THE BLACK WAR IN QUEENSLAND

[By ARTHUR LAURIE]

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The white man came and shot game and tres­
passed anywhere without permission. When a white
man took up land or a station, he expected the blacks
of that locality to move back into other territory, un­
conscious that this would be an unpardonable
violation of tribal laws, and involve immediate deadly
warfare with the adjoining tribes. Rarely had any
white man attempted to learn a dialect or understand
the customs of this peculiar people and those who
did had no power to direct the course of events. So
wars began between the two races and have continued
with little intermission to the present time.

—Archibald Meston, March, 1895,
(Former Protector of Aborigines, Qld.)

In the area which is now the State of Queensland
the first recorded clash between the aboriginals and
white men was on the western side of Cape York
Peninsula, at a point marked on the map as Cape Keer­
weer (turn again). Captain Wilhelm Janzoon, a Dutch
navigator and explorer in the ship “Duyfken,” in 1606,
landed at this point and was met by the blacks. A fight
occurred; the cause of it is unknown, but a Dutchman
was killed. The Dutch objective was trade, and slavery
was then in existence all over the world and no doubt
the husky blacks looked like a good commodity. This
was the first place at which the Australian native
struck a blow in the defence of his country. One hun­
dred and ninety-three years later, when white settle­
ment in Australia had been in existence about eleven
years, Matthew Flinders, a noted explorer, sailed into
Moreton Bay looking for a suitable place for further
settlement in the near future. On July 16, 1799, he
landed at the eastern end of Bribie Island, now known
as Skirmish Point, looking for a place to careen his
ship the “Norfolk.”

The blacks met him and appeared to be friendly.
Then without apparent reason they made an attack on
his party, who opened fire, and a native was wounded.
Flinders refers to this incident as an “unfortunate
occurrence.” In his party was a Sydney native named
Bongaree who was brought along to act as an inter­
prefer, but he could not make himself understood by the local blacks. It is not unreasonable to assume that the locals would view Bongaree with hostility as being a foreigner and a trespasser in their country, and would want him dealt with, according to the law of the tribes.

They would accept isolated white men in distress, as instanced in later years when three whites were wrecked on Moreton Island, Pamphlett, Finnegan, and Parsons, who lived with the blacks for several months until they were rescued by Lieut. John Oxley in 1823.

**Encounter at North Pine**

The first Moreton Bay settlement was established at Redcliffe in September 1824. The settlement was about two months old when a party of convicts with a guard of soldiers sailed up the North Pine River in a search for timber on the south side of Yebri Creek. They were attacked by a mob of blacks while sawing up a bloodwood tree. In the ensuing clash, one black was killed. Thereafter the aborigines showed open hostility and attacked soldiers and convicts at every opportunity. The settlement was removed from Redcliffe to Brisbane late in 1824, the reason given being the poor land at Redcliffe and the hostility of the blacks.

At first the aborigines were not greatly worried by the white men's settlement at Brisbane. It was confined to a relatively small area, and the blacks were regarded by the Government as an outer guard against the escape of convicts.

The first serious clash occurred in 1830, when Captain Logan, the commandant, a severe disciplinarian, but also notable as a botanist and explorer, while with a party of convicts in the Brisbane Valley was killed, allegedly by blacks, on Logan Creek. Soldiers were sent out on a punitive expedition, but they failed to contact any blacks. Convicts were suspected of having had a hand in the murder.

In 1836 the shipwrecked crew of the ship "Stirling Castle" were attacked by blacks, and all except Mrs. Fraser, the captain's wife, and a man named Baxter, were killed by the blacks.

**First Execution of Blacks**

On May 31 1840, Stapylton, a surveyor, and his assistant, Tuck, were killed by a party of blacks near Mount Lindesay. Another member of the surveyors'
party, Dunlop, was severely injured, but recovered.
On May 14, 1841, two aboriginals, Merridio and
Neugavil, were tried for murder in Sydney and con­
demned to death. They were returned to Brisbane for
the execution, which was carried out on July 31, 1841,
on a cross-arm of the windmill (now the Brisbane
Observatory tower) overlooking the settlement. There
were demonstrations of protest by hundreds of natives
who had been brought to the scene to witness the
summary vengeance of the white man; the reason
being that the real murderers were still roaming the
bush.

In 1838 Moravian missionaries established a
mission station for aborigines at Zion’s Hill, now
Nundah. Three years later a branch station was estab­
lished at Burpengary, twenty-six miles away, by
Pastor Gottfried Haussman and his assistant Gerler.
Gerler was recalled to Nundah when the hut was built,
and Haussman was left alone. The blacks attacked at
dusk. A bag of flour diverted their attention from
killing Haussman, who was wounded badly but escaped
to Nundah. The branch was abandoned.

RaidsonTheDowns

In 1842 Brisbane and District were opened to free
settlers; the Darling Downs had been occupied by the
Leslie Brothers and other squatters since 1840. The
squatters now had free access to Brisbane as a port,
and pastoral expansion was rapid. The hostility of the
aborigines, who had tolerated white settlement while
it was confined to Brisbane and the river, became
intensified. Drays travelling over the range from
Brisbane to the Downs were attacked, and the Govern­
ment stationed a detachment of soldiers at Helidon
for the protection of the teamsters. The blacks con­
tinued their raids on the drays for three or four years,
but spears were no match for bullets and powder.

Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt’s first expedition started
from Jimbour Station, Northern Darling Downs, in
1844, for Port Essington, Northern Territory. The
expedition passed through a region occupied by thou­
sands of blacks but was not molested, although they
must have been observed. It was not until June 28,
1845, that Leichhardt’s party were challenged. In the
attack, Gilbert, the naturalist, who was second in
charge, was fatally speared on the bank of the river
which was later called after him. This spot was only
about three days' journey from the Gulf waters. No
doubt the local blacks had memories of attacks by
Malays who visited the Gulf on fishing expeditions,
and regarded the white men as belonging to the same
class of people.

On October 20, 1846, a settler at North Pine
named Andrew Gregor, and a white woman, Mrs.
Shannon, his employee, were murdered by blacks led
by a notorious savage named Milbong Jemmy. Both
were battered to death with waddies. Mrs. Shannon's
husband was absent at the time. He was attacked later
but escaped. Milbong later attacked a settler named
Richardson, at Eagle Farm, and robbed his home.
Crossing the river at Doughboy Creek he attacked
sawyers at work, but was shot and died almost
immediately.

Siege in The Maranoa

In 1847, two brothers, William and Allan
MacPherson, took up Mt. Abundance as a station; the
peak had been named by Sir Thos. Mitchell, the ex­
plorer, in 1846. This was the frontier of settlement
in the west, and the aborigines early showed their
hostility. Within two years of occupation the
MacPhersons lost seven men killed by the blacks.

In the latter part of 1848 James Alexander Blythe
formed Tingun Station, near the site of Roma. He was
attacked and driven off the holding. As a result of
these attacks the New South Wales Government
formed a detachment of Native Police under the com­
mand of Frederick Walker, with a lieutenant and ten
men, to patrol the Maranoa district.

Outrages in Brisbane District

On September 11, 1847, three sawyers, James
Smith, William Boller, and William Waller, were work­
ing at North Pine. Blacks, led by the notorious outlaw
Dundalli, killed Waller; Boller was wounded badly and
died later. Smith escaped. Outrages continued in and
around Brisbane district and even in the settlement,
where blacks broke in and robbed buildings and terror­
ised unarmed residents. War between whites and
blacks was spreading everywhere. Anywhere the
whites settled was a direct challenge.

In 1847 settlement was extending rapidly — the
Darling Downs was already settled, and the Wide Bay
and Burnett districts were being eagerly sought after.
The northernmost station was Boogimbah (now Boonara), and the furthest west was Mt. Abundance.

Flocks of sheep and shepherds were regarded as fair hunting for the blacks. Retaliation by the whites continued, some of the methods being questionable. At Kilcoy, a station on the Upper Brisbane River, station hands set a trap by mixing arsenic with flour. The hut was robbed and scores of blacks died. All these actions embittered the dispossessed land owners, and opposition to the whites became fiercer.

On the Mary River on October 13, 1847, George Furber, the first settler in the Maryborough district, was building a wool shed, in which he was being assisted by some blacks. He and his white mate were treacherously attacked with broad axes. Furber's mate was killed and he was left for dead.

**An Epic Ride**

His skull was terribly gashed, but on recovering consciousness, he made a rough bandage for his head, caught his horse, crawled into the saddle, and rode to Ipswich, 150 miles away, arriving there semi-conscious. Dr. Dorsey stitched the ghastly wound, and after many days Furber recovered, although he was terribly scarred. Furber returned to Maryborough, and some months later shot and killed the black who had attacked him. No action was taken against Furber. Twelve months later the blacks killed Furber and his brother-in-law in the bush.

Settlers noted at this period that attacks by blacks were becoming systematic and organised, and information gleaned was that blacks had decided on extermination of the whites.

Every three years the tribes attended the feasts of nutritive nuts of the Bonyi (Bunya) Pine in the Bunya Mountains, laws on tribal boundaries being suspended during the season. The tribes came from Central Queensland and over the border of New South Wales, as defined later. The feasting lasted weeks and conferences between tribes took place regarding tribal laws and other interests. One interest would be the white invasion and the method of stopping it. Always after the feasts attacks on stations were more frequent.

During the early period of settlement a force known as Native or Black Police had been recruited for the purpose of protecting white settlers from the
attacks of the blacks. Native Police were recruited from the South and were foreign to local tribes, regarding all other blacks as enemies, with the lust to kill.

**Kennedy’s Last Trek**

In 1848 Edmund B. Kennedy, the explorer, landing at Rockingham Bay, North Queensland, with his party, began his inland journey to Cape York. The party suffered severe privations in travelling through the scrub country, and were soon attacked by blacks. Because of the food shortage, Kennedy was forced to divide the party when the journey was only half completed. With his faithful black boy, Jacky Jacky, Kennedy pushed on. They were ambushed by natives near the end of their journey and Kennedy was fatally speared. Jacky Jacky succeeded in reaching Cape York and was rescued by the waiting ship.

In the same year Gin Gin Station had been taken up by Gregory Blaxland and his nephew William Forster.

**Slaughter on the Burnett**

On June 4 1849 two brothers named Pegg, employed as shepherds, were killed a few miles from the station. Blaxland organised a punitive party, assisted by Thompson Bros. of Walla Station, fourteen miles away. Friendly blacks assisted the party, who caught up with the savages at the Cedars, now part of Bingera Sugar Plantation. No mercy was shown and scores of blacks were killed. Blaxland records that the blacks put up a great fight against firearms. Over sixty years later ploughmen unearthed skulls, bones and weapons. No black police figured in this action, and the authorities were blamed for inertia.

Twelve months later, in 1850, Blaxland was ambushed and killed about 200 yards from the station homestead. Again, squatters and station hands organised themselves into a punitive party. The blacks were followed down the Burnett River and were trapped on Paddy’s Island. Hundreds of blacks were killed, but many more escaped by swimming the river and disappearing into the Woongarra Scrub.

The power of the blacks was broken by these successive slaughters, but two years later, in 1852, Adolphus Henry Trevethan, owner of Rawbelle, was
killed on the station. His murderer, an aborigine named Davey, was hanged in Queen Street, Brisbane, on August 22, 1852.

The same year McLaren, owner of Isla Station, on the Dawson River, was killed, his body being found by his wife a few hundred yards from the homestead.

On December 3, 1853, Tom Dowse and his family, the first settlers at Sandgate, were attacked by blacks. They escaped with their lives, but the episode led to a native police camp being established there, with Lieutenant Wheeler in charge.

In 1854 W. Young, owner of Mt. Larcom Station in the Port Curtis district, while absent in Gladstone, returned home to find five of his employees murdered. This massacre took place on Christmas Day. On this occasion Black Police pursued the murderers and killed a large number.

On January 5, 1855, another hanging, that of the black outlaw Dundalli, took place in Queen Street, Brisbane, where the Post Office now stands. Dundalli had a hand in murders with Milbong Jemmy at North Pine. He was notorious for travelling at night, unusual in a black. When on the scaffold he appealed to assembled blacks to avenge his death. The execution was bungled. The rope was too long and Dundalli struck the ground and had to be strangled by the hangman.

Settlement extended into the Dawson River district—later called Leichhardt. Andrew Scott occupied Hornet Bank, Dawson River, in 1853, and settled it with sheep. He found a fierce tribe called “Jimans” settled around him. Early in occupation he had a shepherd killed and 1,400 sheep driven off. Scott and the Black Police rescued the sheep. Scott ringed the station with markings, which no blacks were allowed to pass. In 1854 he leased Hornet Bank to John Fraser, his wife and family of five sons and four daughters. Fraser died a few months later, but his widow and family carried on.

The Hornet Bank Massacre

The Frasers allowed the blacks into the station. “Boney,” a semi-civilised servant of the Frasers, turned traitor while the eldest son, William Fraser, was absent in Ipswich with drays seeking supplies for the station. On October 27, 1857, “Boney” led the wild blacks in the darkness to attack the family while they were asleep in their beds. Mrs. Fraser and her four
daughters and three sons were killed. One son, Sylvester, was knocked on the head, but hid under a bed and lived to escape and tell the story of the attack. Three men employees, one a tutor, and two shepherds, were killed either before or after the Fraser family.

The boy Sylvester carried the news to the Black Police, and a punitive expedition of Native Police and local settlers pursued and attacked the blacks whenever they could be found. This massacre of whites was the worst up to that time, and the New South Wales Government was strongly criticised for failing to take sufficient measures to protect settlers and their families from attack.


Conduct of Native Police

Discontent with the behaviour of the Native Constabulary over the years had led to an inquiry by a Parliamentary Select Committee in 1856, as a result of which Capt. F. Walker, Commandant of Native Police, was dismissed for intemperate habits and neglect of duty. He was succeeded by H. P. Marshall, but the Government later reduced the force from 136 to 72. The decision caused Marshall to resign. The Native Police Force continued to be unsatisfactory. Recruits were by this time being obtained among local tribes; many of them deserted and became spies for their tribes. Incidents occurred of inefficiency, e.g., a squad of Native Police reduced to one round of ammunition each, encountered a tribe of 200 blacks painted and ready for battle. They refused the challenge of the blacks and galloped away, giving the savages an impression of cowardice.

Seven months after Hornet Bank massacre, two shepherds were killed on Eurombah on April 16, 1858. Eurombah was twelve miles away from Hornet Bank, showing the blacks to be fully active. The Government appointed another Committee of Enquiry in June 1858, to enquire into the Dawson River murders. Recommendations included an increase of the Black Police force; all recruits to be obtained from the South—no less than 600 miles from local centres; increase of troopers’ pay from 5d. to 8d. per day; patrols to be carried out with a strong hand and all future outrages upon life and property to be punished with necessary severity. The enquiry revealed that Captain Walker (ex-commandant) recruited a local
Black Police squad which was paid and maintained by local squatters. Both enquiries also revealed that Separation of the Northern Districts from New South Wales was in sight. The N.S.W. Government was not prepared to spend any more than was barely necessary in police protection and in providing any further amenities for a territory that they were shortly to lose.

Queensland became a separate Colony on December 10, 1859, the population of the settled districts being 25,000, including Brisbane, 5,000.

The year 1860 saw development spreading rapidly. Bowen was opened up as a port, the Central west being settled to advantage, with the exception of hostility of blacks in all parts of the Colony.

The 1861 Inquiry

In 1861 the new Government of Queensland appointed a Committee of inquiry into the condition of the blacks and their treatment by squatters. Some squatters holding public positions defied the committee and refused to give evidence. No action or penalties were enforced. Witnesses were mostly evasive in their statements and excuses for short memories about events. One witness, Dr. Challinor (Coroner, Ipswich), was outspoken, after viewing shot blacks and bodies in a state of decomposition. He condemned the action of Lieut. Wheeler of the Black Police for his methods of dispensing justice. Challinor was a blacks' sympathiser, but he received no other support. This incident and others took place within a short distance of Brisbane, at Logan and Albert Rivers, Fassifern, and Coochin Coochin. The colony was not then two years old, although white settlement in these localities was twenty years old. Another witness, Capt. John Coley, resident of Brisbane since 1842, stated that 250 white people had been killed by blacks in nineteen years.

R. B. Sheridan, Customs Officer, Maryborough, regarded as a friend of the aborigines, stated that whites ill-treated blacks and cheated them of just dues such as payment for work, promising gifts and refusing them. These actions caused the blacks to distrust whites. He stated that blacks practised cannibalism in the town of Maryborough with full knowledge of the authorities. He also testified to
having seen Lieut. O'Connel Bligh shoot several blacks in the Mary River while trying to capture one of them.

James Davis (Duramboi), ex-convict, stated he lived fifteen years with blacks, with several tribes, some as far as 600 miles from Brisbane, and could speak several languages and knew all their customs. All practised cannibalism as a ceremony, but not from necessity.

Thomas Petrie, resident of Brisbane for twenty-four years (he was only three months old when he arrived), stated he grew up with blacks, and had no other playmates as a child. He learnt their language and customs and the blacks placed full confidence in him. He blamed whites for the bad conduct of blacks, making promises and not keeping them. He was cattle raising on the Pine River and had no trouble with blacks, although his neighbours were constantly worried, stock being killed and attacks made on residents. He approved of the retention of Black Police as a measure of protection, but condemned their methods. The Committee of Enquiry sat from May 3, 1861, to July 8, 1861. R. R. McKenzie (later Premier) was chairman. The Committee expressed regret that some witnesses refused to submit to examination; evidence proved that change in Police by substitution of white troopers for natives would destroy efficiency; under present Commandant, E. N. V. Morriset, destruction of life and property had diminished; any attempt to disband Black Police would have disastrous results; troopers for the force should be recruited away from locality of operation; Lieutenant F. Wheeler had acted indiscreetly at Logan and Fassifern, and should be reprimanded and transferred to another district; the murder of Fanny Briggs (white woman) by Black Police at Rockhampton was individual and the force was not to blame. The Committee also recommended that the Police Station be shifted from Rockhampton away from the influence of liquor.

**Massacre at Cullin-la-Ringo**

Within three months of the completion of the foregoing Committee's investigation and its report being submitted to Parliament, the Colony was startled by another massacre nearly double that of the Hornet Bank outrage on October 27, 1857.

On October 17, 1861, at Cullin-la-Ringo on the Nogoa River, nineteen people, men, women and child-
ren, were slaughtered on a bright sunny afternoon. Horatio Spencer Wills had formed the station about a fortnight previously, with 10,000 sheep, and had twenty-four people living on the holding. Like the Frasers of Hornet Bank, he made friends with the blacks. All arms were stored in the owner's tent as proof of good faith and trust. Good feeling prevailed and security seemed assured. Early in the afternoon sixty blacks appeared at the camp; all were friendly. One employee resting under a tree a few hundred yards away was startled by screams and shouting. He saw the beginning of the attack, then bolted for Rainworth, a neighbouring station thirty miles away. Gregor, the owner, organised a party of his employees and reached Cullin-la-Ringo at night—too late to do anything. Next morning the party found nineteen bodies, including H. S. Wills. Other employees were absent at the time of the attack. The party buried the bodies, then set out on revenge. They caught up with the blacks twenty-five miles away, and made an attack, but most of the blacks got away. The Black Police arrived on October 26 and shot a large number and recovered firearms and other property stolen by the murderers. This latest outrage intensified feeling against the blacks and attacks became numerous all over settled areas of the Colony. Cullin-la-Ringo was only occupied a fortnight when this outrage occurred. No buildings had been erected and the people were living in tents.

On September 7, 1861, Inspector Frederick Walker left Rockhampton to search for the explorers Burke and Wills. Walker had numerous clashes with blacks, the first one on Flinders River. Local blacks disputed his right to camp at a fresh water spring. Spears were thrown; the Black Police opened fire, and twelve blacks were killed. In a second encounter near Gulf waters several blacks were killed. Walker's report later on the nature of the country led to a rush for settlement in the Gulf area, which added to the conflict between whites and blacks. Walker returned to the Gulf afterwards; he died at Floraville on November 15, 1866, and his grave is unmarked.

The Jardines go North

One of the first acts of the new Colonial Government was to establish a settlement at Cape York for the benefit of shipping. John Jardine, police magistrate
at Rockhampton, was appointed Government Resident and sent in 1863 to establish the new settlement which was named Somerset. To provide livestock for the sustenance of the garrison, the Government approved Jardine's proposal to establish a station.

Jardine's two sons, Frank (22) and Alex (20), both excellent bushmen, were in charge of the expedition which left Carpentaria Downs (formed by J. G. Macdonald in 1863, and then the most northerly station) on October 11, 1864. There were eight others in the party: Archibald J. Richardson (surveyor), C. Scrutton, R. N. Binney, A. Cowderoy, and four native troopers from the Rockhampton district. The expedition had 250 head of cattle, purchased in the Bowen district, forty-one horses, and a mule.

After five months of peril and hardship, travelling over difficult country, and several clashes with the blacks, the expedition completed its 1,600-mile journey on March 2, 1865, without loss of human life. Twenty-one horses, the mule, and many of the cattle were lost.

"We Shot Our Way Through"

The Jardines summed up the expedition by saying: "We shot our way through!" Hostile blacks dogged them for more than 500 miles. On December 18, 1864, occurred the biggest clash, which became known as the Battle of the Mitchell.

This was one of the few recorded occasions when aboriginal warriors fought in pitched battle against armed white men. Hundreds of myalls charged the party, hurling showers of spears.

None of the Jardines' party was injured, although there were narrow escapes. The party, firing ten carbines, used more than fifty rounds of ammunition before the blacks fled, leaving scores of killed and wounded.

The settlement at Somerset was attacked by blacks on a number of occasions.

On June 8, 1865, a white sergeant and three black troopers were ambushed and killed by blacks on Rio Station, Dawson River. A vengeance expedition by the Black Police followed.

Christison Makes a Treaty

In 1866, Robert Christison settled at Lammermoor, 350 miles west of Bowen. The blacks were numerous and truculent, and inveterate sheep-stealers.
After unsuccessful overtures of friendship, Christison captured a young native buck and chained him to a verandah post at the homestead. With infinite patience Christison taught the native to speak English and christened him Barney.* Thereafter Barney was Christison's faithful and devoted shadow, and lived to a ripe old age on Lammermoor where he died honoured and lamented as a faithful and valued retainer. Christison used Barney as his ambassador to make a treaty with the tribe as a result of which mutual amity and protection was arranged.

Christison had no use for the Native Constabulary and warned them to keep off his run.

Both the blacks and Christison kept their promises, furnishing a unique example of 2,000 square miles of neutral territory where a handful of whites and many hundreds of blacks lived in amity and mutual understanding.

Eventually the tribe, named Dalleburra, was decimated—not by bullets but by disease.

Raiders in The Gulf Country

The earliest settlement in the Gulf Country closest to the sea was at Burketown, on the Albert River, in 1864, three years after the visit of Burke and Wills.

In 1868 there was a massacre by blacks on Liddie and Hetzer's Station on the Norman River. Inspector Uhr, in charge of a contingent of Native Police, found the mutilated bodies of two white men, W. Cannon and R. Manson, and a number of Chinese. Uhr and his police boys "dispersed" the blacks in the customary frontier fashion. The settlers sent Uhr a letter thanking him for ridding the district of fifty-nine savages.

In the same year, Albert Downs, on the Gregory River, was raided by blacks and robbed of firearms, axes, foodstuffs, and other supplies. Cassidy's Station on the Leichhardt River was also attacked, but there was no loss of life in either case. In each case the native marauders were "dispersed" by the law of the carbine.

On December 17, 1868, J. T. Collins, owner of North Creek Station, Nebo, was murdered by blacks.

Murders on The Barcoo

On May 17, 1872, the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin reported that Richard Griffith Welford, a

* M. M. Bennett's "Christison of Lammermoor."
squatter, and Henry Hall, stockman, were murdered by blacks on April 24. Welford had formed a cattle station adjoining Isis Downs in an area drained by the Barcoo River. Neighbours from Isis Downs visited the hut and found it looted. Not far away Welford’s body was found in a water hole. Welford and his employee were sawing a tree and apparently were attacked from behind. The stockman’s body was not found. Local opinion was very incensed and claimed there was insufficient police protection. Welford was well connected in England; his father was a judge and his brothers were barristers in Australia. He was buried close to the waterhole and the property was afterwards named Welford Downs. He had lived in the district six years and was very popular. A report of the murder appears in the Queenslander dated May 25, 1872.

On August 13, 1872, Valley of Lagoons Station, North Queensland, reported that on a neighbouring station, Wyandotte, the blacks rounded up and burnt 500 sheep. On this occasion Inspector R. Johnstone denied his patrol did any “dispersing” of the blacks.

**Fate of The Maria Adventurers**

Early in 1872 seventy-five men, comprising all grades of society, but mostly adventurers, left Sydney in the brig “Maria” to prospect for gold in New Guinea. The brig was in unseaworthy condition, leaking badly. It reached the neighbourhood of Gladys Inlet, Johnstone River, North Queensland, and then foundered. The company tried to reach shore in boats and rafts, became separated and encountered blacks, some friendly, others hostile. Great suffering was experienced by the thirty-six survivors. Thirty-five were drowned or killed by the blacks. Captain Moresby, H.M.S. “Basilisk,” assisted in the rescue. Inspector Johnstone and Black Police dealt with alleged cannibals and murderers, but there was grave suspicion that many of the blacks they killed were innocent.

On November 22, 1873, on Gilberton Goldfield, two Chinese prospectors were murdered by blacks and two others were reported missing, the latter believed to be victims of a cannibal feast. The blacks regarded the flesh of Chinese as a delicacy.

**War on The Palmer**

On September 3, 1873, James Venture Mulligan reported the Palmer River as a payable goldfield. A rush began. Blacks in large numbers, both inland and
on the coast, resented the intrusion of whites; no doubt they had memories of the Kennedy expedition of 1848, and the Jardine Brothers, 1864. The blacks started hostilities immediately. Inspector R. Johnstone and the Black Police arrived from Cardwell on Cooktown site on October 24, 1873. The Palmer goldfield was 120 miles from Cooktown, at the mouth of the Endeavour River. The route to the field was over rough country. One part known as Hell’s Gates, in a narrow gorge, gave protection to blacks in attack. Chinese were the worst sufferers. They passed through in thousands unarmed. When attacked they dropped their packs and ran like animals. The whites also suffered, but had means of reprisal. The blacks became cunning: they would stampede teams, pack horses, horse and bullock drays, in creeks, or on steep pinches in the mountains. These guerilla tactics gave them the best results. Blacks on the Cooktown-Palmer road would eat horses, as well as human beings. This warfare continued for seven years and it can be claimed that the Palmer blacks put up the best fight against the white invasion than anywhere else in Australia. They were of different tribes but they must have had a common understanding that the white man was their greatest enemy and on either side no quarter was given.

Battle Camp is a place name marked on all maps of the Far North of Queensland. It was here that a real battle took place between white prospectors and Black Police on one side, and the myall blacks on the other. The location is about half-way to the Palmer. Two prospectors were speared and killed on the approach to the range, and also a teamster and his family were speared at the same place. The horses were also speared and the dray was raided of its load which was mostly foodstuffs. The police were able to surround the savages not far from this spot and made an attack. It is recorded that it was a stand-up fight, with the blacks full of determination to win. But spears were no match for powder and bullets and the blacks were handicapped: when all their spears were thrown their opponents threw none back for them to carry on the fight. Hundreds of blacks were killed in this encounter, but the fight did not deter them as there were still many hundreds left in the ranges.

In 1876 a police camp was formed on the Bulloo River, consisting of two sub-inspectors, one constable,
and eight black troopers. There was also a police camp at Yo Yo Creek, Augathella, in the same year, consisting of two sub-inspectors, two constables, six black troopers.

In South Western Queensland, the blacks were not as savage as their kinsmen in the North, but they did make occasional attacks on the white settlers. In the early 1870s, Wombendery station was taken up by Messrs. Reid and Fraser. A white man named Silletor and a boy named Maloney were left in charge of the stock. They allowed the blacks in close to their camp. One day the boy Maloney was missing; Silletor found his speared body in a nearby waterhole. Inspector Gilmour, Thargomindah, took up the charge. Black Police action was assumed, but there were no reports.

The Kalkadoons Make War

On Christmas Day 1878, near Sulieman Creek Station, in the Cloncurry district, an intending settler named Molvo, and his three employees, were murdered while travelling with a mob of cattle. When camped at a waterhole known as Woonamo they were attacked by the Kalkadoons, a fierce tribe occupying a large area of the mountainous country in the district. The bodies were thrown in the waterhole and the cattle driven off. It is believed that Molvo allowed the blacks into his camp. When the alarm was raised the Kalkadoons were busy raiding other stations spearing cattle. Black Police stationed at Boulia in charge of Inspector Eglinton, arrived on the scene and joined with Alexander Kennedy, owner of Suleiman Creek. With a party of whites they went into the ranges and found the blacks, who challenged them with contempt. A fight took place and scores of blacks were killed, but the tribe remained unconquered.

In the beginning of the 1880s Cloncurry town was an isolated outpost in the centre of the Kalkadoon country, and the few townspeople were in fear of an attack. A police inspector with an aristocratic name, Marcus de la Poer Beresford, had a patrol in the ranges around the head of the Williams River on January 24, 1883. He rounded up a mob of blacks and stupidly treated them like cattle; he drove them into a gorge at night and decided to hold them there until morning. In the night the blacks attacked, Beresford was killed, also his troopers, with the exception of one man, who carried the news to Cloncurry. Inspector Eglinton
came from Boulia but the blacks had retreated into the hills and were safe. In March, 1884, Inspector F. C. Urquhart took charge at Cloncurry and set out upon a campaign against the Kalkadoons. Police horses were stolen by the blacks and Urquhart received a challenge to come out into the ranges and fight. Urquhart did not confine himself to the town, but set up a camp outside, twenty-five miles away on the Corella River. Early in 1884 James White Powell of Calton Hills, sixty miles away, was murdered and his black boy Jacky speared. Jacky reported the murder and Urquhart went into action. He buried Powell on Mistake Creek, tracked down the murderers, and found them in a gorge feasting on cattle. Urquhart was assisted by Alex Kennedy, who was partner to Powell. The carbines barked and the blacks suffered heavy casualties. The avengers believed the power of the blacks was broken, and Urquhart stayed in the ranges for two months clearing up the position. The Kalkadoon tribe has been recognised as being the fiercest and most courageous of all the Queensland tribes. When attacked they would always put up a fight, but the firearms always won the day.

The last determined stand made by the Kalkadoons occurred about 1890 when a Chinese shepherd was murdered on an outstation of Granada on the Dugald River. It was a lonely outpost and visited about once a fortnight. What actually happened is unknown, but the sheep had been in the yard several days. The camp was robbed and burnt, and the remains of the shepherd were found miles away. Hopkins, the owner, got the aid of Urquhart and the blacks were located at Prospector’s Creek. In the fight that followed, Urquhart nearly lost his life; one of the troopers shot his attacker. The contest was savage but the blacks lost the day. This spot is known locally as Battle Mountain.

Archibald Meston’s Survey

In 1895 the Queensland Government appointed Archibald Meston, who was previously Protector of Aborigines, as a special Commissioner to report on the condition of the blacks in Queensland, particularly in Cape York Peninsula, which was the last part of Queensland to be concerned with their depredations. Meston started from Thursday Island and moved southward. He visited Mapoon Mission, 120 miles from
Thursday Island, called at York Downs station and Moreton Telegraph station, and established friendly relations at Batavia River, meeting 250 blacks and making them the gift of a bullock. There were further meetings at Port Douglas and Daintree Rivers, where the tribes received gifts of flour, tobacco, and a bullock. Meston found the country between Newcastle Bay and Princess Charlotte Bay in the same original state as it was thousands of years ago; there was no white settlement in this area. In parts where pearl shell and beche-de-mer fishing was carried on the blacks were exploited and ill treated; gins were taken on vessels for immoral purposes, and ill-treated as well. These actions raised feelings of revenge in the blacks, who retaliated. At Moreton Telegraph station Meston met an old black who remembered Kennedy passing through the Peninsula in 1848. Meston described the Batavia tribes as being six feet in height, and their women had graceful figures. He estimated there were 20,000 blacks in the Peninsula from the $17^\circ$ parallel. Of this number 12,000 had no intercourse with whites. There were six mission stations operating up there and carrying out good work.

Meston carried out this investigation unarmed and was emphatic that if blacks were treated well, they could be trusted. His recommendations were:

- Total abolition of Native Police, to be replaced by white police with the assistance of unarmed trackers;
- no native police officer under the old system to be retained;
- absolute prohibition of all aboriginals on pearlshell and beche-de-mer vessels, under any conditions whatever;
- total exclusion from townships of all aboriginals;
- imprisonment for sale of intoxicating liquor or opium;
- penalty for whites found with aboriginal blankets;
- reserves to be created in Queensland for aboriginals only, with food centres;
- suitable lands to be used for agriculture.

The foregoing description of the Black War in Queensland was taken from official records, such as police reports, and reports presented to Parliament on Black Police activities, as well as newspaper reports dating back to the early 1840s. It can be said without exaggeration that the conflict between whites and blacks lasted for more than fifty years in the spread of settlement throughout Queensland.

A novel feature of the campaign was that the white officers of the police never led the black
troopers but followed them in the rear. Cynical critics say this was due to a lack of knowledge about tracking, and that very few of them were good bushmen, as well as the old adage "Never let a blackfellow travel behind you." The inborn savage instinct of the black to attack a stranger has been responsible for many deaths of settlers in the long period of white occupation.