IN THE DAYS WHEN THE WORLD WAS WIDE

Anecdotes of South-West Queensland

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(Read before a meeting of the Society on 25 May 1967.)

This paper chiefly concerns the way of life lived by the people of South-West Queensland during the mid 1890's and early 1900's. Most of the events took place at the town of Charleville and the Warrego district, and a similar way of life was lived in most Western towns.

Our house had been what was called "the Cottage" of the original Victoria Hotel built by my grandfather in 1865. My mother was born in it in 1867 as were four of her five children. When the house was built the land was part of Gowrie Station and it was not till 1868 that the spot was surveyed and called Charleville.

My maternal grandmother was the first white woman there and my mother the first white child born there. The house was built of pit-sawn timber. It was not built on stumps, but on very heavy hardwood sleepers. The walls were of heavy hardwood slabs and the roof of shingles. The interior walls were lined with hessian, which was painted over with calcium. The room, called the drawing room (in those days), was lined with varnished Cypress pine. The front verandah posts were 1ft. x 1ft. square. The kitchen was some distance behind the house and connected to the house by a covered walk.
The old original kitchen was further back still. It had an enormous fire-place across which was a heavy rail from which hung pots and camp ovens. The fire was an open fire of logs on the ant-bed floor. It was not in use in my time but had become the wash-house where "Yellow Lizzie" did the washing.

My early recollections start from about 1896 (the population was about 1,000). The grown-ups still discussed the shearers' strike of '91 and the bank smashes of '93.

THE SHEARERS' STRIKE OF '91

The shearers' strike camp was south of the town, about two miles. It was a tent town laid out in streets. For many years, the remains of the cook's stove fire-places could be seen. It is a wonder the A.W.U. have not marked the spot as it is historically connected with the rise in later years of the A.L.P. From what I used to hear, there was little violence in the town but, in the surrounding district shearing sheds were burnt down, and fights over free labour were frequent. The military were encamped in the Shire Council grounds. Major, afterwards Colonel, Ricardo was in charge. They had a Gatling gun with them.

About this time, the changeover from the blade shears to the machine shears was taking place, and there were many arguments as to their respective merits. Like all Western towns, Charleville depended on shearers, drovers and carriers for business. The big stations owned by overseas companies bought their supplies from the cities. Today those big areas have been cut up, and cut up again a second time.

COMING OF COBB & CO.

A new era was dawning: an industry had started in 1893—Cobb & Co. Their coach-building factory was transferred from Bathurst and Burke to Charleville. Their coaches had been coming to Charleville since 1875. I will divert from Cobb & Co.'s factory for a while to relate the coming of Cobb's coaches to the town. The following is from "The Western Star," Roma, Saturday, 2 October 1875:

"Mr. Murphy, Cobb's road manager, left Roma on Sunday afternoon the 18th ult. accompanied by Mr. Bradley of Toowoomba, to inspect the road to Charleville. They arrived in Charleville at noon Thursday, left again early next morning and were back in Roma by Sunday evening, thus doing the whole distance, 360 miles, in seven days—without a change of horses! Some drive—some horses!"

To divert again, my mother going home for the Christmas holidays from All Hallows' Convent went by train to Dalby,
then by Cobb’s Coach. Six days to Charleville! Today it is under two hours per plane!

BIG COACH CENTRE

Back now to Cobb’s factory. The whole outfit was brought from Bathurst and Bourke by coaches and teams to Charleville. At its peak, the factory employed about 40 tradesmen, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, body builders, coach trimmers, painters and saddlers; apart from coach drivers and grooms. The factory had its own cricket and football teams. The company, as well as building coaches, built buggies, sulkies and buckboards for the public.

Speaking of sulkies, the general manager of Cobbs, James Rutherford, had special sulkies built for his own use. These sulkies had a pole and were drawn by two horses, and were much heavier than the usual sulky and had broader tyres. Rutherford would start his tour of inspection at Charleville and end up in the Gulf. He, of course, had plenty of horse-flesh at the various mail changes of the company. Many of the horses were well bred. The company, among many sires, had one at St. George called Patmos. Some of his horses won races around the country and two I remember, “Problem” and “Paddy” won in Brisbane.

Among the tradesmen at the factory were the Hoopers—Hooper, sen., and three sons. As late as about five years ago I used to visit Geo. Hooper at Indooroopilly, and he showed me his apprenticeship papers to Cobb and Co. at Bathurst, signed by James Rutherford, dated 1882. He started off at 5/- per week and ended up at £1 per week and if he was of good behaviour during the apprenticeship he received a bonus of £20. George received the £20. I tried to get the papers for this Society, but he had promised them to the Bathurst Society.

George told me that the first coaches in Victoria were Wells Fargo coaches imported from U.S.A. George’s grandfather built some of the first coaches in Victoria. His father some of the first at Bathurst and George built the last at Charleville.

KING OF THE ROAD

As to actual coach travelling, the coach driver was king of the road and would be looked up to as a jet pilot is today. The seats of honour were the box seats, up with the driver, which cost 10/- extra—mostly occupied by commercial travellers. A typical day’s trip would be Charleville to Augathella—52 miles.

This coach had a prize team—five lovely bays (corn fed). They were only used on the first stage out of Charleville, and then on the return trip into Charleville. The first stage was 13
miles to Gowrie Station mail change. A change of horses, and on the coach rolled to the 27-mile pub and mail change. On again to the third mail change, to the Yo Yo, about 13 miles. Then on the last stage to Augathella, arriving at midnight, having left Charleville at 3 o'clock. This was nine hours' driving, including three stops, and was typical of most coach trips.

The next day, this coach went on to Tambo, 80 miles. The driver was Bob Wright, who on the third day started on his return trip back to Charleville, arriving on the fourth day. The fifth day he had a spell till 3 o'clock in the afternoon and started the same trip again—528 miles from Saturday to Saturday.

**THE BIG DROUGHT**

About 1896 the big drought started and did not break until 1902. There were children, five and six years old, who saw the river run for the first time. There were huge stock losses, and many stations were taken over by the banks. There were few sheep and cattle, hence no droving, shearing or station work, and all the Western towns were "dead" so far as business was concerned. The only job bushmen could get was mulga cutting, and this petered out as graziers' funds got lower. It must have cost Cobb and Co. a fortune to keep their horses alive as coach after coach carted corn and chaff to the mail changes. Carriers also lost whole teams of bullocks and horses.

Clement Wragge, the weather man of the time, informed the C.T. Council he would make rain with guns by concussion. The Council commissioned him to get the guns made. These guns were called Stiger Vortex guns and were used in Europe to break up hailstorms. The guns duly arrived and were named after the Premier of the day (Sir Robert Philp) and five of his Cabinet.

The guns made a lot of noise but no rain fell to break the drought. Everybody's tanks were empty; the bore water had not at that time been laid on to the town and well water only had to be used. The sanitary system was the cesspit method which polluted the wells and typhoid fever was prevalent. Sandy blight was very bad too, with plenty of flies, with dead sheep and cattle everywhere.

**HARD TIMES**

Just as horses stand tail to head to brush off the flies, we school "kids" while marching into school brushed the flies off the boy in front with our handkerchiefs. Fly screen doors were unknown. Once a week all school pupils with sandy blight or granulation were marched up to the hospital where
old Dr. Kirkaldy would turn the top lid of the eye back and paint it with Blue Stone. Did it hurt! There were all sorts of eye lotions for Sandy Blight, also home remedies, such as cold tea leaf poultices, to take the heat out of the eye.

Some people, both male and female, had their ears pierced and small gold ear-rings inserted, and after the style of the rings of gun metal which were worn on fingers to cure rheumatism, these ear-rings were supposed to strengthen the sight.

"Bung" eyes, lips and noses were very common, caused by what we called a "Soldier fly." A few seconds after being stung by the fly, the part stung would swell up. At the time I speak of, there was only one doctor, and a married couple ran the hospital as wardsman and matron, both unqualified.

**SHEEP BOILED DOWN FOR TALLOW**

During the drought years Campbell's boiling-down works put through a lot of sheep for tallow. For a dozen eggs the slaughtermen would "swap" two dozen sheeps' tongues. The boiling-downs afterwards became a wool scour. The wet scoured wool was laid out on calico sheets and sun-dried. The scour was afterwards purchased by Mr. John Armstrong, who installed modern machinery. Mrs. Betty Maloney, one of our members, is a daughter of Mr. Armstrong.

In 1897 the railway line was opened to Wyandra and the Governor, Lord Lamington, came out to open it. My father was the Mayor of Charleville at the time and I went down with him to the opening.

**MULGA STUMP FOR LOCK-UP**

The police station was a railway carriage and the lock-up was a big mulga stump to which a prisoner was tied up with a chain to the ankle. Previously prisoners were tied to a log, but a big powerful "navvy" got thirsty and carried log and all over to the pub!

When the Boer War broke out some of the local boys enlisted, the editor of the *Charleville Times* (a military man previously) among them. He was R. B. ("Bob") Echlin, and was a captain. The "Soldiers of the Queen" and "The Absent-minded Beggar" were the popular songs of the day.

**"THE BREAKER"**

An Englishman named "Harry Morant"² had been a horse-breaker around the Warrego. He was an educated man and wrote poetry under the pen-name of "The Breaker." He was among those who went to the Boer War. He was court-martialed and shot for shooting Boer prisoners.
Speaking of poets, there were plenty of bush poets around the west, and most boys and girls recited poems at school concerts. Most of the bush poets were of the school of Adam Lindsay Gordon. The theme was mostly the horse, for instance Harry Morant's “Who's Riding Old Harlequin Now?” and John Creevy (of Augathella), “The Kenniffs.” Speaking of Constable Doyle, the horse he rode was Landsdowne bred—its place was on the turf. Referring to Dahlke he was mounted on the pride of Carnarvon, a mare called Boadicea.

The noted horseman, Lance Skuthorpe, was also a poet. One of his poems about a rough rider says, “He was rocked to sleep on a buckjumper’s back.”

SOME COLOURFUL CHARACTERS

There were some colourful characters about in those days. “Happy Jack” was a shearer who was gaoled for three years on St. Helena over the shearers’ strike. In gaol, he learnt bootmaking and came back to Charleville and opened a boot business and was supported by all. He also sold bicycles. The shearers had discarded the horse and packhorse and had taken to bicycles.

Another character, Bill McKay, a Dr. Barnardo boy from England, taught himself the violin and signwriting. He was also the town crier (Bell Ringer) and he and his daughter had a barber’s shop. The daughter was an expert at shaving. At night, he sold hot pies from a lorry drawn by four “billy” goats.

“POSSUM JACK”

The days of the bushman coming to town and knocking down his cheque were still in vogue; one character, “Possum Jack,” would climb up a tree and sit in the fork, hence his name. Another old character, “The Bower Bird,” perished from thirst between Charleville and Bourke. When his body was found, his old dog was there with him, dead.

The Charleville Times, after years of being the only paper, had opposition, The Guardian. Very soon the editors were at loggerheads. After much criticism of each other in their papers, they decided to settle matters in the ring with the gloves. A hall was engaged and proceeds went to the hospital. The Charleville Times editor won in three rounds.

Now a word or two about the aborigines. There were still many aborigines about in the late 90’s when Archie Meston came out and put them in Mission Stations. I often saw corroborees, including one big one at Gowrie Crossing in which about 60 took part. I only saw one case of “bone pointing.” My father had a groom called “Mick.” Mick took
sick and despite Dr. Kirkaldy's efforts he pined away and died—a case of mind over matter.

We boys used to go fishing and bird watching with aboriginal boys. They had all sorts of ways of getting fish. After a flood, when the water between the deep holes was still running, but only about a foot deep, the aborigines cut a stick, somewhat like a hockey stick, with which they knocked the fish swimming up stream. The fish always swam up stream. Good catches of small cod, yellow belly, catfish, and bony bream were caught. The bony bream are not edible, but the boys bartered them for grapes or watermelons from the Chinese gardeners. The Chinese made a medicine from the bony bream.

BLANKETS FOR ABORIGINES

May 24, Queen Victoria's birthday, was a big day for the aborigines. It was the day when each aborigine was given a blanket. My grandmother often told us of the year the blacks did not receive their blankets until August. Sir Joshua Peter Bell was the Minister in charge. The blacks were very annoyed at not receiving the blankets on time, and composed a ditty something like this:

_Baal Budgeree Mr. Bell, baal gibbit it blanket,_
_Warra Warra tumble down, wheel barrow broke it._

which means—

_No good Mr. Bell, no give it blanket._
_Rain, rain tumble down, bullock dray broke down._

The ditty may have been the theme for a corroboree, because most corroborees were about something which happened in the past and was really their way of recording history.

CHARLIE JOINED THE SALVATION ARMY

The police black tracker Charlie joined the Salvation Army. One night in the main street, Charlie was giving his testimony and some of the boys were interjecting. Charlie said, "It's all right, you smart fellow throwing off! How would you get on if you woke up in the morning and found yourselves dead?"

On another occasion the subject was "Sharks." Someone said, "Sharks won't attack blackfellows; you would be all right, Charlie!"

Charlie retorted, "I don't know; I could be unlucky and run into a colour-blind shark!"

Black gins were employed as washerwomen. Most of them smoked clay pipes. Delilah Mary, Jenny Bradley and "Yellow Lizzie" (half-castes) were the best known laundresses. The wife of aboriginal Darby McCarthy, the jockey
now riding in France, is a descendant of the Warrego tribe. Her grandfather, Billy Hart, was a first-class roughrider in his youth.

CHINESE GARDENERS

Chinese gardeners grew vegetables on the banks of the town waterhole. They irrigated by horse (one horse). A scaffold was built in the water and a big cask with a hinged bottom was pulled up by a windlass. The windlass was a big beam across a stump in the ground. To one end of the beam a rope was attached which went over a pulley wheel at the top of the scaffold. To the other end of the beam the horse was attached and he walked around and around a track somewhat like a circus ring.

The horse was blindfolded as he would stop working if he could see that no Chinaman was there to watch him. Every time the horse went around the full circle, the cask of water would be pulled to the top of the scaffold, where it was tilted into a tank which was connected with pipes which ran down into the garden.

The Chinese grew every variety of vegetable and fruit; chiefly grapes and watermelons. In later years, citrus fruit was grown. At Wyandra, 50 miles down river, there was a very big citrus orchard, which produced beautiful fruit.

“TWANG” SMOKERS

There were a couple of Chinese storekeepers and a Chinese baker in the township. The Chinese of the township were good law-abiding citizens. It was the Chinese on the stations in the earlier days who taught the aborigines to smoke “Twang” (opium).

On two occasions I saw opium being smoked, the first among the ti-trees in the bed of the Warrego. Jimmy Warby and his gin were smoking opium charcoal, the refuse of the pure opium. On the other occasion I was camped out one night, going to the Adavale races.

It was before the days of the motor car, and it was a big camp—racehorses, buggies, sulkies and vans, horse trainers, jockeys and bookies. I saw Jim Perfue, a horse trainer, and Jimmy the Rat, a jockey, smoking opium before turning in to their swags for the night; they were both half-caste Chinese.

In the Warrego, above and below Charleville, are some big permanent waterholes; these are a great place for Murray Cod. At Baker’s Bend, 30 miles below the town, is the biggest and deepest hole and some very big cod have been taken from this hole. Bill O’Sullivan, the secretary of the A.W.U., caught one there weighing 110lb.

About bird nesting. The aborigines cut steps with a toma-
hawk in the gum-trees to climb up to the hollow where the nest is. One year, I remember it was a good season so it was not necessary to do any climbing, as there were millions of budgerigars and not enough trees with hollows to go around. They built on the top of tree stumps and even in hollow logs lying on the ground. Two brothers named Campbell converted two wagonettes into aviaries on wheels and took two loads of budgerigars to Sydney.

Before 1896, Charleville was the terminus or rail-head of the south-western railway. In 1896, the railway went south to Cunnamulla. The carriers (bullock and horse teams) had followed the line out from Dalby in the east; others had come up the river from Bourke in New South Wales. One family I knew came from Goulburn, another from Albury. As the railways went further out, so did the carriers.

TEAMSTERS AND CARRIERS

The big table-top wagons were built in Charleville by blacksmiths. Bill Grice built the biggest wagon in the West. Donald Angus, now 93, was born at Orange in 1874—and is still going strong at Quilpie. His father came to the Bulloo River in 1882, and Donald Angus had his own team in 1894.

The teamsters carted supplies for the stations on the outward trip and brought back wool on the return trip. Some carriers took their wives and families with them, the wife driving a wagonette with the children in it. My grandmother drove a wagonette from Charleville to Charters Towers accompanying my grandfather with a mob of horses to sell to the diggers. My mother, aged five, and her sister of seven, travelled in the wagonette too. A wagonette is a covered-in vehicle like the covered wagon, the “prairie schooner,” of the old American West.

When carriers took their wives and children with them, underneath the wagon would be a coop with some fowls and following behind would be some goats for milk. It was a tough, hard life in drought and tougher still in flood times when wagons became bogged. Generally, in wet weather the teams travelled in pairs. If one team became bogged, the other team was hitched on to pull it out. I knew a woman who took turn about with her husband to drive the bullock team. I can see her now, trudging along in elastic side boots beside the team with the big whip over her shoulder. After her husband died, she carried on alone. A few years ago her grandson won a scholarship to the University of California.

The carriers did much of the pioneering of this country. Many of the boys (sons of carriers) who were my schoolmates became graziers. Around Quilpie very many of the graziers are the grandsons of the old carriers.
I had a great deal to do with carriers. My first job was office boy with Fitzwalter and Co., storekeepers. One part of my work was to make out waybills. A few of the older ones could not write their name and would make an X (his mark) which I witnessed. A clerk who worked with me showed me the signature of a man in an old waybill book who was hanged on the gallows beam which is on display on the front verandah at Newstead House.

"MAGPIE BILL"

There was a "bullocky" called "Magpie Bill." He did not own his own team but worked for wages. He was in love with a girl but she rejected him. While her family was in town he poisoned the flour. The next day the mother of the family made a damper and everybody became ill. Fortunately no one died. Bill was arrested and charged with attempted murder. Going down to Charleville in Cobb's coach in charge of a constable, Bill was handcuffed to another prisoner named "Ginger" Gleeson who was a noted wit. Bill asked Ginger, "How long do you think I'll get, Ginger?"

After a bit of pretended thought, Ginger said, "Oh, about fourteen days!"

"Fourteen days for attempted murder? What rot!" says Bill.

"Yes," said Ginger, "but they will be fourteen Christmas Days!"

Bill got fourteen years at the Roma District Court.

"GINGER" GLEESON

There are many yarns about Ginger Gleeson. Here's one of the many. Ginger was a "spieler" at country race meetings. He made a book on the outside, or "outer," as it was called. He did not have a licence and his clientele were aborigines and poor whites who bet in silver shillings and florins. This particular day the meeting was at Augathella. The favourite won and Ginger could not, or would not, pay. So the crowd started to give him a kicking.

Ginger said: "Don't kick me towards Tambo! Kick me towards home—Charleville!"

My employer, George James Fitz-Walter, was a great citizen. He carried the town on his back during the big drought. He must have been owed a fortune. He issued his own £1 notes (or "shin plasters"). He believed in advancing with the times. He had the first typewriter, the first gramophone, and later the first motor car. Fitz-Walter started as a carrier, or hawker, with a van out on the Bulloo. In the wet season of 1878, a hawker with goods for sale camped on the
highest spot, a stony ridge on Cooper's Creek. He stayed there and his wagon became a store, and the spot became the township of Windorah, which means Stony Point.

**THE WEST LOOKS UP**

With the breaking of the drought, the West began to look up. Very big horse sales were held behind Dalton's Hotel, where the Bank of New South Wales now stands. Thousands of horses were put through the yards. Buyers came from all parts of Australia. Most of the horses came from the Northern Territory and North Queensland, and most of them were bought for the Indian Army as remounts (walers).

A year or so later the cattle began to come in to Charleville. Charleville was the railhead in those days; the Quilpie line was not built until much later. The cattle came from the big stations in the Northern Territory, such as Wave Hill, Victoria River Downs and various Gulf stations. Some even came from the Kimberleys in Western Australia.

One lot came from Blue Mud Bay, on the Arafura Sea, and were months on the road. The cattle were delivered at various stations around the Warrego for spelling. The boss drovers came into town with their men and paid them off. When three or four mobs arrived within a week or so of one another, the town became a real wild western town (without the guns).

Drovers after months on the road spent their money freely and the “pubs” did a roaring trade, and there was plenty of two-up and hazard playing as well. For entertainment, there were drovers’ dances every night, and cricket matches between the locals and the drovers.

**BARE KNUCKLE FIGHTS**

Of course there were the inevitable fights. I remember that, one Sunday afternoon down in the dry bed of the Warrego, the drovers' champion fought the local champion (bare knuckles) for £20 a side. The local knocked the drover out quick smart.

The drovers produced another fighter and fought on the same conditions, £20; again the local champion won. The local was a blacksmith striker at Cobb and Company's factory and, needless to say, was in good condition.

Then to clinch it all, two drovers got in an argument and fought for a “fiver.” One had a dash of Chinese in him—the one who got beaten. The beaten man challenged the winner to fight again. Before sparring up for the second fight, the Irishman with the Chinese blood exclaimed, “He beat the
Chinese in me. Let's see if he can beat the Irish in me!" The Irishman won the second fight.

Most of the drovers' plants had a couple of aborigines among them. They were real myalls from the Northern Territory, only boys of 16 or 17, and Charleville was an eye-opener to them.

**EVERY FAMILY HAD GOATS**

Every family had a few goats, otherwise they would have to use condensed milk as there were no dairies in those days. Goats are very hardy and will live where sheep will perish. The yarn about goats eating jam tins is partly true. I have seen them lick the paper labels off and chew them. A bill poster had hardly finished pasting a poster advertising a circus, before the goats were up on their hind legs and stripped the wall bare to get at the flour and water paste. Young wether goats are eaten, which reminds me of the waitress at the bush pub who asked: "What will you have—goat or galah—goat's off?" So you see how popular goat on the menu was.

**"STEPPER" DAVIS AND "STINKER"**

There was a race and sports meeting combined at a Central Western town. The local bookmaker of the district was one "Stepper Davis." There was a goat race on the programme. "Stinker" opened up at 4 to 1 and was backed down to even money. Away they went; some of the kids fell off their mounts, others went bush and "Stinker" won by the proverbial street. In racing parlance it was a one-goer race. After the payout, Bookie Davis said "There were only two b—goats, Stinker and I!"

One of our "nannies" had a three-legged kid; only one hind leg. He was quite as agile as a normal goat. We had him castrated and he grew into a big goat. The Town Council had imported from Victoria some Angora bucks to improve the local breed; he was one of them and had fine long white hair.

Wirth's Circus came to town, and my brother and I sold him for £5—quite a sum of money for boys in those days. Years afterwards I went over to Wirth's Circus at South Brisbane and there he was!

Annual show and race weeks were the big gatherings in western towns. Those were the days of horses and buggies, and when people came to town it was for a week, not like today with the motor car only for a few hours. Some of the bigger squatters drove in, in four-in-hand, but most a buggy and pair. The leading hotel yard was full of buggies and their horse paddocks outside town were full of horses.
WOMEN RODE SIDE SADDLE

Up to about 1910 some women still rode side saddle at the show. Two local girls, Connie B. and Vera L., were the first to ride astride, and the old chin-waggers gave them a decent roasting! Apart from the show and races, there was camp drafting, and at night there would be a Race Ball and a Show Ball. This was before the days of pictures, and local concerts were the only entertainment, but at showtime a circus would always turn up and often a tent dramatic company.

Professional foot running held in the 1890’s and 1900’s, and on Easter Monday and St. Patrick’s Day, were the big days for sports meetings, foot running and bicycle races.

THE OLD WAYS CHANGE

After World War I, the old days and the old ways changed. The motor car became more general, and to it could be attributed the cause of most of the change. With its coming went Cobb’s coaches, the carriers, the blacksmiths, and the saddlers. People came to town for the day and went home again at night. Wayside bush pubs were passed by the traveller and soon closed up. It was all for the better. Today the westerner has practically every convenience of the city dweller. Now the motor car is giving way to the ’plane.

Recently, down at Eagle Farm Aerodrome, I met an old lady of 90 going home to Charleville. The trip would take under two hours with stops at Dalby and Roma. My thoughts went back to 1865. My grandmother arrived in Brisbane aboard the “Fiery Star” from Liverpool after coming across the Atlantic from Boston in the U.S.A. From Brisbane she went by boat to Ipswich, thence to Myall Creek (Dalby). Then on to Roma and then to the Maranoa River, now Mitchell. The road then did not go west to the Warrego, but up the Maranoa and across to the upper Warrego, down the Warrego to Gowrie Station, which later became Charleville. How long the journey took I do not know. It was done by buggy and wagonette. It was before Cobb and Co. in those parts.

These men and women, drovers, shearers, station hands, squatters, coach drivers and others were all pioneers, mostly unknown, who did their bit to open up this great country.

Many of them are at rest amidst the cypress on the sand hill by the creek at Charleville; others lie by the stock routes of the Gulf and Northern Territory in unmarked graves.
APPENDICES

1. CLEMENT Wragge's Stiger Vortex Guns

Wragge’s Stiger Vortex cannon was a cone-shaped gun, about 15ft. long, erected vertically, with the bell-mouth uppermost. It was charged with exactly 7½oz. of explosive. Guns of the Stiger Vortex type were claimed to have been used effectively for the control of rainfall in Styria (Austria) and upper Italy. Wragge had made a special study into weather-control methods during a visit to Europe in 1901, and he wrote a voluminous report to the Queensland Government. He visited Suschnig, manufacturer of the Stiger Vortex cannon, and Stiger. Stiger was the first man to bring cloud-shooting to a successful issue. Wragge saw the cannon in operation. “Shooting against clouds” was the method, used mainly for protection of vineyards against damage by hail. Its effect in controlling rainfall was limited to the production of showers.

Great numbers of these cannon were used in northern Italy. Roberto, Professor of Physics at Alessandria, Piedmont, said the gaseous ring which proceeded from the mouth of the funnel of the gun after firing was less dense than the air strata into which it was fired. This difference in density assisted its ascension, causing waves which were likened to the effect produced by throwing stones into a pool of water. A marked vibration was produced, preventing the formation of hail particles, and compelling the clouds to yield their vapour in the form of gentle rain.

Suschnig recommended a trial in Australia of ten stations, having the guns separated from each other by about 1,000 yards. One isolated gun was not sufficient. Herr Stiger agreed, and pointed out four important points for Australians to consider: lightning always ceased when firing began; hail was stopped from falling; gentle rainfall was precipitated; and floods could be prevented by breaking up the heavy clouds. Wragge stated that the cannon was a permanent institution in Austria, Hungary, Italy, and France. The Italians had established 10,000 stations in northern Italy alone.

Wragge, with the Queensland Government’s approval, proceeded with his plans for producing rain by bombarding rain-clouds with mortars. Six guns of the Stiger Vortex type were manufactured by a Brisbane foundry and transported by rail to Charleville. The gala-day, 26 September 1902, was marked by heavy clouds.

At noon, the order “Fire!” was given. A few drops of rain fell, and two hours later there was a light shower. Later in the afternoon a second bombardment of the sullen sky was made with extra charges. Two guns exploded, but no rain fell.

That was the end of Wragge’s rain-making experiments. He incurred much criticism for what was condemned as a fiasco, and he left Queensland an angry and frustrated man.

2. Harry Morant—“The Breaker”

Harry Morant (“The Breaker”) was a fine horseman and served as a lieutenant in the Boer War, with the South Australian Mounted Rifles and the Bushveldt Carabineers. Along with a comrade, he was shot after court martial on a Boer, who was found guilty and shot. The story is related by a fellow-accused officer, G. R. Witten, in Scapegoat of Empire, 1907, in which some of Morant’s verses are included. Douglas Sladen refers to the incident in Adam Lindsay
Gordon and his Friends (1912). The early life of Morant is fictitiously presented in Alfred Buchanan's Where Day Begins, 1911.

When the Boer War broke out in 1899, Morant joined up with the South Australian Mounted Rifles, and soon rose to the rank of sergeant. In South Africa he was attached to General French's cavalry column, and took part in the relief of Kimberley, and the battles of Paardeberg and Bloemfontein. After some months, Morant succeeded in getting his discharge from the Army, and re-visited his native Devon. When his funds ran low, he re-enlisted, this time in the British Army. He was able to secure a commission as an officer in Baden Powell's Constabulary.

But when he arrived back in South Africa, restless and erratic, as he always was, he suddenly changed his plans. Resigning his commission, he joined up as a lieutenant with a formation of irregular cavalry known as the Bushveldt Carabineers. It was really a commando, the equivalent of the Boer commandos, which carried out daring raids on their shaggy ponies. The Carabineers were commanded by an old friend of Morant's, Major R. W. Lenehan, and consisted mainly of time-expired Australian light horsemen.

THE FATAL DECISION

As it turned out, it was the fatal decision of Morant's life. Morant's detachment made many raids, gathering in herds of cattle, as well as many prisoners who were placed in compounds. This was part of Kitchener's plan to segregate the Boers and smash their guerilla warfare.

One day in June 1901, Morant's company of 50 carabineers, with Captain Hunt in command, set out to capture or destroy a Boer commando which was operating in the wild Spelonken area 70 miles beyond Pietersburg. A month later, while Captain Hunt was leading an attack on a Boer farmhouse, he was shot down. Next day he was found dead, with his neck broken and stripped of his uniform.

Morant went crazy with rage. Always hot-tempered, the incident triggered off an unreasoning ferocity. He swore that henceforth he would give no quarter; all prisoners captured would be shot. A few days later he captured twelve Boer prisoners, one of them a lad, and shot the lot. A German missionary named Hesse set out for Pietersburg to protest to the British authorities. He never arrived there. He was shot down in his tracks, and a Carabineer who had objected to the killing of the prisoners, was also shot.

There was no evidence as to who had actually done the killings, but the logic of events pointed to Morant and his men.

A chorus of indignation echoed around the world. The anti-British Press in Germany and other countries made much of the incident. Drastic action was taken by the British Command in South Africa. The Carabineers were immediately disbanded, and Morant was arrested and tried by court-martial.

Morant swore on oath that the Carabineers had explicit orders from Kitchener's headquarters that no prisoners were to be taken. This was denied by the Army authorities, and the court refused to accept Morant's testimony on this point.

"RULE OF THE .303 RIFLE"

When Morant was asked if his own court-martials had been carried out according to the international rules of war, he said with blunt defiance: "No; we got 'em and we shot 'em under the rule of the .303 rifle."

Morant, with his fellow lieutenants Witton and Handcock, were
sentenced to be shot by firing squad. There was an immediate revulsion against the severity of the sentences, not so much in favour of Morant as on behalf of Handcock, who was a married man, with three children. Urgent pleas were made by Major J. F. Thomas, of the New South Wales Bushmen, who was a solicitor in private life, and who appeared for Morant and the other accused at the court-martial, for mitigation of the sentences, and he was joined by others, but the Army authorities were adamant. The orders had come from the British Government, and there is little doubt that they yielded to the pressure of the German Government, Hesse, the murdered missionary, being a German subject.

Morant heard the sentence with a disdainful curl of the lip. “Take us out and crucify us at once!” he exclaimed. “This is what comes of being an Empire-builder!”

Witton escaped death, but was sentenced to penal servitude for life. After suffering imprisonment for several months, he was released as the result of strenuous efforts made on his behalf. Another one of the accused, Lieutenant Picton, was reprieved, but cashiered from the Army.

There was a general outcry against the harshness of the sentences. Many people in Australia and elsewhere, who were shocked by the verdict, considered that a sentence of penal servitude, which could have been remitted later, would have been ample punishment in the case of Morant and Handcock.

The Boers did not have many scruples in their warfare. They were very partial to ambush and shooting down from concealment. Many patrols were shot down in this way. Sometimes they did not bother about taking prisoners, principally because of the problem of guarding and feeding them, especially when the war degenerated into guerilla fighting with the collapse of the main centres of Boer resistance. Undoubtedly, atrocities were committed on both sides; these were probably inevitable in guerilla warfare.

Morant and Handcock were shot one morning in February 1902 at 6 o'clock outside the walls of Pretoria, capital of the Transvaal.

Morant was game to the last. He refused to have his eyes bandaged, stared straight at the barrels of the firing squad, and shouted: “Shoot straight! Don’t make a mess of it!”—EDITOR.