SOME REMINISCENCES OF EARLY QUEENSLAND

[By the late E. C. DAVIES (1836-1931) with an introductory note by Sir Raphael Cilento.]

(Read at a meeting of the Society by Sir Raphael Cilento on February 27, 1958.)

Through the kindness of Mr. Tyley H. E. Hancock, of Buderim, it is my privilege to bring to your notice to-night some reminiscences of Queensland in 1856-1861 recalled by the late Ernest Charles Davies, his great-uncle and one of our early pioneers.

Ernest Charles Davies was born at Ostend, Belgium, on December 26, 1836, the youngest son of the Reverend William Davies of Brecon, Wales. He died at Buderim, South Queensland, on April 13, 1931, in his ninety-fifth year, having spent some seventy-six years in Australia.

He arrived here in the "Shalimar" in 1854, and having then proceeded to the Moreton Bay area (then part of New South Wales) he spent some years here, with varying fortune and a variety of most interesting experiences and adventures.

After the events narrated in these notes, he returned to Sydney with Aubrey Somerville and, in partnership with him, had a property "Aston" at Port Macquarie where they grew sugar, with vines and cattle as sidelines. Incidentally he was churchwarden at the old church there for years. Somerville succeeded to a title and at his death soon afterwards was found to have willed his interest in "Aston" to Davies, but it did not profit him greatly, for, having been persuaded to secure a transaction upon it for the benefit of others (he had been assured that it was a mere formality), he lost it upon their failure.

He was the youngest of a family of five sons and four daughters born to the Reverend William Davies and his wife. She was the daughter of a Colonel Irving of the Royal Buffs, who held Gibraltar during one of the assaults upon that stronghold during the Napoleonic Wars. The four daughters were Cordelia, Julia, Mary and Emily, and do not concern us here.

Of the five sons, all had a strong predilection for the Army and the Church. The eldest, William, died in the army in India from fever or cholera; the second, John, was a lieutenant in the navy of the East India
Company and was lost overboard while leading a party aloft to free the halliards which had frozen into their blocks in bitter weather round Cape Horn (?). George, the third son, became rector of Kelsale; while Henry, (grandfather of Mr. Tyley Hancock of Buderim), came out to Australia, and was followed a couple of years later by Ernest Charles.

Actually it was the death of John, as mentioned above, that brought Ernest Charles here: he was quite determined to enlist for the Crimean War (1854-56), but, at his mother’s earnest plea, reluctantly abandoned an Army career, for the lesser perils of pioneering.

Though the Reverend William Davies built the Rectory at Llangynide (pron. Hlan gunéed) (four miles from Craighowel) (pron. Cróok-hówl) (and ten from Brecknock), he and his family gloried in the tradition that on both sides they had centuries of renown as border raiders. The Davies of the Welsh border even had a legendary relationship with “Reece (or Rhys) Goch”—“Red Rhys”—the greatest cattle raider of all time.

However, as Ernest Charles used to say, in his jovial way, the links are naturally hard to trace, since everyone knows that Rhys Goch was contemporary with Adam and Eve if, indeed, he did not antedate them!

The Irvings, for their part, had eight “towers” on the banks of the Kirtle Brook on the borders of Dumfrieshire, each tower within sight and succour of the next, from which they continually sallied forth to raid the lands of the Percies in Northumberland. (Colonel Irving’s family came from Bonham Towers.)

On both sides of the border the story ran that, when the larder was low, the ladies of the household used to serve a pair of sizzhne: hot spurs and nothing else in a meat dish, as a mute reminder that a raid would be welcome. A great stone cross commemorates a certain John Irving who was caught redhanded by the Duke of Northumberland or his son and heir, and hanged within sight of his own tower. His vassals and adherents erected the cross on the spot and inscribed on it: “Here lies gallant John Irving foully murdered by a Percy cutthroat.”

Ernest Charles Davies was a splendidly built man of 6ft. 1\(\frac{1}{2}\)in. to 6ft. 2in. in height and broad in proportion. A fine athlete, boxer and horseman, he gloried in
the exploration of this new land, but he was no business man, and genial and trusting, was more than once overreached by the city sharpers that hover on the edges of the achievements of better men.

He was a great admirer of William Landsborough for reasons that will be apparent and, in the evening of his days, returned to Queensland to the area of his early associations with him.

He was never married, but spent his last years with his only relatives in Queensland, the descendants of his brother Henry Davies.

His only Australian relatives (of whom we are happy to see several with us to-night) are: Miss Mary E. J. Davies (niece); Mr. Tyley H. E. Hancock (great-nephew); Mrs. Penelope Margaret Hancock (great-niece); and their daughter Mary Penelope Tyley Hancock (great-great-niece), all of Buderim; and Mr. Ernest Henry Davies (great-nephew—unmarried), who lives at Hunter's Hill, Sydney, New South Wales.

With the consent of the other relatives Mr. Hancock has handed to the Society the original handwritten series of notes that are transcribed below. Page two of the manuscript of twenty-two pages is missing, but fortunately has been replaced through a copy made some years ago by Miss Mary E. J. Davies.

The Society expresses warm thanks for this gift.

My dear old boy Tyley,

In a moment of weakness I promised your Mum I would write you some of my recollections of long ago, many of them before either she or you were born or even thought of. I have decided to commence at the time I left the old country, after bidding farewell to my mother, assuring her, that in five years I anticipated making a great fortune in Australia and coming back to lay the riches at her feet.

Alas, I failed to make the fortune, and never saw her again. I went on board at Liverpool the ship "Shalimar" (Captain Robertson, skipper).

During the voyage we ran into a cyclone during which the main and fore top sail yards came down with a crash, one on top of the house on deck and the other on the cook’s galley. One of the blocks landed on a seaman’s head. Being possessed of a thick skull, after a time he opened his eyes and wanted to know who had
hit him. Our skipper adopted what in those days was known as the great circle sailing, in the hope of shortening the time of the voyage, with the result that we got so far south that we ran into a heavy field of flat ice and did not get clear of it for several days during which we saw several icebergs, some small and some big.

Eventually we arrived off Port Philip Heads in sixty-two days, which would have been a record for speed had we got inside, but a heavy gale prevented this and we had to run before it south of Tasmania, and did not get back to Port Philip for some ten or twelve days, which upset our captain's hope of making a record voyage; the voyage took about eighty-four days instead of the sixty-two or sixty-three we had hoped to complete it in. I had to wait in Melbourne for a week before there was a steamer available to carry me on to Sydney.

Melbourne in those days, though rapidly becoming a big city, was a very patchwork sort of place, some large and handsome buildings dotted along the streets with all sorts of shanties and shacks in between. Many of them were built of old gin and other cases, and roofed with the linings out of drapery cases, or sheets of bark. Shingle roofs were few and far between.

I made the ship my headquarters until the "Waratah" steamer was announced as ready to take us on to Sydney. One of the passengers by the "Waratah" was a very well known man in those days—Captain Towns, more generally known as "Bobbie" Towns. For some reason or other he took it into his head to chum up with me. He was very kind and friendly both on board and after we arrived in Sydney.

After spending Christmas and the New Year at Canberra I returned to Sydney, met Mr. Murray Prior and proceeded with him to Brisbane in the s.s. "Boomerang." Captain Towns was also on board. He was going up for the purpose of starting a new steamship on the Brisbane River to run between that town and Ipswich. The name of this ship, if my memory does not fail me, was the "Breadalbane," and she was looked upon as a very great acquisition to the two towns. Mr. Prior, who occupied a residence about halfway up the river between Brisbane and Ipswich, and myself were guests, among other distinguished people, at a champagne lunch on board the "Breadalbane" on her first trip.
“Colonial Experience”

We were landed at Mr. Prior’s residence (Woo­garoo), and it was from here that I began to acquire “colonial experience.” Mr. Prior owned a station on the Logan River called “Bromelton,” where he had for some years been building up a fine herd of short-horned Durham cattle and importing thorough-bred bulls from England. He also owned a considerable area of land on the Brisbane River, just opposite his house, which at that time was called the “Pocket,” formed by a peculiar bend in the river. By erecting a short line of fence across the narrow neck of land he formed a perfectly safe enclosure where he kept his stud herd.

In a few days I was sent off to Bromelton on the Logan in charge of some horses and three or four men—“new-chums” like myself—where I was to meet and hand over myself, the men, and the horses to a Mr. Sydney Lindow, who was acting for Mr. Prior. At this time two gentlemen, Messrs. Vaughan and Frazer, had taken the station over on terms, by which they were to deliver to Mr. Prior certain drafts of cattle year by year for a stated period in payment for the station and stock. Mr. Lindow was there to take delivery of some 300 or 400 which were to be taken up to Mr. Prior’s new station “Hawkwood” in the Burnett district, which was then in charge of your granddad, who had come out to Australia a couple of years before I did.

Thus, my first taste of Colonial experience commenced; the journey from Woogaroo to Bromelton was I think about forty-five or fifty miles, the longest ride in one day that I had ever made, though I had become a fairly good horseman before I left the Old Country, at the advanced age of seventeen. However, I got through without feeling overtired or the need of *diacaline plaster, but not so the men. I fancy this was probably the first horseback trip they had ever faced, as they were sore, stiff and tired at the end of it.

We arrived at Bromelton long after dark, hitting the big lagoon on the opposite side to the homestead. This lagoon was large and very deep, and was shaped like a huge comma; the round part was of unknown depth, and was supposed to be the habitation of that mythical water monster the “Bunyip.” A very nice
garden ran from the house down to one side of the deep part of the lagoon. One day Miss Harpur, Mrs. Prior's sister, was sitting on the bank reading, when she heard a great splash and disturbance in the water and thought she saw a huge fish of some kind wallowing about. She called Mr. Prior, and both of them declared they saw a big black thing like an enormous eel with what appeared to have an immense head with a long, thick hairy-looking mane running from the back of its head for several feet along the body. Mr. P. was so convinced of having seen the Bunyip that in an incautious moment he wrote to one of the papers either in Brisbane or Ipswich describing its appearance.

Unfortunately, among other comments he said that it was as large round as Miss Harper's waist. This opened the way for a rival paper, to whom he had not sent any account of the matter, to make some incredulous, not to say, personal, comments.

If the white Australians were inclined to laugh at the bad jokes levelled at the narrator, he had a perfectly satisfied army of believers in the Black Australians, who one and all agreed in the Bunyip's existence, and had never been known either before or after this event to bathe in that lagoon, "too muchee debil-debil belonging that fellow, blackfellow corbon frightened 'bout that one."

On our arrival at the station, we were met by a tall, young fellow in what appeared in the darkness to be a full set of pyjamas, but which afterwards resolved itself into shirt sleeves and white moleskin riding breeches. I asked if this was Bromelton and if Mr. Vaughan or Mr. Fraser were at home. The reply was, "Hallo, Davies, is that you? When did you get down? Get off and come inside." I asked who I was speaking to, and that I hadn't come down from anywhere. The long-legged one said, "I am Haruce Walpole, and you are Henry Davies, so get off and don't pretend you don't know me." To which I replied I was not Henry Davies, but admitted I was his brother. "Oh, well," he said, "it's all the same, you're the new chum, I suppose, they have been expecting, so come along; the groom will take your horse, and the men can get their suppers in there" — pointing to what turned out to be the kitchen.

* Horace
I did as he directed, and was ushered into the
dining room where at a long table sat about twenty
other fellows, with shirt sleeves rolled up, and the
inevitable white moleskin breeks, some playing cards,
others trying to read and others laughing and talking.

The long-legged one, by way of introduction,
announced my name and “new chumship.” Two of those
at the table welcomed me with many expressions of
pleasure at making my acquaintance. These turned out
to be Messrs. Vaughan and Fraser. Those present were
all from neighbouring stations, gathered to Bromelton
to assist in the cattle muster and to take away their
own stray animals.

Next morning after an early breakfast everyone
got mounted to commence the muster. A fine bay horse
was brought up and my saddle put on him. I had never
made acquaintance with an Australian buck-jumper,
and I was no sooner on than this noble animal put his
head between his fore-legs and gave me to understand
he didn’t want me on his back. I held on for a while
like grim death among the encouraging yells of my
previous night’s entertainers, “to stick to him Davies!”,
which I did for a few minutes, but that horse was an
artist in his profession. When he found his first efforts
didn’t succeed he very suddenly set to work in earnest
bucking from side to side and round and round like a
humming top, and in a very short time I landed on my
hands and knees in the dust. I got on his back again,
quite determined to see it out. Much to my relief he
went off quietly and carried me like a true friend all
that day, and many other days afterwards.

**Droving Along the Brisbane**

The muster occupied about three weeks, after
which we made our start for Hawkwood with about
400 or 500 head. The journey took us about six weeks
in consequence of bad weather and flooded rivers and
creeks. We travelled up the Brisbane River via Cress-
brook, crossing and recrossing the river on more than
one occasion three and four times in a day.

Our progress was under favourable conditions
about ten miles a day. We had breakfast before the sun
rose, then saddled up and started the cattle, allowing
them to spread where feed was good, about a quarter
of a mile on either side the road and just keeping their
heads in the right direction. We would pause for a pot
of tea and some damper and salt beef about mid-day, and then another jog till next sundown, when we camped for the night.

This routine describes the everyday work of droving, diversified now and again by a sudden stampede at night, if a belated kangaroo or even a possum, sometimes a dingo, gave the cattle a fright.

During the next year or two I made several journeys to and from Bromelton with drafts of cattle, and eventually for a year or so took charge of Hawkwood when Mr. Prior was away.

**The Massacre**

One evening just before shearing commenced Mr. Arthur McArthur, of Bungunbar Station, on the Upper Dawson, rode up to Hawkwood with the news that a terrible tragedy had occurred at a station farther out called Hornet Bank; the blacks had attacked the station at daylight and murdered the whole of the people on it but one, whom they left for dead. Mrs. Fraser, three or four daughters, a twelve or eighteen months' old child, the tutor, one son about fifteen years old and two working hands, were all killed and frightfully mutilated. The only survivor was the young lad Sebastian Fraser.

Mrs. Fraser's husband had died a few months previously and her eldest son was in Ipswich with the teams, or on his road up with the station supplies at the time of the massacre. Young Fraser, when he recovered consciousness, made his way to a neighbouring station and reported the outrage.

Mr. McArthur had ridden down for the purpose of getting a party together from the various stations, to pursue and inflict condign punishment on the blacks, and we made up our minds to do what we could to avenge the murder of our neighbours. The party consisted of McArthur, Serrocold,† Piggot, Olton, Prior, Thomas and myself and two Brisbane blackboys for tracking. We all met on a certain day at the Auburn Station (Mr. Piggot's) and made our start from there.

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* Sylvester
† George Pierce Serrocold (1828-1902), pioneer Queensland pastoralist, who travelled overland with pack-horses from Sydney to the central-west of Queensland, and acquired an interest in several pastoral properties. Serrocold pioneered country on the upper waters of the Dawson River, settling at Cockatoo Creek, a tributary of the Dawson, about 1857. He brought by bullock team into Rockhampton the first wool to be received from the Dawson River country.
Before leaving Hawkwood Mr. Prior and myself had a discussion as to which of us should remain behind to look after the shearing. I wanted him to stay and he wanted me to do so. We both said it was impossible to remain with such an outrage to avenge, and though, of course, he could have insisted upon my staying behind—being his superintendent at the time—he was considerate and did not urge the point, but asked me who I would leave in charge of the shed, and I said “Con Daly,” at which he drew a long breath, if not a whistle of incredulity. Con had been engaged by me some months back to do some contract work on the station until shearing time. He was a fine workman and a very fast shearer. Over and above that he was as wild an Irishman as you would meet, and an extremely good boxer, always ready to give or take a licking on the slightest provocation, but withal he was a dependable man and never broke his word under any given circumstance.

I had a set of good boxing gloves and when alone on the station often used to get Con to come up to the house of an evening when we would clear the tables and chairs in the dining room, and have an hour or two with the gloves. I learned more of the noble art of self-defence from that hard-hitting Hibernian than I ever knew before.

I asked Con if he thought he could take charge of the shed and still do his share of shearing while I was away after the blacks. His reply was much as I expected, not only in the affirmative, but he added significantly, “When you come back, Mr. Davies, you’ll admit you never saw better shorn sheep, so ye will, and Con Daly’ll see to that.”

So he was installed with full authority over the shed. On our return after six weeks’ hunting, we found the last of the sheep being counted out, and my wild Irishman was as good as his word. I never saw cleaner shearing nor so few cut by the shears. Mr. Prior agreed with me that Con deserved, as he got, a very handsome addition to his cheque, which he neither asked for nor expected. All he wanted was to hear that our expedition had not failed to punish the right blacks.

**Hunting the Killers**

The Upper Dawson blacks could not be mistaken as they all bore a large raised tatoo* on the chest,
shaped like a crescent or boomerang. Just before making our start we got reliable information that there was a very large body of these blacks camped in a heavy brigalow scrub running for many miles between Pigott's Station and some others and that their camp was about fifty miles away. On the second day out the blackboys came on some tracks which we followed up till nearly sunset.

From a pretty high ridge we came in sight of their camp smoke—about as far as we could judge three or four miles away. It was too late in the evening to tackle them as they were evidently well inside the scrub, so we went back a mile or so for water and camped for the night, close hobbling the horses and taking it in turns to watch them.

At daylight we saddled up and having had a pot of tea and some damper and salt beef proceeded cautiously to where we had turned back; set the blackboys to watch, and let us know when the blacks left their camp to hunt up possums and other game, as we wanted to get them clear of the scrub. As soon as the boys reported, we commenced to ride as silently as possible towards the camp in the hope of cutting the beggars off.

However, they must have had some of the gins acting as sentinels for we soon heard their high-pitched warning cries, and there was nothing left but to gallop as hard as the horses could go. Most of them managed to get into the scrub before we could stop them, though we raced hard in line, one behind the other, carrying our carbines in our hands ready. I got a flying shot at one, and apparently bowled him over. When the rush was over I returned to where I had seen the black drop, but to my surprise and disgust, my prey turned out to be a gin, more frightened than hurt I am glad to say. The bullet had just caught her on the point of the elbow and ran right along the forearm to the wrist, just making a clean cut as if with a knife but only skin deep.

After searching for some time we found the camp well inside the scrub and wonderfully well concealed with bushes. When we came to overhaul it we found Bibles and prayerbooks with the names of the Frasers written in them, women's dresses, work boxes, and a quantity of blankets all branded with the Fraser's name, women's hats and other plunder from the
station; hundreds of spears and other weapons, and possum rugs, dilly-bags, tomahawks, and other black-fellow impedimenta in profusion.

We gathered everything together and made a huge bonfire of it all, except the tomahawks. These we put into three or four large dilly-bags, and dropped them into a deep waterhole some miles away. The Bibles and prayerbooks and some few things that we thought the two surviving Frasers might like to have were retained for them and I believe were sent to them by McArthur and Serrocoold. Everything else we burned.

We picked up the tracks of the blacks and followed them up. Some of them we found at one place and some at another during our six weeks' hunt, and upon the whole they got their deserts at our hands, so far as it was in our power to deal out rough justice. We knew we had got the right men, from the loot they had in the first camp, and the raised tattoo marks previously mentioned was a sure brand of identity.

**A Trip With Gregory**

Shortly after this Hawkwood was sold, and Mr. P. and the family for some time resided in Brisbane. There being no railways or coaches in those days, the family had to be driven down to town. Mr. and Mrs. Prior and the two youngest children had a sort of "Sociable" with a pair of horses and I took the dog-cart and the elder ones drove tandem. After safely delivering my charges, I took a trip with the late Sir Augustus Gregory — at that time Mr. Gregory — the well-known explorer, he on behalf of the owner of the then unstocked country known as Mount Hatton on the Robinson River and I on behalf of the Halys of Taabinga Station, to report upon its extent and value for sheep-breeding purposes.

Mr. G. was about the finest all-round bushman I have ever met, and one of the most genial and informative companions conceivable for such a trip, as clever with his hands as he was with his head; he could almost make anything he wanted out of the most unlikely looking materials, from a pack-saddle to a watch-key. I had the misfortune to lose my watch-key, and no one in the party had one that would fit. As we were at that time a few hundred miles from the nearest known watchmaker, I concluded my watch would not be of much service during the rest of the journey. However,
Mr. Gregory thought otherwise, and offered to try and make one for me. Among other things we had with us were horse-shoes and nails. G. selected one of the latter and commenced one evening to hammer out the head flat and thin. In a wonderfully short time he turned it into a tube squared inside to fit the nipple of the watch, turning the shank of the nail into the handle. When finished it answered the purpose perfectly, his only tools being a few fine files and small pincers and a few bits of square steel wire, one of which he filed to the size of the watch nipple and on that turned the nail head into a key. I used that key to the end of the trip and kept it as a curio for many a year afterwards, but eventually mislaid or lost it during my wanderings.

It was during this trip I got my first experience of fever and ague. Once again Mr. Gregory came to the rescue, this time with quinine, a bottle of which I always carried, and though it relieved me, I never was quite free of the malady while I remained in Queensland and used to have occasional attacks of it for some years afterwards.

**Association with Landsborough**

After our return I undertook to form a new station for Mr. William Landsborough, the explorer, and his newchum partner Mr. Glen, on Perch Creek, a tributary of the Lower Dawson, and started out with a few thousand sheep. These I left in charge of my friend Harry Dalgleish while I went off to locate the country and select a site for the head station, which we named Nulalbin. While the sheep were travelling up I set to work to get some buildings and other improvements underway. I had a few good hands with me, but very shortly after the first living house was finished and a horse paddock fenced in, gold was discovered some little distance out from Rockhampton, if I remember rightly in the neighbourhood of Yamba* on the Fitzroy River.

A regular furore broke out and all my men but one cleared out for the new El Dorado, but the one that stuck to me was a trump and a treasure; he was an Irishman of the very best and could turn his hand to anything almost in the bush. Among other accomplishments he was a good top sawyer, and we soon got a sawpit underway. He undertook to initiate me into the art of taking the other end of the saw in the pit. The

* Yaamba
first week I shall never forget, for having to look up all
the time the saw was going so as to keep the chalk
lines, I thought I would never be able to straighten my
neck again, but one gets used to most things and by
the time we had all the sawn timber we wanted for the
woolshed, the top sawyer pronounced me a first-class
pitman. Before the sheep arrived we had very nearly
completed the erection of the woolshed, and by that
time I was able to get a few men again who completed
the drafting yards and several sheep station huts and
yards.

The head station was situated on a high bank over­
looking a fine deep stretch of water in Perch Creek of
a depth of from fifteen to twenty feet, and as we had a
fine supply of large cipress* pines growing on a part of
the run about a mile away we had no difficulty in get­
ting all our wants in the way of sawn and other timber.

George Siving (?) and his brother John took up a
run lower down the creek and became our nearest
neighbours; they did as I had done, coming ahead of
their stock, to get things ready, leaving Allen in charge
of the sheep. He subsequently joined me in search of
country, which we took up on the Barcoo. At that time
the Barcoo was outside of any settled country and prac­
tically unknown except for an exploring trip which was
undertaken by Sir Thomas Mitchell some years before
in search of the lost explorer Leichhardt. Mitchell,
who I think at the time was Surveyor-General, was
recalled before he had accomplished the object of his
expedition. He had named the Barcoo the Victoria
River, under the impression from its northerly course
that it was the head of the river of that name in what
is now known as the Northern Territory. Of course had
he been permitted to continue his explorations as far
as the Thompson River where it joins the Barcoo, and
takes its final and sudden change of course to nearly
due south he would have corrected his first idea of its
being the head of the Victoria River, and also estab­
lished the fact that the Barcoo and Thompson Rivers
were among the headwaters of Cooper's Creek which
loses itself in Lake Eyre in South Australia.

Search for New Country

It was after I handed over the new-formed station
"Nulalbin" to Landsborough and Glen, that Allen and

* Cypress
myself decided to join forces and go out in search of new country. I started off to another station which at that time they owned at Broad Sound, called Glen Prairie, to obtain a number of half-broken-in horses. These they kindly offered us for our expedition, the arrangement being that at the conclusion of our trip, we should sell the horses for them to the best advantage we could—an offer we were very glad to accept as it meant a great saving of funds to us, and at the same time gave our friends a fair chance of realising something substantial by the sale of a lot of good though almost unbroken pirates; Allen meantime set to work to make and paint our canvas pack-saddle bags, each to carry about 75 lb. weight of flour, bacon, dried beef and other necessaries for the trip, two of these bags to each pack-saddle slung one on each side. The pack-saddles and provisions I was to purchase in Rockhampton and load them up on our mob of bronchos.

Having reached Glen Prairie I obtained about a dozen of these wild but really fine upstanding horses, and with the assistance of two or three fellows on the station got them on the road and away from their run, reaching Yamba the next day where we found the river in flood, a regular banker. We got them all haltered, and borrowing the publican's boat we swam them one at a time at the tail of the boat across the river, without the loss of any of them, and without accident, though the river was running strong, and was pretty wide. After getting them to Rockhampton, I got them all shod.

With a friend—Mr. Cunningham—I saddled these vagabonds up, put the packs on them, as securely as leather straps and surcingles would make them, opened the yard and started, Cunningham on one side of the mob and myself on the other. Having got them out of town and on the road the fun commenced. There were two or three billy cans, which now and again made a little music, which their bearers disapproved of. Suddenly one began to buck, then another, until they were all busy trying to get rid of their loads. Not succeeding, they began to bolt in all directions, each one taking his own direction. We managed by hard riding to keep them pretty well together for a mile or two, but at last were very glad to get all but two of them into a yard at Gracemere, where the ever-hospitable Archers allowed me to unload and put them
into a paddock while I went off to find the missing radicals.

Next morning Cunningham and myself made a fresh start, and with the help of two or three of our Gracemere friends got them fairly on the road without further serious trouble. By the time Cunningham’s road left mine next day, they were manageable enough and when we arrived at Nulalbin the worst of the trouble was over.

In a few days our party of three, namely, Allen (generally known as black Allen), Jemmy Wilkinson, and myself, made our start for the Never-Never in search of good stock country. We travelled out by way of Bauhinia Downs, then the property of the Dutton family; Planet Downs and Mantuan Downs, the latter having been stocked by Mr. Duncan Clark, and which at that time was in that direction the last and outside station. We followed Mantuan Creek for some distance hoping it would lead us to a practical crossing of a very high and apparently precipitous ridge, which appeared to run for many miles.

**One of Mitchell’s Camps**

Alas for our hopes, the creek at its source was a wet swamp at the foot of the range, where we camped close to a peculiarly shaped hill not unlike a huge old-fashioned beehive, near the summit of which there was a sort of hole or tunnel through it by which we were able to recognise one of Sir Thomas Mitchell’s camps, described and illustrated in his book, a copy of which we had brought with us.

It seems strange after the lapse of so many years that we found still intact the wheel-marks of a dray which he had taken out with him, and the stumps of several cypress pine trees which had been cut down with a cross-cut saw. The creek for some distance below the swamp ran in a narrow channel with almost perpendicular sides with a depth of about three feet of beautiful clear water; one of our horses slipped into this channel and could not get out, so we had to walk him along for the best part of half-a-mile before finding a place wide enough to turn him, so that he could face the bank and struggle out.

On leaving this camp we travelled along near the base of the cliffs for some miles until late in the afternoon we struck a gully coming down through the range,
and finding a waterhole we camped for the night. Next morning we decided to follow-up this gully, which gradually broadened a little with the high cliffs on either hand, and had the good fortune to find it led us right up to the top of the range, where to our surprise and satisfaction we found we were overlooking one of the extreme head branches of the Warrego; this gully afterwards became one of the high roads to the Nieve, Nivelle, and Barcoo Rivers.

The Warrego Country

On resuming our journey next day we got into a somewhat dense scrub running between the Warrego and Nieve Rivers. We were in it for the best part of three days, and then broke out of it on open country on the Warrego, where we marked out a few blocks of country, for future application, crossed back again through the scrub on to some very fine downs country on the Nieve which we marked and took up.

I forgot to mention that after leaving Planet Downs we met two acquaintances, Messrs. Missing and de Satge,* who were waiting for us with a view of asking to be allowed to join our party as they were also on the lookout for new country. We had no desire to increase our numbers as it meant having to take up or search for greater areas of suitable land. However, after much persuasion we consented, on the understanding that, at the expiration of six weeks they should return to civilisation, whether we were successful or not in securing any suitable country, and they were not to take more than sufficient provision to carry them back at the expiration of the six weeks, when if we had obtained any country we were to draw lots for it.

As a matter of fact when their time to return arrived we had only marked a run on the Warrego, and they begged us to extend their time for another two weeks, which we did, during which time we took up the Nieve blocks; then came the time for the drawing of lots which took place on the eve of Missing and de Satge’s return. The Nieve blocks were the most valuable and formed one run, and the Warrego blocks formed another, so there were two prizes and three blanks to be drawn for. Allen drew a blank, then

* Oscar de Satge, one of the pioneers of the Central West, who in 1861 took over the management of Gordon Sandeman’s property on Peak Downs, afterwards called Wolfang—named after an isolated peak that stuck out like a dog’s tooth.
de Satge drew the Warrego blocks. I drew a blank, Missing drew the plum (the Nieve blocks), and Wilkinson, of course, the third blank. So our two unsought companions obtained all the results and we three at this stage and after two months’ travelling were as bare of country as when we started.

**Strong Meat for the Larder**

As all three of us were pretty good shots we often supplemented our depleted larder with game of sorts. Among other flying things we put under requisition was on one occasion a crow, on another an owl, and once we came upon a breeding colony of black shags, where we slaughtered two or three dozen of these birds. The crow was hard and tough, and the owl, or so we imagined, tasted a bit mousey, but the black shags were past all limits for flavour and fragrancy, so we strung them on long sticks and smoked and roasted them over our camp fire, after which we found them eatable by stewing them with bacon rind and thickened with flour.

**On the Barcoo**

Having parted with our two other companions, we three continued our pilgrimage in search of country. At the end of a couple of months we had secured all we wanted, as we made off in the direction of the Barcoo where we were rewarded in full for all our previous disappointments. We came upon a magnificent succession of downs and open country clothed with the finest of barley and other grasses, with heaps of saltbush of numerous varieties and herbage of infinite value and variety, crowsfoot, cotton bush and wild carrot, all of which are highly appreciated by both sheep and cattle, and horses. The latter, despite long days and hard work, got fat and kept their condition wonderfully all through our peregrinations.

On dividing the runs we secured, Elizabeth Creek and Enniskillen fell to Allen’s lot, and Northampton Downs and Douglas Ponds fell to me. These four runs comprised a very considerable area of country, of the very choicest description, and we decided that we could turn our steps homeward quite satisfied with the results of our expedition. We decided to explore the headwaters of the river which seemed to hold out prospects of good country, that might at some future time be worth securing. Although our provisions were
getting low, we spent a week or ten days looking up the head branches of the river, and put ourselves on still further reduced rations, as we also wanted to try and find out if there was any other break in the range through which a practicable road could be found to shorten carriage of supplies, etc., for the new stations. In this we failed, and had our search for nothing, and I do not think any other route has been found than that we were fortunate enough to hit upon when we were on our way out.

We found some very heavy scrubs as we approached the range, and fell in with a large party of blacks one morning; the first intimation of their presence was the sound of tomahawks chopping all directions. They were evidently possum hunting, but we only saw one of them, an old gin who suddenly jumped up almost from under my horse's feet with a wild yell of fright for I had nearly ridden over her.

**Unwelcome Visitors**

That night we camped on a creek open on one side with dense scrub on the other, and as everything seemed quiet we decided not to keep a watch and we turned in and slept soundly till morning. At daybreak Wilkinson went out of the tent to put the fire together and make tea. After a little while he came and woke me up asking if I had been outside during the night as he found footmarks in the ashes and traced them into the tent, where they showed up on a red blanket which Allen had over him. As neither he nor I had been out during the night it was evident that some of the blacks we had heard during the day had paid us a visit and had actually walked into the tent, but they left us undisturbed and did not interfere with anything though their presence while we slept, left an uncomfortable feeling that we had taken an unwarranted risk in not keeping watch.

The then most distant station had been formed by Messrs. Armstrong and Johns, while we were still on our exploring trip, and it was the first place we reached on our return.

After two days' rest we made a fresh start on our way down to Rockhampton to get our applications into the Lands Office for the country we had taken up. Among other changes that had occurred while we were away, we found that we were no longer in New South
Wales; in the interval Queensland had been proclaimed a separate colony, a not altogether unexpected happening, as for several years persistent efforts had been put forward in that direction. Our journey down was not productive of any startling occurrences, but when we reached Albinia Downs we met another party of explorers going out under the leadership of Fred Walker, who had on a previous trip taken up the country on the Ward River, and Nieve.

Our meeting was quite unexpected, and we were able to give Mr. Walker a fairly good account of his chances of obtaining the sort of country he wanted, just beyond ours. He was in want of a few spare horses, which we were glad of the opportunity of supplying, and as they were in first-rate condition he was equally pleased to get their pack-saddles and bags.

**Tried to Steal a March**

In due course we reached Perch Creek again, and found an old friend, Mr. Harry Harden, waiting for us, in the hope of being able to purchase one of the runs we had taken up, but neither Allen nor myself at that time had any intention of selling, and as we wanted a day or two's spell for our horses Harden returned to Rockhampton. We made out our application forms, and as my horse Grey Beard was in best condition for the trip, I took charge of Allen’s papers, and started off to lodge them. On my way down I met a man with whom I had been on very close and intimate terms of friendship at one of the stations I stayed at for the night. In conversation I told him of our successful search for country, and gave him a fairly good idea of where it was located.

Next day I resumed my journey and after a couple of days arrived at my last stage, stopping for the night at a wayside hotel, and went to bed meaning to make an early start next morning. However, I was roused out before I had been asleep more than an hour, by the sudden appearance of Harden at the bedside. It seems he had fallen in with the man I had met two or three days before, who was on his way down to Rockhampton, as he told him, to put in applications for country on the Barcoo, and as the next day was Land Day said he would push on. Harden asked him if he had seen me, which he denied.
For some reason or other Harden's suspicions were roused, and he started out to meet me and let me know what he suspected. I got out of bed, dressed, and we started for Rockhampton straight away. After breakfast we went to the Lands Office, which opened at 10 a.m., and having the papers all ready I walked in at once and asked the recording clerk to mark the time on each application form as it was most important; this was done, and then he went in to the inner office and told Mr. Hay, the then Local Commissioner for Lands, what I had to say. Hay came out to see me and I told him what had happened, also stating that if this man did put in an application, I should in all probability give him as good a thrashing as I could, and that had he succeeded in getting in before me I would shoot him.

Of course Hay pointed out the folly of doing such a thing, especially as my application would, of course, take precedence, as so far my quondam friend had not appeared. If he did, the Commissioner said, he would let him understand it would be conducive to his well-being not to insist on lodging his application as he would take all necessary steps to have it refused, and also expose his treacherous conduct. I left the office, with the assurance that our interests would be protected.

Subsequently the would-be robber arrived, and Hay requested him to come into his private office and bring his application with him. Hay then examined the papers and compared them with mine, and said he was too late as I had already lodged applications for the same land a couple of hours earlier; however, the fellow insisted on their being marked and recorded. Mr. Hay told him that I was aware of what he intended to do, and that if he persisted it was my firm intention to shoot him on sight, and that I meant it, besides which he would under any circumstances advise the refusal of his application.

After some little blustering he voluntarily withdrew his application. As he was leaving Hay strongly advised him to, if possible, avoid all chance of meeting me, as he felt sure it would not be advisable in my then mood. Whether he acted on the advice I don't know, but I never saw him again.

Having secured both Allen's and my own country, through the more than friendly intervention of Harden, I felt that the least I could do was to let him have one of my runs at the price he had offered me, so I trans-
ferred Northampton Downs to him and Sir William Manning, consisting of 100 square miles. On a second expedition I took him out and showed it to him, and very well pleased he was when he saw what beautiful country it was.

**Victim of Sydney Swindlers**

Some time afterwards I met in Rockhampton Aubrey Somerville, a brother of Walter and Everard Somerville, who were old friends of our family at home. As he was on the lookout for an opportunity to invest his money in pastoral pursuits in Queensland, we agreed to join forces, he putting his cash as against my country, and we proceeded to purchase sheep to stock it with the necessary drays, teams, supplies, etc., to form our station. As Somerville's money was at this time in England it became necessary to make arrangements with an agent in Sydney to advance the money we required, giving them full authority to collect Somerville's capital in England. We went to Sydney with letters of introduction to the firm of Burns, Bassett and Coy., with whom we made satisfactory arrangements to draw upon them, for the purchase of our stock and equipment, giving them the authority to receive Somerville's English capital. We returned to Queensland and purchased our stock from Landsborough and Paterson, paying by draft on our Sydney agents as agreed upon. Having taken delivery, we started on our journey to our run, "Douglas Ponds," which adjoined the country I had sold to Harden.

We had got about seventy or eighty miles on our way, when one morning Paterson arrived at our camp with the information that when Landsborough went to Sydney and presented our drafts, to Burns Bassett and Coy., that firm had coolly dishonoured them, giving no reason or explanation. Despite the fact that Landsborough disclosed the fact that we had shown him the contract under which they were bound to accept our drafts, they persisted in refusing to do so. Of course, Landsborough was compelled in defence of himself and Paterson to go through the form of protesting the bills. There was no other course open to us than at once to offer to return the stock without delay and free of all expense to them, but L. and P., like the good fellows
they were, would not hear of our doing so, unless on my going to Sydney, I failed in bringing our agents to reason.

However, we arranged with the owner of the station through which we were travelling at the time to allow us to stay where we were and depasture our sheep, during my absence in Sydney; and away I went. On reaching Sydney, I at once had an interview with Burns, who without assigning any reason flatly refused to carry out their undertaking. I asked what he proposed to do about the authority they held to collect our funds in England, to which he replied that it would be time enough to consider the question when they had received advices from home.

Having arrived at the conclusion that there was nothing more to be obtained by further discussion I gave him the full benefit of my opinion as to his conduct, in such precise terms with regard to his trickiness and complete disregard of common honesty, that he requested me to leave his office, which I declined to do until I had finished what I had to say, as I might not have another opportunity of doing so. By the time I concluded the interview he was under no sort of ignorance as to my estimate of his disgraceful action. I assured him that he would find out that in me he had struck a burr that would stick to him, and that he would hear without delay from my solicitors, and then left him to chew the cud of reflection.

My next step was to call on Messrs. Want and Slade, solicitors, and put my case before them, with the result that they took counsel's opinion and at once entered an action against B.B. and Coy. To make a long story short, they and their lawyers laid themselves out, to take every point possible to delay the case getting before the Courts. Their final move was to ask the Court for a commission to take evidence in England as to whom they were to be responsible for the money they had collected. Before the case at last came on for hearing, a period of over three years had elapsed. Mean- time, as we could not stock it, our country became forfeited and was lost to us. We, of course, redelivered the sheep to Landsborough and Paterson — the only thing we could do to save them from loss.