvik, c. 1894: L. to R. Amalie (Malla) Elligers, Erik Jørgensen (Winter), Erling Archer (Jamie's son), Kitty Elligers, Julla Jørgensen. (Courtesy, Per Jørgensen, Norway.)
Mary Archer in yachting dress about the time that she skippered her yacht Maggie in the 1890 Risør Regatta. (Courtesy, Mrs Anne Anderson, England.)

Mary Archer Heggen's painting of 'Meheia', her Aunt Mary Archer's summer retreat near Moholt, about two hour's steamer voyage from Larvik on Lake Farris. (Courtesy, Mrs Anne Anderson, England.)
'Hejmen', Jamie and Louie Archer's home in Larvik where their younger children were born in the 1890s. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)

On the tennis lawn at 'Hejmen' in the spring of 1890, Jamie, Louie (far right) visibly pregnant, with son Erling and Colin's daughter, Lullul and Mary in costume. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)
Jamie and Louie Archer on a snowy winter’s day in the late 1890s with their children, Ronald, Erling, Alister, Cedric, Rolf and Kathleen. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)

Family beginnings for Colin’s son Illam Archer and his wife Jenny (Sorensen): the first three children, L. to R. Jenny, Karen and Tomas. (Courtesy, Mrs Anne Anderson, England.)
Time was running out for several of these Archer siblings, meeting in Larvik c. 1900: Standing: Colin and Tom. Seated: Archie, Grace, Jane Ann and Mary. (Courtesy, Mrs Anne Anderson, England.)

Tolderodden with extended family basking in the summer sun. Lived in by Archers since 1827, it remained in family ownership until 1939. (Courtesy, James R. Archer, Norway.)
Colin Archer on board the polar ship *Fram*, which came off his Rekkevik slipway in 1892. *Fram* was his great masterpiece as a naval architect, but it was his innovative rescue boats, fishing boats and pleasure craft which made him a 'saint' to the people of Norway. (Courtesy, Mrs Anne Anderson, England.)

Last survivors of the nine Archer brothers, Jamie and Colin, enjoying a game of chess in September 1909. (Courtesy, Stephen Archer, England.)
David Archer's sons, Robert and John (Jack), who arrived in Queensland in 1880 and were photographed in Rockhampton a year or two later.

Another of David's six sons to come to Australia, James (Jim) who, like his Uncle Jack, became a sea captain.

Robert Stubbs Archer (1858-1926) in the prime of life as a stud cattle breeder, General Manager of Archer Brothers and Director of Mt Morgan Gold Mining Company. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere, and Mrs Alison Forster, Brisbane.)

Mrs Robert Archer (Daisy), nee Marwedel, about the time of marriage in 1889.
Edward Walker Archer (1871–1940), the youngest of David's sons and the last to call Queensland home. He became Member for Capricornia in the Australian Parliament, 1906–1910 and in 1914–15 he was a Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)

Robert and Daisy Archer with their children, Joan, David and Archie, photographed on the front steps of Gracemere homestead c. 1905. (Courtesy, A. J. (Jim) Archer, Gracemere.)
Two young Norwegians, Alister Archer and Nikolai Aagaard, in their jackerooing days at John Archer’s Torsdale Station in the Callide Valley, Queensland, c. 1911. (Courtesy, John Aagaard, Mt Tamborine.)

Joan Archer (grand-daughter of David) and Alister Archer (son of Jamie), newly betrothed, soon after Alister’s naturalisation and enlistment in the Australian Defence Forces, January 1916. (Courtesy, Mrs Alison Forster, Brisbane.)
Alister Archer (son of Jamie) in the garden at Gracemere with his three children, L. to R. Cedric, James (Jim) and Alison, c. 1935. (Courtesy, Mrs Alison Forster, Brisbane.)

‘Fair girls on grey horses’: Alison Archer (Forster), Doris Aagaard (nee Archer) and Karen Aagaard (Delpratt), competing in the Rockhampton Show, c. 1940. (Courtesy, Mrs Alison Forster, Brisbane.)
John and Brenda Archer’s golden wedding celebration with extended family at Torsdale, Queensland, in 1948:

**Back, L. to R.** Alister Archer, Bill Nott, Nan Archer, Paddy Archer, Fred Nott, Emma Nott, Jessie Nott, John Aagaard, Doris Aagaard, (Mrs) Tim Nott, Margaret Nott, Sydney Porteous, John Nott, Sandy Archer with son Peter on shoulder.

**Seated Centre:** John and Brenda Archer (nee Nott).

**Front, L. to R.** Nikolai Aagaard, Sue Porteous, Helen Aagaard, Betty Porteous, Jenny Delpratt, Fanny Delpratt, Nina Marwedel.

(Courtesy, Mrs Alison Forster, Brisbane.)
Revisiting the Past: Australian Archers at Gracemere homestead to celebrate the centenary of Charles and William Archer's 'discovery' of the Fitzroy River in May 1853.


Seated, L. to R. Alison Forster, Pam Archer, Joan Archer nursing grand-daughter, Jennifer Archer, Sandy Archer, Bruce Archer, Sally Archer, Jessie Archer, Alison Archer.

Seated on lawn, L. to R. Robert Forster, Jan Archer, Mary Archer, Tom Archer, Alister Forster, Charles Archer, Peter Archer, Lyn Archer, Pat Archer, Jim Archer.

(Courtesy, R. C. M. (Cedric) Archer, Gracemere.)
Mary Archer, had she been born even fifty years later, might have risen to the same kind of physical challenges which took women to the tops of mountains formerly climbed only by men. An even later birthdate might have found her sailing solo around the globe in the manner of the Australian Kay Cottee in the 1980s. Mary Archer sailing her yacht *Maggie* in the regatta at Risør in 1890, came third in the 5–6 ton class. The fact that David ignored such news in his letters to Robert in Queensland is a fair indication that he disapproved of his sister taking part in a male sport. Mary, born in Larvik in 1826, broke the bonds which bound most of her female peers in the western world (with the notable exception of Natalie Zahle) to roles as dutiful daughters, wives and mothers. While her parents and brothers might have been alarmed prior to 1880 by her independent spirit, there is little written confirmation. Jack's fleeting reference in 1856 to his sister's 'eccentric' nature probably referred only to her preference for the out-of-doors. David's comment in 1865, that Froken Zahle had 'bedrivit' Mary, was as close as he ever came to written criticism of her lifestyle. There was no one within her extended family with whom she could have shared her emancipated views — not even Tom's intellectual and agnostic son, William the drama critic. It was in her friendship and companionship with Zahle that Mary found intellectual and emotional fulfilment.
William and Julia's five youngest children who were born in Larvik — Mary, Sandy, Jane Ann, Colin and James — naturally had a deeper attachment to Norway than the eight who were Scottish born. Sandy was the only one of the five whose bones did not return to the soil of the Tolderodden Gravlund.  

The 1860s, as already indicated, revealed Jamie and Colin as rivals in love. But with Jamie back in Queensland by 1865 and Colin still at Tolderodden, the outcome was almost inevitable. Perhaps it was sheer coincidence, but shortly after news of Colin and Karen's marriage reached Gracemere, Willie sent Jamie off to Sandy in Brisbane 'to try if he could put some fushman [fire] in him. His suave [manner] has for some time been out of sorts & his ryg [back] has been anything but strong for several months'.¹ Willie's plan was partially successful. A month later Sandy commented that Jamie's back was improving and he hoped soon to report him 'safe and sound in mind and limb'.² When Jamie's back was still causing pain a year later, David thought the cause might be 'internal piles' and if costiveness was a problem he should take 'as much salts as will lie on a sixpence in a pint of soft water'.³ David was never short on advice, whether on boats, backs or boy-girl relationships.  

When Colin and Karen's first child was born in 1869, Jamie's letter of congratulation and good wishes to all three contained no hint of continuing disappointment. His second holiday visit to Larvik in 1873–74, however, lacked the magic of his first with its skating and concerts, despite
a visit to Copenhagen and a sail ‘up the Baltic’ with brother Archie. His journey back to Queensland began badly at the end of September 1874 with a tedious passage from Norway to Scotland ‘towing a dismantled & water-logged ship part of the time’. 4 Ill luck followed when he was delayed in Singapore, and he was not back at Gracemere until March 1875. With Tom and Grace at the homestead, Jamie then began his lonely life as manager of Minnie Downs which was to be his lot for the remainder of the decade.

For Colin the 1870s were notable for the begetting of four more children and the building of twenty more sailing craft. The first child was named Julia, following the English (and Archer) tradition of naming first sons and daughters for paternal grandparents. In this case confusion between the little Julia Archer and all the other Julia Archers (Tom’s and David’s as well as Jack’s who had become Eliza in Norway) was overcome by her own lisped version as ‘Lullul’. She was known as Lullul throughout her entire life. Two years after her birth she acquired a brother who was named Justus for Karen’s Uncle Justus Schwensen. Mary, second daughter born in 1872, was always known during her aunt Mary Archer’s lifetime by the pet name of ‘Tulla’, while Colin who arrived in 1874 was ‘Colle’ within the extended family. He died at the age of ten from a childhood fever, a loss which affected them all deeply. Karen gave birth to her last child in 1879 and although Colin bestowed the traditional name of William upon him, he was known throughout his life as ‘Illam’, his own lisping version. What a lot of confusion this avoided from yet another ‘Willie’ Archer.

The children were born at their parent’s lovely home, Lilleodden, which was built on the highest rise overlooking Tolderodden. Colin had his office on the ground floor of Lilleodden. There he designed a variety of sailing craft, gradually building up a reputation as an innovative naval architect. Beginning also in a small way as a boat builder in the old shed below Tolderodden, he had turned out only four craft by 1871. The first two were sold to the Customs Department and the next two were pilot boats — but not yet the brilliant design which later added to his fame as a self-taught naval architect. Although the numbers of small craft completed during the remainder of the decade brought the total to twenty, Colin’s insistence on the best materials and workmanship meant that he made
very little money. His income was still largely dependent upon the fortunes or misfortunes of Archer Brothers in Queensland. While this was satisfactory for most of those years, it was a different story from the 1880s onwards.

Colin's business of boat building did not at first impress any of his older brothers — convinced as they were that either wool growing in Queensland or merchandising in London were preferable means of making money. 'I am sorry to say I have no confidence that embarking on the building of larger vessels gives much hope of better results …' wrote Willie to Colin in 1872.5 As for David, it was at this time that he began his unsolicited advice on methods of building, business practices and advertising promotion. Colin's placid nature enabled him to get on with his profession in the manner he thought fit. Against Willie's pessimism, he began building larger vessels at Herlofson's Rekkevik boatyard in 1875. It is certain that Knutsen, Herlofson and Archer formed a company called 'Laurvig Strandværst' in that year. After Herlofson's financial failure, Colin became sole owner of the Rekkevik Yard in 1887 — with a little financial help from Jamie and Sandy.

Despite his siblings' initial lack of faith in his ability to succeed in a completely new enterprise for an Archer, Colin's genius as an innovator in the 1870s and as a respected naval architect in Britain as well as Norway in the 1880s eventually convinced them that the fraternal duckling had become a swan. They would be even more proud of him in the 1890s.

Life had not stood still for Jamie while his brother was struggling to make his business financially profitable. It was during the summer of 1883 while Sandy and Minnie were on leave in Norway that Jamie met his future wife. The weather was glorious and while they were at Horstad, three MacKenzies came over from Scotland to join their party. One of these was Minnie's much younger sister, Louisa, always known as Louie. For Jamie this summer proved to be much more memorable than that of twenty years earlier, for he and Louie fell in love and became engaged in 1884.

While both families were pleased by the prospect of another Archer-MacKenzie marriage, they differed on the means of legalising it. 'Jamie is with us at present', David told Colin in January 1885, 'and Miss L. MacKenzie is also our guest. Poor Jamie is still a good deal harassed'. The MacKenzies were not yet reconciled to a civil marriage, as required by
Jamie’s Separatist principles, and were ‘trying hard to impose some kind of religious element into it’.\footnote{6}

In the end the wedding ‘came off’ at a Registry Office in London’s West End on 26 January 1885. David was present with daughter Sissie and niece Dooie Archer — Separatists all. And as Susan Archer wrote to son Jack in Queensland:

... it was such a relief when it was well over, as of course Lady MacKenzie and all her friends thought badly of such a marriage, without any religious ceremony, but they were very nice about it & did their best to get over it quickly. The happy pair only went as far as the Queens Hotel, Norwood, and they have been here each Sunday since. I think you will like Aunt Louie, and won’t Aunt Minnie be delighted to have them both at Arley, but Uncle Jamie does not intend to remain in Australia, they spoke of settling in Norway on their return ...\footnote{7}

It was not quite time to settle in Norway. Jamie was anxious to give Brisbane-born Louie a glimpse of Gracemere where he had spent so much of his life. He was forty-eight when they married, Louie thirty-one. They took passage on SS \textit{Wahroonga} on 10 March 1885 to Brisbane via Torres Strait. ‘I suppose all of you woidd run down to Keppel Bay to have a look at them’, commented Sandy to Robert at Gracemere. But he also reminded his nephew of marriageable age, who had committed himself to Separatism in 1880, that once more ‘the lawfulness of employing a clergyman to perform marriages’ had arisen.\footnote{8} After some time at Arley in Brisbane, Jamie and Louie joined Archie and their nephews at Gracemere. ‘He and Aunt Louie seem to knock along here very weU & find plenty to keep them going’, Robert told his Uncle Willie, ‘he star-gazing & carpentering, & she gardening & collecting insects etc.’\footnote{9}

Jamie and Louie arrived back in England in September 1886. They were with Lady MacKenzie at Coul, Scotland, for the birth of their first child, Ronald, in October. But, as planned, they made their permanent home in Larvik in the following year. Jamie sought advice from David about investments as he had no regular employment apart from occasional book-keeping.\footnote{10} He later established a business as a tea importer and general agent, perhaps after 1889 when he indicated he was ‘ready to be bought out’ by Archer Brothers. Like Colin and Simon, he signed the petition requesting that all the land be sold with the exception of the
Cattle Station — known as the Fifteen Mile because of its distance from Gracemere homestead. It seems that Robert, by this time manager of Archer Brothers, was the only one to believe Gracemere had a future.

While Jamie was not so ‘dreadfully pinched’ as Colin and Simon as the result of recession and business failures, he was anxious to redeem his money now that he had a wife and family to support. There was by this time a second son Erling and another baby on the way. And so he agreed to take 4,000 pounds sterling ‘for all his interest in and claims on the station’. It was indeed time, as David argued, to convert the loosely controlled partnership to a limited liability company.

One happy event for Jamie and Louie in 1890, following their grieving for Sandy and Minnie, was the birth of their third son, Alister. At Gracemere in January of that same year, Robert and his wife Alice (Daisy) named their first child, Joan, eschewing the traditional Archer names as Jamie and Louie had already done and would continue to do. There is no evidence that any of the family had the Scottish gift of ‘second sight’ concerning the future of both Alister and Joan. David, then the patriarch among the Archers, wrote to his little grand-daughter Joan in December 1892:

Do you know you have cousins in Norway? Some of these live in Laurvig where you have many Uncles and Aunts. Uncle Jamie and Aunt Louie have five little children. Their names are Ronald, Erling, Alister, Kathleen, and Cedric. Kathleen is a little girl about a year old. Isn’t Cedric a funny name? He is a little baby only 7 or 8 weeks old …

Jamie and Louie in naming their only daughter Kathleen, and alternating the choices for their sons between Scottish and Scandinavian names, followed their own preferences. Their sixth son was named Rolf. In 1895 they had lost a ‘wee baby’ named Arthur. During much of their first eight years in Larvik, the James Archers lived in a house named ‘Klubgaarden’ owned by brother Willie. It was just over the brow of the hill from Tolderodden. In 1894 they moved into their own home, ‘Hejmen’, in the same area. In December of that year Jamie began to worry about the cost of feeding, clothing and educating his expanding ‘tribe’. He unburdened himself to nephew Robert in that decade of economic depression in Queensland:

... business does not appear to be flourishing. When will the tide turn? Here
Norwegians Born and Bred

we are going on much as usual. We have got into our new house and find it very comfortable, but it has cost about twice as much as we expected which is rather a drawback in these hard times ...  

Hejmen was not a completely new house, but James had it extended. Sissie Archer doubted it would be much improvement on Klubgaarden. ‘Fancy that tribe packed away in Fr. Hansen’s tiny cottage in spite of alterations’. Sissie was surely unaware that Jamie had exceeded his budget in converting it from a small cottage to a comfortable family home. James was a worrier, but his own financial ‘tide’ turned sufficiently to enable the whole family to holiday abroad from time to time. Archer & Co., however, had to wait many years for their tide to turn even briefly.

The James Archers were holidaying at Coul when they heard of the death of brother William at Tolderodden in the summer of 1896. Although Jamie returned for the funeral, he went back to Scotland again, spending several days with David and family on holiday at Blair Athol before going on to Coul. Holidays in Scotland kept the children in touch with their maternal roots and, at least during their grandmother, Lady MacKenzie’s lifetime, they enjoyed having ponies and grooms at their beck and call. Erling, 15, and Alister, 13, were considered old enough to travel alone across the North Sea in the summer of 1903. Their father wrote:

Hejmen, Larvik, 10 July 1903.
My dear boys,

You have managed to give us a good fright by neither telegraphing from Newcastle or Brighton. On Tuesday when there was no news of you I telegraphed to Christiania & … had an answer in about 4 hours setting our minds at rest. Is it the old excuse “Jeg glaemte” [forgot] or shall we hear a better one in course of time.

You will be surprised to hear that at the time of writing this, it is about 7 o’clock in the morning … we intend going out in the “Kathleen” to “dørje” [troll] as there are a lot of mackerel about at present … The party today is to consist of Illam & a friend of his, Ronald & perhaps Charlie Arentz & myself …

11th. The fishing trip was a perfect failure. About 8.30 we started with a fresh westerly wind so that we could stand right out to sea & got some 2 or 3 miles (english) outside Svenør but not a sign of fish; there was a heavy sea and this had the usual effect on Charlie & Ronald who had to offer all their nice breakfast to Neptune. After going backwards & forwards a bit & getting nothing … we set course for Svenør & got there about 12 o’clock & had dinner. Just as we had finished Aunt Mary came in with Astrid & Christian in
the "Maggie". By this time both wind & sea had increased so we did not try any more fishing and came straight home ...

This afternoon I am off to Bommestad to bring home that big fish you have heard so much about. Mammie & the rest are all well. And now my dear boys I hope you will have a good time ... ¹⁸

And a good time they did have, first at Brighton with the MacKenzies and then with Willie and Maggie Archer, in London. Alister and Erling were first cousins to Willie and Maggie — Willie more than forty years older and Maggie a middle-aged matron. The two 'very nice boys' kept Willie 'pretty busy' what with outings to the Crystal Palace and to cricket matches 'in which they showed great interest and knowledge, spouting out names & innings like a cricketers' guide'. At the fun fair at the Palace they enjoyed themselves 'looping the loop, in the topsy turvey railway, climbing the chute, running the rapids and all the wonders of the show'. The Palace by this time was run 'on popular music hall lines, and beginning to pay for the first time' as Willie told Robert.¹⁹ This was a memorable holiday for the boys from sleepy Larvik, but soon they were back at the Grammar School where their father and uncles had gone before them.

I'llam Archer and Charlie Arentz were the boys' Norwegian first cousins. I'llam, born in 1879, was quite a bit older than Ronald. Colin had built the Kathleen for James and family in 1901, so James' account of the two trips in 1903 took place when the much loved yacht was fairly new. Jamie and Louie were, for their times, relaxed and indulgent parents. Colin and Karen, married almost twenty years earlier, appear to have been loving but sterner parents. With Colin's office on the ground floor of Lilleodden, he would have been less tolerant of noisy children within doors than the family at Hejmen. Colin's eldest grandchild recalled that he could express disapproval simply by 'a look'.²⁰ While Justus met with his father's approval in training as a civil engineer, I'llam's ambition to go to sea was at first vetoed by Colin, but after a rebellious episode in which the boy stowed away and was shipwrecked on the English coast, Colin agreed. I'llam eventually married a pilot's daughter, Jenny Sørensen, and became a master mariner.

The grandchildren of old William and Julia, eldest to youngest, were separated in age by an incredible 66 years. Kate Jørgensen's Julia Caroline (Julla) was born in 1829, Jamie and Louie's youngest, Rolf, in 1895. At the
beginning of the twentieth century there were, with the birth of I lam's first child, three generations of Archers 'born and bred' living in Larvik.
The young James Archer children brought a new dimension to the extended family in Larvik. Colin’s family in 1900 ranged in age from Tulla Mary, thirty-one, to Illam, twenty-one. The old aunts at Tolderodden were each nearing the end of life on earth, while Jack’s Eliza of the next generation was already in her fifties. While Colin’s two boatyards at Tolderodden and Rekkevik were still busy, the most significant decade, the 1890s, provided the climax of his career as naval architect and boat builder. Great honours had already been bestowed upon him by the King of Norway: the Cross of the Order of St Olav in 1886, and in 1896, Commander of the Order of St Olav ‘for services rendered for ship construction and the furtherance of scientific voyages of discovery’.¹ Colin’s contribution to science came with his designing and building the polar ship Fram (launched at Rekkevik in 1892) which was to take Fridtjof Nansen closer to the North Pole than any previous vessel and, eventually, enable Roald Amundsen to plant the Norwegian flag at the South Pole in 1911, just weeks ahead of British explorer, Robert Falcon Scott.

These were events which brought world-wide acclaim to Fram’s architect, but for the people of Norway Colin Archer was to be almost canonised for his innovative design for rescue boats (life boats) which saved many hundreds of lives. The prototype which he built in 1893, using some materials left over from Fram’s construction, was named RS1 Colin Archer in his honour by the Norsk Selskab til Skibbrudnes Redning (Society for the Rescue of the Shipwrecked). That it was still sailing in Norwegian waters
in the final years of the twentieth century, and training young people in the art of sailing, says a great deal about Colin Archer's architectural skills and his integrity as a builder. At least half a dozen books, in English as well as Norwegian, have been published on his life and work in the seventy-five years since his death. In his lifetime, neither national nor international praise diverted him from those things which meant most to him: his family, his religion, his love of sailing and his duty as a citizen of Larvik and Norway.

While existing Archer correspondence (in English) for the first decade of the twentieth century is chiefly concerned with the state of affairs at Gracemere, Eleanor Berkeley, a young impoverished relative of Jamie's wife Louie, filled the role as Larvik recorder in 1900–03. A century later she might have been a documentary film writer, for her 'scripts' are remarkably visual. Like Louie, she was a descendant of Richard 'China' Jones, the early Sydney merchant. Eleanor, her mother, and sister were obliged to eke out a living teaching English in private families — Mrs Berkeley and Anna in Germany, Eleanor in Norway. All were poorly paid and so they were partially dependent upon the good-will and generosity of relatives.

Eleanor Berkeley was a young woman whose self esteem had been battered by her father's disgrace (never identified) and her mother's animosity towards him. Eleanor wavered between criticism of his behaviour and sympathy for his inability to obtain a position in England. Correspondence with her sister Anna provided an outlet for her pent up emotions, her self-criticism and also her admiration of the Norwegian Archers and their lifestyle. The three generations then occupying Tolderodden, Lilleodden and Hejmen are seen chiefly in their leisure moments, but also at Sunday meetings which appear by this time to have been held at Lilleodden, as the old aunts are not mentioned as present.

Eleanor was employed in the home of a country family near Larvik in 1900, but was so unhappy that Louie invited her to live with the family at Hejmen. For the following several years she earned a little money by teaching English to private pupils and in helping look after the Archer children. While she was a little in awe of the old ladies at Tolderodden, she hero-worshipped 'Mr Colin' and was filled with admiration for both his daughters who treated her like one of themselves. There was never any suggestion of 'cold charity' in their attitude to her, or in James' and Louie's
either. She spent cosy Sunday evenings with ‘Cousin Louie as Cousin Jamie usually goes to Tolderodden after supper on Sunday’. In October 1902 she received birthday presents from all the family — ‘nice warm knitted knickerbockers’ from Louie, a large silk neckerchief from Jamie, knitted gloves from eleven year old Kathleen, a silk tie from Erling and Alister, a Norwegian work basket from Ronald, a little bag from Cedric and some pretty mats for her dressing table from little Rolf. Each Christmas she not only received practical gifts from all at Hejmen, but also from Tolderodden and Lilleodden. On one occasion she referred to these people as ‘far more to me than blood relations’ — with the exception of her mother and sister and Louie Archer.

Eleanor was fond of the children and they of her. One of these, Alister, was to continue his parents’ care of Eleanor and Anna in their old age by sending them food parcels from Queensland during the Second World War, but that was undreamed of in November 1902 when she told Anna: ‘Saturday was Kathleen’s birthday (she is 11 now) and she had a little party of three and got up a tableau & I was specially to look at them so I could not do anything else. Well, so there was yesterday — Sunday — we were all up very late as the servants overslept — then meeting from 11 to 12.30 — a sharp walk on the “parade” in Tolderodden garden, then home to superintend dinner at 2. I was in charge as Cousins J. & L. were at Tolderodden, also Ronald (the oldest and rowdiest!) and Rolf (the youngest and naughtiest!). Alister (3rd one aged 12 — rowdy but nice at heart) was also dining out, so I had only Kathleen, Erling (2nd and gentlemanliest) and Cedric (5th, aged 10 — untruthful, disobedient — but I like him!)’

The children at Hejmen were never expected, like English children of that era, to be seen and not heard. ‘After a merry dinner (for these “Youngsters” are real youngsters I can tell you)’, wrote Ellie in the spring of 1903, ‘we 4 girls departed to play ping-pong in the ironing room’. The children had a wonderfully happy life. In addition to all their out-door activities such as skiing in winter — the ‘learning slopes’ were actually in the Tolderodden garden — and sailing in the long days of summer, there were also special events in the family and in the town just for children. Poor Ellie reminded Anna that as children they had never had such fun, in fact as she told the Archer children, she ‘never felt young’.
narratives slip from one generation to the next quite effortlessly, as it appears Colin and his girls did in 1903:

I have been to dinner at Lilleoedden today & had a nice quiet time after as I made Lullul lie down & Mary had to go off at 3.30 to play games with the children — giving prizes — & to each prize Mr Colin, L. & M. had attached a funny little verse composed by themselves! Afterwards the children dressed up: Erling as Robin Hood, Alister as a Jester in blue & Yellow; Kathleen in her peasant dress; Cedric as a sailor boy & little Rolf like Alister as a Jester. Ronald (who is now 16) was too proud to join in! Well, all the children marched in procession singing “Ja, vi elsker dette landet” the National song, & then songs suited to their dresses in turns & after in choruses — Miss Jane playing, it was so pretty. Then we had several tableaux & wound up after supper at 9.30 — getting home by 10.30.

On Saturday Cousin Louie & I had to get all 6 dressed & taken to the Town Hall by 6 p.m. & ourselves too as we had to go & look after them — & we sat there from 6 to 12 p.m.! 6 hours! only moving once for supper! It was very pretty to see all the children dancing — but 6 hours is too much — a lot of young ladies & gentlemen come up at 12 & keep it up till 3 a.m.! …

Not all the news was of the children. While the hordes of visiting relatives and friends no longer came to Tolderodden as they did in the 1860s when David’s and Tom’s children were young, the middle-aged still came over from England. Willie Minor and Maggie and young Grace stayed for part of each summer, the Jørgensens of Oslo paid occasional visits and in 1903 Tom’s son, Colonel Charles Archer, brought his American wife Alice to introduce her to her new Norwegian family. They all liked her very much, she was ‘so natural and free like most Americans’. On the same night as the children’s fancy dress ball, Lullul and Mary gave a party for the couple, so only Jamie could go. ‘They had such fun acting the titles of books’. Ellie described Charlie as ‘very high up in the Diplomatic service out in India’ and on a year’s leave. They were both ‘rather great swells — but awfully pleasant and easy to get on with’. They were keen to see a Norwegian winter and were fortunate that the first fall of snow was on the day before their arrival. They were there for Christmas and New Year. There was ‘the usual large family gathering’ at Tolderodden on New Years Day with dinner for the adults at 4 pm with the children coming in for desert at 5 o’clock.

Already there had been losses. The last of the incumbent males at
Tolderodden, Archie the former Queensland politician, died there in 1902, as did Eliza, the youngest of them all, but sixth-eldest of the third generation. Her death on 8 August, just four months after Archie’s, was unexpected. Her brother Willie Minor who was visiting, but absent in Copenhagen when Eliza ‘took ill’, wrote to Robert at Gracemere two weeks later. He revealed how much Eliza was appreciated when it was too late to tell her so. For many years she had organised sales of work so that she might assist the impoverished of Larvik. At 55 she was classed by Eleanor Berkeley as one of the old ones. Willie Minor and Maggie stayed on almost until Christmas, their aunts found it so hard to manage without Eliza. ‘It is pretty dull for them at Tolderodden now ... those three old ladies left alone; “richtig genug” ...’. The three deaths in that year — ‘Mr Archibald, Fru Elligers & Miss Eliza ... three of the most beloved’, commented Eleanor.6

It was anything but dull in Larvik during the Life-saving Society’s bazaar which lasted for several days. Tulla Mary was on the committee and had been working ‘like a thousand bricks ... down there from 4 p.m. till 1 & 2 in the morning’ according to Ellie. Lullul and ‘Mr Colin’ were also there every evening helping in various ways. ‘A bazaar here consists of a number of things on a stall on which people take numbers — very cheap — and afterwards draw lots, no buying & selling’.8

Despite her poverty and self-abasement (‘Oh! what an awful creature I am!’), Eleanor was accepted almost as one of the family. Writing letters one Easter Sunday afternoon, she was interrupted by Louie and Jamie who told her it was ‘a perfect sin to sit writing letters on such a perfect day’, so she accompanied them to Tolderodden ‘where we met three of the “youngsters” — 2 daughters of Herr Simon Jørgensen & Astrid Arentz (Old Fru Arentz’s grand-daughter)’. Accompanied by old Miss Mary and Miss Jane, they all strolled about on the rocks and ‘basked in the sun & the enchantment of the scenery’. Eleanor was invited to join them for dinner. What is more, an invitation to dinner at either Tolderodden or Lilleodden ‘always means you stay to supper too’.9

While there are occasional references to the Sunday meetings in Archer letters, it is to Eleanor Berkeley that we owe a detailed description of the procedure followed by these family non-conformists. She makes it quite clear that they differed in more ways than one from the Scottish Calvinists who made Sunday such a dreary day. An English law passed in 1833 —
‘An Act to allow the People called Separatists to make a Solemn Affirmation and Declaration instead of an Oath’ — enabled Separatists ‘from conscientious scruples’ to refuse the Oath in ‘Courts of Justice and other Places’. This was a privilege the Archers took seriously, as both Colin’s and Jamie’s marriages in Registry Offices confirm. The Bible was their guide, with a little help from the writings of the Irish John Walker, founder of the Separatists. That this did not turn them into ‘wowsers’ is evident from Eleanor’s observations and account of Sunday activities:

The Archers all look on Sunday in the same light — meeting together for prayer & a Bible-reading only because it is the first day of the week — they all work or amuse themselves as usual. Their religion is the same as ours [orthodox Christian] in belief, except that they will have no ceremonies & no clergymen — the eldest man in the family leading the meeting & saying the few explanatory words over the readings. Mr Colin always does it. They “break bread” together & pass the cup around to those who “belong” & at the close all the members seal the service by kissing each other — it is all very simple, solemn & reverent. There are very few of this sect outside the family — it is a Scotch sect, not Norwegian ...

... the Archer’s religion is a very exclusive one, & though we — Cousin Louie & her children, Lullul, Mary & myself & any of the younger members of the family who may be staying here — are always present & sing & pray with the others — yet we are outsiders — those who belong are seated round the table — & I should not be allowed to take Communion with them without actually joining them — & to join them means to believe that everyone who does not believe as they believe, is lost. That is why [Tulla] Mary & the others do not join. Mary is a believer, you know — only my Lullul cannot believe ...

Separatist exclusions seldom related to the living, except in the matter of communion, but, as already seen, David’s son ‘Dadie’ refrained from inviting the newly widowed Maggie Archer to stay with the Croydon family because she had left the fold. In Larvik Eleanor thought none the less of ‘Mr Colin’ for excluding orthodox Christians like herself from the breaking of bread:

Mr Colin is my ideal of a Christian gentleman ... I had a walk with him on my birthday & he was talking of some lectures for workmen being held [in the town] & as I was interested he said I must come with him next Sunday, & so I went over to see if we were going & found he had bought me a season ticket so I could go when I wanted ... the Lecturer was a fanatical red hot Norwegian Nationalist ... we did not stay it out, it was too much. In the
morning after meeting, Lullul, Cousin Jamie, Mr Colin & I had a delightful walk in the “byskov” [the wood by the town], the scenery looking lovely with all the autumn tints ...

It was during Eleanor’s time in Larvik that Colin’s daughter, Mary, made her ‘grand tour’ in 1901–02, visiting England, Paris and Germany. Her father and Lullul joined her at Wiesbaden for a short holiday. Recorded in Mary’s travel diary is an anecdote which captured her attention because it involved Australia:

Lul’s table companions are an Australian cattle-driver and an English priest here, who is quite blind. Recently he told Lul about a catholic priest in Australia who baptized blackfellows with water and after this ceremonious treatment, promised, “Now you are no longer black fellows but roman catholics, but remember not to eat meat on Friday.” When he returned on Friday they had prepared a nice meal of o’possum meat. “Have I not told you not to eat meat on Friday?” “Oh yes,” they replied, “but we just shot some o’possums and then we took them and put them in a water-hole and then we said — “Now you are no longer o’possums, but fish”.

While ‘Cousin Jamie’ does not play a leading role in Eleanor’s documentary, he was not only among the ‘believers’ at the Sunday meetings, but also busy providing for his family through his agency business, watching his investments and, in 1904, renewing his links with Queensland. When Robert (from Gracemere) suggested that his uncle should write a paper on the settlement of Central Queensland, he replied: ‘It is quite out of the question; for although I daresay there are not now many alive who have come so much in contact with these settlers as myself, still as I have kept no notes & have no memory, it would be utterly impossible for me to write a paper even if I had the ability to write about such matters in an interesting style, which I have not, so it would be something like the Irishman’s gun — a very good gun if it had a new lock, stock & barrel.’

While Jamie found it hard to remember early history, he had very good recall on his Queensland investments. He had put his share of Archie’s estate into the purchase of mortgages at 5 per cent. But he was worried about a property he owned in Roma Street, Brisbane, which had returned him up to 130 pounds annually for some years. Since the death of his agent two years earlier, he had not received a penny. ‘I do not like to bother you about my private affairs, but I am getting a little anxious …’, he confessed.
to Robert who acted in a voluntary capacity for all his European relatives. These included mining investments, most of them proving useless. Mount Morgan was the exception.

While Jamie was not prepared to go into print on early history, strong bonds of friendship were renewed at this time with J.T. (Jamie) Walker who had been close friends with Jamie Archer and Simon Jørgensen in the 1860s during Walker's four years with the Bank of New South Wales in Rockhampton. Gracemere was his refuge. His later friendships with Sandy and Minnie (despite the stressful times) and with Tom and Grace and their son Jim, extended well into the twentieth century. When Louie wrote to him in 1905, he had retired as President of the Bank of New South Wales but was a foundation Senator in the Australian Federal Parliament. Jamie Walker retained his interest in human relationships to the end of his distinguished life (1921). On one memorable occasion, acting on a request from Simon Jørgensen's son, Johan, he had purchased an engagement ring for the young Queensland settler. That his commitment to the younger generation had not waned is evident from Louie's letter to him dated 21 July 1905:

I have read with much interest the book you so kindly sent me, "Waldemar the Ganger" & I am sure my two eldest boys, who are now on a visit to Scotland, will enjoy reading it, in one place it mentions two Norwegian captains, Ronald & Erling, & those are the names of the two boys. My eldest son Ronald is 18 years old & the youngest, Rolf, is nine. The only girl, Kathleen, is 13 & is as wild as any of the boys, there are 5 of them! When we were in England last summer I had the pleasure of meeting your sister [Kate] at Croydon, it was my first visit to England for some years as we generally go direct to Scotland. I daresay you will see in the papers about the unsettled state of Norway — at present we have no King & no President, so we don't know what will happen to us — but we hope there will not be war.

You mention Johan Jørgensen, we do hope his farm will succeed …

This was the same Johan Jørgensen for whom Jamie Walker had earlier acted as Cupid in the matter of an engagement ring. Johan and his brother Erik both emulated their father Simon in migrating to Australia. Erik eventually returned to Norway, but Johan farmed in Queensland from 1890 until his death in Dalby in 1959.

Louie Archer's reference to a crisis in the affairs of Norway in 1905 was indeed true. Perhaps this was the subject of that "fanatical red hot
Norwegian Nationalist’ speaker who had been too much for ‘Mr Colin’ and Eleanor Berkeley. Differences between Norway and Sweden came to a head when a constitutional clause enabled the Storting to declare the union between the two countries at an end. While the Swedish Diet believed that the Storting had no right to act as it did, in the end it agreed to the almost unanimous vote of the Norwegian people to dissolve the union. Louie’s fear of war was replaced by rejoicing in peace and Norway’s independence. Prince Carl of Denmark accepted the Storting’s invitation to become King Haakon VII of Norway.17 His wife was formerly Princess Maud of Britain, a connection which pleased the Norwegian Archers.

Rejoicing in independent Norway was not allowed to interfere with family relationships. Tolderodden, by this time, had become a refuge for the aged. Willie Minor and Maggie, on their annual visits, lifted much of the gloom. Willie commented to Robert in 1902 that he hadn’t done much boating that year as the weather was so cold and uninviting, ‘but Aunt Mary was out pretty regularly’. She was the only active one. Willie Minor and Maggie were there again in the winter of 1906 soon after the death of Julia Arentz, the last of the Scottish born children of William and Julia. She had been living with her sisters for the past four years. By this time Jane was a semi-invalid, at least during the winter months, but with her own bedroom and sitting room upstairs. And while there was no sailing for Mary during the winter, she either walked or went driving every day. Her love of the outdoors remained to the very end. Willie Minor and Maggie, not liking to leave the two remaining old aunts, stayed on until springtime. Colin, Lullul and Tulla Mary were all away, Louie ‘had her hands full with her own brood’, while Kitty Efligers (Malla Jørgensen’s daughter) was looking after her aunt, Julla Jørgensen, who was ‘often on the sick list’.18

According to Willie Minor, Aunt Mary still ruled the clan a year later:

Since the reconstruction scheme [Archer & Co.] came in the wind Aunt Mary has taken it into her head to go for strict economy, the garden here is not to be cultivated and the “Maggie” is to be sold, it hasn’t got any further yet, tho’ this house is run on most extravagant lines and great economies could be made without affecting the comfort of anyone in it. It reminds me very much of Gracemere in Conrad’s time. The worst of it is that the dependants won’t believe that it is hard times & tho’ the old gardener Mortensen has been told he is only to come once a week he comes regularly as usual, I think his legs
have got so accustomed to come here that they bring him in spite of himself, as they have come the same track I believe for over 40 years.¹⁹

A little over a year later Mary, she who had nailed her flag of independence to the mast half a century earlier, died from ‘inflammation of the lungs’. She was eighty-two, Jeannie five years younger. ‘We all feel so much for [Aunt Jeannie]’, Willie Minor reported, ‘the two of them have been complementary to one another and it must be a great wrench for her to be left alone’.²⁰ But it was Eleanor Berkeley who had only known ‘Tante Mary’ in her old age who showed the other side of this enigmatic character:

I can scarcely bear to think of never seeing that well-known & loved form again, she was so strong and truly kind in spite of her outward sternness; & then when I begin to think of dear Aunt Jane sitting there quiet & lonely, for different as those two were, still they had lived together so long & were so used to each other & had shared so many joys & troubles together — it makes me feel sick at heart … Tante Mary will be missed by many outside the home circle & very specially at the Children’s Home at Langestrand. She has left the memory of an upright life behind which is no small thing.²¹

It was at this time of ‘endings’ for the older generation that Robert’s daughter, Joan, who was attending Crohamhurst Girls High School at Croydon, London, while living with her Uncle David and Aunts Sissie and Toonie, spent summer holidays at Tolderodden. Willie Minor, who believed Joan had been ‘much spoiled’ at Croydon thought it would be good for her character ‘to find how useful she can be to Aunt Jeannie’. Jamie, showing a much better understanding of a teenager’s need for young company, realised that it would be dull for Joan at Tolderodden. ‘We are looking forward with pleasure to Joan and Dadie arriving here before long & I am getting the tennis lawn ready for the former & fishing tackle for the latter’, he told Robert in July 1907. All his children, with the exception of Ronald, were then ‘in different parts of the country’ for their school holidays, but would soon be home again.²²

When her Uncle David and Miss Baker, their Irish relative, returned to England early in August, Joan remained in Norway until her school term resumed. Jamie thought it hard on her as she would not have many companions of her own age. Ronald was already employed in a shipping office, Erling had begun his training in forestry at the special school (this
was the beginning of a lifelong career in forestry), and the others had all recommenced school in Larvik. He was correct in thinking that Joan would 'no doubt rub along'. She was the first Archer to be born at Gracemere (1890) and also the first Australian-born family member to travel over earth and ocean to find a haven at Tolderodden. Most previous 'migrations' had been from north to south. Joan was to be influential in re-establishing that pattern, though in a modest way compared with the first generation.

Jamie's son Alister (six months younger than Joan) was the next in line to complete school. In his final exam at the Larvik Grammar School in 1908 he gained satisfactory results in languages (Norwegian, German and English), also in history — in which he would take a renewed interest many years later. He also changed his mind about migrating to Queensland. Before Joan's visit he had shown no interest when his father talked to him on the subject. His decision seems to have been influenced by Joan's description of life at Gracemere and her circle of young friends there, if not by the attractive young girl herself. And so it was that in 1909, accompanied by his school friend Nikolai Aagaard, he arrived at Gracemere to begin a completely new life from that so familiar to him in Larvik.

Alister's letters home provided a kind of _deja vu_ for James. 'You may be sure your letters are all of great interest to me as they recall incidents from my own bush life of more than fifty years ago'. He was glad that his son liked the life — 'Isn't it far better than being tied down to a desk in a stuffy room?' he asked. Both Alister and Nikolai Aagaard 'learned the ropes' under the guidance of 'Cousin Jack', David Archer's second son who had managed Torsdale since 1885. The Aagaards were as pleased as Jamie and Louie to have good reports of the two boys. Jamie kept Alister up to date with their activities during the long summer holiday (1909). Well aware of the aridity of the Queensland bush for much of the year, he described one of their trips in the _Kathleen_ — 'it may act upon you as a whiff from the briny which, by the time you get this, I daresay would be appreciated by you':

Farbro [uncle], Charlie [Arentz], Cedric & I left this morning for a cruise to Langesund & the adjoining fjords. Beating against a S.W. wind, inside the Rakkebaaer, [underwater skerries] we made Nevluanghai early in the day, lay into the Quay there & had dinner on board, & reached Langesund in the
evening where we stopped for the night …

[Landing on an island] … I was fascinated by a large roundish stone made up apparently of every kind of rock from soft clay to hard quartz & I immediately made up my mind that it must be brought home, but as it weighed some 150 kg. we could not manage it. Later I got up a party consisting, in the “Kathleen”: Cousin Willie, Farbror [uncle], Ronald, Chr. Sommerfeldt, Roar [Arentz] & myself; in the “Sagitta”, Uncle Colin, Lul & Tulla Mary. We brought with us some strong oak planks & after everyone giving a different opinion as to how it ought to be done, managed to get it on board, it is now standing on the stump in front of Tolderodden where, in the course of time, I hope you will have an opportunity of seeing it, when Erling can give you a scientific lecture on it, his whole time at present being taken up with the study of geology …

It was about this time (1909) that James found interest in compiling a family tree. With his older sons at the outset of their careers and Kathleen studying at a Domestic Science School, he had more time on his hands. He appealed to both Joan and her father for assistance in obtaining information from the Australian Archers — Robert’s brothers and Tom’s son, George, in Sydney. In Larvik during the winter, ‘day follows day in the same old routine’, he told Robert, ‘Lul’s engagement being the only break in it for a long time’. Lullul, at the age of 40, was about to marry Ola Willoch, a widowed railway engineer with young twin daughters. She left Larvik for her new life at Drammen. Her sister Mary’s marriage in 1910 to Halvard Heggen, a judge who at that time was a member of the International Tribunal in Egypt, deprived Colin of the company of both his girls, but they visited frequently and he liked his sons-in-law. Colin’s wife, Karen Sofie, who had spent some years in a nursing home at Lillehammer, died in 1908 and was buried in Tolderodden’s Gravlunden, the same year as Mary Archer.

There were ‘beginnings’ among the Archers, as well as middle-aged marriages at Lilleodden and ‘endings’ at Tolderodden. Illam and his wife Jenny were producing grand-children for Colin every couple of years. Eleanor Berkeley provided a glimpse of the newest generation about 1903. She accompanied Tulla Mary on a visit to her youngest brother and family:

We found them at supper — at least Herr Illam was, his wife was walking up & down with a baby of 4 weeks which would not stop crying — such a mite! Whilst little Karen, who is nearly 2 years was sitting on the floor … They have such a nice little home & Fru Illam looks so nice & sensible & sweet. Haven’t
I told you that he married a poor girl — one of "the people" — & though I think Mr Colin & L. & M. were pretty cut up at first, they have behaved splendidly & treat her in every way as their sister ... Herr Illam (who is first mate in the mercantile service) is going on a 2 years' voyage on Thursday — it must be awful to be a sailor's wife.28

Jenny (Sorensen) Archer came from a long line of Norwegian sea pilots and had as much reason to be proud of her lineage as her husband of his. Karen, as eldest child, spent much time with Grandfather Colin as well as his sisters Mary and Jeannie at Tolderodden. She and her brother Tomas were rather in awe of Aunt Mary, as they were sometimes sent to stand before her and be lectured on their childish misdeeds. But they loved Aunt Jeannie who gave them delicious chocolate to drink while watching through the big parlour window the sailing ships coming and going on the fjord. Karen was less impressed by the macaroni cheese served for luncheon. As young children she and Tomas saw their grandfather almost every day. On one occasion she begged her father to be allowed to attend a Sunday meeting at which only the three who had been young Queeslanders together were present — Colin, Jamie and Simon Jørgensen. 'Do I have to do it again?' she asked Illam on her return home. Her knees were sore from kneeling on the carpetless floor.29

While Illam's family was increasing (six by 1911), Jamie's sons were gradually moving out into the world. 'Our boy Cedric, 18 years old, has also expressed a wish to go to Australia and as there is little prospect of his getting on here, I do not see that he can do better', Jamie told Robert in October 1910. Following the example of his own father, he took Cedric from school, put him to work in a carpenter's shop and sent him to evening classes at the technical school.30 Within weeks Robert replied that they would be very glad to have him at Gracemere. 'Daisy will I am sure extend that motherly interest she takes in Alister ...'31 Alister and his cousin Jack, however, threw cold water on Cedric's training in carpentry. In the bush they no longer had to build their own huts as their pioneering uncles were obliged to do. Jamie admitted that the circumstances were different from his time, but rightly thought it a useful occupation, even if it only developed Cedric's muscles.32

There was another subject on which James was also a little behind the times. He reminded Alister that on becoming twenty-one on 6 June 1911
he would come into his share of Aunt Kate MacKenzie's legacy — about 450 pounds. Did he wish it to be left in Norway earning 5 per cent interest, or remitted to Queensland? His thoughts took wing back to his own youth:

When I was a "Jakaroo" [sic] I was allowed to invest my small savings in stock which had a free run on the station & , of course, specially marked, but I suppose these times are over now when the country is of far more value than it was then. A few hundred cows, even if you had to pay for their agistment, might not be a bad investment, selling the steers & keeping the heifers would in the course of time put you in possession of a herd to start with ...  

There had already been some complaints from the northern hemisphere about the management of Archer & Co., but these would be more serious if certain jackeroos were allowed to run a few hundred cattle for their own benefit.

There were changes in Larvik in those years as well as among the Archers, young and old. When Willie Minor arrived in the autumn of 1908 he found the town on holiday for an agricultural show (which he thought a poor affair compared with Rockhampton). The Vestland (countryside) was more impressive — 'decked in its grandest dress of green, scarlet and gold and the country all strewed with yellow leaves'. Some of the farmers 'actually talked of letting their cows out [of the barns] for a run in the fresh air even in the snow and so as to air the byre — nothing could be more wonderful', commented the man who was used to thousands of cattle running free on Torsdale or Minnie Downs. More importantly, on a personal scale, in that year of his Aunt Mary's death, Jeannie had a new housekeeper whom she 'had taken to' wonderfully. One hopes that this last remaining Tolderodden aunt showed her appreciation of Willie Minor, so kind in his middle years, but as a boy derided as a difficult child and a trouble to them all.

Time was already running out for the last of the Tolderodden 'petticoats' in the year 1912. Jane Ann, affectionately known as Jeannie, was a favourite with each generation. One of the last letters she received was from her nephew George (Tom's son) in Sydney. Jeannie had sent him a beautiful book of views of Norway which he had shown to the newly arrived Cedric. George wrote:
He & I are to lunch with Mr J.T. [Jamie] Walker and then he sails for Rockhampton in the Wyrema, one of the largest of our coastal steamers. I was much interested to hear of you all in Larvik from Cedric. It is a long time since I had the opportunity of learning so many details about the whereabouts & doings of all my relatives. Cedric seems to be a fine fellow and is eager to get to work … Bob was down from Gracemere for about 3 weeks at Easter time. He and [son] David went with us to Amundsen’s lecture on his South Pole trip & enjoyed it very much although it was difficult to follow the captain’s actual words owing to his strong accent. We were disappointed that the Fram did not come to Sydney.  

Jeannie died in that same year, 1912, in Tolderodden, the house in which she had been born 81 years earlier. Her estate was valued at about 58,000 kroner. This meant that each of her nieces and grand-nieces, 36 in all, received more than ‘pocket money’. David’s daughters, Sissie and Toonie, wished their shares to be given to Frøken Amundsen. ‘We are so glad you approve’, she told her Uncle Colin, ‘it is not “generous” at all, for we have more than enough for all our needs and it is a great pleasure to feel that Aunt Jeannie would have wished this to be done’. Jeannie had been the musical one of the family, having had professional lessons in Oslo in the 1860s. Eleanor Berkeley described one occasion in 1902 when she had been invited with Jamie and Louie to dinner at Tolderodden — ‘which always means supper too’ — ‘Had a cosy evening sitting around the fire (all these 3 houses have one open fireplace) and then Miss Jane played, she plays so nicely — with such feeling — not like a wound up machine’. She had been the only extrovert among the four sisters, often described by her brothers as ‘merry as a cricket’ and ready to romp with the children. She was often teased about her plump figure, so different from Mary’s tall, bony frame. She found fulfilment in her music and in domestic comfort, again unlike Mary’s need for action in the open air and her love of sailing. Tolderodden farewelled the last of the ‘petticoats’ when Jeannie was laid to rest in the Gravlunden.

There was an ‘ending’ of a different kind during these years. Colin officially closed his boat building business in 1909 although he continued to complete previous orders — a lifeboat in 1913 and a ‘Jolle til R/S’ for the Rescue Society in 1915. From humble professional beginnings to the end of his distinguished career as naval architect and boat builder, Colin retained his ‘unflappable’ and modest nature. Praise heaped upon him by
such as Nansen and Amundsen was accepted with humility. After Amundsen’s return from the South Polar Expedition, Colin hosted a dinner for him at Lilleodden in September 1912. Among those present were brother James, nephew Simon Jørgensen and eldest grandchild, Karen Archer aged eleven. She later recalled her pride in meeting the polar explorer, along with memories of her grandfather as ‘a saint — but not a saintly saint’.  

At the time of Fram’s building, when Colin had another thirty years of living, he was described thus: ‘He was immensely prestigious in Norwegian maritime circles, a white-bearded patriarchal figure who looked like Noah, the archetypal boat builder’.  

Colin Archer’s record of smaller sailing craft which he designed and constructed, a total of 205, is in addition to the larger ships built at his Rekkevik yard and at various yards including Arendal (south of Larvik). While the most famous of those built at Rekkevik was Fram, there were also two ordinary merchant vessels and a steam yacht. Cargo ships such as those made for the shallow river systems of South America and water ballast ships for Russia were among the commercial vessels built elsewhere.

The pleasure craft which came off the Tolderodden slipway between 1867 and 1915 included fifteen built for family members. Number 1 on his own list is Maggie I which he constructed for himself in 1867. The significance of this yacht goes far beyond the pleasure which all the family, as well as himself, had in sailing her. She features in accounts of family summer picnics and races during two decades. It was the building of this yacht which decided Colin not to return to Queensland, but to establish a boat building yard in the old shed at the bottom of the Tolderodden garden, southern side, but later moved to the town side. Maggie was the catalyst which was to bring him world fame.

Although Colin built a small boat for Sandy in 1869, ‘Nina of Coul’, this is not listed, apparently classed as a humble rowing boat with an auxiliary sail. Brother Archie’s Bolgen built in 1877 is Number 15, Maggie II for ‘Familien Archer, Larvik’ was launched in 1883 and David Archer’s Nøkken in 1885. David was noted for the gratuitous advice on boat building which he sent to Colin in his monthly letters from London. It is doubtful if he really recognised his much younger brother’s talent until acclaim for Fram’s architect was published abroad. The yacht he built for ‘M. Archer, Larvik’ in 1890 was yet another Maggie, that in which Mary
was triumphant at the Risør Regatta that same summer. Colin’s next ‘brotherly boats’ were built for Tom and another Nøkken for David, both in 1891. Two years later Tom’s new boat was named Doovie, the pet name of his daughter Julia (Parsons). Colin built yet another yacht for Tom in 1897, the same year in which his ‘Recollections of a Rambling Life’ were privately published for family members. It is obvious that in recalling his early memory of the family’s voyage from Scotland to Norway in 1825 in the schooner Pomona, the emotional Tom became nostalgic, for that was the name he gave to his new yacht. This, and the earlier boats built for him, remained at Larvik until eventually sold.

A family yacht which has already featured in this story was Kathleen built for Jamie in 1901 and of course named for the only girl among five boys in his family. This boat continued to bring pleasure for family members into the 1930s. The next three Archer boats were designed for those closest to Colin’s heart: a motor boat for son Illam simply identified as ‘NR 4’ and built in 1904; a yacht for daughter Mary in 1908 which she named Sagitta II; and another for Lullul in the following year. By this time she was Fru Willoch and living in Drammen, so the boat was sent to her there. She named it Goul. Finally, also in 1909, Colin built a new boat for himself, a skeyte m / motor which he called Skjold. She was the fifth last boat off the Tolderodden slipway (according to Colin’s Norwegian biographer Sannes’). There was also an earlier small sailing boat, Concordia, which has been owned for many years by some of Illam’s children and grand-children. His son, Colin, and grand-daughter Anne Anderson, sailed her in a ‘fun regatta’ on Larvik Fjord in 1947–48 in which she won the race in her class. Despite the fact that she was the only yacht in her class, uncle and niece won a small cup. Concordia still calls Larvik home.

Jeannie’s death might have brought an ‘ending’ for Tolderodden itself. It was so strange for the old home to be empty and silent after eighty-six years of constant occupation by family members. It could have been sold to an outsider, but Jamie and Louie decided to live there themselves, although they no longer needed such a large house. Even their youngest child, Rolf, was already sixteen in 1912. Next door at Lilleodden there was only Colin now that both girls were married. How quiet it had become on the peninsula which had once rung with the voices of thirteen
Archer children — the older ones in the 1820s and the ‘youngsters’ in the
1830s and 1840s.

With all their older brothers and sisters dead, Colin and Jamie had
become the ‘watchdogs’ for family interests in Archer & Co. These included
Jørgensen and Arentz descendants. Colin found it difficult to understand
why the cattle operations failed, year after year, to make a profit. Thinking
back to the situation as it was when he, Charlie and Willie established and
developed Gracemere Station from 1855, with its fine location with a river
port nearby, he thought the reason must be bad management. The changes
which had taken place in the beef cattle industry itself in the intervening
years, as well as the effect of devastating droughts, had very little to do with
good or bad management. The worst drought since European settlement
which occurred 1898-1903 left Archers with only 2,000 head from a herd
of 12,000. Yet in 1908 Colin complained to Robert about the ‘poor returns’
and discouraging reports. His letter concluded:

As you will gather from what I have said we are anxious to devise some plan
by which shareholders in this country could realise their direct interest in the
station. Some of us are getting well on in years and we should like to arrive at
some satisfactory settlement before we drop off. In view of the many
formalities of Colonial law I fear complications will multiply as the old
members of the family make their exit and at last lead to inextricable
difficulties.41

Although Jamie had also been critical of management in the past, he
had a greater understanding of marketing and climatic setbacks than Colin,
having spent 25 years in Queensland. Then when Alister, and then Cedric,
became jackeroos and employees of the company, James had to be more
discreet than Colin in his comments. Alister was able to leave Queensland
for a holiday in Norway in March 1913, after only four years in the bush.
His father had to wait eight years for his first spell home, so not all the
changes were bad. Joan arrived in England in the summer of 1913 with
plans to stay a second summer. Joan and Alister were both at Tolderodden
when Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, and so had to
face a hazardous voyage across the North Sea. There were no plans for
them to return to Australia together, but when Joan’s travelling compan­
ions cancelled their booking, her Uncle David in London cabled Robert
for permission for her to travel home with Alister.42 Because they were
cousins, no impropriety was seen in this unchaperoned voyage. But those moonlight nights at sea played a part in their growing love for one another. Soon after their return to Queensland, Alister wrote to his mother: ‘I have a secret to tell you. Joan and I are engaged! I don’t expect it will be a great secret to you, as I think we were rather like it at home ... I warned Joan about accepting a mad man like me, but she seems to think I’m allright. I have been fond of her for years, so you can understand I’m happy’:

Perhaps Daddie would like to know, but I leave it to you to tell him. I fancy him shaking his head saying: Well, if they want to be fools, allright, but don’t blame me! I can remember being rather sarcastic about Ronald & Elly to him — and now I’m just as bad myself. Daddie once said at the dinner-table: I’ll give you Uncle Sandy’s tray, if you get a decent wife — Joan is now anxious to know if she is!

Alister concluded his letter with thoughts on his and Joan’s future — perhaps he would be able to get a small place of his own if he could ‘get hold of some jink [money]! Joan will have to learn to milk! Lady Joan milking in a flame coloured gown! However I don’t expect we’ll be married for two years at least ... ‘

Alister’s incoherent state in June 1915 regarding both present and future suddenly changed when Cedric, after becoming naturalised, enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF). Just one week after announcing his ‘secret’ engagement, Alister explained to his father his reasons for enlisting. He confessed that he had been wavering for the past six months, but ‘looking upon Norway as my fatherland, I didn’t like the idea of going as long as her fate was unknown’. All three Scandinavian countries had declared themselves neutral in August 1914 and, with some difficulty, remained so. Alister’s wavering ended after details of the Gallipoli campaign reached him. ‘Nearly all the chaps I know out here have been wounded’, he told Jamie: ‘That makes a chap realise more, what is really up. I intend to make my home out here so there is something expected of me too’. He assured his father that no one had exerted pressure on him to enlist, he simply decided that Germany was unfit to rule the English speaking world — ‘Their method of warfare fills one, as Cousin Jack says, with righteous indignation’. But he still worried about Norway as ‘Sweden was saying a lot of nasty things about her’.
As a newly fledged British subject, Alister marked the event by sending his father a full-size Australian flag. James, as a former Queensland citizen, and as the father of two Australian ‘diggers’, proudly raised the flag on the Tolderodden flagpole on 11 September 1915, Louie’s birthday. Kathleen, Louie, Elly and Colin formed an admiring guard of honour to watch it flying high from the most elevated point in the garden. The caption on the photograph confirms the solemnity of the occasion: ‘Det australske flag heises første gang paa Tolderodden’. (The Australian flag is raised at Tolderoden for the first time.) The raising of the flag formed yet another symbolic episode in this Norse-Australian saga. Accompanying the national emblem was some verse in which Alister tried to express his feelings on his father’s early life in the colony and the significance of the stars of the Southern Cross on the flag:

Old man, stand out and see
the flag of days gone by unfurled
and waving gently on the northern breeze
bringing hilsen [greetings] from across the sea.
Behold, the Southern Cross
the Cross that guarded you at night
when after finished work you rode
to well earned rest at campfire bright ... 45

After basic training, Alister joined the 5th Australian Light Horse Regiment. He had New Year leave with Joan and her parents at Emu Park where Nikolai Aagaard was also relaxing before enlisting. All three of these young Norwegians, Alister, Cedric and Nikolai took on British citizenship in order to become ‘soldiers of the [British] King’. After disembarkation in Egypt and some months with the Light Horse, Alister was appointed troop officer, 4th (Anzac) Battalion Imperial Camel Corps. He learned how to ‘handle the brutes ... none too pleasant at first’. Cedric was serving in France and Alister in his innocence wished he were there too. Writing to his mother on his twenty-sixth birthday, he explained why: ‘I’m lying on my tummy in the sand writing this. I’m so deadly sick of sand! My mouth, ears, nose and eyes are always full of it’. Despite these discomforts he wrote an ‘ode’ which he asked her to give to James on his eightieth birthday:
I send my greetings from the desert sand
to you, so far across the sea.
Could I but join to clasp your hand
How very happy I should be.
Eighty years! a mighty span,
In keeping with the Archer clan!
A life spent neath the Austral star
With cattle, sheep and bridle-bar.
In "gamle Nor" you found your realm
When in a storm you had the helm.
And in your garden worked all day
Or let the salmon have his play.
All hail to you with hair turned white
May many birthdays find you bright
Enjoying sun and wind and snow
While old time memories come and go.

'My Pegasus is rather lame, chiefly owing to the heavy going in the sand. His fare is also meagre: he feeds solely on "Field Service Regulations", Alister joked in conclusion.46

Alister's great sense of humour not only carried him through even greater discomforts before the war's ending, but also throughout the rest of his life. Jamie was failing in health by this time, but was filled with quiet pride when Alister was appointed ADC to General Chauvel in 1917. Alister himself reported this with his usual banter, but took his duties seriously. When back again with his Light Horse Regiment in Egypt, he quipped for his father's benefit: 'I wish I could appear before you now as I'm a Captain on the staff with red tabs all over me ... I have a sword to stick through the enemy & 3 good horses to ride'.47 He was then unaware that Cedric had been killed at Villiers Britteneaux just ten days earlier, 10 August 1918, and three months before war's end. Willie and Frances Archer's only child Tom (Tomarcher) also lost his life in those last months of war. Also serving in France were Robert Archer's son David from Gracemere, and George Archer's sons, Rob and Jack, from Sydney. While these three escaped the killing fields, the deaths of two Archers among the known six family servicemen reflected the death rate in general.

Alister led the Light Horse in the victory march through London in May 1919. He was then given brief leave and was at Tolderodden when
his father died on 10 June. Colin made this terse entry in his personal diary: ‘Brother Jamie died today’. In those latter years, the last two living sons of William and Julia had not only joined in Sunday meetings, but also enjoyed many quiet games of chess together. Four days later Colin’s diary entry read: ‘Jamie was buried today — his grave adjoining Charlie’s. Many townspeople attended the funeral. Louie and all the children present’. In Queensland Robert Archer told a cattleman friend: ‘I hear by wire today that my Uncle James died at the old Norwegian home Tolderodden, Larvik. He was 82 or 83, the youngest brother. He drove one of the bullock drays from the Burnett in 1855 when they stocked Gracemere …’.\textsuperscript{48}

Whether James would have appreciated being remembered as a bullock driver, a task detested by all the young Archers, is doubtful. He was never a public man like Archie, nor a craftsman like Colin, but as a businessman he was moderately successful. He invested wisely and by 1915 was the third highest tax payer in Larvik. While he might not have been able to boast, as he did to his mother in 1860 that he was ‘as rich as Croesus’, after his death his estate was valued 436,000 Kroner.\textsuperscript{49} Not marrying until middle-age, like David, his children were his great resource. Alister was the only one to settle in Australia. Kathleen, Ronald, Erling and Rolf (after a brief period in Queensland) all married Norwegians and raised their families there. Like their father it was \textit{gamle Norge} for them. Back in the 1890s economic depression in Queensland James had asked Robert: ‘When will the tide turn?’ He lived long enough to see it ‘turn’ in the affairs of Archer & Co. during the First World War. His death in 1919 saved him from knowledge of its drastic ebb in the 1920s and 1930s when its return flow seemed impossible.

Colin, four years older than James, continued to enjoy sailing almost to the end of his life. The entry in his personal diary for Monday 22 April 1918:

This being my 86th birthday we had a pleasant picnic … Embarked, 12 in all, in the Sagitta and William’s motor boat. Delightful weather and fine gentle lady’s wind both ways. On land at O. had a good feed and then walked across to Kongestrand, enjoyed a siesta there. On return to the landing place had a coffee and another feed and got home before 8 o’clock. Enjoyable day!

Both daughters Lullul and Mary were among those helping to celebrate his birthday, and most probably some of Illam’s children were among the twelve. The two eldest, Karen and Tomas, were then in their mid teens.
Colin's diary confirms this as a time of 'endings' within the extended family. Less than one month before Jamie's death, his entry for 26 May: 'Billy Arentz died today after years of suffering from joint rheumatism'. But there was still one great survivor from the second generation. His sister Kate's eldest daughter, Julla Jørgensen, celebrated her 90th birthday on 13 September 1919. She was three years older than her Uncle Colin.

During the latter part of 1920 Colin's health was failing. He died on 8 February 1921 in his eighty-ninth year. His daughters Mary Heggen and Lullul Willoch 'took turns' in staying at Lilleodden during those last three months. 'He was always cheery, grand, strong and patient to the very last', Mary Heggen told Robert at Gracemere. His burial mound in the Gravlunden lies beside that of Karen Sofie whom he had loved so dearly, but 'lost' to a nursing home long before her actual death in 1908. His funeral was attended by prominent men from the Rescue Society, of which Colin had been a foundation member, and by townsmen from the Harbour Board, Municipality and Music Society, in which he had played leading roles. But those who missed him most were his sons, daughters and grandchildren.

The passing of the last two Archers of their generation marked the end of an era, but not the end of Lilleodden and Tolderodden as family homes. William (Iflam) and his young family moved into Lilleodden, while Louie Archer, many years younger than James, continued to live in Tolderodden. Her 'ending' was so woven into the warp and weft of the old home itself, that it is described in the following chapter.
Tolderodden (now spelt Tollerodden) is central to the saga of the Archers. But its history began long before William Archer fell under the spell of Larvik's beauty in 1819. Its name derives from 'Toller' — customs officer — and 'odden' — peninsula. There was a customs house in Larvik before 1671. It is not known when Tolderodden was built but it appears in written sources from 1686, so it could have been the original customs house of two storeys. It was partly rebuilt in 1794 by its merchant owner, Hans Falkenberg, with a semi-hip roof, making it one and half storeys. New side-wings were also built. Dormer windows were added later, presumably prior to Archer ownership, but had disappeared by 1873.

Larvik, originally Laurvig, has its origins in the sixteenth century, but there had been flour mills and sawmills by the Farris River in the Middle Ages. There was a Viking settlement in the area centuries before that, while Hedrum Church was built in stone from 1100 A.D. Several other churches, Tjølling, Tanum, Berg, Hem and Styrvold are either twelfth or thirteenth century buildings, indicating a well populated countryside in the middle ages. Iver Jernskjegg established a trading business beside Lake Farris in the sixteenth century and his family dominated the region for a hundred years. The town of Larvik was founded in 1671 when King Christian V of Denmark and Norway established the 'Countship of Laurvig' for his half-brother, Gyldenløve. His residence, Herregården, was completed in 1677. It has been the town museum since the 1920s.

William Archer, as already indicated, sold the schooner Pomona for 400
English pounds in 1827 in order to purchase Tolderodden. The price of 2,000 daler included an existing mortgage of 2,033 daler. The contract states that Heiberg (one of the owners) had to pay Archer 466 daler (78 pounds) in order to close the deal which was brokered by Hans Falkenberg's nephew, Frederik Hesselberg Falkenberg. Tolderodden was the perfect house for a large family. And for as long as Julia Archer lived, it continued to be the 'magnetic pole' of her extended family's affections. And for as long as any of William and Julia's descendants lived there, it was the Norwegian anchorage for all those family members scattered over the face of earth and ocean.

'Everything most beautiful' surrounds 'old Odden', from its landscaped garden to its view across the fjord. But neither a picturesque environment nor centuries of history turn a house into a home. It was the human beings who occupied it who breathed life into it and gave Tolderodden its true character. That a Scottish couple should contribute so significantly to the character of a former Norwegian customs house is remarkable enough, but that its long term ownership was made possible by nine sons in the southern hemisphere surely makes it unique in Norway's cultural and social history.

The story of William Archer's purchase of Tolderodden and the signing of the deeds in 1827 has been told, also the story of his sons' hard-won success in saving it from the mortgagor. Apart from landscaping its gardens, William himself was never in a position to make improvements to the house. One alteration the 'petticoats' did make in 1845: they 'turned the old kitchen into a comfortable sitting room for all hands'. The first major change occurred during Archie's spell at home in 1854. He told Willie that at the request of their parents:

... I have purchased this house etc. & the furniture from them, the purchase money being portion of the sum paid by us to Mr A. Smyth. This arrangement they consider preferable to that of leaving the house & for the benefit of the daughters in common, the house valued for insurance at spd 2500 & mortgage for 2290. So it is of small value to anyone, but Father & Mother think that the ownership being settled will prevail ... I do not intend having the deed of sale registered in the meantime and as you have paid in common with me the money to Mr Smyth upon which the transaction is furnished, you may if you like become joint proprietor with me in the splendid estate of Tolderodden
... It is desirable that the ownership should be vested in whoever may live here after Father & Mother are gone ...

Archie little dreamed of the future trouble this loose arrangement would cause, but his ironic reference to the ‘splendid estate’ suggests that the old house was run-down and shabby. Colin confirmed this on his return from Queensland when he discovered how desperately it required repairs. Both the 1794 wings were ‘old and ill adapted to their purposes’ and the dwelling house needed 2 or 3 thousand dollars spent on it, he told Willie, ‘to make the place a pleasant and convenient residence’. Its value would also be enhanced, a point which would surely appeal to the canny Willie. He and Mary ‘puzzled [their] brains’ in trying to decide what alterations and improvements could be made to the buildings. They were ‘so dilapidated and inconveniently arranged that any partial repairs would be almost money thrown away’, he added. Mary thought the interior also required ‘radical improvements & alterations’ and that the kitchen should be in the end next to the street ... [and] that upstairs ought to be made available so as to give more room to the house’. Eventually, repairs and alterations were made, but few details of these have survived. It is known, however, that after the old dormer windows disappeared, two new dormer windows were added, one from 1873 and the other in the 1890s during Mary and Jeannie’s ownership. These faced the garden. They added character to the old house.

The brothers were unanimous that the house remain as home to their parents and sisters, but their trust in one another’s integrity, rather than in legal documents, created problems. This began with Archie’s decision not to register the transfer of deeds, but was partially rectified when a Deed of Conveyance from William (Senior) to Charles was transacted in 1856. Then, soon after Charles’ death in 1861, the difficulty concerning his two wills arose. As already indicated, his legal will made at Gracemere in 1856 and witnessed by Jamie and Simon, was overturned in favour of the draft will made in London a few months before his death. He had advised David that if he died before signing it he wished its direction to be carried out: that his estate be divided between his sisters — one-third each to Mary and Jane Ann (who would care for their parents at Tolderodden for as long as they lived) and one sixth each to Kate Jørgensen and Julia Arentz.

‘I fear it will be a complicated business to carry out Charlie’s wishes’,
David told Willie. Complicated indeed it proved to be. Whatever reason Charlie had for not having his will witnessed, was never explained. But by the time all agreed to accept the draft will, Kate had been in her grave for three years. Recent research by James Archer’s great-grandson, James Ronald Archer of Larvik, reveals a complex series of transfers between five different family members, 1856–1893. And as far as Tolderodden was concerned, there seems to have been a kind of family game of ‘pass the parcel’ as to who held the mortgage.

The resolution of Charles’ will in 1868 and old William’s death in the following year, seem to have ushered in a more expansive era. David, who at that time administered Tolderodden’s financial affairs, agreed with Willie in 1874 that household expenditure had increased considerably, but thought his sisters had the right to spend the 1,750 pound profit from Charlie’s estate as they desired:

... Mary has, I find, set her heart on acquiring not only old Stephansen’s gaard but the Schrodergård as well, so that the grog shops kept there may be suppressed and the road turned up by Madame Schrøeder’s some way instead of coming round by Tolderodden ...

In the following year David agreed with Willie about the proposed acquisitions, but as these affected his own financial position he added: ‘But my lot don’t see it in the same light as I do, as you may suppose’ — ‘my lot’ being wife Susan and their older children then in their late teens. Schrodergården was finally purchased by Willie in 1882 and later inherited by James Archer. These were the years when Mary not only hoisted her flag of independence, but also kept it flying high in rebellion against the affairs of Tolderodden being solely in the hands of the absent David and Willie.

The old house was by this time central to the Larvik family. ‘I am glad the Jørgensens are going to have their house [Pladsen] so near you’, Sandy told his mother in 1878. ‘I did not quite understand at first where it was to be, but now Old Odden will be flanked on one side by Colin & the other by Jørgensens. The next thing will be to close up the road & get the rock at the back & then the peninsula will be quite shut out from the public’. This had been Mary’s idea several years earlier, and in another ten years Jamie and Louie and family would add to the ‘flanking’ effect.
The ‘colony of Archers’ in Australia had, it seems, a Norwegian counterpart.

When Mary and Jane Ann became official owners of Tolderodden in 1893 the mortgage was transferred to David. Shortly before his death in 1900 he told Jamie he was anxious to get this off his hands. He died before doing so. His son David inherited not only the mortgage, but also the problem of getting rid of it. On New Years Day 1901 he asked his brother Robert on the other side of the world if ‘Aunt Mary and Aunt Jane were still willing to pay off partly or entirely (as they had offered last year) the 1856 mortgage …’.

Official records show a Deed of Conveyance transferring Tolderodden from William Archer to Charles in 1856, then to his four sisters in acceptance of his unsigned will in 1893. The mortgage was then transferred to several brothers and redeemed between 1894 and 1913. The family seemed unaware that Tolderodden had been part of Charles’ estate, not their parents’.

Archie’s death in the old home in 1902 raised a new problem for Jamie. Archie had left a fund for the maintenance of Tolderodden, but once more it was in the form of a personal request, not a legal document. Jamie, at least, remembered the complications which arose from Charlie’s draft will. In the hope of avoiding the same debacle after his own death, he drew up a document: Declaration of Wish dated 10 March 1915 by J.G.L. Archer:

To fulfil the wish by Archibald Archer dated 18 March 1901 I declare that in accordance with this an amount of 63,500 NOK is to be set apart after my death … to be placed in safe mortgages with the yields to those in the family owning Tolderodden. My wife has the right to the yields as long as she keeps the property. The yields are — according to the enclosed wish of my brother — to be used in the maintenance of Tolderodden. To administer this I appoint Ronald and Erling Archer and the cashier of Larvik, Th. Speilberg. When one of them resigns he is [to be] replaced in such a way that there is always one outside and two inside the family …

This was the manner in which this close-knit family ensured that old Odden remain a final refuge for those of William and Julia’s descendants who wished to call it home. Willie was the first of the retired bachelors to join his sisters there in the 1880s. When he became too feeble to spend his summers at Horstad, he was cared for by Jane and Eliza — Mary was often absent in those years. Willie died there on 25 June 1896. On the
same day David directed Robert: ‘You had better insert the death in one or more of the papers describing him as of Gracemere Queensland and Laurvig Norway aged 78’. Archie had arrived soon after this to spend his remaining years at Tolderodden. He died on 6 February 1902, a particularly cold winter in Larvik — ‘snowing almost every day’. Willie, who had long since shed ‘Minor’ to distinguish him from all the others, told Robert that winter, ‘The old place is so very much changed and everyone seems so old and tired, but it is still the Old Home and very cosy and pleasant it is’. But there were other changes. Malla Elligers, at Pladsen, died soon after her uncle Archie.

James, the thirteenth in the family, had a special affection for Tolderodden which he confirmed in caption and verse beneath its photograph: ‘Arrived 15 July 1889 [from Coul]. Left for Klubgaarden 7 September [1889].

And thou, the dearest spot of all
Where first my infant eyes beheld
The glorious light of day
Where first my tottering steps were led
By loving hands — and loving hearts
Supplied each boyish want —
No tongue shall tell, no pen shall write
The charm that's only there.

Jamie and Louie had lived at Heijmen since September 1894, but moved into Tolderodden following the death of the last of the ‘petticoats’ in 1912. The Larvik Municipality apparently thought this an appropriate time — ‘the end of an era’ — to make claims of their own on the property. They argued that Captain Rørdam had made an imperfect survey of the grounds in 1822 and that some of this land should be forfeited. The Municipality had a determined opponent in James Archer. He found the original title deeds which were registered in his father’s name in October 1827 and corrected in 1879. He argued that ‘the property called Tolderodden’ had remained in the family since 1827 and that:

During all that time there has been no question as to its boundaries towards the sea which surrounds it on three sides and no claim has been made on any part of it during these 85 years or, as far as is known, before that time. It has therefore been taken for granted that no such claim could arise and acting on
this the whole of the property has been improved and utilised without anyone protesting against such alteration. As the greatest proportion of the property next to the sea consists of bare and rugged rocks these improvements consist chiefly in cutting steps in the rocks, bridging clefts and laying out rough paths ... There is no dispute about the boundary along the Kirkestrædet and Kirkegaden as it answers approximately to Rørdam's measurements ...19

James Archer's death in 1919 saved him from the stress of post-war economic depression and social disruption and also from later disruption relating to Tolderodden. Meantime it continued to be flanked by Archers. After Colin's death in 1921, Illam and family moved into Lilleodden. Ronald and his wife Elly were living in Schrödergården when their first son, Ronald, was born in 1920. This had been one of Willie's Larvik properties which he bequeathed to Jamie. Klubgaarden, also Willie's but bequeathed to Colin, and the house in which Jamie and Louie lived before acquiring Hejmen, had by 1926 become a home for old people. For a time it had been used as a factory.20 Rolf, who had spent several years at Gracemere after the war, told Alister in 1926 that 'Mammie' (her children all called Louie by this diminutive) was 'getting a bit old' but was 'as cheerful and full of fun as ever'. She enjoyed summer visits from Kathleen and her two 'great little girls' and had Ronald's 'two fine boys' in the house, also her frail and aged sister, Fanny MacKenzie, formerly of Coul.21 Tolderodden's human pattern since 1827 of several generations within its solid walls had been re-established, especially in relation to summer visits from children and grand-children.

Rolf had disturbing news in 1930 for Alister, then living in the Gracemere homestead as manager of Archer Brothers. Their mother Louie was by this time almost totally blind and so for the past several years had left the management of her business affairs in the hands of eldest son, Ronald. James had left his considerable estate, including Tolderodden, to his wife. Ronald had invested Louie's money without her knowledge and lost virtually all of it. Acting in what he thought the best interests of his mother, he was foiled by the Wall Street Stock Market crash in USA and the shock waves it sent all around the western world. Ronald's plans, along with those of tens of thousands of other investors, left Louie with worthless pieces of paper. Rolf believed the loss included 'Archibald Archer's fund' for the maintenance of Tolderodden. But Rolf was a little premature in concluding that this was 'a horrible ending to the reign of the Archer
family at Tolderodden’. Nor did he absolve himself or brother Erling from blame, admitting they should have been more in touch with Ronald in the management of their mother’s affairs. It was the thought of the loss of the old home, he said, which worried ‘Mammie’ most of all. This did not happen. Tolderodden was to be lived in by Archers for quite a few more years.

Louie’s cheerful disposition allowed her to recover quickly from her shocking loss. She still had Tolderodden and her wants were few. In the summer of 1932 she was ‘in fine form for her birthday and received a lot of her lady friends for tea and cake in the forenoon, and received also many presents’. Kathleen and her husband Vilhelm Greve and their children were there, also Rolf. The two men enjoyed sailing Kathleen — ‘still in fine form despite her 31 years’, according to Rolf. Once more it was a return to happier times at Tolderodden, but not for long.

Early in the following year Louie had an attack of influenza, the first illness in her entire lifetime. She appeared to recover completely, but two months later she simply died in her sleep — just the way Rolf always wished she should do. On a beautiful sunny day in May 1933 Brisbane-born Louie was buried in Tolderodden’s Gravlunden. When Alister read Rolf’s description of her burial he surely thought his mother had ended her earthly life in the same genteel manner as she had lived it, so familiar to them all:

... we placed the coffin under the big Lønnetre [maple] — so she was carried from there to Gravlunden where Vilhelm Greve (in mufti) took the service, in the old traditional way of the family.

It was all so peaceful and beautiful — with the flower covered coffin, where the sun shone down through the trees — the bees were hunting honey in the flowers, and so: Herren gav — Herren tog — Herren navn være lovæ [The Lord gives, the Lord takes, the Lord’s name be praised]. And the coffin was slowly lowered down.

Afterwards we had a small family dinner, Lullul og Ola, Mary Heggen, Lajla Arentz and Charlie, Erik Winter [Jørgensen], Ingeborg Archer, Karen Ander­son, Carola Marcussen (Elly’s sister), Elly, Erling, Kathleen and self ...

The Gravlunden had been part of Tolderodden’s garden since Charles’ burial in 1861, but surely Louie’s funeral was the most peaceful and beautiful in all those years. Vilhelm Greve, an orthodox Lutheran clergyman, conducted the simple burial service on Separatist lines, even though...
Louie had not been one of the inner circle when Eleanor Berkeley described a meeting in earlier years. Nor was Louie’s death the end of Tolderodden as a family home. Ronald predeceased his mother in 1931, but he and Elly and the children, Ronald and Aleck, had lived there from about 1922.

Elly and her boys lived on at old Odden, caring for Fanny MacKenzie until her death a little later. ‘It is really sad about Tolderodden’, Kathleen told Alister, ‘it does not seem as a home to us any longer, Elly has taken the upper hand, so it is perhaps the best thing to sell it’. But she conceded that as long as old Aunt Fanny lived, it was best to leave the strong minded Elly there. Kathleen, Erling and their families continued to visit each summer, even though ‘it was so sad being there without Grannie’. In 1936 they were joined by their English cousin, Frank Archer, also Cecelia Bancroft from Brisbane — she who had been present at Alister’s birth in 1890. Fred Berney, a ‘Norwegian Queenslander’ and old friend, visiting his parents at Lillehammer, also spent a few days there with Rolf in 1936. They sailed around all the old favourite places ‘in the old Kathleen’.

Rolf by this time owned a small farm, Skallevoll, near Tønsberg.

It was about this time that Rolf advised Alister that their main hope to keep the house within the family, Mary Heggen, (Colin’s daughter) had declined to take on Tolderodden. She found it beyond her to pay the heavy taxes and other expenses involved, including repairs, even though she was left comfortably off by Halvard Heggen. The inevitable came to pass. Tolderodden was offered for sale in 1938 for Kroner 35,000, but there were no buyers. Meantime the family delved into the storage trunks in the attic where, among other treasures, they found ‘Grandfather’s diary of 1819’. The University of Oslo photographed every page. ‘It seems a very precious document’. Lullul commented to Alister. Mary Heggen who by this time had become a respected artist and sculptor, after training in Paris, had already sent him her painting of Tolderodden, oil on canvas — ‘by shutting one eye you will get the right spring effect’, she told him. Mary Heggen again wrote to Alister in December 1938 with news of the sale to Kommunen, the Local Authority:

It is too bad and sad that Tolderodden is sold & that the community didn’t pay up better, it is a shame for you all. Kathleen, Ingeborg & Erling are back from having distributed the furniture which Erling is to get packed etc. Kathleen
says that they have sent up into our cellar [Lilleodden] a case containing old books & photos etc. which they had no time to look through, also old iron beds etc. Kathleen says she is ashamed to say they are very worn and old, but we are very glad to have the old things especially as we are just now arranging Lilleodden for Lu's and my use. Illam has moved into the second storey. So the whole of the first floor is at our disposal ...

We don't mind what the community of Larvik will do with the Tolderodden house, but they are keen on using the rocks for 'Havne auldg' [some kind of development.] I hope some time will pass before they get enough money for that. Elly and [son] Aleck are staying on there, [son] Ronald has gone to Agricultural school ...

Rolf was far more pragmatic about the sale, although it would be strange not having the old place any more. It had cost from Kroner 3 to 4,000 a year to keep it together, so he thought as they could all make good use of the money they received, he 'reckoned' it was for the best. Archers in Australia and England each had his or her nostalgic memory. Colonel Charles Archer (Tom's son) had earlier described the old home as a place that drew William Archer's descendants back, 'with a magnetism that increased rather than lessened'. In reply to Erling's letter 'with a full and interesting account of “the Passing of Tolderodden”', he expressed 'the sadness that one can’t help feeling at the inevitable end of beautiful things ... I remember of course the great side-board and the other furniture you speak of, & we are glad to know it will remain in the family'. The furniture might have gone to other houses, but the new owners allowed Elly to remain at Tolderodden.

Mary and Lullul called upon their bachelor cousin, Jim Archer (Tom's son) to help them sift through the bundles of letters and photographs transferred to the Lilleodden cellar. Since his retirement from oriental banking more than ten years earlier, Jim had spent happy holidays with Colin's daughters and they had become close friends. He had already had many of the early letters, 1833 to 1855, transcribed and copies typed for family members. On a visit to Gracemere in 1934 he had inspired Alister to join him in delving into family history. (See Part V) And so it was that 'after some hesitation' he posted a parcel to Alister containing family photographs, explaining that 'The only thing of value is the little portrait of Julia Thomson which used to hang over the spisestue [sitting room] sofa at Tolderodden. Mary says it is sent to you by her. I suppose it is the
oldest portrait we have of any of our ancestors ... With rumblings of war in Europe, and the German occupation of Norway not too far in the future, it was as well that Alister's parcel was posted in time. Mary Heggen's painting of Tolderodden and the portrait of Julia Thomson, Julia Archer's Scottish grandmother, which Alister hung in the big living room at Gracemere, provided visible symbols of the scattering of Archers 'over the face of earth and ocean'.

By the time Larvik Municipality completed the conversion of Tolderodden into flats, the Second World War was under way. Norway declared herself neutral, but both Britain and Germany had plans for her. In April 1940 Britain laid mines in Norwegian territorial waters, but within days German troops succeeded in occupying major ports. Norway declared war on Germany and her troops 'put up a determined show' but were heavily outnumbered. British troops came to assist but were 'inexperienced and poorly equipped'. Russia's occupation of Finland, in conjunction with the German occupation of Norway, effectively cut off communication with Britain and her allies. One of old William Archer's great-grand-daughters in Australia, Mary Archer of Sydney, expressed what many others felt in 1940: 'The part that poor little Norway played ... has saved a lot of bloodshed ... and I, for one, was mighty glad they managed to wriggle out of a general bust up'. They were not to know until war's end that Tolderodden was occupied by German soldiers.

Elly Archer, Ronald's widow, retained three rooms on the ground floor and two upper rooms during the German occupation. She was not the kind of weak-minded woman to be cowed by the Nazis. She told them that a ghost haunted the old house. Nor did she fabricate the story. She herself was convinced that she had seen a ghost in the long passage connecting the old house with the 1873 wing. She identified it as Sandy Archer, drowned in Queensland waters in 1890. Ghost or no ghost, the Nazis troubled Elly no more. She lived on there until 1972.

During the war years there was no direct communication with the Norwegian family. The only snippets of Norwegian news to reach Gracemere came in a roundabout way from Simon Jørgensen's daughter Valborg, then in London.

Five years after war's end, Alister received a letter from his old friend Julius Salvesen 'after a trip he had to Larvik last summer; quite a number
of them met there and from what I could gather they all seemed rather sad at the sight of Tolderodden’. Alister preferred to retain the visual image portrayed in Mary Heggen’s painting of Tolderodden and the glory of its garden in springtime. ‘It still has the pride of place in our [Gracemere] sitting room’ he assured her in 1947. He also thought the house should be turned into an old sailors’ home.

Tolderodden reverted to Local Authority control when the Germans departed. The flats helped ease the post-war housing shortage, but eventually were vacated as they failed to measure up to modern standards. The building, left vacant, was degraded even further when ‘hippies’ and other homeless people used it as a refuge, vandalised it and on at least one occasion lit a fire which fortunately was put out before it spread. Eventually repairs were undertaken, but sadly in renewing the roof, the dormer windows were not replaced nor the distinctive entrance porch rebuilt. But there were some wonderful discoveries. Cultural archaeologists found ‘four centuries of hidden treasures’. These included velour wallpaper which is very rare, less than fifteen examples are known to exist in the whole of Europe. There are, too, painted ceiling decorations from the 1730s or earlier. A false ceiling, presumably installed by Falkenberg in 1794 in the large ground-floor dining room, conceals these beautiful hand painted designs. The colours appear medieval — the muted greens and gold of vegetable dyes are similar to those seen today in Hedrum Church. Another ceiling painted in red and white tonings was also concealed, possibly some time after Archie’s and Willie’s purchase of Tolderodden in 1854.

Tolderodden’s Gravlunden was at the time of the sale to the Local Authority registered as a separate property in the name of the descendants of James and Louie Archer. This sequestered area remains a peaceful resting place for many family members. Alongside the evergreen mantled burial mounds stand three memorial stones for three young descendants of William and Julia killed in two wars: Cedric Archer, Jamie’s son, killed in France 10 August 1918; Thomas Archer, only son of Tom’s son William, killed in Belgium 28 April 1918; Colin Archer ‘sonn av Justus og Alethe, Født 23 November 1910. d. Spania, 11 February 1937’. For these young men there were no flower covered coffins with bees hunting for honey, only the din of exploding shells and unseen lethal bullets. But while their bones lie in foreign soil, one senses that their spirits are now at peace beside
old Odden where as children they played among the tumbled rocks or paddled by the strand.

Tollerodden's Venner (Friends of Tolderodden) was founded 6 April 1992 to raise funds for the restoration of the building to its former style and to preserve its valuable cultural heritage. Since the discovery of the seventeenth century and eighteenth century ceiling decorations and wallpaper, Tolderodden should be listed as a national treasure. After the ‘Friends’ struggle of six years, the Municipality of Larvik on 24 June 1998 decided to vest the ownership of Tolderodden in a Foundation. Its Board comprises one municipal representative and four from Tollerodden's Venner. One of these is James Ronald Archer, a great-great grandson of William Archer.

Members of Tollerodden's Venner won First Prize in Larvik's jubilee parade in 1996. They dressed up as inhabitants of the house through 300 years — 'as an answer to the problem of how to show the history of a house' visually. They were led by the most recent inhabitants, the 'hippies' who carried the sign, 'I ravaged here in the 1980s'; then a German soldier, 'Ich okkupierte und ...'; then Mary Archer with yachting cap and pipe, 'I smoked my pipe and sailed my own boat'; then Colin Archer with a roll of boat designs, 'I was born here in 1832'; then Captain Falkenberg with sextant, 'I rebuilt the house in 1794'; then customs officer, Gether, mid eighteenth century with binoculars; then the wife of another customs officer (1730) with a huge key, 'My husband was arrested here'. James Ronald Archer brought up the rear dressed as the first known inhabitant of the house about 1680, customs officer Grønvold, carrying a padlock.

Tolderodden of old was a treasure of a different kind from today's cultural Tolderodden. For William and Julia Archer's sons in faraway Australia in the 1840s it was: 'the goal of all our aspirations' and 'the magnetic pole of all our affections'. While the house now belongs to the people, Tolderodden's Gravlunden will remain in family ownership in the twenty-first century as a sequestered last resting place for Norwegian 'born and bred' Archers. It is maintained and cared for by William and Julia's descendants, following in the tradition of Mary Archer who in 1861 ordered trees from Scotland to plant near 'lange Charlie’s' grave.
PART V
Looking Despondently at the Map of Australia 1890–1965
The strong links between Norway and Australia, forged in 1834 by David's migration to New South Wales, were to be maintained in the twentieth century, first by David's eldest son Robert and then by James' third son, Alister. First cousins though separated by a generation, each was to sacrifice personal contentment for the sake of the family firm.

As already shown, both Colin and James found it hard to realise and accept the changed conditions in Queensland since their days, brought about not only by more severe droughts, but also by difficulties in marketing Australian beef in Britain. It was Jack's Willie Minor who expressed what they were all feeling when he told Robert in 1901 that he had been 'looking despondently at the map of Australia'. He had spent half his life in Queensland, not only in the pastoral industry, but also in growing sugar in the Mackay district. He knew from bitter experience how tough the conditions were and how hard it was to make a profit.

The final decade of the nineteenth century in Central Queensland conformed to depressed *fin-de-siecle* theory: ushered in by a severe flood in 1890, an even worse one in 1896, and farewelled with the onset of devastating drought. This was the decade of the great shearers' strike of 1891 with its divisive social effects, the bank 'crashes' of 1893, the arrival of the cattle tick in 1896 and the rapid spread of the introduced prickly pear (cactus) choking vast areas of grazing lands. Small wonder that Willie Archer looked on all these events with despondency.
Gracemere 1890–1926: Robert

The 1890s was also the decade in which the last of the original Archer brothers, Archie, retired to Norway. It was the end of one generation at Gracemere and the beginning of a third with Robert’s children being born in the old homestead. Robert, of the second generation, had long since taken over the management of Archer & Co. Like his younger uncles, Colin and Jamie in their boyhood, ‘Bobby’ had also heard many tales of frontier life from his father, David. His own initiation in June 1880 was very different from that of his father and uncles. Instead of being sent out to ‘rough it’ in the bush as they were, Robert had a ‘silver spoon’ introduction by taking over the book-keeping on arrival at Gracemere. He also had a gentle transition from London suburban life, with Sunday ‘meetings’ at home, to Rockhampton social life with Sunday ‘meetings’ at the home of Stanley Hill (Clerk of Petty Sessions). On the voyage from England, Robert, 22, lonely and homesick, had committed himself as a believer — he told his father he wished to join the Separatists. It seems that Stanley Hill was the only member of the sect in Rockhampton.

At the time of Robert’s birth in 1858 at Norbury Villa, Croydon, David had abandoned family tradition in naming his eldest son as yet another William, choosing instead to honour his father-in-law, Dr Robert Stubbs of Dublin. The first Robert Stubbs and his brother John had migrated to Ireland prior to 1660 as part of Cromwell’s ‘Anglo-Irish plantation’. It seems that Oliver Cromwell played a key role in dispersing young Robert Archer’s paternal ancestors to Scotland and his Stubbs maternal forebears
to Ireland, the first as rebels, the second as faithful followers. The name of Robert Stubbs Archer would be renowned within the Australian beef cattle industry for his contribution to raising the quality of northern herds.

But that was well in the future during Robert’s first years at Gracemere. His diary for 1881 records more about his social life than his training in station management. First impressions in that department were not favourable. He accompanied his Uncle Jamie on an overnight stay at the Fifteen Mile cattle station where they were fed ‘stinking beef’ and where ‘the beds stink worse than the beef’. His first game with the newly formed Berserker Football Club was not much better: ‘very few knew the rules, and those that did cheated … the Rockhamptonites are a queer lot’, he concluded. But not the young ladies. He enjoyed ‘squired’ various girls at balls and dances, or taking them for a row on the mere. On 6 July he recorded a visit to the races: ‘plenty of grub, splendid races & very good fun jawing to the gals. Got hold of M.M. [Maud Milman?] who isn’t bad’.

At home he was detailed to ‘offside’ for the distinguished Norwegian scientist, Carl Lumholz, who was a house guest at Gracemere for several months. On one occasion he assisted ‘the Doctor’ in his attempt to catch a shark in Crescent Lagoon: ‘… arrived at the Lagoon a little after seven & camped for breakfast in pouring rain, the Doctor growling horribly. Fished for the shark till 1pm in beastly heavy punt but could not get him to bite. Got home at 3pm’.

Robert’s salad days were soon over. He became involved in 1882 in upgrading the Hereford stud herd after a visit to southern colonies to purchase breeding stock. He had been initiated in these skills by Jamie whose brothers had been inclined to tease him in earlier years about his ‘horned pets’. Robert was considered competent enough to take over the management of Gracemere, with some assistance from Archie, when James returned to Europe in 1883. Almost immediately the young man was catapulted into experiences such as the deleterious effect of the fire which destroyed Lakes Creek Meatworks in September 1883. There was virtually no other market for cattle. This was followed in 1885 by drought — ‘the most disastrous year known in Queensland’.

These were setbacks in the industry which might have prepared Robert for those of the following decade, but like his fellow cattlemen, he looked forward to better times.
A century later, graziers continued to live on hopes of better times, despite the evidence that 'better times' seldom last more than a season or two in Central Queensland.

On a personal level, the approach to the 1890s was one of great happiness for Robert. Not only did it bring Sissie (his sister Julia Alice) on a year-long visit, but also their Uncle Willie who chaperoned her on the voyage from England. Most importantly, this was the year in which he met his future wife, Alice Manon (Daisy) Marwedel of Toowoomba. She was on a visit to her twin sister Jessie, Mrs George Allen, of Rockhampton. The story of Robert and Daisy's growing attachment is recorded in Sissie's Journal during June and July 1887 in such entries as 'Bob drove into town and brought Miss Marwedel out for the races'. A week later it was 'Daisy' who ate pineapple, went sailing on the mere before lunch and played tennis in the afternoon. Daisy's name appears in Sissie's social jottings until mid July — at the races and ball, at the Grammar School sports and fancy dress ball from which Bob came home 'tired but jovial'. Two days later they all went to Mrs McIntosh's dance.4

Soon after Christmas Daisy was not only back in Rockhampton, but also a guest at Gracemere during the first two weeks of the new year. On 15 January Bob and Sissie 'picked up Daisy' at the Allens and set out for a lovely drive to Olsen's Caves — opened to the public a couple of years earlier. A week later they took Daisy with them to Emu Park, Rockhampton's favourite seaside township. 'Nice but hot drive to Palmtree Scrub where we lunched and banged [rested] till driven on by a thunderstorm. Lovely moonlight on the cliff & a stroll by the sea ...'5 Robert's planned visit home in company with Sissie and Uncle Willie lost some of its former appeal after that moonlight walk. When he boarded the Jumna in Keppel Bay on 25 February 1888 he had a secret to share with Sissie (who had been on a farewell visit to Sandy and Minnie). He told her of his as yet unannounced engagement to Daisy.

Robert Stubbs Archer married Alice Manon (Daisy) Marwedel, daughter of Ernest Marwedel and his wife Marie, nee Geh, in Toowoomba in February 1889. Because Robert had committed himself to the Separatists, the wedding appears to have been a quiet family occasion. Strangely, his father's letters to his Uncle Colin at that time make no mention of Robert's marriage, merely 'a few lines from Bob' on the lack of rainfall.6
Robert was under pressure in both personal and company matters: concern over his feckless brother Colin who was out of work in Mackay, and financial demands from English and Norwegian shareholders. This was the year in which they petitioned for everything except the Fifteen Mile cattle station to be sold. There had been heavy losses over the past three years on cattle, horses and land. Robert's father, still trying to run Gracemere by remote control, feared the bank debt would be 10,000 pounds by the time the cattle were paid off. Unknown to them all, the future would be even bleaker.

Robert's and Daisy's rejoicing over the birth of their first child, Joan Marie, on 17 January 1890, soon turned to mourning for Sandy and Minnie lost in the Quetta wreck. Then came the worst flood since European settlement, with the mere almost lapping the homestead verandah posts. In Rockhampton one pylon of the suspension bridge over the Fitzroy collapsed, causing its closure. Robert had been present at its gala opening on New Years Day 1881. Frederick Byerley, engineer in charge of the bridge construction, received an urgent message at his 'grace and favour' cottage at Gracemere but flood waters prevented him from assessing the situation. Then, as usual in Central Queensland, this flood was followed by a droughty season. Robert's brother Jack was at the company's central highland property, St Helens, in October 1891 supervising the building of a dam at Anakie. In 1885 the two brothers had taken up 'Torsdale', a selection block in the Callide Valley, in the name of R.S. & J. Archer. Jack had been obliged to leave his own interests to come to the rescue of Archer & Co. on this occasion as he would be from time to time in the future. Robert suggested he should take his long promised trip home in March 1892. At Gracemere their Uncle Tom, now 69, was paying his last visit, not only to the station, but also to Australia where he had begun his roving life in 1837.

The financial crisis of 1893 which affected all of Australia was, according to David, the result of 'wild speculation in land' and too many banks competing against one another. He had declined an earlier invitation to become a director of the Royal Bank of Queensland (in which J.T. (Jamie) Walker was involved) when it opened a branch in London. Its doors closed in 1893. But as a shareholder in the Bank of New South Wales, David was relieved to find that its shares were again rising in value by August of that
disastrous year. In Rockhampton only three banks remained open, the Bank of New South Wales which held Archer & Co.'s account was among these. Throughout Australia, but particularly in Melbourne, the 'booming 80s' provided a false sense of optimism followed by the financial collapse of many businesses in the 90s, a pattern repeated a century later.

Depressing as all these events were, their importance diminished for cattle owners compared with the effect of the cattle tick which reached Central Queensland in 1896. This pest was brought to the Northern Territory on imported Asian cattle in 1872, then gradually worked its way east and south on the hides of bullock teams. Cattlemen were aware of the terrible threat. Robert, pacing up and down the big sitting room one night in January 1897, told Daisy he believed it would be the ruination of the cattle industry. This was an inspired prophecy. The cattle tick, *boophilus microplus*, has shown itself to have the tenacity of the cockroach in survival techniques a century after its introduction to Queensland.

The news of this disaster reached London early in 1897. David's nephew Willie Minor saw in the 'British Australian' paper that ticks had been found on the dairy cows at Gracemere. A week later he heard from Bob himself that they were 'gaining ground'. Cattle began to die from the tick related disease, redwater fever. The first generation partners were in a state of alarm as David's letter to Colin reveals:

> Things are so adverse in Australia and I see so little prospect of any improvement in the future, that I think it will be better to dissolve the partnership of Archer Brothers unless we can make better terms with our creditors than we have at present. Therefore acting under Paragraph 21 of the Deed of Partnership I have addressed the necessary notices which I have enclosed to yourself, Archie and Jamie ... I am willing if the others agree to take 4% instead of 6% on my loan accts., which now amount to some 9000 pounds — as I have refrained from drawing the interest for some years, and have been living on money which has fallen in here, so as to keep down Archer Bros. overdraft ...  

The Norwegians agreed to David's proposal, even though Colin expressed gloom: 'The statement you have made of the affairs of the firm is not a very cheerful one, but ... from all I hear from the Colony, I fear it is not far from the mark'. During much of that year Robert was away from home on 'tick business' — attending meetings in Brisbane and Clermont, between times supervising the building of a plunge dip at
Gracemere (believed to be the first cattle dip in Queensland) and, in 1898, travelling out west as a member of the government appointed Stock Board. Despite all this, he remained optimistic. Like his father he did not believe in dwelling on 'the dark side of things'.

Throughout this troublesome decade, when all the achievements of the first generation seemed to have been in vain, Robert found comfort and relaxation within the homestead walls. His pleasure in his children was much like that of his own father in his time. Joan, as a toddler, playing at his feet as he wrote letters gave him quiet satisfaction. While in Sydney attending the Easter Show in 1894 he addressed a letter to 'My dearest Joannie' — telling her of the former pit pony which Jamie Walker's twin boys owned. He promised to look for a nice quiet pony for her in Rockhampton. And when he did find one, her grandfather David sent a side-saddle for her from London.

Robert and Daisy's first son was born on 21 February 1897 in Gracemere homestead — yet another reason for keeping the family roots nourished in this place. The baby was named David Marwedel Archer for both grandfathers, but in childhood he was 'little Davie' to them all. A family holiday at Emu Park when Davie was just a year old provided news of his 'gambols' on the beach and of Joan learning to swim. 'I am glad to hear it, but she must not be too venturesome', wrote her ever cautious grandfather.

There were also two marriages to rejoice over in this year — first, Jack's to Brenda Nott whose father owned Greycliffe Station, not too far from Torsdale. Jack's father sent him a draft on Archer Brothers for 25 pounds as a wedding present, and by March 1899 was 'expecting to hear good news of Brenda shortly'. Son Colin received the same gift when he and Ethel were married, but would have less to show for it than his steady brother Jack. The relationship between Colin and Robert had been strained for some time, so their father was 'much gratified to hear ... that [Colin] and his wife had been out to Gracemere'. He trusted that the past would be forgotten and forgiven. Colin was to be forgiven the Biblical seventy-times seven, but it was difficult to forget his foolishness. Five years later Jamie Walker, then a Senator in the Australian Federal Parliament as well as a director of the Bank of New South Wales, wrote to Robert:

I am sorry that your brother Colin is a source of anxiety. It is certainly unlike
the typical "Archer" to get into debt & Colin is fortunate in having you to act
the brother's part ... We must admit that 180 pounds a year plus bank interest
on 800 pounds is not much on which a bank clerk and his wife ... can
housekeep in a place like Rockhampton. I suppose you are satisfied he does
not gamble ... tell him that should it come to the Bank's knowledge officially
that he lived beyond his means, the inevitable practice is to call for an officer's
resignation ... 19

This was neither the first nor last time that Colin was saved by the high
regard in which his family and forebears were held. Seven years later, in
1905, Robert was embarrassed yet again by having to approach this old
family friend, but as he explained to Walker, the chances of Colin getting
employment more congenial than banking 'in the present depressed state
of business ... in Queensland' was quite out of the question. Colin did not
have enough 'push' nor any idea of bettering his position. His constant cry
was 'if he could only receive his small inheritance' he would be all right.
But Robert knew from bitter experience that this would all be gone in a
year or two and then his brother would be worse off than ever.20 It is
perhaps as well that Colin and Ethel remained childless or the situation
might have been even more desperate. It is ironic that David had named
this son Colin as a tribute to his brother Colin, even then beginning to
make a name for himself in Norway.

Robert's own children provided relaxation from fraternal or business
worries. Joan's early schooling provided no problem. It began under the
tutelage of Mrs Frederick Byerley who lived a short walk from the
homestead. The link between the Byerleys and the Archers had been
forged when the McLeods, Mrs Byerley's parents, cared for 'poor Jack's'
Eliza and Willie Minor in Gippsland after their mother’s death in 1848.
Mrs Byerley was an eccentric woman who put straw hats on the buggy
horses, but Joan 'adored' her. Very early each morning she would ask her
mother, 'May I go over to Mrs Byerley's now?' After waiting what seemed
for ever, she hurried barefoot along the track beside the prickly pear hedge
keeping a careful watch for snakes. In the late afternoons she and Mrs
Byerley would walk up the driveway to meet Frederick returning from
his town office. When he died suddenly in 1897 he was buried in
Gracemere's private cemetery.21

When Mrs Byerley returned to her Melbourne relatives, Joan attended
Miss Greenish's small private school in town along with her cousin
Marjorie Allen. When she was nine, Joan was enrolled at Rockhampton Girls Grammar School, staying during the week with her parents’ friends, Principal and Mrs Wheatcroft at the Boys Grammar School. Her grandfather Archer thought it was so good for her to be with other children. When he died in 1900, Susan told Robert that she was sending Joan her dear grandfather’s photo, as he was so fond of her.22

Robert and Daisy’s second son Archie, born in 1902, being so much younger than Joan and David, tended to be a little spoilt. When he was about five he overstepped the mark with his father. Asked to do some small task in the garden, he replied ‘Do it yourself Bob!’ After a quick trip to his father’s dressing room and the application of a big black clothes brush to his ‘tender parts’, he never again offended in this way.23 Soon after this when Joan said goodbye to her little brother before leaving for schooling in England, she wept, and he wondered what all the fuss was about. But he also had to settle down to school lessons with his cousin, Valentine Allen, as governess.

Gracemere was a place of natural enjoyment for the Archer children born in the homestead, as it had been for their great-uncle Tom’s children in the 1870s. In 1976 Archie (then Sir Archibald Archer) reminisced about their childhood. The lagoon or mere was a constant source of entertainment, either boating on it or swimming in it. He learned to swim when he was about three in the same manner as little Aboriginal children. ‘I thought at the time my father was a bit cruel ... down in the bathing shed he just grabbed me, went out on the end of the springboard and said, “Right, you can swim” and threw me in’. After floundering a bit, he found he could swim.

When Archie was eight or nine years old he joined his brother David in riding every day to Rockhampton Grammar School, seven miles (11 kilometres) there and seven miles home. He was much keener to stay home than go to school on wet days. His father soon ‘woke up’ to the boy’s trick of just going far enough to get wet, then coming home for the day. ‘He would catch me before I had gone too far and say, Here’s your coat!’ One particular special school holiday proved to be a mixed blessing:

The year the old King died, Edward VII ... the Headmaster gave us all a holiday, said we could go home. My brother was five years older than I was, and it was immediately arranged that Ned Allen and other boys, [Fitzroy] Jardine was one
I think, decided to all spend the day at Gracemere and they all got on their ponies. There was an old orchard, a prickly pear enclosed orchard with tree pear to keep the stock and vermin out, it was a great place for the game of bobbies and bushies. I rode home and when the others appeared my mother said, 'No, this is not a holiday given to you to play bobbies and bushrangers, this is for prayer for the old King. Now you boys get off your horses, you are not to do anything today but … pray, I suppose, certainly not play bushrangers!'

Joan was sixteen when she sailed for England in March 1906 under the care of friends of her parents. Two and a half years is a long time in the life of an adolescent, but during her time at Crohamhurst Girls High School in Croydon her cousins and friends kept her in touch with the teenage social life of Rockhampton. But Valentine's and Marjorie's letters could not match that of their mutual friend, seventeen year old Vera Rees Jones, for sheer drama. She told Joan in November 1906 that she was ‘always going to write’ but never had time:

Of course after my knee was a bit better I went into long frocks — then “came out” — then became engaged, oh! yes! ah! yes! — then went for a trip to Sydney — and then came home & was married & here I am in my dear little home. I suppose you will scream laughing when you read this letter as it seems only the other day we were at school together …

Other letters, especially those telling of visits to Gracemere, left Joan with a longing to be home again and part of the fun. There were also occasional letters from friends who were boys rather than boy-friends. Judge Virgil Power's son, Joseph, wrote of a day spent at Gracemere in December 1906, but first the news that it was now 'the fashion in Rocky to be engaged', but as he was not, he must pretend he had some prospect. He not only told her of boating on the mere, with himself rowing and his brother Virgil and Val Allen seated together in the stern, but also sketched them. On the way home, the sketch showed Virgil rowing and Joe under an umbrella with Val. While these were intended to amuse Joan, they might have touched her adolescent sensibilities in a different way. David and Archie, still too young to be interested in such pairings, remained in the prow, skylarking in the manner of young boys.

It seemed to Joan as though half a lifetime had passed by the time she arrived home in January 1909. ‘So now you have your “little girl” back
again safe and sound ... what a bliss for Joan, now we say she is a lucky girl’, wrote Sissie to Robert. Her parents, who met her in Sydney, found that their fledgling had become a young lady just entering a new phase of life. Happy to be home, she nevertheless now found herself yearning for the delights of Larvik and the seduction of the London theatre. She was, in a sense, suspended between two worlds. Val and Marjorie were still the same jolly companions, but some of her former schoolmates thought she ‘put on airs’. Crohamhurst, however, was no snobbish finishing school, simply a girls high school. Having completed the senior year there, Joan took over Val’s role as Archie’s governess. But as Paul Voss, then at boarding school in Sydney surmised: ‘I’ll bet he gives you the very deuce of a time. I know I would have a big fat loaf if you were teaching me!’ And so did Archie — hence his reluctant elevation to the Grammar School with its all-male teaching staff.

Joan’s first winter home began with her ‘coming out’ dance. When her great-uncle Colin received a full-length photograph of her in ball gown, he reminisced on how different things were in his day: ‘We men considered ourselves in full dress when we could add a white linen jacket to the everyday shirt and inexpressibles, with a belt around the waist. Since then civilisation has spread out her net and brought Gracemere within her grasp …’ He was perhaps recalling those times in 1861 when he squired the young Annie Boyce who thought him ‘a very nice man’.

Dances at Gracemere sixty years later did indeed show how things had changed. The final private dance of the season was always held there so that the young people could spill out to the garden, bright with Chinese lanterns hanging from branches. The big sitting room was cleared of furniture and the favourite dances such as Lancers and Sir Roger de Covelly, interspersed with romantic waltzes, were greatly enjoyed. Daisy Archer’s suppers were memorable, and so was the claret cup to which, unknown to her, the boys added a ‘sting’.

Life at Gracemere changed in several ways in 1911: Robert bought all Archer Brothers’ shares from the beneficiaries of his Uncle William’s estate (mainly in Norway) in his own and Daisy’s names ‘so as to get the 5,000 pounds exemption in Land Tax’; fourteen year old David was sent away to Sydney Church of England Grammar School; Archie topped his class at Rockhampton Grammar School; Jamie’s son, Alister, having completed
his initial jackerooing with honour, became head stockman at Magoura Station, Gulf of Carpentaria; and Robert who had been thinking about buying a motor car, finally took the plunge — 'so as to get about more quickly & make more of my available time'. Most importantly, Robert who had been made a director of the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Co. in 1896 and Chairman of the Board, 1904–11, was appointed as Managing Director in that year. His motor car cost 575 pounds — the equivalent of three years wages for his brother Colin as a bank clerk. The car was a Talbot 'with a lot of brass about it'. And like all cars at that time, a punctured tyre while on the road could not be changed, but required a stepney wheel — a spare spokeless wheel — to be bolted on to the normal wheel. This car was young Archie's delight: 'The lights of course were acetylene. When we went to the pictures I was sent out to light up the little generator and get the lights going on the car and as Father drove down Bolsover Street [Rockhampton] ... from Earls Court, he would lean over the side of the car and bang the generator, the lights went down and they would come on again then ...'!

This car had to be cranked with a handle, a gut-wrenching necessity. Dr FH.V.Voss, family friend as well as physician, told Robert in 1919 that he must have a car with a self-starter. And so the old Talbot was traded in for a Buick.

Home life at Gracemere in the early years of the twentieth century had a stability which was non-existent among the original migrant generation — bachelors all. Robert was convinced, despite continuing financial difficulties, that his future and that of his children was tied to the land taken up by his father and uncles, and to the homestead built by his Uncle Colin in 1858. That he devised first one scheme and then another in attempts to overcome financial deficits, shows how determined he was that the firm should survive. His remaining uncles, Colin and Jamie, and his older cousin, Willie Minor, all lacked this conviction.

Dairy farming on a massive scale was one of these attempted means of salvation. In the mid 1890s Robert introduced a share-farming scheme in which the company provided 600 Ayeshire cows divided between six farms. Three were at Matcham (part of Gracemere Station) and another three at the Fifteen Mile cattle station. The Matcham factory produced butter and cheese, including small jars of Stilton. In 1896 David Archer
investigated (on Robert’s behalf) milking machines in London, but warned
that they were very expensive and not necessarily suited to Queensland
conditions. In the following year, after the arrival of the cattle tick,
practically the only income was from the dairy. No stud cattle could be
sold, nor commercial cattle from St Helens, because of tick quarantine
borders. Carried away by the initial success of the dairy, Robert ordered
a pasteurising plant from London, for he was selling whole milk to Mount
Morgan as well as Rockhampton where customers were alert to the risk
of tuberculosis.

Then came the great drought of of 1898–1903 with the dairy cattle
faring badly through lack of nutritious fodder. By the time the country
picked up again, almost every small selector in the district was selling butter
to town shops. Competition increased even more after Premier Kidston’s
‘gang forrit’ (go forward) policy of 1907 opened up cheap government
land to new settlers. Yet another promising scheme intended to rescue the
firm had failed. The Matcham factory closed in 1914 and the dairy stock
were dispersed.

Small wonder that the European Archers looked so despondently at the
map of Australia before and after the turn of the century. They suffered
only in a monetary sense, but it was far worse for Robert and Jack and
their youngest brother Ted (who had arrived in 1899) to watch the beef
cattle herds depleted by drought from 12,000 to 2,000. They tried
unsuccessfully to rid their lands of prickly pear. Natural and environmental
afflictions were bad enough, but Robert as manager of Archer & Co. also
had to justify crippling losses to his uncles in Norway. It was his Austra­
lian-born cousin Willie Minor living frugally in London in January 1901,
who had coined the phrase ‘looking despondently at the map of Australia’.
Willie Minor’s remittance from Archer & Co. came only just in time on
that occasion. According to his cousin David, Willie Minor had first
‘knocked off’ his whisky, then quit smoking: ‘It never occurred to me that
it was in the cause of economy, however, fortunately the pipe was only
stopped for three days’. 

After a working life spent at Gracemere, Minnie Downs, Thylungra
Station in the Channel country and on a sugar cane farm at Mackay, Willie
Minor had left Gracemere for England in 1896, only months before the
cattle tick reached Central Queensland. In his own experience, droughts
Gracemere 1890–1926: Robert

and lack of markets were the two most crippling problems in the cattle industry. He thought there should be a run of good seasons now, as he observed ‘they run in cycles’. Both he and Maggie liked to put money into ‘our firm’, but if they had to wait for returns, so be it.\(^3\)

Droughts and fickle markets continued to shackle the industry throughout the twentieth century, the cattle tick likewise. The great drought at the beginning of the twentieth century, the most disastrous since European settlement in eastern Australia, took a heavy toll on more than cattle. Jack told Robert in 1902 that it was so bad on the Dawson that the horses were ‘frames’ and the scrub turkeys so hungry they came into the houses to pick up crumbs.\(^3\) At Gracemere Robert was feeding the dairy herd on chopped prickly pear and at Targinnie, near Gladstone, Ted kept the surviving bullocks alive on mangroves. But their greatest losses were at St Helens where 7,000 Herefords and a stud herd of Durhams were reduced to the several hundred which had been removed to Torsdale. This dire state of affairs was compounded by heavy interest charges on the firm’s overdraft and loans. Nor was the situation much better when the drought broke. It takes four years to breed up a herd to marketable standards.

As a result of all these setbacks, Robert proposed in 1906 that Archer Brothers be formed into a Joint Stock Company. ‘The hopeful view you have previously taken of matters for the last few years in spite of all difficulties seem destined to be disappointed’, wrote Colin to his nephew when agreeing to the proposal. The children of Thomas and David also gave their permission and so the old firm became Archer Brothers Ltd. on 23 December 1907 with Robert as Chairman of Directors ‘with full power to carry on the business of the company’.\(^3\) Even so, nine months later his Uncle Colin became a little tetchy concerning the future: ‘Surely the business in its present form should under careful and economic management — having by the late reorganisation wiped out a very considerable debt — give a very handsome return’. Those in Norway, he said, were anxious to find a way of realising their direct interest in the station. ‘Some of us are getting well on in years and we should like to arrive at some satisfactory settlement before we drop off’, he concluded. Looking back on his own years at Gracemere, he failed to understand why a station ‘so favourably situated’ should not make a profit.\(^3\) Gracemere in the first decade of the twentieth century was no longer ‘favourably situated’ in
almost limitless acreages, but had been reduced in size to about 7,000 acres and surrounded by settlers’ small holdings. The elusive frozen beef market in 1908 was in London, not Rockhampton. And for the Archers whose policy was to breed pure-bred bulls to improve the quality of the northern cattle herd, not merely their own commercial herd, squating in Queensland was more often than not — in Colin’s words — ‘a losing game’.

With the reorganisation, shares in Archer Brothers Ltd. were divided between the representatives of the three first generation partners: David, William and Thomas. Colin and James both held first and second debentures, likewise Grace (Tom’s widow) and her daughter Maggie. Bachelor William’s estate had been bequeathed to his sister, Jane Ann, and to Jørgensen and Arentz nieces and nephews and, surprisingly, to nephew Robert who also had a share in his father’s estate. The share division was necessarily complex and the expectations of the overseas shareholders unrealistic.

While Robert had boosted the working capital by sales of land, his own optimism concerning the new company soon evaporated. Bank interest, land tax and rates absorbed 3,000 pounds per annum and a similar amount was owed to the Bank of New South Wales. And so in 1913 he devised yet another scheme to save the firm. With Jack’s consent he proposed to amalgamate the Torsdale leases, almost debt free, held in partnership between Jack and himself, with the old firm. His letter to his Uncle Colin outlining the proposal provides a significant resumé of Archer Brothers, 1902–13. After the crippling drought losses, the reorganisation of the company in 1907, the imposition of land taxes which depreciated values, the drought of 1911 struck with a loss of 800 from 3,500 head. An influx of new settlers on cheap government land made private land sales impossible. His suggestion of amalgamation involved personal sacrifice, especially on Jack’s part for he had very few shares in Archer Brothers: ‘... I am sure he is activated more by a wish to hold the family together than from strict business principles ...’. Robert asked Colin if he ‘could bring about a general consent’ of the English as well as the Norwegian Archers, ‘to cable the word “Accept”, so that I can fix the business up with the Bank.’ It was a nerve-wracking situation for Robert and Jack, putting their private interests at risk to save the family firm.

Their youngest brother, Ted, who had a small share in Torsdale, put
Robert's 'back up' by objecting to the deal. He already owed the partnership 2,000 pounds. He was at this time running a small agency business in Brisbane. The English and Norwegian debenture holders, however, willingly agreed to accept 75 pounds for every hundred pounds invested. They were no doubt glad to get cash in the hand rather than cling on in hope of more in the future. An Extraordinary General Meeting of the company held in Archer Chambers, Rockhampton, on 27 April 1914 increased the capital to 75,000 pounds by the creation of 50,000 additional shares at 21 shillings each. The whole of the assets of R.S. & J. Archer were paid for by 50,000 one-pound shares in Archer Brothers Ltd. This was indeed to prove a sacrificial transaction. Ted was to be proven correct in his assumption that the old firm had the best of the deal. Meantime he became a director along with Robert and Jack, their cousin George in Sydney, brother David (Dadie) and cousin William (Tom's son) in England. Board meetings were held at Gracemere with proxy votes from the English Archers. These formal meetings were a far cry from those early verbal agreements between Tom and Charlie, or Davie and Willie, in their several partnerships.

Ted had a more varied life than any of his brothers in Australia. He had begun his married life at Targinnie Station, was elected to the Federal Parliament as Member for Capricornia, 1906–10, sitting with the Free Trade party, but was defeated at the next election. In March 1914 he became Member for Normanby in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, but was defeated in the following year. Ted proved to be eminently suited to politics — his education, varied experience and out-going personality were valuable assets. But with the rise of the Labor Party, conservative politicians found themselves under constant threat in Central Queensland seats. When Ted's Brisbane business failed to provide a profit, he was back on the company payroll again, briefly as manager of Coolibah (on the Dawson) and then the Fifteen Mile cattle station where he remained until retirement in 1931.

David Archer's Queensland sons, with the exception of weak and wayward Colin, were all committed to community service. During his long years at Torsdale Jack was a member of the Banana Shire Council, including a term as Chairman. In his quiet way he could always be depended upon to support a range of community activities. Ted also served
on both Calliope and Fitzroy Shire Councils and was Chairman of the Port Curtis Co-operative Dairy Company, 1904–07. While his shareholding in the family firm was small, his contribution as a director from 1914 brought wider public experience than either of his brothers.

At the time of the amalgamation in 1914 Robert was in a better financial position than Jack as he also had income from the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company, though as manager of Torsdale Jack received the same salary from Archer Brothers as Robert, 400 pounds a year plus a car, house and running expenses. Robert could afford to send Joan on ‘a trip home’ in 1913 and to plan one for himself and Daisy in 1915 — though this was aborted by war. When son David commenced training at Hawkesbury Agricultural College (NSW) in 1914, Robert echoed old grandfather William’s ideas regarding practical training. He requested that David first ‘go into Saddlery, Carpentry and the Blacksmiths Shop’. It was not long, however, before David enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces, as did Alister and Cedric after naturalisation.

As a kind of compensation for missing out on their own voyage ‘home’, Robert had a holiday house built at Emu Park. They named it ‘Carpien’ and there Joan spent some time with her mother on arrival home early in 1915. She was surely a pioneer of surfing at Emu Park — ‘banging about in the surf’ according to her father. Just a year later David, instead of returning for his third year at Hawkesbury, enlisted. He embarked in May 1916 with the 3rd Mobile Veterinary Section. He was soon serving in France. His musical ability, both as a violinist and baritone singer, made him a popular member of army concert parties. During leave in England he and George Archer’s sons, Rob and Jack, were fortunate to be cosseted by their Archer relatives in England and David by his Stubbs cousins in Ireland.

At Gracemere Robert, Daisy and Joan were all involved in voluntary war work. Robert, as Chairman of the Stockowners Red Cross Fund, was frustrated by senseless bureaucracy.

The war years were stressful not only for Robert and Daisy as parents, but also for Joan with a fiance (Alister) as well as a brother (David) in Egypt and France respectively. There was always the dread of receiving a telegram. Joan’s health was not good following an operation for appendicitis in 1918 — a major operation in that era. But she kept both her mind
and her hands occupied with the art of wood carving. Her mother had learned this craft from a former Gracemere book-keeper, Henry King-Church.\textsuperscript{43} Joan shunned the traditional patterns of vine leaves or acorns, her artistic skills enabling her to create imaginative designs based on Scandinavian myths and legends. Her major work during the war years was the replica of a Norwegian chair, c. 1200 AD, which she carved for Alister. Her work is markedly superior to the original in the Hall of Antiquities in Oslo. She used Tasmanian beech wood which the old station carpenter cut into the necessary lengths and shapes. Her mother was also a skilled carver, but traced standard patterns for her work. She and Joan together carved the mantelpiece in the big sitting room to Joan's design.

When the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, Australian communities had their own celebrations. Robert, being assured by local organisers that there would be no alcohol, sent a donation of five guineas. Now it was just a matter of waiting for the boys to come home. Alister had continuing duties as General Chauvel's Aide-de-camp and a visit to his family in Norway. David spent three months specialised training among leading British cattle studs before returning via the USA. Their homecoming was no anti-climax. Robert, Daisy and Joan were in Sydney to greet David on 3 September 1919 and Alister two weeks later.

Alister and Joan were married in St James Anglican Church, Sydney, on 1 October 1919. There were no objections to a church wedding in this generation. The couple spent three months at Leura in the Blue Mountains until Alister's military appointment was terminated. Robert presented them with 1,000 shares in Archer Brothers and promised Alister the management of the beef cattle stud at Gracemere.\textsuperscript{44}

Nikolai Aagaard had also visited his family in Norway before returning to Queensland. Like his old school chum, Alister, he also married an Archer, Jack's daughter, Doris. And so the family links forged between Norway and Australia in the first half of the nineteenth century were reinforced in the years following the First World War. And as James had promised years earlier, Alister and Joan qualified to receive Sandy Archer's silver tray.

Optimism was in the air during a fine family gathering at Emu Park for Christmas and New Year 1919–20. There was 'any amount of jazzing and tennis'. Good rain at Gracemere and a satisfactory cattle market also brought a smile to Robert's public face. Holidays over, Archie returned for
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his final year at Sydney Church of England Grammar School and David commenced jackerooing at Oondooroo Station at Winton. A new phase of family life began twelve months later with the birth of Alister and Joan's first child, Alison. At five months old she was, according to her grandfather, 'a ripper ... with fat red cheeks'.  

Personal contentment was soon to be replaced by business worries.

During the war years and immediately afterwards, cattle producers enjoyed one of their rare economic 'booms'. British Army contracts for Australian 'bully beef' assured them of a market and good prices for their cattle. Then came sudden collapse. Within one week in 1921 fat cattle prices dropped by more than 50 per cent. And by 1922 bullocks which had brought more than 30 pounds two years earlier, averaged less than four pounds. The British meat market was closed to Australian frozen beef. Australia could not compete against cheaply produced chilled beef from the Argentine. Lakes Creek Meatworks closed, along with almost every other in northern Australia — dependent as they were on the export trade. The whole industry was brought to a standstill. Archers were selling stud bulls for not much more than the price of commercial bullocks. 'Eventually it will come to giving them away with a pound of tea', Robert complained to George Archer.

The family firm was subjected to stringent cost-cutting. Managers' salaries were reduced by 25 per cent, domestic help was cut to a cook at each place. Gracemere was run with a cowboy & a maid of all work. They did the best they could with the garden. This was the situation in which Daisy found herself at Carnival time in Rockhampton when she 'was let in for having the Governor [Sir Matthew Nathan] here from Sunday till Friday. He is a nice old bird and no trouble', commented Robert. When hospitality for the Governor was requested two years later, Daisy was at Cloncurry with Archie, hospitalised with typhoid fever. But with Joan acting as hostess, the Governor came to Gracemere, as did successive Governors for years to come.

Making the King's representative in Queensland comfortable was a passing worry, but economic problems appeared unending. Just before the 'crash' in 1921, and in response to a dry summer at Torsdale, Archer Brothers had purchased a 27,000 acre grazing farm, Laleham, south of Blackwater in central Queensland. With the advantage of hindsight, this
was ill-timed, but a decision made when market stability seemed assured. The new property actually saved the half-starved cattle from Torsdale but, ironically, they were worth practically nothing when marketed. While Robert awaited recovery in the economy (which did not occur until a decade after his death), he sold 3,464 acres at Bobs Creek on the Fifteen Mile cattle station for 54 shillings an acre. The land was sub-divided for dairy and cotton farms, with many returned soldiers opting for farm life.48

Twelve months later Alister alarmed Jack and Brenda with his opinion that the company was ‘hopelessly insolvent’. Robert advised them not to be depressed by Alister — ‘it is his nature to take a gloomy view’. He then expressed his own view. It was almost a repeat of his arguments thirty years earlier when his father and uncles wanted to sell Gracemere. He reminded them that a forced sale at that time, with cattle prices depreciated by 70 to 80 per cent, would not leave much for the shareholders. But while the cattle had depreciated, the land had appreciated ‘and we have every prospect of selling the 15 Mile at a price which would meet all the liabilities & leave us the stock & Gracemere well to the good …’49 His optimism was in distinct contrast to Alister’s more realistic view.

Robert had been selling off land intermittently for years. Following a demand for suburban housing in Rockhampton in 1915 he had two ten-acre blocks on Athelstane Range (the ‘Toorak’ of the town) subdivided and sold for 180 pounds per acre. These blocks had been bought by his Uncle William at one of the very early land sales. Coolibah, a Dawson River leasehold, was sold in 1916 for 36,000 pounds including 5,000 cattle and 150 horses. Daisy wrote to the manager, H.C. Webb, requesting one of the ponies for Jack and Brenda’s ‘little Sandy’ to whom she had promised one when last at Torsdale. ‘I am so fond of Sandy & I would not like him to go without now the station has been sold’.50 The ‘Fish Ponds’ — 4,000 acres on the Fifteen Mile — had been sold in 1909 for 30 shillings an acre and another 2,200 acres for 40 shillings.51

Whatever else was sold, Gracemere itself remained sacrosanct. So did Torsdale, Jack and Brenda’s home station. Robert’s accounts of cost-cutting at the onset of the 1920s recession included their large workforce. In 1918 the company had 60 employees on all properties, but in 1921 these were reduced to 28. But as wages had risen sharply for station hands, the amount saved in one year was a mere 3,000 pounds. Unemployment was high.
Much of inward and outward correspondence at this time involved returned soldiers looking for work — including the former cheese-maker at Matcham.

The threatened government resumption of the Torsdale lease in 1923 provoked Robert into addressing Premier E.G. Theodore himself:

... Cattle breeders are constantly urged to improve their herds & to maintain a high standard of breed to meet the sheer competition of the Argentine & other countries. In these circumstances we maintain it will be a serious loss to all concerned, the State included, if these cattle from which we produce 400 to 500 pure bred bulls per annum are sacrificed ... We trust the Govt. will consider our request from a broad national point of view ...

Archer Brothers had to wait a full two years for approval of the lease for a further 15 years in the names of John Archer, Edward Walker Archer and Robert Stubbs Archer. Robert believed the industry was recovering and that the company would soon be in a position to pay off all its debts. But in the end Alister's 'gloomy view' proved to be more accurate.

These troublesome years were made bearable for Robert by his pleasure in the new generation of Archers and also by his growing interest in his father's generation. Such simple joys as Alister driving Joan and 'Doodie' (Alison) over to breakfast before going on to Kalka to inspect a chaff-cutter in October 1923 warmed the cockles of his heart. The birth of his first grandson, Cedric, a year later assured him of the family name continuing at Gracemere. Alister's mother liked his name, Robert Cedric MacKenzie, but thought 'MacKenzie is rather a long name'. About the same time, she approved also the naming of Erling's daughter as 'Else' but opposed adding her own name, 'Louisa'. Then there was David's engagement to Alison Mackay of 'Strathdarr', Longreach, in the following year to cheer his father even more. Their marriage took place on 7 July 1926. 'Alison is a particularly nice, sensible girl', he told his brother David (Dadie), 'and they should be very happy'. He was pleased that son David had been appointed manager of Strathdarr. It had been the expectation of some family members that he would follow Robert at Gracemere.

Robert's interest in family history was stimulated by news of the death in 1921 of the last of the originals, Colin. Now aged 63, he began to think about the historical significance of that generation. He nominated his sons, David and Archie, for membership of the Australasian Pioneer Club in
Sydney. He told the secretary that two of his cousins, Alister and Rolf Archer (Rolf was then at Gracemere), would also like to join, 'but are not eligible through their Father [James] who did not arrive in Queensland [sic.] until 1855. We think however they can claim admission through their maternal grandfather, Sir Robert MacKenzie, Bart.\textsuperscript{56} They could actually go much further back to their great-grandfather, Richard (China) Jones. In the year of son David's marriage he asked brother David: 'Did you ever come across the old family seal with the crest on it? Father used to keep it for Willie (Uncle John's Willie) the Head of the Family — now he has gone it ought to come to me & I would like David to have it ...'\textsuperscript{57}

Robert's contribution to the history of Queensland was both more diverse and of greater duration than that of his forebears. While he could not claim the overland trekking experience of his father David, nor the exploration feats of uncles Tom, Charles, William or Colin, he was an inventor and innovator. He had begun in the 1880s by inventing an above-ground silo. He was ahead of his time in realising the significance of fodder conservation. He experimented with pasture improvement and irrigation long before such practices were common. He was recognised as an authority on cattle breeding from 1891 when he was awarded second prize by the National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland for his treatise on the relative merits of Hereford and Shorthorn beef cattle. He was highly regarded as a cattle judge at Brisbane and Sydney shows. After the arrival of the cattle tick at Gracemere, he not only designed a plunge dip, but also experimented with inoculation against redwater fever. Even the agricultural scientists listened to him.

Towards the end of his life, Robert believed his most important contribution, and that of Archer Brothers, was in the production of pure bred cattle and the sale of registered herd bulls which brought significant improvements to northern Australian herds. That this had been achieved despite financial loss to the family firm is evident. His own explanation for continuing after the 1921 'crash': 'I fear the Microbe is in our blood, as it is for others in Horse racing, and it will be hard to give it up.'\textsuperscript{58} Had he declined all company and public positions, life would have been easier in a personal sense and perhaps more prosperous for Archer Brothers. Even so, calamities such as prolonged drought and falling cattle prices were beyond human control. While his optimism for the future often proved to
be unrealistic, had he heeded the pessimism of Norwegian and English shareholders 'looking despondently at the map of Australia', he would long since have sold Gracemere and abandoned his family's heritage.

Respect for Robert Archer in the wider community involved not only personal regard, or praise for his prize winning cattle at Sydney, Brisbane or Rockhampton shows, but also his leadership in two industries basic to the well being of Central Queensland: mining and shipping. His record is outstanding as a dependable director of the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Co. Ltd., 1896–1926 (Chairman, 1904–11); Chairman of the Rockhampton Harbour Board, 1907–09, 1910–13, 1915–24. He was president of the Rockhampton Show Society, 1895–1926, and a trustee of Rockhampton Grammar School, 1899–1907. He was a generous supporter of charitable and cultural causes and played a leadership role in wartime fundraising and in settling returned soldiers on the land.59

With so many diverse calls upon his time it comes as little surprise that his health suffered. On more than one occasion bouts of illness coincided with his uncles' criticism of his 'management methods' or lack of detail in station expense accounts. While reporting to his Uncle Colin in 1909 on the company's prospects, he confessed that his health was 'getting steadily worse' and that he had to undergo an operation.60 In that era, abdominal surgery was a serious and risky matter involving five or six weeks in hospital and slow recovery. Three years later he still suffered. He dreamed of a voyage back to England and Norway — 'I should like to see you all after a spell of 26 years', he told his uncle.61 But unlike the first generation, Robert never did get his second trip 'home'. In 1921 after a bout of influenza he had a sudden heart attack.

David's sons Robert, Jack, Colin, Ted and Jim (who had a sea-faring career, home port, Sydney) and Tom's son George who also lived in Sydney, were the first Archers to become truly Australian. Although their Uncle Jack's Australian-born son Willie Minor spent three decades in the colony, like his uncles he eventually returned to Europe. Robert was not only the first to found a family at Gracemere, but he was the first Archer to be buried in Gracemere's equivalent of Tolderodden's Gravlunden.

The Christmas holiday of 1926 with the family at Emu Park began with the grandparents' delight in Alison's and Cedric's excitement over Christmas stockings and toys. Then Robert became seriously ill with
pneumonia and had to be conveyed on a stretcher by train to Hillcrest Private Hospital in Rockhampton. He died early in the morning on 29 December from cardiac arrest. His death after such a brief illness came as a shock to Daisy and the family. With the exception of Charles’ death at the age of 48, and Kate Jørgensen’s at 54, all the first generation died in old age — as had their parents at Tolderodden. Robert at 68 might have expected another decade or two, but it was not to be.

‘PASSING OF AN ESTIMABLE GENTLEMAN’, headlined the Evening News on the day of Robert’s death, but it was the Bulletin which reported IMPRESSIVE OBSEQUIES. These began at 4pm on 30 December. The garden which Charles envisioned in 1853 when he chose the homestead site, and which his brother William landscaped after 1858, had been faithfully tended by Daisy since the 1890s. Now it was stripped of flowers to make a bower of the big living room where Robert’s casket rested. After a brief service, the solemn procession left the homestead:

It was the wish of the late Mr Archer that his remains should be conveyed to their last resting place in a farm wagon, symbolical of the conveyance used by the Archers when they trekked to Central Queensland and put it on the map. Could a pioneer wish for a more fitting carriage on life’s last journey! Two strapping draught horses supplied the motive force, and so stately was their tread and dignity of bearing that one could not help but feel that they knew their beloved master had passed on and that with them was the honour and privilege of bearing him to his last resting place …

The ceremony, in the Archer tradition, was kept within the family. The Reverend Edgar Streeten, husband of Daisy’s niece, Valentine Allen, delivered the eulogy and conducted the service according to the rites of the Church of England. He commented that ‘the honesty which had ever been associated with the name of Archer had never concerned itself with expediency’. Mr Archer, he said, had been true to his motto, Sola bona qual honesta ‘which the present day proverb rather inadequately translated into “Honesty is the best policy”’. Had Robert Archer and his forebears been less honest they might have been financially more prosperous, he concluded.

The sudden death of the Chairman of Directors and General Manager of Archer Brothers caused a flurry among overseas shareholders as to the company’s future. English Jim agreed with his brother George in Sydney.
that none of them wanted to hold on to their shares for sentimental reasons, but neither did they see any great urgency to dispose of them. He quoted their sister, Grace Stedman, as expressing the general feeling: 'My attitude is that I want to do whatever will least embarrass those who are carrying on out there. Whenever there is a chance of selling out with honour I should like to sell ...' Like their first cousin, Robert, they were not concerned with matters of expediency.

'Out there' the Board of Directors met on 27 January 1927 and elected John (Jack) Archer as Chairman. He moved and George seconded that Mrs Robert S. Archer be allowed 150 pounds a year. This was little enough for the woman who had shared the bad times as well as the good at Gracemere for the past 37 years. A later meeting elected David Marwedel Archer as a director in place of his father. Mrs Archer and her three children each received 2,851 shares from Robert’s estate — a fine legacy on paper, but practically worthless in reality, given the state of the cattle market in the 1920s.

It is true that both Robert and Jack sacrificed their own interests in Torsdale in one of several rescue bids to save Gracemere. But the older generation, in agreeing to David’s requests in 1889 and 1897 for taking a ‘cut’ in their interest rates on loans to the company, also put the company ahead of self interest.

The seemingly ironic fate which hampered so many of Robert’s attempts through four decades to make Archer Brothers more profitable, did not embitter him. Towards the end, however, he sought forgetfulness in the early exploits of his father and uncles. Their resourcefulness prior to 1860 had called forth courage to face physical odds, but Robert’s courage in confronting diverse mental, economic and environmental pressures surely equalled theirs. He was true to his heritage in ensuring that Gracemere remained within the family. They ‘put it on the map’, Robert kept it there for future generations.
The tenacity with which Robert clung to his various schemes over many years in order to avoid the sale of Gracemere, seems to have been handed on to those who followed. Their attachment was to the ‘spirit of place’. It is significant that the first generation of Archers were sensitive to such concepts. As Charles told his father in 1845: ‘Davie considers the Black as the hereditary owner of the soil and that it is an act of injustice to drive him from his hunting grounds …’ It is also true that it was not the Archers who drove the Warrabura clan from their summer or winter camps on Gracemere, overlooking the mere or in the sheltered hills, but the encroachment of ‘civilisation’ from nearby Rockhampton.

Following Robert Archer’s death in 1926, his son-in-law and first cousin, Alister, 36, was appointed general manager of Archer Brothers. The move from the house at Matcham to the homestead was simply a home-coming for Joan, but for Alister a stern reminder of present and future responsibilities. In a way he had been prepared for this ever since his arrival from Norway in 1909. His father’s parting advice had been ‘to give the life out there a fair trial … and ultimately take charge of a station and you are therefore bound to do your best to attain this end …’

Alister little dreamed as an eighteen year old that the station would be Gracemere and that the fair trial would become a life sentence. He had learned all the bush skills before the war and then, after that four-year break, his grooming for management continued at Gracemere as stud-
master and secretary of Archer Brothers Ltd. His prowess in the cattle business reached its climax in 1925 when the firm won the prestigious prize offered by the Hereford Herd Book Society of England.

Alister was filled with apprehension following ‘Cousin Bob’s’ death. Despite his obvious grooming for future management, he had not expected this to take place for many years. A temporary upsurge in cattle prices in 1926 had even raised hopes that Robert and Daisy might make their long delayed voyage ‘home’. A period as acting manager would have eased Alister in to the position. He lacked Robert’s self-confidence as well as his optimism. But he had at least one advantage over the older man — an ironic sense of humour which included self deprecation. While his father’s generation all displayed characteristic Archer modesty and enjoyed a joke, only Tom had a highly developed sense of humour. Alister’s MacKenzie mother, on the other hand, possessed a sense of fun which she passed on to her children, most particularly Alister.

The reality of management of Archer Brothers left little time for ‘fun’, but Alister who often spent much of the day and part of the night in writing letters, managed to inject an ironic or humorous comment into those not considered too formal. He also took over Robert’s role as family communicator. Over the years he developed a conversational tone, even though he might write ten or more letters at a sitting. He picked up the connecting links where ‘C.Bob’ had dropped them — the interchange between Gracemere and Tom’s sons Jim in London and George in Sydney, also Colin’s daughters Mary Heggen and Lulul Willoch in Norway. He gave English Jim the credit for awakening his interest in early Australian history, but the old homestead with its pervasive spirit of place also influenced him. While he later complained about its inconvenient location in relation to the best farming land, he became increasingly conscious of the part played by his uncles in establishing the homestead and the founding of Rockhampton. It had been proclaimed a city in 1901 and by the 1920s had a population of 30,000.

In the year following their move to Gracemere homestead, Alister and Joan’s third child, Alister James (Jim), arrived to complete their family. Because Joan had spent so much time with both the English and Norwegian Archers, she was as much part of the European extended family as Alister. ‘How amazing it is that business is not flourishing, so that you all might come home for a trip’, wrote Mary Heggen during the
depths of the great economic depression in 1930. 'The Croydon folks let me have a glimpse at photos of yours and Joan's children', she added, 'I must say they are magnificent & sweet No 3 in his perambulator I thought was a lot like old Uncle Willie'. While William was once described as 'a real stunner', no one would have dared call him 'sweet'.

The new generation of children at Gracemere enjoyed the same kind of free and easy lives as their mother and uncles David and Archie had at the turn of the century — swimming in the lagoon and rowing the old boat. His own children's 'adventures' sometimes took Alister's mind back to his Larvik childhood and the first sea-bathing each summer while the snow was still on the hills. Mention of Uncle Willie (who died in 1896) re-awakened Alister's sole memory of this stern, tall uncle 'roaring' at the small boy for being aloft in the forbidden cherry tree in Tolderodden's garden. Having returned home in 1919, his thoughts often strayed there, though less often after his mother's death in 1933. Of his siblings he was closest to Rolf who was 'glad to have the honour of being godfather to Alister James'. Rolf's several years at Gracemere in the early 1920s had honed his English, but Erling whose lifetime career in charge of forests was wholly in Norway, always wrote in his native language. His cultural bonds were Scandinavian. His marriage to Ingeborg and the birth of their daughters, Else and Karen, naturally increased those ties. Ronald and his wife Elly and sons Ronald and Aleck, also Kathleen Greve and her daughters Mary Ann and Helen were, despite their English names, all true Norwegians. Cecelia Bancroft on a visit to Oslo in 1936 was unable to communicate in English with the children, but as she told Alister she was most impressed by his only sister:

... from Joan and Dooie I had heard how charming Kathleen is, but as in the old story "Behold, the half was not told me". Really Kathleen is the sweetest & prettiest & most charming woman I have met for many a long day & I only hope Herr Greve realises what a treasure he has — I'm sure he does for the family struck me as being a very happy one ...

Alister might have expected to revisit Norway when times improved. This was not to be. Nor did any of his siblings or their children visit Gracemere during his years as manager. As they became more involved in their Norwegian families, so he became more Australian along with Joan and their children.
Looking Despondently at the Map of Australia

A glimpse of the children at Gracemere early in 1937 reveals changes in their formerly easy-going life style. They were all experiencing the disciplines of formal education. Alison, affectionately known as 'Doodie', was a boarder at New England Girls Grammar School in New South Wales, but there were changes also for the boys whom Alister thought would both be 'the old type of Archer — long and lean'. He told English David who had watched over Joan during her school days in Croydon:

Poor Cedric does not know what has happened. He goes to school in town; he has to be up at 6.30, catch the motor train in, and does not get home till 6 — he then has 3 hours of homework. He is in what they call the Scholarship class, and they drive them for all they are worth. After the Correspondence School where they take things rather steady, his pace has him bewildered ...

Poor Cegi, who is a great reader, has had to transfer his affections from "Erling the Bold" to "compound interest". Joan has her hands full now with James as a pupil & no Miss Collier. So far the school part is going surprisingly well though I am afraid the pupil does not think much of his teacher ...

Miss Collier had been governess to Alison and the boys, supervising their correspondence lessons. But with his mother as 'governess', James (Jim) still had comparative freedom — sufficient to pester his father every couple of hours to 'come for a swim' in the mere.

There were changes, too, for Alister's uncles, Jack and Ted, who in retirement had left the bush. At Gracemere Jack and Brenda occupied the house they named 'Coravante' which overlooked the mere just a few hundred yards from the old homestead. The Byerleys had lived near this site before the turn of the century. Ted and Jessie lived at Mt Athelstane in Rockhampton: "Old Wiseman" (to the original brothers) had built this slab house and stone store-room in 1858–59 during a time of close friendship with Colin, Jamie and Willie at Gracemere. John Archer (Jack), as Chairman of Directors of Archer Brothers, was now able to share some of the firm's burdens in those troublesome years. His optimism, much like that of his brother Robert, also provided a balance to Alister's more realistic 'gloomy view'. In retirement Ted maintained community service as an executive member of the United Graziers Association, 1927–40, and as Chairman of Rockhampton Harbour Board, 1933–39. Following his death on 1 July 1940 he, too, was laid to rest in Gracemere's private burial ground.
During the economic depression of the early 1930s, Alister quipped to Archie: ‘I think Archer Brothers Ltd. is a sermon on the expression “financial confidence”. The Bank seems quite willing to mortgage [the shares] twice over, but it certainly cannot be their true cash value’. While there were some signs of improvement by the end of 1934 with Australian chilled beef entering the British market for the first time, and a consequent rise in cattle prices, there was a great deal of catching up to be done. The company had recorded an average annual loss of 4,000 pounds during the past three years — several hundred thousand dollars in the values of the 1990s.

Despite the effects of the great world-wide economic depression with its inevitable influence on the stud cattle industry in northern Australia, Archers continued to purchase top quality stud bulls and heifers, including three bulls from England, to maintain their high standards. Alister explained this to the Chairman of the Land Administration Board in September 1936: ‘We have retained these herds at a high standard believing it to be in the interests of the Industry to breed bulls which we know from experience will stand up to severe tropical conditions …

In providing information on the company’s holdings in 1936 to the local Commissioner of Lands, Alister revealed not only their extent, but also their dead-weight as far as the 27 family shareholders were concerned. In addition to the 6,000 acres at Gracemere, 14,000 at the Fifteen Mile and Torsdale’s 50 square miles, there were also pastoral leases over 76,000 acres in the two properties in the Blackwater area, Laleham and Terang. Profits were supposed to be distributed to shareholders, but he added that there had been no profits since June 1919. In the seventeen years since then, the accumulated losses had amounted to 32,594 thousand pounds. Small wonder the Norwegian and English shareholders continued to look despondently at the map of Australia.

The first suggestion regarding ‘the probable breaking up of the old firm’ was made at a meeting of Archer Brothers Board in 1937. At that time it was merely a discussion ‘in the true Archer spirit’ with each seeing the other’s point of view. Even so, Alister confessed nervousness to English David: ‘The people I feel most sorry for are Niko and Alister! — who will have to start afresh when they are worn out’. Unlike all the other shareholders, they were entirely dependent on the company for a living.
Nikolai Aagaard was manager of Torsdale while Alister continued as general manager of the company. But with the onset of the Second World War the company’s fate was postponed. Nikolai and Alister would be even more ‘worn out’ when the firm’s end came in 1949.

Far greater changes had to be endured before and during the war years by all the Archer families in Australia, England and most of all in Norway. Eleanor Berkeley, who as a young woman had lived with Jamie and Louie Archer and family in Larvik, told Alister and Joan as early as 1935 how lucky they were to be in Australia. ‘Europe is full of political chaos, rumours of War & preparation for War. Italy & Germany ruled by mad & bad men …’ while innocent Jews were hounded to death or sent into exile. She and her sister Anna were teaching English to these refugees for as little as two shillings a lesson.11 Before war between Britain and Germany became inevitable, Colin Archer’s grandson and namesake, son of Justus, died on 11 February 1937 fighting in the International Brigade in Spain. The ‘killing fields’ which had claimed two young Archers in 1918 had yet another victim.

Australian newspapers prepared citizens for the worst. George Archer’s daughter, Mary, crippled by poliomyelitis, wrote to Alister on 3 September 1939 just hours before Prime Minister Menzies declared Australia to be at war:

The world is in for the worst, it seems. We are, like you no doubt, anxiously awaiting to get definite news tonight, but I can’t see how it can be anything else but war. The great consolation about the Russo-German business is that it has put such a very different aspect on the Eastern situation that we appear to be no longer threatened by Japan — the only country that ever did threaten us to my mind. And yet no end of precautions are being taken in Sydney and suburbs, police patrolling the Bridge, Central Railway Station etc., “wardens” appointed to take charge of certain districts if emergency arises and so on …12

The world was indeed ‘in for the worst’. For Alister the fate of Norway was a personal anxiety, alleviated only slightly by the news that she had ‘wriggled out of the general bust up’. Communication with family members was no longer possible. Australian letters to Norway were returned to sender. News from England was not much better. London had become ‘too hot’ for cousin Jim who took himself off to Scotland in the hope of gathering sphagnum moss used in the treatment of wounds in the
First World War. But his efforts were not needed, medical science had advanced to antibiotics. The younger family members in England were mainly in the armed forces, while the older ones suffered their homes to be filled with evacuees. In July 1940 Alister had cabled to Jim: ‘Suggest you nominate two children come Gracemere’. He replied that there were no ‘eligible children’ within the extended family and did not think they would want them to suggest Gracemere ‘to people of whom we know nothing directly’.

Before long the realisation that Alison and Cedric were approaching military age was of far greater concern to Joan and Alister than English evacuees. Cedric, home for holidays from Brisbane Church of England Grammar School (‘Churchie’) in 1940 asked Aunt Cecelia how long she thought the war would last. She thought possibly three years. ‘Didn’t his face light up’, she later told Joan — ‘Oh, I’ll be there then’, he said. So it was that in June 1942 Aunt Cecelia felt sorry for Joan having to say goodbye to Cedric who was about to begin training at Bradfield, Sydney, for the Royal Australian Air Force. Alister had already joined the Australian Women’s Army Service. Jack and Brenda’s sons, Paddy and Sandy, were already in the armed forces, also Bob, Ted and Jessie’s only son. Mary Archer thought the Queensland Archers were ‘doing their bit’ and was pleased that Joan’s brother Archie who had been too young for service in the First World War had been ‘turned down’ for the Second. Her prediction in 1939 that the Japanese were no longer a threat to Australia had been blasted by their surprise attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbour in December 1941.

With the very real threat of Japanese invasion of Australia in the following year, Archie offered to take coastal evacuees at Booramel, Aramac, in the central west. It was generally believed that Japanese soldiers would not survive in the dry inland. It was a comfort to have tens of thousands of American soldiers in coastal cities, including Rockhampton. And while some were irritated by General Douglas Macarthur’s ‘take over’ of Australia, the alternative was unthinkable. Colonel Harold Riegelman, stationed in Rockhampton for 16 months, formed a lifetime friendship with Alister and found a place of refuge at Gracemere. On leaving suddenly for the war zone in February 1944 he wrote:

I shall never cease to be grateful for your kindness and hospitality — which set
a standard awfully hard to meet and impossible to surpass, but well worth striving for. If the stranger at my gate should be Australian, may he be an Archer … 16

Wartime courtships, like wartime friendships, were also threatened by military demands. And so when Alison Archer became engaged to Major J.K.M. (Keith) Forster there was no time to plan a traditional wedding and leisurely honeymoon. They had first met in 1938 at a Forster wedding, but their courtship was interrupted by Keith’s posting to Darwin, 1940–42. As Officer Commanding, East Point Peninsula, he was responsible for Anti-Aircraft Batteries, Engineers, Infantry and Navy personnel during a period which included the Japanese bombing of Darwin. 17 Alison's and Keith’s marriage was celebrated at St Pauls Cathedral, Rockhampton, on 15 June 1943. Alister was too ill for the reception to be held at Gracemere, but ‘Aunt Nina Marwedel’ provided afternoon tea at her Rockhampton home for friends and relatives. The Americans had emptied the shops so guests raided their cupboards, providing ‘really sentimental gifts’ such as parts of coffee and tea sets from an earlier age. 18 Bride and groom left in a borrowed car for a brief honeymoon at Emu Park where Keith, who had earlier represented Queensland in Australian Surf Lifesaving titles at Bondi, was disgusted by the lack of surf at a beach protected by the Great Barrier Reef.

At age fifty-five Alister became ‘a broadcaster’ in January 1945 when the Australian Broadcasting Corporation interviewed him on early Queensland history for their ‘Q series’. He had never faced a ‘mike’ before, but found it no great ordeal: ‘ … you can sit on the verandah and just talk ordinarily’ — even though there was no preparation and no editing afterwards. 19 He received a great deal of ‘fan mail’ following the broadcast and in response to several inquiries, revisited his own past:

I have met both Nansen and Amundsen; in fact when I got leave from the Army in 1919 Nansen was on the boat going over. He had already started working on the Relief Commission and had been to Paris to see about the Armenian refugee problem. I am afraid I was not very helpful — I served in the Light Horse — as I had seen more than enough of the poor devils … 20

This was in reply to a stranger, but to his cousin George in Sydney he recalled:

I had the pleasure of riding at the head of the column when they had the
Dominion march through London; and what is perhaps just as interesting, when we pulled up for a spell just by Whitehall, I found myself looking at your brother Charles [Colonel Charles Archer] on the pavement just by me ...21

Within a few months of writing these letters, Alister had plenty to be cheerful about in his personal present. Cedric cabled from England that he was ‘safe and happy’, his son-in-law Keith Forster had flown to Japan with General Eichelberger’s Airborne Division, and from Norway came great news: ‘The Huns just turned it in’ after it seemed that they might be ‘very nasty’. All Alister’s extended family had come through safely, though they had ‘a pretty thin time … my brother-in-law [Vilhelm Greve] was in a concentration camp for a while’, he told George. And because the Germans commandeered all Norwegian farm produce, Rolf had to steal his own to help family members. One extra stress was that they could get no world news at all, for there were very heavy penalties for listening to overseas broadcasts. Erling told Alister that every day since ‘the Huns tossed it in’ had been a gala day. What they most needed at war’s end was warm under-clothing. Joan sent stockings, singlets and pants to Kathleen for distribution ‘among the females of the tribe’.22

Alister’s first post-war letter to Erling explained that he’d made no attempt to contact the family through the Red Cross. He thought that a letter from a British Dominion which fell into the hands of ‘the Jerries’ might be used against the family. He admitted, too, that news of the Nazi invasion of Norway ‘finished me completely’. He was not only physically ill, but also suffering from nerves.23 In a letter to Kathleen he summed up the wartime situation in Rockhampton as well as bringing her up to date with family news:

As for the war itself, things were a bit worrying for a few months in 1942 and a lot of people cleared off south; but [Australia] being an island I can’t see where they intended to finish up exactly; as things turned out we [in Rockhampton] never saw, nor got the smell of the Japs, not even in the air; we at one stage had 57,000 Yanks here, camped all round R’ton training and it was the biggest single concentration in Australia; we met quite a lot of nice men — and some we found not quite so nice!!!

One of the nice things was General Eichelberger, who is now in charge of the occupation forces in Japan. Funnily enough Alison’s husband — Major Keith Forster — was sent along to pick up Australian Prisoners of War in Japan and he went to Okinawa and from there flew in with the American Airborne
Division to Tokyo — the first lot to go to Japan ...

The Archers were lucky as a family — all available men went — and all came through ... Alison was also one of the first in the Army; however she met her man after about 12 months or so, then got married and as Master Robert was not long in showing up, she had to get out again.

My youngest hopeful — James — is a very big fellow and very good at sport; good swimmer and runner and reasonably good at school. Both boys are Archers, with hooked noses and long thin bodies.

Joan is very well; she has had the hardest time of all I think; owing to manpower shortage she has had to do all the housework, gardening etc, all on her own, but she has struggled through well ...

At Gracemere it was grand to have 'Cegi' home again and Keith back from Japan and reunited with Alison and young Robert. Personal jubilation was one thing, post-war industrial trouble a different kettle-of-fish. 'What with strikes and the dry weather the outlook is anything but promising', Alister told old family friend, Fred Berney. 'All around it looks as if the BRAVE NEW WORLD is not going to materialise just as the last time'. And to Bob Archer, Ted's returned soldier son, in relation to the family firm: 'Things are going from worse to bloody awful here'. It seemed that the fates had ordained that Archer Brothers had 'had it'.

Alister's 'gloomy view' of the firm's financial position was more often than not justified. While his sense of humour and facetious comments concealed his true state of mind from most, those close to him knew that his sleeplessness and digestive troubles signalled 'a worrier'. His self-diagnosis was 'nervous dyspepsia'. He confided in his cousin George more than any of his correspondents concerning his fears for the future and his tendency to worry: 'I can't just chuck it like ordinary human beings, the damn thing stays with me and a vicious circle of "guts and brains" get going and I become a wreck for the time being. Another thing which is telling on me now, is the years I was deaf and had no hearing aid — anyway the thing I have now is not conducive to peace of mind ... a vibration going on next your brain box all day ...'

Alister's deafness was a legacy of his war service. His Norwegian school reports indicate that as a teenager his hearing was perfect. But for years he conducted the business of Archer Brothers, including attendance at sales and shows, hampered by increasing deafness. While his post-war
Keeping the Strangers Out 1927–1949

hearing-aid was a cumbersome affair, it had some advantages. He described these in a letter to Vilhelm Greve in the winter of 1946:

I am sitting by the fire writing and listening to music on the wireless — using my telephone on my head. I now have a wonderful machine; for years life was a burden to me from trying to hear people talking; with this machine I am more or less normal and can go anywhere without handicap ... It is an American affair — 3 valve wireless worked with small A and B batteries ... this one was about 1200 kroner and as it is my third one at about the same price it is no cheap entertainment being deaf.  

The two heavy batteries were enclosed in a cumbersome box fixed to his belt, small microphone attached, which he held in his hand and directed towards the speaker. A cord ran to a strap on the top of his head with springs holding in place the 'bone conductor' units behind each ear. It was perhaps more like a radio receiver on the head, than a telephone, but certainly a far cry from the invisible hearing-aids of the 1990s. More often than not Alister treated his hearing defect facetiously, as he did his own appearance, dressed in singlet and shorts when obliged to act as the property cowboy (the 'general useful') in the summer of 1948. He told his old friend Harry Mort: ‘The Missus hides her face and says I look awful — but my skinny old legs are just getting a good colour and I am inclined to fancy myself if no one else will’. He had a particular grievance against the youth of ‘the New Order’. He had intermittently employed a solitary cowboy, but complained that they usually only lasted about a fortnight — ‘they then either abscond, steal or fall in love’. 

It was about this time that Alister, now fifty-eight, admitted that ‘running the show’ for Archer Brothers was beyond him, both physically and mentally. The idea of selling out had been raised before the war but necessarily delayed. Now the shareholders, especially those overseas, were anxious to see the company wound up. Some of these described themselves as ‘chronic sufferers from want of cash’. In Queensland David and Archie were against anyone from the younger generation taking over, nor did they wish to themselves. The returned servicemen in the family preferred to apply for land of their own.

A Board meeting on 9 May 1947, despite some differences of opinion, was ‘most gentlemanly’. David Archer as Chairman asked the directors ‘to avoid personalities’. Other directors present at this historic meeting were
John Archer (Uncle Jack) and his sons Paddy and Sandy and son-in-law Nikolai Aagaard. Bob Archer (Ted’s son), Archie Archer and of course, Alister who depicted the assemblage as ‘a formidable array’. The majority thought that all properties should be offered in one lot, the old homestead making the package more attractive. In view of this, Alister did not press his and Joan’s desire to purchase the homestead. In the months following this meeting he reported that there were ‘rumours flying around … most people in town knew our business before we did’.32

As it transpired, there were no offers for the whole so the properties were offered separately. These included the last of the town blocks — four acres sold for 500 pounds after the company had paid rates on the land for 85 years. Alister’s old friend, Harry Mort, his ‘best mate’ during the First World War, purchased the Laleham lease. For a while after Lord and Lady Vestey visited Gracemere for afternoon tea, it seemed as though Vestey’s might buy the place to raise pigs — in conjunction with the Queensland British Food Corporation’s broadacre grain production in the Central Highlands, some of it on land taken up by Charles and Colin Archer in 1854. But to everybody’s relief Vestey’s declined to buy Gracemere because at that time Torsdale was part of the deal.33 When W.H. King bought Torsdale in May 1949, Alister commented that ‘a somewhat sad chapter in the history of the Callide Valley is closed’. Not only had Charles Archer been the first European in the valley, but it was Colin who ‘called the ferryman’ — *kall-eide* — to cross the flooded Callide creek in the winter of 1853, thus giving both creek and valley a delightful Norwegian name. And much later, Robert and John Archer had sacrificed their personal interests in Torsdale, which they took up in 1885, for the greater benefit of Archer Brothers.

Gracemere was spared a similar fate. The directors agreed to the sale of the homestead block to Joan and Alister ‘to keep the strangers out’. Alister spent many weeks with bank managers in his efforts to raise the necessary capital. He told George that during this time of uncertainty one of his friends forecast that ‘if he doesn’t buy it, it will kill Joan — if he does it will kill Alister’.34 At an Extraordinary General Meeting on 17 June 1949 John Archer moved and David Archer seconded that Gracemere be sold to Alister and Joan for 28,000 pounds. This included 1200 acres at the homestead, 3,800 at Malchi, fixed improvements, furniture, 30 horses and
716 cattle. The farm at Matcham had to be sold to finance the purchase. Archibald Archer moved and Robert (Bob) Archer seconded the motion that the company be wound up voluntarily. The simple facts recorded in the minutes were in stark contrast to the emotions of the directors — Archers all. The homestead site had been ‘a perfect paradise’ to Charles Archer when he came upon it in a good season in May 1853. To all those who followed, Gracemere was the antipodean equivalent of Torderrodden in their affections. All present on that June day in 1949 gave thanks that at least ‘the strangers’ had been kept out.

Once more Alister shared his thoughts with George whose fascination with early history matched his own:

... I felt both for Joan's sake — and the sake of the old home — that some effort should be made to retain it. I would be quite content to call it a go myself and just retain the homestead; however, we will have the R'ton saleyards opposite soon and may do a bit of dairying, plus a little bit of farming, plus a little fattening, so we may be able to carry on.

If Uncle Charles in the first place had used his eyes more for business — instead of the Romantic — A. Bros. would have been a lot better off today, as this place is about as inconvenient as possible and on the worst country [for farming]; however those days, water was the thing; today we don't worry much if the lagoon is full or dry ... 36

It was in Alister's nature to worry about the disadvantages such as that of the homestead being at a distance from the good farming land, also the extent of the garden which Joan would have to 'keep up' without help. He also worried about the age of the buildings, but as he told George's son, Rob: 'I felt someone must make an effort to retain the old place in the family. Whatever the future holds I hope my sons will have to do most of the worrying, I have had 30 years of it ...'

It was to English Frank Archer, Tom's youngest son who spent his early childhood at Gracemere, that Alister revealed the depth of his feelings: 'Joan and I bought Gracemere — to keep the strangers out — although it was a bit much for us ...'

Gracemere had come to the end of its first long and diverse chapter in history, with its owners 'scattered over the face of earth and ocean'. At the end of Alister's twenty-two years as manager, he described Gracemere as having been 'the handmaiden, depot & transhipment station of the other
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[company] places'. Now it was about to begin a new chapter in Australian ownership, but one in which there was a very real consciousness of history and heritage and the responsibility which this brought with it.
Keeping the strangers out brought a completely new way of life to Gracemere. While the pressures imposed upon company management by overseas and Australian shareholders had gone, so had the 'perks' such as a car, a gardener and a cowboy. Keeping the strangers out also meant bringing the sons home.

Before joining the Royal Australian Air Force, Cedric had jackerooed at Russell Nimmo’s Oak Park Station near Einasleigh in far northern Queensland, not far from Magoura where his father had been head stockman. While at Oak Park, Cedric had fallen in love with Cath Nimmo and so after discharge he returned north to work at an adjoining property and their engagement was announced in January 1946. ‘Cedric’s forlovet is a very nice girl’, Alister told Lajla Arentz. Nor did he ever change his opinion, becoming even more fond of her over the years. Plans for marriage had to be delayed owing to Cedric’s long convalescence from a badly broken leg. Thrown from his horse late one evening while mustering cattle on the northern station, he lay all night in the bush before rescue by one of his Aboriginal friends who broke down and cried on finding him: ‘Oh Bob, I thought you was dead!’ When Cedric had first arrived at Oak Park as a seventeen year old, he identified himself as ‘Bob’. He thought being a first-year jackaroo was bad enough without being teased about a ‘foreign’ name.

Cedric and Cath were married at Oak Park on 1 October 1947. Two
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years later they did their part in keeping the strangers out by returning to Gracemere with their baby son, Charles. They moved into the second house, the one beside the mere where Jack and Brenda had spent part of their retirement. Jim had completed his senior year at Rockhampton Grammar School in 1946, and then jackerooed at the Valley of Lagoons (named by Leichhardt) in North Queensland, and also in the Cunnamulla district. He likewise returned home to assist his father.

Gracemere, having been a company house for almost a century, now reverted to a family home. Alister, in replying to a former Norwegian school-mate seeking employment for a friend, provides a picture of life at the old homestead in 1950. Because he also gives a realistic account of post-war social conditions, as well as a nostalgic glimpse back in time, his letter is worth quoting in full:

Dear Evynd, I won't even try to write to you in Norwegian as it is over 30 years since I saw Norway and now my Norsk er litt rusten.

I am sorry to say I can do nothing for your friend. My firm sold out completely last year and I then bought this property from them. As I had to buy at inflated values I can't afford to employ anyone and work it with 2 sons and find it a bit of an uphill battle.

Nikolai has retired and is living on a small property near Brisbane; his health has gone to pieces; his lungs are no good; not T.B. but Fibrositis [sic.] — and he can't do any physical work; he makes a living by doing [wood] carving while his wife does vegetables and flowers.

As regards housing; I am afraid the position is worse here than at home; all the states are importing ready made houses from Europe, as we are just the same as you — we don't like work any more.

... you will no doubt have read of our immigration policy, which is being pushed on all the time in large numbers. Unfortunately a lot of ... mediterranean's are coming out and they all get into the cities and start shops and are no good to the [rural areas] ...

I often think of the old days when we bathed, went to Hagens and Buch Holm and had a bottle of Ushers gren label ... The last I heard of you was when you started a fox farm. I hope you and Nils Bugge don't fight too much in court. I always remember den 17de — Attar saa kommer den maette with red caps etc. ...

... I can beat your four grandchildren; I have 5 now, the last — a girl — arriving about 3 weeks ago. Before I had 4 grandsons and I was getting a bit sick of them. ...

Despite his facetious comment about being sick of boys, Alister took great pride in the exploits of his Forster grandsons who often stayed at
Gracemere. Now he also had a growing family of Archer grandchildren next door to provide him with anecdotes in his letters for the next decade. There was one for English Jim in 1951. He had just discovered that Cedric and Cath's children were sixth generation Australians. Their maternal descent was from Governor Philip Gidley King 'who came out as 2nd [in charge] with Admiral Philip in the First Fleet'. Even Richard 'China' Jones was a late comer by comparison (1809). Alister at last had 'one up' on Aunt Cecelia, Richard Jones' grand-daughter, who loved to tease him about the Archers' late arrival in the colony in 1833–34.

Alister admitted at this time that his own social life had become minimal, partly owing to the demands of farming and cattle husbandry, but even more to indifferent health and hearing problems. He dreaded 'turnouts' and parties with people all talking at once: 'the machine just drives me silly'. But there was one Rockhampton show time function he really enjoyed — 'the Hereford chevoo — 6.30 to 9pm. No speeches but plenty booze and very good tucker. It really is an excellent show — started up by Dick Wilson and McCamley'. Because the food was very late in arriving, but not the drink, 'even the ladies got quite squiffy'. Alister could usually see the funny side. He believed a sense of humour was 'the saving grace of the Archers'. He never tired of reading his Uncle Colin's Journal, 1858–59, because of the 'continual flashes of humour in it'. Colin's description of Calliungal homestead in 1859 might have been penned by Alister: 'Such a bundle of crooked sticks to ask a person to ride 90 miles to see — as if there could possibly be two opinions about its stability'. But these were the words of the architect of Gracemere homestead, completed just one year earlier. It takes a person with a keen sense of humour to appreciate a like mind.

Alister was not the only one to have to undertake more physical work in the change from company to private ownership. Joan had become both cook and gardener. She took the same pride in the garden, landscaped by her great-uncle William so long ago, as her mother had in her time. In 1949 when 87 year old Daisy Archer returned from Toowoomba to again take up residence at Gracemere, Alister told Archie: 'Gran is splendid; she's never idle; she FORGETS to lie down, she loves pottering in the garden, weeding etc. ...' But not for long. In June 1952 she was laid to rest 'beside
Bob on the hill’. Her grave was covered with flowers from the garden she loved, as it had been for Robert twenty-six years earlier.

Australian history provided Alister’s chief relaxation from work and worry. But he also had an interest in conservation and the environment long before this became politically correct. He noted the changes over the decades in Gracemere lagoon in which he and George Archer had seen a rare species of blackfish in 1926 — found only there and in one or two of the town lagoons. These had disappeared by the 1950s. He told George, who remembered the mere as it had been in his childhood in the 1870s, that it was now quite different: ‘I blame the Mt Morgan [Mine] sulphur treatment for spoiling the water; there has been no marine growth for years in it and we would not dream of bathing it now; you get a nasty sensation in the back of your nose’. Siltation and erosion were so bad that he forecast there would be no lagoon left in fifty years. Forty-five years after that prediction the lagoon was dry for three and a half years in one of the longest droughts in Central Queensland since European settlement. Even when filled, its depth was much less than in the early years of the century when Archie’s father threw him in to learn to swim.

As early as 1936 Alister wrote to the Mayor of Rockhampton drawing attention to the state of the Fairy Bower Reserve. This formerly beautiful sequestered glade on Scrubby Creek had been a favourite picnic spot for townspeople since the 1860s. It is not much more than a kilometre from Gracemere homestead, but in 1936 was still under the control of the City Council. Alister reminded the mayor:

This one time beautiful scrub has been neglected to such an extent that it is now little else but a breeding ground for “rubber vine”, lantana and Noogoora Burr, and a dump for rubbish … All the useful lumber has been cut down and carted away, tons of soil have been dug up and carted away to town gardens …

Although the reserve may not be urgently required by the present generation, it seems a great pity to allow this “tropical rainforest” to be ruined through neglect.

We cannot help the impression that many of your citizens do not even know of this ideal pic-nic spot, or they would not have allowed such bad treatment.

This early warning, and another to Fitzroy Shire Council, went unheeded. The fairies’ former ‘bower’ eventually disappeared completely
through neglect and bad treatment. Resident prophets are seldom honoured.

The water was very low in the mere during drought in 1951 when Alister observed plenty of birds ‘on the lookout for a feed’. He estimated 1,000 hawks, 1,000 pelicans and 500 cormorants were feasting on the fish — mainly bony bream. In 1962 he had a new theory on siltation in the mere — ‘drainage from the Saleyards … it is full of weed but all floating on the top of the mud’. By year’s end there were dead eels galore. ‘No smell yet’, he reported to Alison, ‘but I told Ma she would need to go to [Emu] Park but she says she was brought up on stink from the lagoon’.9 The Rockhampton and District Saleyards Board had opened its new yards adjoining Gracemere’s boundary ten years earlier.

The climate provided Alister with a never-ending theme in his correspondence. In the very year that he and Joan became the proud owners of Gracemere, and for much of the 1950s, there was below average rainfall. It was more or less chronic drought, relieved occasionally, as in 1954, by a major flood. When the summer temperature exceeded 38 degrees Celsius, he described the weather as ‘a double B.B. with knobs on’. But after the rain transformed the countryside as in November 1961, the result was ‘plenty of grass for the cows to get their tongues around’. Even so, there was ‘always something to worry the man on the land so now we have ticks’.10

Alister could seldom be persuaded to leave the homestead now, not even on the occasion of the Governor General’s visit to Rockhampton in 1963 ‘primed up about the pioneers and A. Bros.’. His deafness was so profound that his ‘head telephone’ was useless. While he remained a great conversationalist and humorist, visitors were obliged to communicate with him by means of a proffered note pad. This did not deter him. ‘There are people ringing up all the time — So and So told us to ring and come out and see the lovely garden’, he confided to Alison. ‘Of course Mama enjoys a pat on the back in that line but poor old Dada is helpless’.11 On one particular Sunday he told her that ‘poor old Dada’ was left alone to cope with an influx of visitors. Jim was at the farm, Cedric had taken his family to the beach for the day, and Joan said she was feeling sick, shut her door and refused to appear. He not only had to show them the garden, but also entertain them for ‘quite a while’.12
Alister's wonderful fluency as a letter writer was also drying up. When his brother Erling died late in 1962, his letter to his sister-in-law Ingeborg whom he had never met was 'a hard letter to write'.

As year's end drew near in 1963, Alister's life began to ebb and during the following year, age seventy-four, he was unable to keep up his marvellous correspondence. Just two weeks before his death, his Norwegian cousin, Illam Archer, wrote to Alison: 'One day we shall all come to an end and I think it is no advantage that it comes very late'. These two first cousins, sons of Colin and James, were each born the proverbial stone's throw from old Tolderodden. They had both grown up in Larvik but lived out their adult lives at opposite ends of the earth. 'I see from your letter that your father is very ill', he told Alison, 'so I write to you to show it to him or read it for him. Is it any use to send him Norwegian papers now?' No use at all, but he had in the past always enjoyed those which Erling sent him from time to time. Alister Archer died on 10 April 1965, having valiantly given his working life since 1927 as general manager of the family firm, and since 1949 in making Gracemere a viable family property. The words of a friend at the time he was raising the finance to buy Gracemere proved prophetic: 'If he does not get it, it will kill Joan; if he gets it, it will kill Alister'.

Alister was the only one of the Norwegian-born Archers to die in Australia and the only Australian Archer whose father had also been born in Norway. David's and Tom's Australian sons were all born in England or Scotland. Alister and Joan had shown the same commitment to saving the old homestead at Gracemere as the first generation had in saving old Tolderodden. In Queensland they kept the strangers out, in Norway in 1939 the family lost the battle.

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Alister Archer's public life went far beyond his role as general manager of Archer Brothers Ltd., or his contribution to the beef cattle industry, or his struggle to keep Gracemere in the family. He was a generation ahead of his time in recognising the significance of early personal papers as part of the heritage of all Australians, indigenous as well as European. This was recognised by the writer of an obituary article in Rockhampton's Morning Bulletin:
... Mr Archer was one of the most knowledgeable of amateur historians, relating to the pioneering era in Queensland. This interest was stimulated by his discovery in 1930 of original letters from Ludwig Leichhardt to David Archer. His early researches centred on family history and brought to light letters written by the Archer brothers to the family in Norway. Charles Archer’s diary of the exploratory trip from the Burnett district to the Fitzroy Valley in 1853 which resulted in the settlement of Gracemere, the journals and diaries of William, Colin and Charles, and Thomas Archer’s book, “Recollections of a Rambling Life”.

With this material and numerous other documents and early books on Queensland history Alister Archer became a recognised authority on Central Queensland history ... Through a voluminous correspondence with the descendants of early pioneers and other students of history, professional and amateur, he gained a knowledge of the early settlement which might not otherwise have been preserved. It was his contention that the Government should make available a fund to carry out historical research in this field before the record was lost ...

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Alister and Joan, one born and bred in Norway, the other entranced by its beauty and ancient myths and legends, as well as Archer associations since 1825, had maintained communication with Norwegian kin, despite distances over earth and ocean. On one occasion in 1951 Joan suffered two heart attacks followed by double pneumonia. Convalescing at home, she shared with Alister her memory of a visit to her great-aunt Mary’s summer cottage — ‘that lovely place’, Meheia. Alister, ‘prince of correspondents’, related the story to his cousin Lullul in Norway:

The sun is coming up and I must make Joan a cup of tea. My main time for letter writing now is before daylight. I get up at 4 or earlier and make myself a good “cuppa” and come down to the office. Feel too tired at night now the days are so long and hot. — Have just returned from Joan’s bedside; she sends you her best love and says she often thinks of the old days; she gave me the story of the time she and Kathleen visited you up the country at “that lovely place”. She remembers going in bathing in the lake with Kathleen in the nude and you calling them two Venuses ...
It is now time to take a retrospective look, not only at Alister Archer's contribution to recorded history, but also to that of other branches of the family. The significance of letter-writing in keeping this family, scattered over earth and ocean, in touch and united in discovering and preserving their history and heritage, became more evident as the twentieth century neared its end. The lost art of personal correspondence can never adequately be replaced by such electronic and computerised devices as fax, e-mail and the internet.

Ten years before his death, Alister ensured that the great mass of family papers stored in the timber office building at Gracemere should not succumb to fire or environmental pests. Truckloads of valuable source material relative to Australian history were dispatched to Mitchell Library in Sydney where his uncles had arrived in the 1830s to begin new lives as Australian pastoralists. Ten years after his death, his family donated the remaining truckloads to the same library. In 1976 the Archer Papers were identified as the largest collection of pastoral papers in any archive in the nation.

It is a universal truth that men and women become interested in their roots after the passing of the previous generation. There seems to be some inhibition about prying into the affairs of the living. And so it was that some years after the death of Colin Archer in 1921 — the last of the nine brothers who had experienced life in Australia — ‘bundles of letters from the uncles [were] dug out at Tolderodden by Lullul’.¹ These proved to be
the catalyst in English Jim’s quest for more information on early history, a quest made possible by his retirement from oriental banking. This followed his cousin Robert’s earlier fascination with Thomas Archer’s *Recollections of a Rambling Life* (1897). While Jim unsuccessfully explored means of republishing his father’s book, it was the manuscript material in the letters and diaries which he found most exciting. Very soon his enthusiasm was shared by his brother George in Sydney and cousin Alister at Gracemere. By the early 1930s they were a formidable team of researchers.

The colonial tapestry woven a century earlier was examined minutely and some flaws revealed. ‘It may be just as well for some of us that Thomas Archer did not return to his Eldorado [in western Queensland]’ commented George. It was now known that MacPherson who stocked Fitzroy Downs soon after Tom’s and Arthur Chauvel’s expedition in 1847 had been driven off by Aborigines and some of his men killed. It was this same Chauvel who took up Miriam Vale Station, south of Gladstone, but did not stay there long. ‘I have an idea he was driven out by the blacks’, his nephew, Sir Harry Chauvel’ later told Alister. Arthur Chauvel was unlucky also in naming his station for his favourite girl — she married someone else.

Aborigines on the Fitzroy River in 1856 also speared the Archers’ friend ‘Hobby’ Elliot, though not fatally. One of his shepherds was killed in the same attack which Charles Archer described at the time as ‘most determined and systematic’. More than seventy years later Jim recollected his youthful memory of William (‘Hobby’) Elliot as ‘a delightful old gentleman … whose hands were constantly a-tremble from nerve injury, the result of spear wounds received when his camp was attacked by blacks’. Jim believed Elliot had been Colin’s crew of one on the *Ellida*’s voyage from Maryborough to the Fitzroy in 1855, a later unidentified source claims it was their overseer, Ned Kelly. A search in Norway for the log book was unsuccessful, though Colin’s daughters Mary and Lullul both recalled seeing it in their youth. What Lullul found in the Tolderodden attic was much more significant — bundles of letters written by the brothers in Australia between 1833 and 1855. Jim was convinced, however, that Kennedy Allen, a Rockhampton historian, must have had access to the *Ellida* Journal in 1924. If so, Robert must have lent it to him without
insisting on its return. While this was pure speculation, another of his comments to Alister was most accurate: 'How difficult it is to get at the truth after only a few years have elapsed'.

Ninety-two years had passed since 'Hobby' Elliot’s wounding when Alister not only reiterated his forebears’ policy towards the Aborigines, but also the attitude of his own generation in 1948 towards such facts of history:

As for the Blacks the less said the better; firstly of course it is an ethical question whether we had any right to come along at all; but there is no doubt some of the squatters looked upon them as “varmints”. I am very pleased that in all the letters and writings we have of the Uncles — there is no mention of them ever having killed a blackfellow; on the other hand we know that in many cases these things were done for self-protection; but some of these “dispersals” we hear about do not sound very nice.

However these are the days of debunking and much of it can be put down to inferiority complex I think ...

The old letters provided Alister with many clues which enabled him to dispute the accuracy of some published history. *The Australian Encyclopedia*, for instance, gave a later date than 1854 for exploration of the Peak Downs, but Colin’s letter from the Burnett contained the proof of his and Charles’ expedition in 1854. Charles’ 1853 map of the Fitzroy Valley and coastal country revealed the brothers’ names for physical features. The sprinkling of ‘Norske names’ on this map fascinated his nephews. The rugged range in the Shoalwater Bay region which was named *File-Fjeld*, probably by newly arrived Colin for its Norwegian original near Sogne Fjord, became Anglicised as Byfield. In 1965 part of this area was established as the Australian Defence Forces Shoalwater Bay training area. Its wild nature and its creeks and gullies lined with cabbage-tree palms make it an ideal physical environment for jungle training. The discovery of Colin’s 1858–59 Journal in the Tolderodden attic provides his later eye-witness account as one of the first Europeans to see it. On the second occasion he was one of a party searching for a reported ‘white Mary’ living with Aborigines. They did not find her, but the few Aborigines they did see were shy, not aggressive.

In all their expeditions into the wilderness the Archer brothers did not name one physical feature after themselves. Others did it for them, firstly
Leichhardt with his ‘The Four Archers’ in the Gulf country in 1845, and then in 1864 the Jardine brothers named the Archer River and the Jørgensen Range on Cape York for their Gracemere friends. Charles and Colin in their exploration of the Fitzroy Valley in May and July 1853 used names from Norse sagas to identify high peaks in the range overlooking the river: Mount Berserker for the warrior who always tore off his tunic in rage before going into battle; and Mount Sleipner, not only for the god Odin’s favourite steed, but also for Charles’ own grey stallion, Sleipner. The closest the brothers ever came to naming nepotism was in changing the original ‘Farris’ to ‘Gracemere’ to honour Tom’s bride, and naming ‘Minnie Downs’ for Sandy’s.

Charles had modestly declined Land Commissioner Wiseman’s suggestion in 1856 that the township to be established on the Fitzroy should be Charleston in his honour, but he had no say in the original town surveyor’s naming of Archer Street in 1858, nor of the highest peak in the Berserker Range as Mount Archer, nor Archer Park Railway Station and Archer Siding near the Fifteen Mile cattle station, nor of the local authority Archer Ward. And he had been dead for 129 years when Arthur Murch’s fine bronze statue of Charles mounted on Sleipner was unveiled in 1980 beside the Fitzroy River (which he did name).

Archer modesty in declining personal nomenclature was not confined to the first generation. When Girl Guide Divisional Commissioner, Mrs Mary Bradford, asked Alister’s permission in 1952 to use the family surname for the Division, his response was typical: ‘I am horrified at your suggestion to call your Division ARCHER. The place is rotten with the name … I am very keen on Native names when they are reasonably short and pleasant to the ear’. Perhaps he was thinking of his uncles’ early sheep runs — Cooyar, Durundur, Waroongundie and Coonambula. Although they are not short, they are pleasant to the ear. In Colin’s 1858 list of sheep and lambing stations on Gracemere, every one of the 28 locations has its native name as well as English. Only one has survived in its pure form — ‘Callioran’ — with ‘Wanyoweilem’ on the marine plains south of Rockhampton Anglicised to ‘Upper Ulam’.

English Jim — third son of Tom and Grace — had spent many years at Gracemere in the 1870s. He spent his retirement years investigating early history. On a visit to Australia in 1934 he made plans to join Alister and
Joan in Brisbane to retrace the steps of his father and uncles as they trekked northwards from Durundur. But first he and his brother George visited Mitchell Library (State Library of NSW) searching for maps related to Toms’ and Charles’ exploration. In the process they were shown photographs of early Rockhampton personalities, including Archers. ‘That portrait of U. Charlie I was after is among them, proving that, as you thought, Pattison furnished the material for that illustrated article [in The Queenslander]’, Jim told Alister. J. G. ‘Battler’ Pattison had borrowed these while researching his ‘Battler Tales of Early Rockhampton’ to be published in Melbourne in 1939. His alleged sale of these to Mitchell Library in the early 1930s might have augmented his failing finances, but did little for the sale of his book.

Alister and Joan met Jim in Brisbane in May 1934 to begin their pilgrimage from the site of Durundur through to Cooyar, Coonambula and Eidsvold to Gracemere — calling on the way to visit the John Archers at Torsdale. They saw all the old places but, in Alister’s words, ‘there was too little of the old land-marks left for C.Jim’s enjoyment’. From Gracemere he took Jim to the Dee Range near Mount Morgan ‘to pick the spot where the uncles first saw the Gracemere lake and the valley of the Fitzroy’. Jim, a keen amateur photographer, was not only disappointed in the lack of land-marks, but also the quality of his photographs, the weather being showery. But he appreciated the good times Alister and Joan gave him before he took off to follow their Uncle Sandy’s 1852–53 footprints in the Ovens Valley in Victoria, and ‘poor Jack’s’ much earlier ones at the Bay of Islands in New Zealand. After that, the intrepid sleuth went in search of his Uncle Archie’s ‘ghost’ in Tahiti and that of his own father, Tom, in California. On his return to England his very long letter to Alister with a detailed account of his adventures, successes and failures, provides details which Tom’s letters omitted. A few extracts vividly illustrate the theme ‘the past revisited’. In the first he says ‘something about’ his attempts to get on to ‘U.Archie’s trail’ in the Society islands, using original letters as guides:

The first of his two letters, you remember, was written from Moorea (he spells it Morea) which is a very beautiful island 15 miles from Tahiti. I thought it more picturesque than Tahiti itself ... I was doubtful at first which had been Ball’s plantation, but finally decided on Papitoui Bay, as the foundations of a
factory of sorts still exist there. But memories are short. I came across no-one
who knew anything further back than the 1860s when the factory belonged
to Hart — almost certainly the same Hart who came to my father’s assistance
when he was stranded penniless in San Francisco. I had meant to go to Raiatia,
a more distant island of the group, where U. Archie was stranded for nearly a
year with a lot of cattle on his hands, & where he used to entertain the court
of Queen Pomare, who had fled there from the French in Tahiti … but I was
afraid of missing the boat to San Francisco, so cut it out. On Tahiti I was several
times at the place where R.L. Stevenson & his party lived for 2 months late
in the [18]80s where he wrote a letter to [William and Frances’ son] Tom
Archer (then 3 or 4 years old) which you read in the Collected Letters …¹⁰

Jim was surely aware before he began retracing his ‘forty-niner’ father’s
trail in California that his eldest brother, William — famous as a drama
critic and Ibsen translator — had attempted both this and Archie’s in 1877.
Although William’s manuscript waited a hundred years for publication,
Jim himself would have heard his brother talking of his plans at Gracemere
before setting out. He makes no mention of this in his letter to Alister, in
which he describes his visit to the Mt Shasta–Oregon region:

… I found Sonora all right however. It is now what you would call a good
sized township. I had given up all hope of being able to spot Humbug Gulch
(where he made enough to get away) & had got further north into Oregon …
when I was told that Humbug Gulch was south over the border, & I went
in a motor bus across the dividing range (snow covered) to Yucka which is
almost certainly the place T.A. calls Shasta Township. There I got hold of the
postman who serves the gulch three times a week (placer mining still goes on
there) & he took me in his Ford (I was told it was a bit slick) slithering over
another pass through the snow down into the gulch. But to identify the exact
spot where Charlie the Dane took them was impossible. … Then I proceeded
north to the Umpqua River where I was able to place very nearly the spot
where they swam in the river & the little island where [they] saved the life of
the half-breed fiddler …¹¹

Jim’s Pacific Island and North American pilgrimage effectively laid the
Recollections to rest, but he continued to pore over the letters, expedition
journals and Charles’ maps long after his visit to Australia. He confessed
to Alister in 1939: ‘From first to last I believe that trying to unravel the
tangle of misconceptions relative to [Tom’s] trip to Fitzroy Downs has
taken up as much of my time as all the rest of my work on the Letters …¹²
From his comfortable eyrie in London’s National Liberal Club he sent
out research requests to George and Alister as well as corrections for them to pass on to those rare bodies interested in Australian history in the 1930s. The Place Names Board, he believed, had its work cut out — ‘There is no end of blunders in popular entomology ... You remember, perhaps, a Burnett historian ... explaining that Mr Elliot acquired the sobriquet “Hobby” from his having been lame!’\(^{13}\)

Cecelia Bancroft — the ubiquitous ‘Aunt Cecelia’, the living link between old and young — also did her bit to straighten out recorded history’s kinks. The legend concerning the naming of Aramac in central-western Queensland for Alister’s maternal grandfather, R.R. MacKenzie, was based on a report that he had carved his initials on a tree while exploring for pastoral land. On hearing this, Aunt Cecelia protested vigorously to Alister: ‘Nothing would make me believe that your grandfather carved his initials on anything’.\(^{14}\) This was tantamount to vandalism in her opinion, but in fact it was the recognised custom for land seekers, including the Archers, to mark boundary trees with their initials. When the runs were later surveyed, these provided the necessary markers. Jim Archer also commented on the Aramac story which he had heard years earlier, but thought it on a par with ‘Mr Joyce’s explanation of *The Stanks* having been so named after a night when C.A. and W.A. had made pillows of their saddles’.\(^{15}\) Jim himself had originally blundered on the naming of what later became the Dee River. When transcribing Charles’ Journal of May 1853, he had changed the spelling to ‘Stunks’, but on later consulting a dictionary he discovered that ‘Stank’ was the Scottish word for ‘pool’. When Charles and William reached the headwaters of this stream in May 1853 it was simply a chain of pools. Jim also noted that on Arrowsmith’s ‘Sketch Map of the new Counties in the Neighbourhood of Port Curtis’, dated 1854 and based on Charles’ original 1853 map, it was depicted as ‘Tunks Creek’.\(^{16}\) It seems that those who came after the two young explorers thought it impolite to use a word they interpreted as a bad smell.

On the publication of Catherine Cotton’s *Ludwig Leichhardt and the Great South Land* in 1938, Cecelia Bancroft asked Alister, ‘Will the diary [Charles’] upset the “aimless leader” arrived at by Mrs C. Cotton?’ She then recounted an anecdote concerning her grandparents, Mr and Mrs Richard (‘China’) Jones: ‘Probably I have told you that Leichhardt was a passenger on the steamer on which my grandparents and your grand-
mother, Aunt Bessie and my Mother — then aged 2 yrs & 3 mths — travelled from Sydney to Moreton Bay in 1844. Aunt Bessie told me she remembered ‘Papa and Dr Leichhardt pacing the deck together in earnest conversation.’

While Charles Archer’s expedition diaries threw no light on the character of Leichhardt, Alister was quick to assure Aunt Cecelia that the early letters showed the explorer to be a trusted friend. As long as he lived, Alister lost no opportunity to refute derogatory publications such as A.H. Chisholm’s *Strange New World* (1941). More than 45 years later several members of Alister’s family met a great-nephew of Ludwig Leichhardt from Arkansas, USA, on a visit to Queensland. The Leichhardts were special guests at the Sydney Opera House for the opening night of Patrick White’s opera, *Voss*, loosely based on the explorer’s life. And so the threads woven in the 1840s by Leichhardt’s friendship with David, Charles, John and Thomas Archer continued to be part of the warp and woof in the social fabric of the twentieth century.

George, Jim and Alister began digging up the past in 1938 for more personal reasons than research into Australian history. ‘I expect you will have been thinking that I had annexed the Archer families’ share of the Walker Estate and was busy spending it’, quipped George to Alister in September. He was referring to the disputed will of Thomas Walker of Yaralla, Sydney. When Walker made his will in 1873 he assumed that his only child, Eadith, then aged twelve, would eventually marry and bear children. He therefore divided the residue of his large estate in two parts, leaving the second part to his next of kin after his daughter’s death. And so when the philanthropic Dame Eadith Walker died in 1937, unmarried and childless, it opened up immense possibilities for a large number of relatives. Thomas Walker’s brother Archibald and sister Joanna had never married and so nephews and nieces were as non-existent as grandchildren. The case dragged on for months before the Master-in-Equity in the Sydney Court. According to George in June 1938 ‘the total [number of claimants] now lodged is upwards of 400 & the case is expected to last 3 months’.

George was acting on behalf of the nine Norwegian and eleven English and Australian Archer claimants, all first cousins once removed from Thomas Walker. They believed they had a reasonable chance of success
and so each contributed to court costs. A sensation occurred when proof
could not be produced on Edward Walker's legitimate birth. This was the
man who had been David Archer's mentor and business partner, the man
whose religious influence ensured two generations of Separatists among
Archers in Norway and England.

A large number of Edward Walker's descendants were confronted at the
last moment by 'this knockout blow'. George doubted it would affect their
chances as 'they were first cousins twice removed' and so would be 'knocked
out, but still a nasty position for them'. George was wrong. The Master-
in-Equity's ruling included Edward's descendants among the 370 claim­
ants eligible as fifth degree kin.²⁰ It seems that the Archers' claim was in
fact 'knocked out' because it was through the maternal line — Julia Archer,
née Walker. Thomas Walker had died in 1886, but by the time of Dame
Eadith's death in 1937 the sum bequeathed had grown to 400,000 pounds,
the equivalent in the late 1990s of more than 20 million dollars.

The children of J.T. (Jamie) Walker and those of William Henry Walker
(who had gained colonial experience at Gracemere in the 1860s) were
among the nineteen Australian legatees. While the Archers missed out on
the money, Jim's research into their maternal ancestry disproved family
lore that they were descended from John Knox. This 'seemed to be
figments of fertile imagination', he told Alister, 'I think there can be no
doubt that the family emerges from a tan-pit. I expect David Walker
(b.1625), Archibald's father, was also a cordwainer, and he is the remotest
[Walker] ancestor we know of'.²¹

More than two decades later in 1962 Alister told 'Doodie' (Alison) that
his latest correspondent was Archie Walker from Victoria, 'a very keen
Walker genealogist. His great grandfather went into partnership with your
great grandfather David to take stock up to the Moreton Bay settlement
in 1840'. He added that Archie Walker was a Church of England
synodsman and lay reader 'taking after his forebear who was a C of E
clergyman, fell out with the bishop, left them and started our forebears on
the Separatist front'.²² This was yet another instance where the threads run
out by one generation were rewound by those who came later.

After the Second World War it was Aunt Cecelia who took up the role
of beating Australian historians about the ears for their mis-statements or
literary style. First it was ES. Cumbrae Stewart of Brisbane: 'Anyone who
aspired to be — as Cumbrae Stewart did — an authority on historical matters should not have written that sentence beginning "As far as I know etc.". But her hardest blows descended upon the head of a rising Sydney historian whose biography of Lachlan Macquarie was published in 1947:

... Now to say something about M.H. Ellis on R.J. [Richard Jones]. There is always someone to debunk a prominent character ... and Ludwig Leichhardt has not been spared. My contention is that if R.J. was so "nasty" how was it that a man like Sir Maurice O'Connell allowed his son to marry one of R.J.'s daughters — & again your own grandfather R.R. Mac must have known all that was happening & would he deliberately have allied himself with a man of unsavoury reputation. Further, Nehemiah Bartley who I think must have known my grandfather states in his book "Australian Pioneers" p. 12 "Two of the most prominent men in Sydney in 1832 were Richard Jones & James Laidley — men of sound standing — well liked and given to hospitality".24

The merchant firm, Jones and Riley, established in Sydney in 1815 had provoked Governor Macquarie’s ire because of its monopoly and high import charges. Ellis believed Macquarie’s words — ‘this sordid and Rapacious House’.25 Cecelia Bancroft depicted her grandfather Richard Jones as a prominent and highly respected citizen, first in Sydney and then Brisbane. A very young Tom Archer had almost fallen in love with Louisa Jones who soon afterwards married Robert Ramsay MacKenzie and eventually became the mother of Louie and Minnie, Archer wives. Louisa Jones’ sister, Mary Australia Jones, married William Bligh O’Connell, Sir Maurice’s son, while another sister, Frances Sophie, married an Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Thomas Jones, first Rector of Rockhampton. Cecelia Bancroft was their daughter. While her attitude to recorded Australian history might have been somewhat biased, she certainly had some claim to be knowledgeable on oral history. With such a galaxy of ‘founding fathers’, it is not surprising that she and Alister (almost 20 years younger) argued so furiously about Australian history. He was obliged to remind her occasionally that Richard Jones might have been her grandfather, but he was also Alister’s own great-grandfather. She in turn claimed privilege in her ‘sparring friendship’ with Alister, having known him as a swaddled infant in Norway.

‘Interest in the old days seems to be growing here now, but unfortunately a lot of history is taken from anecdotes in the papers and is quite
unreliable’, Alister wrote in 1948. As a member of the Royal Geographical Society of Australia, Queensland Branch, he was incensed by the unveiling of a plaque in Rockhampton Town Hall in 1947 identifying Matthew Flinders as the discoverer of Keppel Bay. He complained to the Society secretary that the plaque would always be an eyesore to him because the truth was that ‘Cook saw [Keppel Bay] and named it and Flinders did a detailed survey’. He felt that as a scientific society they had a responsibility in this regard. Unknown to him the Society itself was not without fault in accepting the disputed inscription. This became the catalyst in the founding of Rockhampton and District Historical Society in the following year. Members elected Alister Archer as their first patron.

Alister’s much earlier confession that he had ‘caught the pioneer bug’ encompassed a broad canvas, for he was extremely knowledgeable on Australian history. The universities were slow to recognise this as a legitimate subject, but a growing number of writers in the post-war period such as M.H. Ellis, Marjorie Barnard and A.H. Chisholm were producing popular biography and history. Alister not only read these, but also gave orders to antiquarian booksellers for ‘old stuff... Journals of Queensland explorers and other books dealing with early Queensland days. I have Leichhardt’s Journal and quite a number of books dealing with the subject’, he told Jim. But on that of centennial events connected with his uncles’ exploration of Central Queensland he was keeping very quiet in 1950. Someone had accused the secretary of the Historical Society of ‘thinking of nothing but the Archers!’

Just a year before Gracemere’s 1953 centenary, Alister told his Norwegian cousin Lullul that it would be a very quiet affair as both ‘U.Jack and C. George will both be too old to come up and most of the younger generation are too occupied with the present and the old uncles appear to them as very distant characters’. As the chosen day drew near Alister thanked Archie for his donation of 50 pounds and wished there were ‘some more generous blokes about’. The Australian family had increased so greatly he thought this might be the last chance to come together:

All the old people at home are just about blind — and nearly dead — but they will be thrilled to know we have honoured the memory of the Uncles. I still keep in touch with Jim in England and Colin’s daughters at home. All three are now blind; Dooie — Tom’s daughter — was 93 the other day — also blind.
The Past Revisited

The only lively one is George [Sydney] who was 87 the other day — still drives his car and plays bowls. I’m afraid we won’t see U.Jack; he had a turn the other day ... the Doctor told them to be prepared for him to go off in his sleep any time — which I hope he will ... 28

‘U.Jack’ outlived all his siblings, David’s children. He was the only one to reach his nineties. George, Tom’s son, not only retained his driver’s licence at age 87, but also his sense of humour. He told Alister ‘if anyone says Centeenary please hit him over the head with a Nulla-Nulla’. 29 Disputes on the pronunciation of the hundred year celebration had begun at the time of Melbourne’s centenary in 1936.

Alister was saddened by English Jim’s death on 4 March 1953. He had planned to cable a greeting from Gracemere on 7 May. ‘We took a great liking to him’, he told Lullul with whom Jim had spent many Norwegian holidays, ‘he was a great gentleman in every sense of the word’. 30 With the departure from earthly life of the old ones, Alister was keen to get the young ones interested even though he admitted his own were ‘sick to death of hearing me spouting history’. In the event all the ‘young shoots’ rose to the occasion. The wider community was also becoming aware of the significance of this one family. Sydney (‘Skip’) Porteous, married to Jack Archer’s daughter Betty, earned Alister’s thanks for his article in the Sydney Bulletin, despite ‘a terrible bloomer’ on Leichhardt accompanying Charles to the Peak Downs in 1854 — six years after his mysterious disappearance. The Women’s Weekly also showed interest by visiting Grace- mere, prompting Alister to tease Joan about the need to buy a Dior frock. 31

Glorious autumn weather prevailed for the great week. Despite both homesteads at Gracemere doing their hospitable best, in the tradition of Archers since 1855, many family members were obliged to stay at the Criterion Hotel — established as the Bush Inn two years after Gracemere. When they all gathered at the old homestead the slab walls echoed to the sound of ‘a thousand tongues’. But it was Alison, wife of David Archer of Strathdarr, Longreach, who recorded the events of the week in her Journal. It is worth quoting in detail:

‘... Dave, Claire and I boarded the old bone-shaking train at Longreach on Monday 4 May, Dave as always like the proverbial sand-boy as soon as he sets foot in the train. Arriving at Rockhampton on Tuesday ... we stayed at the old Criterion. Next day we shopper etc. in the morning and
went out to Gracemere in the afternoon where preparations for the big day were in full swing. Poor Joan had had much to cause her anxiety as Alister had succumbed to the strain of the preparations, then Jim had burnt his leg badly doing some burning off of rubbish following a great and glorious tidy-up — and how wonderfully spick and span the old place looked, not a fallen leaf or weed to be seen and fresh paint everywhere and all the house polished and pinked out most effectively ...

'We were all bidden to a picnic to be celebrated on the spot where the brothers had taken their bearings ... The local branch of the N.Z. Loan Co. had put a car at David's disposal and Merlin, Claire, Rob, Ian (Jack and Ruth's son) and I set out for Gracemere, the gathering point to start for the picnic, picking up en route, as one always does on such expeditions, the "tarts" and soft drinks. Colin and Cedric went ahead in a ton truck with all the paraphernalia and about 30 other people in various cars travelled in a stream along a beautiful bitumen road ... Before ascending the range where the bearings were taken and which is the northern part of the range, we came to a low lying place where we left the cars and traversed a boggy place where water was lying. With a great deal of difficulty the truck with the picnic finally got through. Accompanying us were newspaper photographers and various friends and a few people scientifically interested [Rockhampton and District Historical Society]. The children thoroughly enjoyed themselves and soon came time to return to Gracemere ... for the Family Dinner Party ...

'Joan, Doris and Mary had arranged a most wonderful setting and the young men of the family and a few of the guests had erected a shelter [in the garden] that was most attractive. A broken wall of bamboos with the roof heavily thatched with palm fronds and lights shining along underneath ... all manner of lovely trailing plants had been arranged with wonderful effect, a long table was laid and Joan had engaged a Chinese caterer to cook and serve the dinner which was done most expertly and we all dined of the very best, turkey etc. and Walter Reid's best champagne — as Alister said, it had a French name ... The speeches were not many but were all very good and some were amusing. Aunt Cecelia Bancroft was at Alister's left hand, the Bishop's wife being on his right ... To Merlin was entrusted "The Visitors" and Cedric also made a speech. They were the only young ones [to speak] and acquitted themselves very well ...
Aunt Jessie, Uncle Ted's widow, and Aunt Cecelia were the oldest ones there and very gracious and charming they were … III  

On the following morning bouquets of garden flowers were made from those planted long ago by 'Grannie' — Daisy Archer — then taken to the family graveyard and placed beside the granite boulder bearing her name. She had died in the previous year. While the 'old uncles' had laid out the garden and planted trees and shrubs, as a mirror-image of Tolderodden's, it was 'Grannie' who made it so beautiful with bright flowering bougainvillaeas and other colourful perennials. Joan had continued this labour of love when Gracemere garden came into private hands four years earlier. Tables were laid out under the huge jacaranda tree and in the afternoon 'all the old people were there'. While the picnic and dinner were essentially Archer events, the garden party provided an opportunity for leaders and dignitaries in the wider community to honour Rockhampton's founding family.  

The quiet celebration which Alister had envisaged was defeated by his success in attracting to Gracemere so many descendants of David, Thomas and James, from infants in arms to octogenarians. When two great-grandsons of the original David Archer, Colin and Merlin, arrived at Rockhampton Airport on the western mail plane for the festivities, their mother, Alison, commented:  

... it couldn't help striking us forcibly, how short a space 100 years really is, for so much to happen. And these Archer brothers of the 1950s, looking perfectly fresh, having come from Longreach in a few hours and thinking back to those other Archer brothers, William and Charles, a hundred years ago — how impossible it would have been for them to visualise this 6th May ...  

Ah, not so. Those 'other Archer brothers' had actually envisaged aerial flight as early as 1843 when Tom wrote home to Norway: 'We were talking tonight about the aerial machines of which the papers are full, which will enable us to pay you a visit and spend Christmas with you and return in the course of a month — and all for 20 or 30 pounds'. While this dream did not become reality in time to benefit the first two generations, Charles' vision of an antipodean Tolderodden beside the lagoon was no pipe-dream. 'The locality pitched upon for a head station would be a beautiful place in any country', he had told his father in 1853, 'but here, where fine scenery hardly exists, it appears a perfect paradise to my partial eyes ...' Those who came a century later to revisit the past were inclined to agree.
Conclusion

Archer letters and personal journals have ‘captured alive’ historic events as they affected individuals as well as nations in both hemispheres, from the Napoleonic Wars to the Second World War, from land exploration in Australia to great naval architecture in Norway. Their letters have shown that the first generation of Archer migrants each had a role to play in these or other developments in Australia or Europe: David as a very early Australian overlander; Charles and William as the first Europeans in the Fitzroy Valley and the virtual founders of Rockhampton; Captain John Archer whose seamanship was tested in seas as diverse as the Southern and Arctic Oceans and as ‘poor Jack’ lost his life by shipwreck; Archibald as a politician balancing the aims of the Central Separation Movement against those of the Colony of Queensland; Thomas as a young explorer and much later as Queensland’s Agent General in London playing a key role in the Colony’s annexation of New Guinea; Alexander who weathered the storms of Queensland banking and commerce to lose his life in shipwreck; Colin as architect both of Gracemere homestead in Queensland and the polar ship *Fram* in Norway; and the last of the ‘young shoots’, James Archer and Simon Jørgensen whose arrival in 1855 excluded them from the prestigious Roll of Australian Pioneers, 1788–1838, but not too late to become pioneers in the new Colony of Queensland.

With this generation’s cultural mix of Scottish and Scandinavian, symbolised in their singing of ‘Scots Wha’ Hae’ and ‘Gamle Norge’, and their eventual return to Europe, it was left to the sons of David, Thomas and James to become truly Australian and join in the singing of ‘Waltzing Matilda’.
Alister Archer’s burial in 1965 in Gracemere’s private cemetery on a hill overlooking the homestead and mere, an antipodean Gravlunden, provides an apt finale to the Norse–Australian saga which began in 1819 when his grandfather, William, boarded the Jay in Scotland for passage to Scandinavia. His own Norwegian birth and education, his training as a jackeroo in Queensland, his distinguished service in the Australian Light Horse in the First World War, made him a cosmopolitan naturalised Australian. The social and economic circumstances which combined to scatter the previous generation over earth and ocean, had their antithesis in Alister and Joan Archer and their determination ‘to keep the strangers out’ of historic Gracemere — the Australian counterpart of Norwegian Tolderodden.
FURTHER READING

Books, either biographical or with reference to several generations of Archers, are suggested as further reading. Early publications should be available in special archival collections.

Archer, James, *Colin Archer — A Memoir* (Gloucester, J. Archer, 1949)
—. *Cattle Country* (Brisbane, Boolarong, 1988)
—. *Rockhampton — A History of City and District* (St Lucia, Qld., UQ Press, 1981, Reprint, 1995)
—. *Gladstone — City That Waited* (Brisbane, Boolarong, 1988)
Roderick, Colin, *Leichhardt the Dauntless Explorer* (Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1988)
Stanley, Raymond (ed.) *Tourist to the Antipodes — William Archer's Australian Journey, 1876–77* (St Lucia, Qld., UQ Press, 1977)
Webster, E.M. *Whirlwinds in the Plain* (Melbourne, MU Press, 1980)
Endnotes

*Over Earth and Ocean* is based chiefly on Archer Papers, 1819–1965, the bulk of which are held by Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. References to letters in the text are identified by first name only, except when addressed to other than an Archer. Where first names are repeated, William Archer the father is distinguished from William (Willie) the son in this manner: William Snr. The third generation are identified by the father’s name in brackets, e.g. Willie (Tom), Willie (John), Charlie (David).

Preface
2. Charles to William Snr., 28 April 1845.
3. Thomas to Catherine (Kate) Jørgensen, 14 July 1841.

PART I Norway: A Chequered Dream 1819–1861

1 Unlucky Star
8. William Archer, *op. cit.*.
10. Alexander Smith to David Archer, n.d. c. 1844.
11. Charles Archer to Grandmother Walker, 12 Sep. 1825
17. *ibid.*
18. *ibid.*
19. David Archer to Kate Jørgensen, 24 July 1837.
26. David to Julia Snr., 5 May 1844.
27. David to Julia Snr., 29 Dec. 1838.

2 Magnetic Pole
5. Thomas to William Snr., 7 March 1842.
7. Thomas to Julia Snr., 24 May 1842.
8. *ibid.*, 22 March 1844.
9. Charles to Kate Jørgensen, 29 Dec. 1841.
10. Thomas to William Snr., 7 March 1842.
12. *ibid.*
14. Willie to Julia Snr., 4 May 1844.
16. *ibid.*
21. Willie to Kate Jørgensen, 25 July 1852.
3 ‘You Petticoats’ 1830s–1850s
3. Charles to Kate Jørgensen, 21 Oct. 1845.
7. Charles to Kate Jørgensen, 11 April 1847.
10. Charles to Kate Jørgensen 11 April 1847.
12. Willie to Kate Jørgensen, 25 July 1852.
14. Edward Walker to David Archer, 1 May 1850.

PART II Australia: A Flourishing Colony of Archers 1834–1861

4 Learning the Ropes: Jack
2. ibid. 30 April 1833.
3. ibid., 27 Feb. 1833.
4. ibid.
5. ibid.
6. ibid. 23 March 1834.
7. ibid., 25 Nov. 1836.
8. ibid.
9. ibid., 21 Feb., 1838.
10. ibid., 18 March 1838.
11. ibid., 7 March 1839.
12. ibid.
13. ibid, 26 Oct. 1839.
14. ibid. 10 Feb., 1840.

5 The Young Colonials: David, Tom, Willie
1. David to Kate Jørgensen, 16 May 1835.
3. ibid.
8. Thomas to William Snr., 8 Dec. 1838.
11. *ibid.*

6 The Great Trek: David, Tom, Jack
1. David to Julia Snr., 1 May 1840.
2. Thomas to William Snr., 9 June 1840.
3. Thomas to Julia Snr., 24 Nov. 1840.
8. *ibid.*
12. *ibid.* p. 44.
15. Thomas to Willie, 2 July 1841.

7 Laird of Durundur: David
1. John to Kate Jørgensen, 2 Jan. 1842.
3. Thomas to William Snr., 8 Sep. 1843.
4. Charles to Kate Jørgensen, 31 July 1843.
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7. Edward Walker to David Archer, 12 July 1843.
11. Edward Walker to David Archer, April 1849.
14. David Archer to Julia Snr., 5 May 1844.
15. Willie to Julia Snr., 4 May 1844.
17. Edward Walker to David Archer, 14 May 1845.
22. Thomas to Julia Snr., 16 March 1847.
23. Edward Archer to David Archer, May 1849.
24. Edward Archer to David Archer, 24 Jan. 1850.
   (Melbourne, MUP, Reprint, 1983)
32. Edward Walker to David Archer, 19 Feb. 1852.
34. Willie to Kate Jørgensen, 25 July 1852.

8 Old and New Australians
1. Thomas to Julia Snr., 10 April 1842.
2. Charles to William Snr., 29 April 1845.
4. Charles to William Snr., 29 April 1845.
5. *ibid.*
7. Thomas to William Snr., 22 March 1846.
8. Thomas to David, 12 Nov. 1846.
9. Ludwig Leichhardt to David Archer, 14 May 1846.
10. Ludwig Leichhardt to David Archer, 19 Nov. 1846.
11. Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands, Correspondence, QSA., 11 / 33.

9 Ludwig Leichhardt and Tom the Great Explorer
1. Thomas to William Snr., 10 Sep. 1843.
4. Willie to David, 16 April 1846.
5. Thomas to William Snr., 13 July 1845.
6. ibid.
10. ibid.
11. Ludwig Leichhardt to David Archer, 30 Sep. 1847.
16. ibid.
17. Recollections, p. 159.
18. Ludwig Leichhardt to David Archer, 20 Sep. 1847.

10 The Squattocracy
1. Thomas to Julia Snr., 12 June 1846.
4. Thomas to Julia Snr., 10 April 1842.
5. Thomas to Julia Snr., 8 March 1842.
6. ibid.
8. Arthur Laurie, Davis, James ('Duramboi'). in ADB. op. cit.
9. Thomas to Kate Jørgensen, 14 July 1845.
13. ibid.
15. Thomas to William Snr., 22 Aug. 1848.
16. ibid.
17. Thomas to Mary, 19 Feb. 1848.
18. Thomas to Julia Snr., 2 Dec. 1848.

11 Californian Interlude: Tom
5. Charles to Willie, 24 March 1850.
7. *Recollections*, p. 225
12. Thomas to Julia Snr., 11 Aug. 1854.

12 Visual Reality: Charles the Artist
1. Charles to William Snr., 10 June 1835.
3. Charles to Kate Jørgensen, 29 Dec. 1841.
4. Charles to Kate Jørgensen, 31 July 1843.
6. Thomas to Kate Jørgensen, 2 Aug. 1844.
7. Charles to Kate Jørgensen, 2 Jan. 1846.
13. 'Journal', 3 June 1848.
16. Charles to Julia Snr., 5 Nov. 1851.

13 William the Second
2. Willie to William Snr., 6 June 1845.
5. Willie to Julia Snr., 20 Feb. 1847.
8. Willie to David, 20 Feb. 1844.
10. Willie to David, 23 May 1845.
15. ibid.
16. Willie to Kate Jørgensen, 25 July 1852.

14 Poor Jack
2. Roberts, op. cit. p. 140.
3. Charles to Kate Jørgensen, 28 April 1845.
5. Willie to William Snr., 14 May 1846.
8. John to Kate Jørgensen, 4 Nov. 1848.
12. ibid., 21 July 1851.
13. ibid. 23 Sep. 1851.
15. ibid. pp. 165, 149, 185.
17. ibid.
19. ibid.
22. ibid., Quoted p. 259.
23. ibid. p. 268.

15 The Great Pioneers of the North: Charles, William, Colin
1. Colin to David, 12 March 1853.
4. Willie to David, 9 April 1854.
5. Colin to David, 13 May 1853.
7. *ibid.* 6 May 1853.
9. *ibid.*
11. Charles Archer to Colonial Secretary, 1 Sep. 1853.
15. Thomas to David, 11 Aug. 1854.
20. *ibid.*
21. *ibid.*
23. Willie to David, 4 Oct. 1856.

16 Young Shoots From an Old Tree: Colin, James, Simon

1. James to Julia Snr., 29 June 1855.
2. *ibid.*
7. Simon Jørgensen to Kate Jørgensen, 1 March 1856.
10. *ibid.*
11. Willie to David, 18 July 1856.
12. David to Willie, 10 Sept. 1856.
15. James to Jane Ann, 27 May 1858.
19. Archer Papers, Invoices. ML.
21. ibid. 1 April 1859.
22. McDonald, Rockhampton, p. 188.
23. NSW Votes & Proceedings, 1856; 1858.
26. Annie Boyce to 'Mootie', 29 May 1861.
27. ibid. n.d. 1861.

PART III Settling Down 1861–1905

17 Planting Queensland Roots

2. John to Kate Jorgensen, 2 Jan. 1842.
4. Archie to Willie, 10 Jan. 1846.
5. Willie to Charles, 27 June 1846.
6. Willie to Julia Snr., 20 Feb, 1847.
11. Sandy to Archie, 7 April 1864.
17. David to Willie, 26 March 1866.
19. David to Archie, 24 May 1867.
26. ibid.
27. H.W. Risien to Archie Archer, 23 July 1865.
33. H.W. Risien to Willie Archer, 5 June 1871.
37. Thomas to James, 24 Nov. 1871.
38. David to Willie, 18 March 1870.

18 *Children’s Voices: Tom and Grace*
1. Willie Archer’s (John’s son) Diary, 7 June 1873.
2. David to (brother) Willie, 30 April 1875.
3. Risien’s Diary, 28 Dec. 1874.
4. Raymond Stanley (ed.), *Tourist to the Antipodes* (St Lucia, Qld., University of Press, 1977.) p. 66. William Archer’s (Tom’s son) account of his visit to Australia in 1877.
5. Thomas to David, 4 Nov. 1875.
10. Jamie to Sandy, 2 March 1878.
11. Sandy to David, 21 Nov. 1879.

19 *At the Crossroads*
1. James to Willie, 3 July 1871.
2. *ibid.*
7. David to Colin, 14 April 1882.
10. Archibald Archer (Sir), Typescript, 1976.

20 **Quill Driving in Queensland: Sandy and Minnie**
2. Sandy to Julia Snr., 19 Oct. 1852.
5. Willie to Thomas, 1 July 1855.
7. Sandy to David, 9 Sep. 1863.
8. Sandy to Archie, 7 April 1864.
9. *ibid.*
10. Archie Archer to Arthur Palmer, 4 July 1868.
17. Sandy to Julia Snr., 3 June 1878.
19. Sandy to (nephew) Robert, 17 April 1885.
22. Sandy Archer to James Walker, 10 June 1887.
25. Minnie to Jane Ann, 3 Feb. 1890.
27. David to Jane Ann, 5 March 1890.
29. *ibid.*

21 **A Noble Band of Brothers: Archie**

22 **Benedicts in Britain: David and Tom**
1. David to Willie, 23 April 1854.
2. Edward Walker to David Archer, May 1849.
3. David to Willie, 10 Sep. 1856.
7. David to Willie, 24 July 1861
9. David to Willie, 16 April 1862.
10. David to Willie, 26 Sep. 1864.
17. David to Willie, 31 Dec. 1869
23. James Archer (Tom) to James Walker, 2 May 1882.
26. *ibid.*
31. David to Colin, 21 Nov. 1887.
32. Grace Archer to James Walker, 15 March 1889.
33. *ibid.*
34. Willie Archer Snr. to James Walker, 21 Dec. 1890.
35. Nellie Bell to James Walker, 12 Nov. 1891.
36. Willie (John) to Robert, 19 April 1892.
37. Thomas Archer to James Walker, 30 March 1892.
38. *ibid.*
40. David to Robert, 30 March 1887.
43. David to Robert, 10 June 1897.
44. Susan to Robert, 9 Jan. 1899,
45. David to Colin, 1 Jan. 1884.
46. David to Robert, 10 Feb. 1896.
47. David to Robert, 13 Aug. 1897.
49. David to Robert, 21 May 1897.

23 Reaching the Golden Shore
1. Susan to (grand-daughter) Joan, 29 May 1894.
2. David to Joan, 28 Sep. 1894.
3. R.L. Stevenson to William Archer (Tom), 20 June 1892.
5. William Archer to (son) Tom, 10 Sep. 1901.
6. Sissie Archer to Cecelia Jones, 11 July 1895.
7. ibid.
8. James Archer (Tom) to James Walker, 29 June 1896.
13. William David (son of David) to Robert, 1 Nov. 1900.
18. Kate Walker to James Walker, 30 May 1904.
22. George Bernard Shaw to William Archer, 7 June 1906.

24 Recollections
2. William Archer to George Bernard Shaw, 23 June 1923.
5. Dr Simon Archer to Lorna McDonald, 1 Dec. 1993.
7. Dr Simon Archer, op. cit.
10. Alister (James) to Robert (David), 16 March 1945.

PART IV Norwegian Anchorage 1861–1939

25 The New Order
2. Julla Jørgensen to Susan Archer, 28 April 1862.
4. David to Willie, 16 April 1862.
5. David to Willie, 13 March 1863.
9. Jane Ann to James, 6 April 1864.
10. ibid.
15. David to James, 23 Aug. 1867.
16. ibid.
17. James Archer to Karen Sofie Wiborg, 4 Sep. 1867.
22. David to Kate, 24 July 1837.

26 Mary Hoists Her Flag
1. David to Willie, 30 Nov. 1870.
4. Sandy to Colin, 1 July 1880.
7. David to Archer Brothers., 19 Sep. 1889.
8. Birgitte Possing to Lorna McDonald, 19 May 1996.
12. ibid.
27 Norwegians Born and Bred
2. Sandy to Willie, 7 Oct. 1868.
3. David to Willie, 22 April 1869.
7. Susan to (son) Jack, 10 March 1885.
8. Sandy to Robert, 17 April 1885.
10. James to David, 8 Sep. 1897.
18. James to Erling & Alister, 10 July 1903.

28 Beginnings, Middles and Endings
2. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 19 Nov. 1902.
3. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 19 Nov. 1902.
4. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 25 March 1903.
5. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 27 Dec. 1903.
7. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 19 Nov. 1902.
8. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 25 March 1903.
9. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 27 April 1903.
11. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 16 June 1903.
12. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 3 May 1903.
14. Mary Archer (Colin), Diary, 1901–02.
19. Willie (John) to Robert, 5 March 1907.
20. Willie (John) to Robert, 22 May 1908.
33. *ibid.*
34. Willie (John) to Robert, 15 Oct. 1908.
35. George Archer to (aunt) Jane Ann, 28 May 1912.
37. Eleanor Berkeley to Anna Berkeley, 19 Nov. 1902.
42. Robert to W. David, 10 Dec. 1914.
43. Alister to (mother) Louie, 29 June 1915.
44. Alister to (father) James, 6 July 1915.
46. Alister to Louie, 6 June 1916.
47. Alister to James, 20 Aug. 1918.
50. Colin Archer, Personal Diary, 13 Sep 1919.

29 Tolderodden in Retrospect
4. Willie to David, 23 May 1845.
6. Colin to Willie, 7 July 1862.
8. *ibid.*
11. David to Willie, 30 April 1875.
13. Sandy to Julia, 3 June 1878; James Ronald Archer to Lorna McDonald, 24 Nov. 1996
17. Willie (John) to Robert, 4 April 1902.
18. Caption and verse on photograph.
20. Louie to Alister, 27 April 1926.
21. Rolf to Alister, 30 June 1926.
25. Kathleen to Alister, 4 Dec. 1933.
27. Rolf to Alister, 14 Nov. 1933.
29. Mary (Archer) Heggen to Alister, 2 May 1932.
30. Mary Heggen to Alister, 1 Dec. 1938.
31. Rolf to Alister, 1 Nov. 1938.
32. Charles (Tom) to Erling, 21 Jan. 1931.
33. James (Tom) to Alister, 27 June 1939.
35. Mary Archer (George) to Alister, 7 April 1940.
39. Author’s inspection of Tolderodden interior, August 1993; OH, James Ronald Archer.
41. James Ronald Archer to Lorna McDonald, 5 December 1996.
PART V Looking Despondently at the Map of Australia 1890–1965

30 Gracemere 1890–1926: Robert
1. Stubbs family history, Archer Papers.
2. Robert Archer, Diary, 21 Feb. 1881.
13. David to Robert, 1 June 1897.
14. David to Colin, 1 June 1897.
15. Colin to David, 28 July 1897.
17. David to Robert, 9 April 1898.
22. Susan to (son) Robert, 18 April 1900.
24. *ibid.*
25. V. Mackay to Joan Archer, 25 Nov. 1906.
27. Paul Voss to Joan Archer, 4 April 1909.
30. Robert Archer's correspondence, 1911.
33. Willie (John) to Robert, 24 May 1901.
34. John (David) to Robert, 20 July 1902.
35. Archer Brothers Minute Book, December 1907.
38. Archer Brothers Minute Book, 8 Dec. 1913.
40. Robert Archer to Principal, Hawkesbury Agricultural College, 1 July 1914.
41. Robert to Alister, 1 March 1915.
42. Robert Archer to Hon. A. Willingham, 4 June 1917.
44. Robert Archer to Anna Baker, 16 Dec. 1919.
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46. ibid.
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54. Louie to Alister, 18 Feb. 1924.
55. Robert to W. David, 28 July 1926.
56. Robert Archer to Sec. Australian Pioneer Club, 8 Nov. 1924.
57. Robert to W. David, 15 March 1926.
59. 'Robert Stubbs Archer', ADB, op. cit.
60. Robert to Colin, 21 May 1909.
63. ibid.
64. James (Tom) to George (Tom), 21 April 1927.
65. Archer Brothers Minute Book, 1927.

31 Keeping the Strangers Out 1927–1949
1. Charles to William Snr., 29 April 1845.
3. Mary Heggen to Alister, 26 Sep. 1930.
4. Rolf to Alister, 7 Feb. 1929.
5. Cecelia Bancroft to Alister Archer, 1 Sep. 1936.
7. Alister to Archie, 29 June 1934.
10. Alister to W. David, 21 Nov. 1937.
12. Mary (George) to Alister, 3 Sep. 1939.
13. James (Tom) to Alister, 17 July 1940.
15. Archie (Robert) to Alister, 2 March 1942.  
22. Alister to George, 14 March 1946.  
25. Alister Archer to Fred Berney, 22 April 1946.  
27. Alister to George, 18 Nov. 1945.  
31. Alister to Erling, 21 March 1946.  
33. Alister to Archie, 6 June 1948.  
34. Alister to George, 31 Oct. 1948.  
38. Alister to Frank (Tom), 14 March 1950.  

32 For the Sake of the Old Home 1949–1965  
7. Alister to George, 21 Sep. 1951.  
10. Alister to Alison, 21 Nov. 1961.  
13. Illam Archer to Alison Forster, 27 March 1965.  
15. Alister to Lullul, 11 Nov. 1951.
33 The Past Revisited

2. George to Alister, 19 May 1931.
3. Harry Chauvel to Alister Archer, 6 July 1938.
5. James to Alister, 27 Nov. 1930.
6. Alister Archer to 'Mr Wells', 28 Feb. 1948.
8. James to Alister, 6 July 1934.
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11. ibid.
15. James to Alister, 6 July 1938.
18. George to Alister, 29 Sep. 1938.
19. George to Alister, 2 June 1938.
20. The Sun, 24 March 1939.
27. Alister to Lullul, 15 April 1952.
31. ibid.
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35. Thomas to William Snr., 10 Sep. 1843.
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This is the story of nine adventurous brothers sent out from Norway to make their life on the Australian frontier in the mid 1800s. They became intrepid pioneers, sailors, explorers and gold-diggers, leaving behind them a Europe without promise. Their Scottish parents and all four sisters remained at their home “Tolderodden” in their adopted land of Norway.

In colonial Australia the brothers trekked overland before establishing their pastoral dynasty at “Gracemere” near Rockhampton, Central Queensland.

It is a saga packed with incident. Two brothers died in shipwrecks; one became a Norwegian naval architect; one fought Indians in America; and another is credited with inventing the squatter’s chair. They befriended doomed explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, and took evolutionist Charles Darwin on a kangaroo hunt.

Spanning two centuries, the story of the Archer brothers and their family back home in Europe gives an unrivalled, personalised account of frontier life in northern Australia.