EARLY PIONEERS OF THE WIDE BAY AND BURNETT.

(By FIRMIN McKINNON).

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The first white men to visit the Mary River district were Andrew Petrie, of Brisbane, Wrottesley, an English aristocrat, Henry Stuart Russell, of Cecil Plains, Joliffe who had been a “middie” in the Royal Navy and five convicts with two aborigines. They made a trip to the district in May, of 1842. That trip (well told in “Tom Petrie’s Reminiscences”) becomes a landmark for us because Joliffe was a superintendent for John Eales, and it is with John Eales that much of our present story is concerned.

John Eales, just 90 years ago, was the first pastoralist on the Mary River. Who was he? That is a problem for some of the research students of the Historical Society of Queensland. Much of the information that I can give you has been patiently dug by James Lennon out of that “Kensall Green of Greatness” called “the Files.”

What little we know of Eales is scant and scrappy, and one has to be careful in trying to sift the probable from the improbable. He is confused very often with his son, the Hon. John Eales, who was appointed to the Legislative Council of New South Wales in 1880 and died in April 1894.

In a book called “Australian Men of Mark” we are told that John Eales came to Queensland in the year 1839 and formed a station on the Mary River. That can be dismissed at once as inaccurate. Patrick Leslie did not reach the Downs until 1840, and when Joliffe crossed the Downs with Eales’ sheep he found it all parcelled out, and like David McConnel and the Archers, he had to push on beyond the ranges. The probability is that John Eales himself never saw Queensland, and that Joliffe reached the Wide Bay with Eales’s sheep about the year 1842.

What Tradition Says.

Tradition says—and there may be a good deal of truth in it—that, as a young man in England, Eales applied to Lord Melbourne (afterwards Prime Minis-
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ter of England) asking him for a letter to assist him in taking up land in Australia. It is also suggested that Lord Melbourne tore a leaf from his notebook and wrote on it a few lines asking the Governor of New South Wales to grant him some land. Whether that is so or not we do not know. We do know, however, that he came to Australia, and took up land on the Hunter River, near Morpeth, calling it Duckenfield, and that he lived there for the rest of his life, dying there in April, 1871.

Tradition says that when wheat was fetching a shilling a bushel during a glut he built a number of iron silos on Duckenfield and filled them with wheat which, a little later, he sold for 10/- a bushel. But that is tradition; it may be true; it may be false. Probably, at most, it is a story based on a substratum of fact.

Joliffe's Journeyings.

What we do know is that Joliffe returned to Eales with a satisfactory account of the new country, and was at once sent off with 20,000 sheep and several drays to take up the land and settle it. Joliffe crossed the Downs, came down over the Range, nursed his sheep for a time on the Upper Brisbane, smashed his way over the Brisbane Range under the guidance of Duramboi, and established his headstation at Tiaro with outstations at Gigoomgan and Owanyilla where a police camp was subsequently established by Bligh and Walker.

How Joliffe crossed the Brisbane Range with his drays is a mystery. But in those days where there was a will there was a way. Two years before that the Leslies and the Hodgsons, with their bullock drays, had smashed their way across the Main Range, from ledge to ledge, opening up a road for the first time between Ipswich and the Downs. Joliffe did the same thing when crossing to Wide Bay. A record of that trip would be a thrilling story.

In the Mitchell Library in Sydney there is a valuable journal in which Dr. Stephen Simpson, Land Commissioner of Moreton Bay, describes a journey that he made in March 1843 from Ipswich to Eales's station on the Mary River. Simpson and his party appear to have followed Joliffe's route, and had an exciting experience. Some years ago Mr. Arthur
McConnel (now living at Clayfield) told me that many years after Simpson had crossed the range he was able to track his route by the old tree stumps, sawn off a foot from the ground, and by broken trees against which the waggons had crashed.

Dogged by Misfortune.

Joliffe reached Tiaro and set off by boat for Brisbane for rations. Stuart Russell tells us that he was driven out to sea by a heavy wind, was compelled to kill and eat his dog, and reached Brisbane in a pitiable condition. Russell also tells us:—

"Eales's sheep were in a terrible mess; the country was most unsuitable; the outstations too far away; the blacks inveterate; two shepherds had already lost their lives; and, but for their isolation, it is extremely unlikely that a single man would have remained with the stock, or stood by the station."

That is precisely what happened. Joliffe, after his awful experiences, resigned his management, passing the job to a Mr. Last. Neither Joliffe nor Last appear to have known very much about sheep or sheep country, and 1842 and 1843 were years of sheep diseases. Worse still, they knew nothing about the Mary River blacks who were particularly treacherous. Shepherds and hut keepers were murdered, and flocks of sheep were driven into the scrub and killed. The blacks held a corroboree and a wild Saturnalia followed. Last and the remnant of his men escaped; the stations were abandoned; and the first phase of settlement on the Mary River had ended—in loss and in tragedy. That was in 1843—just 90 years ago.

That date, that splendid failure, provides us with a convenient landmark from which to survey our position. The world lived by candlelight or rushlight in those faraway days; Moreton Bay, still sixteen years away from Separation, was an unconsidered outstation of New South Wales. At that time the Downs had been parcelled out among a score of courageous men. David McConnel had blazed the trees around Cressbrook; Frederick and Francis Bigge had settled down at Mount Brisbane; Richard Jones of Helidon was at Barambah; the Balfours were at Colinton; the MacKenzies were at Kilcoy; the Archers had settled, at least temporarily, at Dur-
undur (afterwards to become the property of David and John McConnel); and Henry Stuart Russell, the first pastoralist on the Burnett, was building a home at Burrandowan, 80 miles from the site of the future town of Gayndah.

Up the Brisbane Range.

Two years earlier Joliffe, by some miracle, had dragged his drays up the Brisbane Range. Last, and the remnant of his men from Tiaro, were able to escape by an easier route because, a few months before the Tiaro disaster, David Archer and Evan MacKenzie had cut a track from Durundur to Brisbane. Just as the long night was ending, just as the daylight of progress was slowly breaking through, John Eales finished his pastoral experiment with Queensland, a disillusioned man, beaten by the blacks and by conditions that his sheepmen did not understand.

But if Eales's experiment had ended in disaster, a greater experiment was at the dawning. While the Eales's experiment was taking place the first vessel that ever entered the Mary River—the “Edward”—was sent there with provisions, and to take away wool. Dr. Simpson in his journal tells us of a visit that he made to the vessel as it lay in Tinana Creek, when he made his journey to Tiaro in 1843. Still four years were to elapse before another and a successful attempt was made to settle the district and to found the town of Maryborough.

Meanwhile Henry Stuart Russell, of Cecil Plains, had been exploring and seeking land. He tells us in his “Genesis of Queensland” (345) that he had heard from Duramboi of fine country immediately to the north of Eales's station. He went to Eales's station, but disliked the country, and then undertook a formidable journey in search of land. After traversing broken and rugged country, they came upon a stream, the Boyne, which he followed until he came to beautiful flat country. There he established his Burrandowan station.

New Rush for Land.

As soon as the news became known that there was better country further out, there was a rush for land. Richard Jones, in 1843, crossed from Helidon
to Barambah, about 70 miles from Gayndah, and a few months later they extended their operations to Mondure. William Humphreys, the pioneer of Mundoolan on the Albert, went to Wetheron in 1845 (this station subsequently passed to the Hon. B. B. Moreton, who became Lord Ducie); the Lawless Brothers, who had pioneered the Logan district, moved out a little later to Boubyjan about 40 miles from the present site of Gayndah. Edward Hawkins, who subsequently went with Thomas Archer to the Californian gold rush, and was drowned in that country, took up Boonara in 1846; in the same year Haly and Jackson secured Taabinga; J. D. McTaggart built his home at Kilkivan; and John Kinchela secured Hawkwood which afterwards passed into the hands of the De Burgh Persse family.

The Archer Brothers, pioneers at Durundur, were dissatisfied with that country for sheep breeding, so they went on to Eidsvold, calling that property after the name of the village in Norway where the first Parliament in 1815 passed the Norwegian Constitution. David Archer took the lower part of the property which was called Coonambula. In the following year W. H. Walsh went to Degilbo, Forster and Blaxland took up Gin Gin, Blaxland being killed shortly afterwards by blacks. Trevethan secured Rawbelle and he, too, was killed by blacks; and J. B. Reid took up Ideraway on which the present town of Gayndah stands.

Some of these stations were constantly changing hands. Some of the fine old warriors could not stand the financial strain and crashed; some were merely restless men, ever ready to move elsewhere.

HOLDINGS IN THE FORTIES.

From a list of station properties in "The Maryborough Almanac and Wide Bay and Burnett Business Directory," published by W. S. Roberts in 1875, it would appear that, in addition to those already mentioned, Ban Ban was taken up in 1846 by the Herberts; Boondooma by the Lawson Brothers; and Brovinia by Percival Stephen—all in 1846. In 1848 George Mocatta settled on Mount Debatable and H. P. Bouverie on Mundubbera. Morodian was taken up by the Scott Brothers, one of whom (Alexander) died at Tarong in February, 1850. Cooranga, 20
miles from Gayndah, was occupied by the Strathdee Brothers in 1848; Dykehead (on the Auburn) by Robert Fleming in 1846 and Redbank by John Ross in 1849. Yenda was taken up by Robert Wilkins in 1848 and Wigton (with Araubanga) was occupied by George Mocatta and Pigott also in 1849.

Other famous properties could be mentioned, such as Teebah which was taken up by H. C. Corfield, and Staunton Harcourt which was taken up by W. H. Walsh (afterwards transferred to Corfield) but those would bring us into the 'fifties.

Of those original settlers the only family, I believe, that retains even part of the old property is the Lawless family of Boubyjan. Clement and Paul Lawless came from Ireland; they settled first on the Liverpool Plains in New South Wales; then they pioneered Nindooimbah on the Logan River; and, twelve years before Queensland became a separate colony, they trekked across to the new country of Wide Bay. Apparently they found what they were seeking for the family still hold the freehold.

**Wool Went to Brisbane.**

The pastoralists who took up that country used Brisbane as their port. It was between 200 and 300 miles distant; through densely timbered country, and along rough bush tracks that had been formed by bullock drays. It was a life of hardship and isolation. Here and there in his "Recollections of a Rambling Life," Tom Archer gives us glimpses of what those old pioneer squatters had to endure. On one occasion Archer and Chauvel and their black boy, Darby, out near Mt. Abundance, were reduced to a small piece of leather jacket and a still smaller piece of salt junk. They cut it into three fairly equal pieces; each turned his back, and blindly selected his piece. On another occasion Archer reached Ipswich (then known as Limestone) in an exhausted condition, having been without food for days. He tells us that the wife of the storekeeper got him a meal; he adds: "It was my first sight of civilization after months of semi-barbarism. Excepting for Mrs. Goodwin on the Severn River, she was the first white woman I had seen for two years." If stories of the heroism and the courage displayed by those pioneers had come down to us from ancient Greece or ancient
Rome, the memory of such men would be cherished, and boys attending secondary schools would be required to translate the stories into English, and to admire the men as exemplars of noble and unselfish heroism.

If Eales's experiment at Tiaro had not failed it may be assumed that the Mary River would have become in the 'forties the port for the pioneer pastoralists of Wide Bay because, as I have previously mentioned, the schooner Edward made at least one voyage to Tinana Creek as early as 1843.

"Strange, Indomitable Man."

The Mary River, however, was neglected until that strange indomitable man, George Furber, arrived from Ipswich in 1847, taking possession of Gir-kum (one of Eales's abandoned stations on the south side of the river, near the site of the old township of Maryborough). There he opened a store, a shanty, and built a makeshift wharf. Furber was the kind of man who would figure well in a novel of the early days; if Joliffe had had the luck to have had with him a man of Furber's courage and determination, it is fairly safe to say that the name of Eales would have been writ large in Queensland's history. From what I have been able to trace of Furber's career—and for that my thanks are due to Mr. James Lennon—I have come to regard him as a man of extraordinary courage and outstanding force of character.

Originally he came from Maitland, so it may be assumed that he knew something of Eales's experiment, and knew what he had to face. It is said that he kept an hotel for a time at Ipswich, but the first that we know of his existence was an advertisement in the "Moreton Bay Courier" in June, 1847, announcing that he intended 'opening a store for the reception of wool at the head of the navigation of the Wide Bay River." At the time that was the name of the Mary River. You will remember that Mr. J. C. Burnett, the surveyor, in July, 1847, traced the course of two rivers. Governor Fitzroy ordered one of these to be named the Burnett, and the Wide Bay River was named the Mary River, in honour of Lady Mary Fitzroy, his wife (who was killed in a carriage accident at Parramatta in December, 1847).
Wide Bay River.

At the time George Furber inserted his historic advertisement in the “Courier,” it was the Wide Bay River, or the Mooraboooola as the natives called a part of it. Furber journeyed overland from Ipswich, took possession of Girkum, one of Eales’s abandoned stations, and set about building his wharf, his store, and his shanty. In October, 1847, when Furber and an employee named Barron were erecting a fence, a blackfellow who was with him chopped Furber’s skull with a squaring axe, and another killed Barron with a morticing axe. By some miracle Furber regained consciousness and rode 150 miles to Ipswich where his frightful wound was dressed by Dr. Dorsay. Some time later Furber shot the blackfellow. But the blacks finally finished the feud. In 1855 Furber and his son-in-law William Wilmhurst were murdered. But long before that time the white man had conquered the district.

Bidwill the Botanist.

When Maryborough holds its centenary week—whether that will be in 1942 or 1947, it will be for Maryborough to decide—it may be hoped that the people there will remember George Furber, and it might be suggested that something should be done to commemorate the services of John Carne Bidwill, another man to whom Maryborough owes far more than a passing reference. Bidwill was born at Exeter, in England, in 1815 and was a renowned botanist. He arrived in Sydney in 1838 and on September 1, 1847, was appointed by the Governor as director of the new Botanic Gardens in that city. However, by a misunderstanding, due to the difficulties of communication, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Earl Grey, had appointed a Mr. Charles Moore to that position, and he arrived in Sydney in January, 1848. Of course the English appointment had to stand, and Bidwill was appointed first Commissioner of Crown Lands at Wide Bay. He built a home on Tinana Creek and planted what he hoped one day would be a botanic garden. He had a very valuable collection of selected fruit trees and rare plants that had been gathered from different parts of the world. One was a mango tree, perhaps the first mango ever planted in Australia.
Shortly after Bidwill's arrival at Tinana he was instructed by the Government of New South Wales to mark a new direct road from Wide Bay to Moreton Bay. This had to be done through dense forest and vine scrub. On that historic trip—a trip that subsequently cost him his life—Bidwill and party came upon loads of wool in a clearing of the scrub. It was the wool from about 2,000 sheep that had been stolen from Scott Brothers' station at Morodian. The blacks raced the sheep through the scrub, and had feasted on them, but were unable to do anything with the wool.

**Fatal Ending to Overland Trip.**

The party ran short of rations so Bidwill and a man named Slade started out with the intention of reaching the Archer Brothers' station at Durundur. Bidwill had neglected to take his compass, and soon the two men were lost in the scrub, without food, excepting what edible roots they could find. They wandered about for eight days, and, finally, when they were at death's door, they were guided—carried in fact—by some friendly blacks to the Durundur station. They stayed at Durundur for a time, and eventually came on to Brisbane. Bidwill was very ill and went to Sydney to consult a doctor. He returned to his home at Tinana, and died there on March 16, 1853. In the "Queenslander" of August 23, 1891, there appeared a full page illustration of "Bidwill's Grave on Tinana Creek." Perhaps the Bunya pines that marked the grave may be still standing.

The mention of Bunya pines recalls an incident in which Bidwill has been misrepresented. Unquestionably, as Stuart Russell relates, Andrew Petrie was the discoverer of the Bunya pine. He, however, was not a botanist, and he took some specimens to Bidwill who immediately recognised it as a species of Araucaria to which the blacks had given the name of "Bunya-tunya." He sent some specimens to England to his friend, Sir William Jackson Hooker, then Director of Kew Gardens, with whom he had previously collected botanical specimens. Sir William Hooker saw that the specimens differed considerably from the classified Araucaria of South America. He described it in detail in the second volume of the London Journal of Botany, and said, "This noble
tree, I propose to dedicate to its discoverer.” That was how the Bunya which had been discovered by Andrew Petrie came to be called Araucaria Bidwilli. Mr. Petrie discovered the tree; Bidwill recognised it; and Hooker named it after Bidwill, perhaps in recognition of his distinguished services to botany; but there is certainly no evidence that Bidwill, who was a very sick man at the time, ever claimed that he was the discoverer of the tree, or sought to deprive Andrew Petrie of any of the honour.

Rough Pioneering Over.

When the 'fifties were reached, the rough pioneering had been done; the port had been opened; the new town of Maryborough had been surveyed; 77 town allotments had been bought at the first land sale on January 14, 1852; E. T. Aldridge kept the Old Bush Inn; Henry Palmer kept another inn; Aldridge had one store and Blackman another; H. C. Corfield had taken up Teebah and would soon transfer it to John Eaton, who was in the town looking for country; Atticus Tooth had taken up one of Eales's abandoned runs; Hugh Graham was at Marianna; Mrs. Furber (the only white woman in the community for a year or more) had a companion at last in the wife of Constable Harwood; Sergeant McAdam (the Chief Constable) had conducted his first case in a police court in a humpy on Ululah Creek; the Rev. E. Tanner was holding Church of England services at intervals in a slab hut; and Dean Hanley had arrived to conduct an occasional Mass in the cottage of Sergeant McAdam. Civilization had arrived! The Empire-builders had triumphed; another great district had been conquered and subdued!