The Search for the Sea Belle Castaways on Fraser Island

by
L. E. Skinner, I.S.O.*

On 2 April 1857, the brig *Sea Belle* sailed from Gladstone bound for her home port of Sydney. Among her passengers were the Chief Constable of the Port Curtis District, James Harty 1, his wife and two children. The *Sea Belle* failed to arrive in Sydney and no definite evidence has ever come to light concerning her fate. Not very long after the vessel disappeared, some Aborigines visiting the settlement at Gladstone said that they had seen Mrs Harty and the children on one of the islands off Port Curtis. Over the succeeding months, vague rumours continued to circulate about a European woman living amongst the Aborigines on the coast north of Gladstone. Public interest was instantly aroused in Sydney in August 1859, when Captain Richard Arnold, of the schooner *Coquette*, made a statement to a Sydney newspaper, *The Empire*, about a white woman and two young female children whom the Fraser Island Aborigines claimed were living with an Island group. This report prompted the New South Wales Government to authorize the owner of the *Coquette*, William Sawyer, to organize a search of Fraser Island and to bring back the supposed castaways.

The Island which Sawyer contracted to search lies off the coast of Queensland between latitudes twenty-four degrees twelve minutes and twenty-five degrees forty-eight minutes south. It lies close to the coast at the southern extremity and extends generally north-east so that its northernmost point, Sandy Cape, is ninety-six kilometres from the coast, forming the eastern side of Hervey Bay. Extending northward from Sandy Cape is Breaksea Spit, composed of sand and dead coral, a hazard to navigation carrying only a few fathoms of water. The Island is 124 kilometres long and varies in width between five and twenty-three kilometres. It consists largely of sand, with underlying rock and contains a number of deep fresh-water lakes. Despite the sandy base, the Island supports a dense cover of vegetation. Of its Aboriginal inhabitants, Archibald Meston wrote in 1903:

Fifty years ago there were from 2,000 to 3,000 aboriginals on Fraser Island, an exceptionally fine race of people. To-day there are about twenty left on the Island! The food supply from the ocean and Straits was unlimited. The big scrub supplied most of the vegetable diet. There were three dialects spoken, the negatives being "wahr", "wacca", and "cabbee", and the various tribes fought occasionally with each other and finished with a corroboree.

The first recorded European sighting of Fraser Island was by Cook in 1770. He named Indian Head, Sandy Cape and Breaksea Spit, but was unaware that the coastline he was observing was that of an island. Flinders did not show the strait between the southern end of Hervey Bay and the ocean at Inskip Point on his 1814 chart and he called the Island Great Sandy Peninsula. The Island obtained the name of Fraser after the wreck of the *Sea Belle* in 1836. There are considerable numbers of deep fresh-water lakes. Despite the sandy base, the Island supports a dense cover of vegetation. Of its Aboriginal inhabitants, Archibald Meston wrote in 1903:

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On 16 October 1849 the first Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Wide Bay district, John Carne Bidwill, wrote reporting to his Chief Commissioner in Sydney the details of an attack made by Aborigines from Fraser Island on his headquarters at Tinana near Maryborough. Fraser Island had become a base for forays against the lives and property of the mainland settlers.

At a meeting of magistrates held at Maryborough on 18 February 1851, it was resolved to put into force warrants issued against a number of Aborigines accused of murder and felony. However, action to execute these warrants was deferred until 27 December 1851 when Commandant Frederick Walker and detachments of the Native Police, accompanied by four other Europeans, were landed on Fraser Island by the schooner *Margaret and Mary* (Captain Currie). In the engagements that ensued, a number of Aborigines were killed and several captured by the Native Police.

Following the death of John Carne Bidwill, Arthur Edward Halloran arrived in Maryborough in September 1853 to take over the office and duties of Commissioner of Crown Lands. Three months later he reported that the Aborigines were in a very savage state, particularly those who visited from Great Sandy (or Fraser Island). In December 1853, he wrote that one of the...
orderlies attached to his establishment had been speared through the body whilst in the garden of the Commissioner's station at Tinana. It was considered unsafe to go about even in the vicinity of the township, without firearms. Halloran's own troopers would not venture to go to the garden, to the creek for water, or to catch a horse more than three hundred or four hundred yards from his house without firearms 21.

In 1853, the movement northwards of squatters had decided the Colonial Government of New South Wales to form a township on a site to be selected at Port Curtis. Gladstone can claim to have commenced its official existence on 30 March 1854 on the arrival there of the schooner Tom Tough. This ship carried the Government Resident for Port Curtis, Captain Maurice Charles O'Connell, Mrs O'Connell, and a number of Government employees and their families. To ensure the safety of the inhabitants of the new township, the Tom Tough was detained at Gladstone for some months although an irregular shipping service from southern ports had commenced. The township suffered from a shortage of supplies at times until a more regular service was established from southern ports.

Before the disappearance of the Sea Belle in 1857, there had been a number of contacts between shipwrecked Europeans and the Fraser Island Aborigines. Some of these wrecks are listed at the end of this article 22. But it is the mystery of the Sea Belle which forms the background for the narrative which follows. The Sea Belle was a brig of one hundred and fifty-three tons. She sailed from Sydney early in February 1857, with cargo and passengers for Gladstone and Rockhampton 23. On the return voyage, she left Gladstone on 2 April 1857 for Sydney and was never seen again. As already mentioned, reports were received of a European woman and children on one of the islands off Gladstone shortly after the vessel disappeared.

On 18 August 1859, Captain Arnold of the Coquette schooner arrived in Sydney from Wide Bay. He informed The Empire that he had been told by Aborigines of Fraser Island that a white woman and two young female children had been living with the Aborigines on that Island for a length of time. It appeared from the information he had received that a vessel had been wrecked on Breaksea Spit and the crew and passengers, after coming on shore by boat to the Island, were immediately surrounded by a great number of Aborigines. Beef and biscuit had come on shore in the boat but no tobacco. By some cause an Aborigine was killed by one of the crew of the vessel and, to have revenge for that death, the Aborigines 'watched an opportunity and killed the whole of the whites with the exception of this woman and the two children' 24. The only description given to Captain Arnold of the woman was that one of her large toes had been injured before her arrival on the Island; that she winked as though her eyes were bad, and that she had two rings on her finger and a spyglass in her possession. From the description given of the children, Captain Arnold supposed the eldest to be about ten or twelve years of age, and the youngest about six years. Captain Arnold stated that this account had agreed with that given by twenty or thirty other Aborigines to Mr. Neil of Maryborough, who had offered to go with him to the place where this woman was. However, Captain Arnold had said he could not leave his vessel. The Aborigines had stated that the woman they called 'Manti' could not understand them nor they her. Arnold therefore was of the opinion that she was a foreigner, as most of the Aborigines on the Island could understand some English.

The Empire published Captain Arnold's statements on 19 August and expressed the hope that the Government would cause a search to be made without delay for this woman. On 26 August 1859, Molison and Black, under instructions from W. H. Sawyer, owner of the schooner Coquette, rendered the services of that vessel for the rescue of the white woman and two children reported to be on Fraser Island. The terms of their tender were that the schooner proceed within a week from Sydney to Wide Bay and there obtain the necessary assistance, including an interpreter; that as soon as possible, to go to Fraser Island to
make a search for and rescue if possible the white woman and two children; that the Coquette was to be furnished with everything necessary for the expedition together with 'peace offerings' to the Aborigines, at the expense of the owner; that payment for these services to be the sum of £150 sterling should the woman and children not be recovered (on proof of due exertion having been made) and the sum of £300 sterling if rescued and landed in Sydney; that a bond to be given, if required, for the due performance of the services. The New South Wales Cabinet accepted this tender, deciding to allow a premium of £100, on satisfactory proof of being added to the Pilot Board that the schooner had visited Fraser Island and that every exertion had been used for the discovery and rescue of the woman and children, even although the result be unsuccessful. If the people were recovered and landed in Sydney, the Cabinet authorized the increase of the premium, from £100 to £300.

Having discharged cargo at Maryborough on 24 September 1859, the Coquette (Captain Arnold), being fully manned, proceeded down the Mary River. On board were Sawyer, the owner, who had joined the vessel at Maryborough, Edward Preddy, an old resident of Maryborough, who acted as interpreter and from whom the use of a whale boat was obtained for the expedition, and two Wide Bay Aborigines. These two were Toby, who previously had been on a voyage with Captain Arnold from Maryborough to Port Curtis and Sydney in the Coquette and who first had informed Arnold of the existence of white people on Fraser Island, and Tommy. On 27 September, the Coquette, after leaving the Mary River, anchored that afternoon under Little Woody Island. There ballast was taken in and an attempt made to communicate with Aborigines. No information having been obtained, on the morning of 28 September the Coquette sailed towards a bay situated eleven miles southwest of Breaksea Spit. The schooner was anchored in that bay on the morning of 29 September. Observing Aborigines on the beach, Sawyer, Captain Arnold, Preddy, Toby and Tommy went on shore in the whaleboat. Tobacco and pipes were distributed and the object of the articles they would be given in exchange for the white people. The searchers, being thinly clad and without water or provisions, spent a restless and uncomfortable night. The weather was boisterous and cold. The searchers, kept out of sight 'under the lee of a mountain' and travelled fast towards those sought.

At sundown the latter came suddenly on two camps. The tribe was caught by surprise and no need arose for the use of fire arms or force of any kind. The rush of the searchers scattered the tribe in all directions. As night was coming on, that night was spent by themselves, the younger one naked, the elder one having only an English worsted net jacket covering her down to the waist. The sight of these two poor creatures was heart-rending. Frank Gillard took off his shirt and clothed the elder girl with it. No time was lost in retiring southward along the sea coast. After some miles of walking in 'fine moonlight', the party camped for the night. Guns had been loaded and a watch was posted and relieved every two hours. Between ten and eleven o'clock an alarm was raised when Aborigines were seen coming over a hill. Fire-arms were discharged in that direction and the party was not molested further during the night. Accompanied by about one hundred Aborigines, a start for the Coquette was made at about half past six next morning. The bush had been fired by Aborigines and walking was difficult. After travelling about twenty-five miles, the younger girl having to be carried the greater portion of the way, a camp was made shortly after sundown. During the night, the party was 'little alarmed once or twice by the corroboberee of the Blacks'. The next day, fatigued and footsore, the party reached the ship about 5 p.m.

The same evening, four of the Aborigines who had assisted, as delegates from the others, were received on board. They were given two hundredweight of flour, one bag of sugar, one bag of bread, a few knives, a tomahawk, scissors, looking-glasses, fish hooks, combs, needles, and about twenty pounds of tobacco. Preddy left the Coquette the following day in his boat and on

At daylight on 3 October the search party set off. It comprised Sawyer, Captain Arnold, Preddy, a seaman named Frank Gillard, Toby and Tommy, and about twenty Island Aborigines who were well known to Captain Arnold from former voyages. Following the advice of the Island Aborigines, the searchers armed themselves on this occasion. Proceeding in a north-easterly direction across the Island, the searchers reached the east coast about 3 p.m. Walking along the beach they came to a watering-hole where they found a recent encampment which had been hastily abandoned. Proceeding further along the beach for several miles, the searchers were joined by a party of Aborigines who confirmed that the white people were still at Indian Head and who offered to take the searchers there. After camping for the night, the searchers at daybreak again started on their journey. By this time they had been joined by sixty or seventy Aborigines. At 2 p.m., after a halt for dinner, they saw at a considerable distance the tribe they sought. The Aborigines pointed out to the searchers the tracks of a woman with a broken toe which they said were those of the white woman. The Aborigines then divided into two parties. One party showed themselves openly to the distant tribe and made friendly signs. The other party, accompanied by the searchers, kept out of sight under the lee of a mountain and travelled fast towards those sought.

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Friday 7 October the Coquette sailed for Sydney. Because of adverse winds the schooner was put into Newcastle from whence the children were conveyed to Sydney per steamer. Aboriginals Charley and Billy, who had assisted in the search, accompanied Sawyer and Captain Arnold to Sydney.

A Board of Inquiry was appointed immediately in relation to the rescue of the two female children from the Aborigines. The members of the Board were H. H. Browne, W. S. Deloitte and Thomas Watson, comprising a sub-committee of the Pilot Board, Dr Alleyne, Health Officer, and S. North, Water Police Magistrate.

Legislative Assembly.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament, by Command.

REPORT of a Sub-Committee of the Pilot Board assisted by the Health Officer and the Water Police Magistrate, to the Honorable the Colonial Treasurer, on the subject of the Rescue of Two Female Children, from the Natives of Frazer's Island, by the Officers and Crew of the Schooner "Coquette".

We have the honor to report, for the information of the Honorable the Minister for Finance and Trade, that having examined all who available witnesses likely to throw light upon the previous history of the two children recently rescued from the natives at Frazer's Island, we now beg to forward copies of the evidence taken in inquiry, as also of the communications which have been received from several persons whom the Board considered likely to afford information.

2. The expedition, undertaken in search of these persons, was originated in consequence of a paragraph which appeared in the Empire newspaper, of the 19th of August, notifying the probable existence of some white persons on Frazer's Island, and an offer was made by Messrs. Molison and Black, the agents of the schooner "Coquette," to undertake the service on terms accepted by the Executive Government, viz., £1000 if successful, and £300 if accomplishing the object for which it set out.

3. From the evidence adduced, it seems that Mr. Sawyer, the owner of the vessel, undertook the conduct of the expedition himself, and he appears to have spared no trouble in making a diligent examination of the Island, or expense in the distribution of presents to conciliate the natives.

4. The persons rescued consist of two females; the elder probably about sixteen or seventeen years of age, the younger about seven or eight. They were in a frightful state of emaciation when discovered, and their bodies were covered with a pigment of a brown color, rendering it almost impossible to distinguish the true color of their skin; their noses, also, were flattened, and their faces otherwise slightly disfigured.

5. It having been presumed that these persons were probably a portion of the passengers who embarked, at Port Curtis, on board of the ill-fated "Sea Belle," in 1857, which vessel was never afterwards heard of, it was considered advisable to seek out some person who had been acquainted with the late Chief Constable's family at Port Curtis, who, it appears, were the only females who embarked in that vessel; and John Hourigan and his wife, who were at that time resident at Gladstone, were accordingly examined.

6. The testimony of these persons goes to some extent in identification of the younger child as that of the late Mrs. Harty, but has no reference to the elder one, Mrs. Harty's other child being an infant in arms.

7. A feeling having existed in the minds of the rescuers, and also in those of other persons, that the mother of these children was still in captivity on the Island, the Board placed themselves in communication with the Government Residents at Moreton Bay and Port Curtis, as also with the Police Magistrate at Maryborough, with a view of ascertaining whether any person could be obtained likely to be sufficiently conversant with the language of the Frazer's Island blacks to obtain from the children themselves the information which it was so desirable to establish.

8. The Government Resident at Moreton Bay having reported that a person named Davis, residing there, who had been a resident with the blacks in the neighborhood of Frazer's Island for some years, was willing to proceed to Sydney on condition of receiving a sum of £20 for his trouble, and the cost of his passage to and from Brisbane, and the Government having acquiesced in the measure, Davis was invited to Sydney, and arrived on the 26th November.

9. He stated that he could freely converse with the two girls, but at the same time observed that he was unable to obtain much information from them, in consequence of their disinclination to make any disclosures, and their entire ignorance of all that had transpired on the Island, accounted for by Davis as being occasioned by their being treated as a degraded race by the blacks, and therefore excluded from all participation in the feasts, fishing excursions, or wrecking expeditions, and thus purposely kept ignorant.

10. Davis' examination of these children went little way in illustrating how they originally came on the Island, but to a considerable extent shook the testimony of Hourigan as to the probability of the younger one being Harty's daughter—the elder child stating that she had known the younger one from infancy, even at the time that it was nursed by a black mother.

11. It however sets at rest one point of importance, which is as to the existence of any other white persons on the island; and on this head the girls are both consistent in their replies.

12. Seeing that the whole matter was in so unsatisfactory a state, the Board determined on ascertaining, if possible, whether a person named Fahey could be obtained to test the interpretation made by Davis, he being a person well conversant with the language of the Frazer's Island blacks; but although the Inspector General of Police has done all in his power to discover this person, he has not as yet been able to trace him, and the Board feel that they must close their proceedings without this corroboration of evidence.

13. Soon after the arrival of these children in Sydney they were received into the Female Immigration Depot, at Hyde Park, and have been under the care of the Matron of that institution ever since. They have now, under kind treatment and attention to cleanliness, much improved in appearance, and much of the paint with which their bodies were covered has now washed off. They now speak a little English; the younger one, who is the most intelligent of the two, picking it up fast.

14. During their residence in Hyde Park Barracks they have been visited by many persons—some from the neighborhood of Wide Bay, as also by several medical men—and almost all have expressed one opinion as to their European origin.

15. We have therefore to report, that in our opinion the children rescued by Mr. Sawyer and the crew of the schooner "Coquette" are the children of white parents, but how they became residents on Frazer's Island there is no evidence to prove.

16. That the eldest is certainly not the child of Harty, and there is also considerable doubt whether the younger is either.

17. That there are no white persons on Frazer's Island now, in captivity amongst the blacks, and consequently no necessity to renew the expedition.

18. That the service accomplished by Mr. Sawyer is not exactly the one which he undertook when the engagement was entered into, that being for the rescue of a white woman and her two children, whereas the white woman does not seem to have had any existence whatever, but the two children were rescued.

19. Under these circumstances, therefore, it appears to the Board that the service has been performed in the spirit in which it was undertaken, although not strictly in deed.

20. These children having now been brought to Sydney, it becomes matter for consideration as to what course would be the best to adopt for their future education and maintenance. The elder is so completely habituated to native life, is somewhat imbecile, and is likely for many years to remain for a return to her old companions; the younger one is, however, far more tractable and intelligent, and already is inclined to take kindly to the Matron.

21. It seems, therefore, to the Board, that there are only two places in which they could be received—the Orphan School, at Parramatta, and the Destitute Children's Asylum, either of which institutions would afford them all necessary protection and education.

H. G. ALLEYNE.


H. G. ALLEYNE.

S. NORTH, W.P.M.

W. E. DELOITTE, J.P.

THOS. WATSON.
for the night. On the 28th got under-way for Break Sea Spit, and came to anchor the following morning. About seven miles from the north end of Frazer's Island (west side) observing the natives on the beach, we landed, and after a conversation, considered it prudent to return to the vessel. We then got under-way and returned in a south-east direction for about twelve miles. Captain Arnold, Mr. Preddy, and myself landed, and in company with several natives, who led us to believe that the white people would be found within a few miles, crossed the island and travelled until dark. At this time our guides absconded, and we determined to remain in the scrub all night in case of attack. Next morning, notwithstanding our strong conviction that the story of the natives was in the main correct, we decided to return to the vessel, which we reached at 2 p.m. of the 30th. Changing our tactics, we got the vessel under-way, and as a feint stood across Harvey's Bay with the intention of returning to Woody Island, where we anchored on the 2nd instant. We were here joined by twelve of the tribe inhabiting the southern portion of the island, and preparing all for a campaign, we started at daylight of 3rd inst., proceeding in a north-eastern direction across the island, and at sundown of the 5th came upon the camp of natives in whose custody the white people were. Having observed the white children, a rush was made—they were seized and carried off—the tribe being panic-stricken and offering no resistance. Afterwards we travelled, it being fine moonlight, about ten miles to the southward, and camped for the night. At near midnight an alarm was raised that strange blacks were watching our movements; a volley of musketry was fired for intimidation, and we were not further molested. Next day we travelled about twenty-seven miles, the youngest girl having to be carried the greatest portion of the way. On the day following, the bush having been fired by the natives, our walking was rendered very difficult, but we were able to regain the vessel. The same evening four of the natives who assisted were received on board as delegates from the others, and received as compensation for services performed several bags of flour, biscuits, tea, sugar, tobacco, clothing, &c., which there is reason to believe was by them fairly distributed. We then set sail for Sydney, but owing to contrary winds we put into Newcastle, from whence the children were conveyed to Sydney per steamer.

From all I could learn, I have every reason to believe that the mother of these girls died about twelve months ago.

The girls, aged respectively about fifteen and ten years, are now in my house at Balmain, and are receiving every possible attention, but I wish to be relieved of them. Their future care must be a matter of great consideration, and as far as my experience teaches I would not recommend their being placed in any of the charitable institutions of the city until such time as they regain lost habits and their mother tongue.

I fear the elder girl will turn out silly in disposition; the other, with kind treatment, will have all her senses.

I may be permitted to mention that the aboriginals Charley and Boney (the former now in Sydney) have rendered me great assistance, and it might be worth while Government considering whether some special mark of approbation might not lead to good results in showing these people that, in case of any disaster on their coast, kind treatment will meet with its reward.

I beg to claim the amount of premium for the above services—three hundred pounds, and remain,

Yours, &c.,

W. H. Sawyer.

W. J. Wilshire, Esq.,
Secretary to the Pilot Board.

William Harry Sawyer states:—The statement produced is the one furnished by me to the Secretary of the Pilot Board. I have no means, of my own knowledge, of connecting the two females I brought with me with those I went to rescue; I have only information which I received from a person named Hourigan, now resident at Sydney, but formerly District Constable at Port Curtis, who saw the children in company with his wife and, to a certain extent, identified the younger girl as being the elder child of Harty, the late Chief Constable of Port Curtis, and, if she was that child, her name was Ellen Harty, and was about four years old when she left Port Curtis. Neither Hourigan nor his wife recognised the elder child: neither had Harty one at that age; but he had a son, younger, named Morris, and born at Port Curtis, aged about twenty months. Mr. Harty and his family were known to have been passengers in the "Sea Belle," which vessel left Port Curtis about the 4th April, 1857, and has never been heard of since. In my interview with the natives at Frazer's Island, during the late expedition, I was not led to believe there were any other white people on the island; but, since my arrival in Sydney,
I have received information from a native of the island, named Charley, belonging to a tribe adjacent to the one from which we recovered the children, that a white woman, whom they call their mother, was still on the island, hidden as far as possible when they were captured. We found no difficulty in discovering the white children, they were so diminutive, from the tribe of blacks—Charley being of a respective tribe of blacks in being much larger. I have seen in Australia. I believe the children were left to their own resources, which might account for their emaciated condition. The blacks, black, understands English very well; he knew what I meant by mother.

W. H. SAWYER.

H. H. BROWNE, THOS. WATSON, H. G. ALLEYNE, W. S. DELOITTE, S. NORTH.

Taken at the Water Police Office, Sydney, this 24th day of October, 1859, before

Richard Arnold states—I am master of the "Coquette," and was master of her when the two children were rescued from Frazer's Island. The statement produced is a true account of what took place on that expedition. I have no means of knowing who the children are, but I believe they are white children. I do not believe there are other white people on the island. From the description given by the natives I believe the two persons rescued are those mentioned by Charley, that the blacks calls a little Edward, which I think you could understand him. The foot-print in the sand of the woman with the broken toe corresponds with the foot-print of the blacks who rescued. We observed it in the sand mixed with a hundred of others; but it was going in the contrary way to that which we were.

R. ARNOLD.

H. H. BROWNE, THOS. WATSON, H. G. ALLEYNE, W. S. DELOITTE, S. NORTH.

Taken at the Water Police Office, Sydney, this 24th day of October, 1859, before

*REPORT of the Rescue of Two White Girls, supposed to be of European Parentage, from the Blacks of Great Sandy Island, commonly known as Frazer's Island, by Captain R. Arnold, Master of the Schooner "Coquette," a regular trader to Wide Bay, and other parts of Terra Australia.*

Having discharged cargo at Maryborough on the 24th September, proceeded down the river with usual crew to Frazer's Island, accompanied by Mr. Sawyer, the owner, who joined the vessel at Maryborough; Edward Pretty, an old resident at Maryborough; two blacks, Toby and Tommy, the same Toby having previously been a voyage with me from Maryborough to Port Curtis and Sydney in the "Coquet," and from whom I received the first information of the existence of white people at Frazer's Island. Supposed to be the survivors of the ill-fated "Sea Belle,"—the greatest part of the crew and passengers had been cruelly murdered. On the afternoon of the 27th of September anchored off little Woody Island, and took in four boat loads of ballast, and kept the blacks and passengers from giving any information. The blacks, however, though seen at a distance, did not approach us. On the morning of the 28th made sail and proceeded towards a bay situated 11 miles S.W. of Break Sea Spit. In search of the white people. Several blacks swam off to us from the shore during the afternoon. Among them there was one called "Charley," a very intelligent fellow, from whom I had on previous occasions received information in this matter, and who accompanied me in the vessel to Sydney, and is now in Balmain with the two rescued girls. The same afternoon every preparation was made for the following day's march on the island, which I knew would be an arduous one, and we packed up supplies of bread, beef, tea, sugar, sufficient for the journey. Left the ship the following morning, and landed on Frazer's Island about 6 o'clock, our party consisting of myself, Mr. Sawyer, Mr. Pretty, Frank Gillard—one of my seamen, a very efficient hand—our two blacks, and about twenty other blacks, who had accompanied us. The blacks who had remained on board until now were sent on shore. Proceeded to little Woody Island, where we arrived at 2 p.m. on Sunday, 2nd October. A canoe with six or seven blacks came alongside, and offered to accompany us on shore in search of the white people. Several blacks swam off to us from the shore without water or provision, and the whole of us being but thinly clad, spent a restless and uncomfortable night—the weather boisterous and cold, but fortunately no rain. Morning of the 30th September a party started to take the girls in our charge, and making our way to the southward along the sea coast. Travelled about six or seven miles, and then landed opposite a tribe in the distance by diverting their attention, and making friendly signs, the other party, with whom I and my associates were kept out of sight under the lee of a mound—satisfy them, still keeping in touch by diverting them. It was sundown when we came suddenly on two of these camps, and caused them quite unaware, they not having recourse to firearms or force of any kind, but by friendly signs, the blacks swarming by themselves, the younger one in a state of nudity, the elder one nearly, having only an English worsted net jacket covering her down to the waist. The sight of these caused confusion. This was heart-rending. Frank Gillard took off his shirt and clothed the elder one with it. We then lost no time taking the girls in our charge, and making our way to the southward along the sea coast. Travelled about six or seven miles, and then camped for the night. Everything had been done for our safety during the night by loading our guns and setting a watch to...
be relieved every two hours. Between ten and eleven o'clock there was a cry among the blacks in our encampment that another party of blacks were in pursuit, as they could see them coming over the hill where we were camped in the valley. Our guns were quickly got out, and we were all ready for action. The blacks pointed to us the direction where they were seen. We then discharged our pieces in that direction to let them know that we were ready for them. We all stood before the camp till about midnight, in a state of alarm, not knowing what moment we might be attacked; but by this time things seemed to have a more peaceable appearance, and we once more laid down to rest. Nothing more occurred that night. Started next morning with our charges about half-past six o'clock, accompanied by about 100 blacks. Nothing particular occurred during this day's march. Camped shortly after sundown, having travelled about twenty-five miles; kept a good look-out all night, relieving every two hours; little alarmed once or twice by the corroboreeing of the blacks, but all went well. The next day reached the ship about 5 p.m. much fatigued; foot sore. The following presents were given to the blacks:—2 cwt. flour, 1 bag sugar, 1 bag bread, a few knives, tomahawk, scissors, looking-glasses, fish-hooks, combs, needles, and about 20 lbs. of tobacco.

John Hourigan, of Sydney, states,—I formerly resided at Port Curtis. I left that district last March. I was resident there about six years. I remember the "Sea Belle" leaving there about two years and a half ago. The chief constable, Mr. Harty, and his wife and family, left in her. I was in the police at the time, and serving under Mr. Harty,—so I frequently saw him. His family consisted of a girl aged about four years, and a boy aged about two years. I frequently saw the children. We lived in adjoining houses. I do not know any other female embarked in the "Sea Belle." Mr. Norman Leith Hay was a passenger in her. The little girl could speak a little when she left; she was born in Calcutta. Her father and mother were Europeans. I have seen the two children brought up by the "Coquette." The youngest, I think, resembles Mr. Harty's little girl; the color of the hair and eyes, and the largeness of her eyes, correspond exactly; she had sandy hair and hazel eyes. The daguerreotype likeness produced is like the little girl. I do not know anything of the elder of the girls brought up by the "Coquette." The child was brought to Port Curtis when she was brought to Port Curtis. I think she was vaccinated at Port Curtis by Doctor Roberts. I am under a strong impression that the younger child brought up by the "Coquette" is the daughter of Mr. Harty. I am led to that conclusion chiefly by the color of her hair and eyes, and the largeness of her eyes. Her name was Ellen. I believe she was baptised in India. I am not aware of any vessels having been wrecked on the coast except the "Sea Belle." While I was at Port Curtis two portions of crews of other vessels were given to the blacks:—2 cwt. flour, 1 bag sugar, 1 bag bread, a few knives, tomahawk, scissors, looking-glasses, fish-hooks, combs, needles, and about 20 lbs. of tobacco.

Mrs. Harty is still on the island; and they describe her as having a sore foot. I am aware that Mrs. Harty had a very sore foot when she left, and used to wear a slipper. The child spoke very well when she left in the ship. She was a very fair child, and her hair light, and her eyes grey. The features of the child brought by the "Coquette" are so much disfigured and changed it would be impossible to say positively that it is Mrs. Harty's child. I do not know if Mrs. Harty was in the family way or not when she left Port Curtis.

CATHERINE HOURIGAN.

Taken at the Water Police Office, Sydney, this 25th day of October, 1859, before  
H. H. BROWNE,Commissioner's Office, Turana, 15 November, 1859.

Sir,—I do myself the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 25th ultimo, requesting to know if there is any trooper of the Native Police here who could act as interpreter and assist the Board in their investigation respecting the two children recently rescued from Frazer's Island, and in reply I beg to acquaint you, that immediately on the receipt of your letter (which I handed over to the Bench) I proceeded to the Native Police Barracks, at Cooper's Plains, and examined the few troopers there, and I am sorry to say there is not one of the troopers who would be of any service to you in investigating the matter.

There is a man named Davis, residing in Brisbane, who was for many years living amongst the blacks, about fifty miles from Maryborough, who is generally employed as interpreter at the Criminal Court, Brisbane, and I believe speaks the language of the natives of this part well, who might be of service to the Board; and there is also another man named John Fahey, who was residing amongst the blacks on the head of the Mary for thirteen years, and who was captured in December, 1854, by a party of Native Police, who were in company with me. This man speaks the language fluently, and is, I believe, now living in Sydney; he accompanied Mr. Gregory, I believe, on his last exploring expedition.

I beg to add, that several of the natives to whom I have spoken persist in asserting that the mother of these two children is a black woman; and that there is a brother of theirs, of the same color as the girls, now on the island; and it is also stated by the blacks, that there are two lads, also of the same color, children of black parents, now living in the neighbourhood of Double Island Point. I have, &c.,

H. H. Browne, Esq.,

ARTHUR E. HALLORAN, Chairman.

G. C. Lands.

P. S.—The greater number of the Native Police are now absent on patrol; when they come in, should there be one of them who would be of service in the matter, I will request the officer in charge.
to send him by next steamer, but I suspect he will require an order from the Commandant before he will feel justified in sending to Sydney any one of the troopers, and the Commandant is now absent on duty.

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt, yesterday, of your letter of the 29th October, applying to me, on the part of the Board appointed to investigate the circumstances attending the rescue of two females from the natives on Frazer's Island, for any information I may be able to afford at all likely to throw light upon its proceedings.

1. In attention to your request, and as the case of the "Sea Belle" is the only one known here having any probable connection with this matter, I beg to state that the abovenamed vessel left Port Curtis on the 2nd of April, 1857, having as the only female passengers on board Mrs. Harty and her daughter Ellen.

2. In the course of the correspondence about the "Sea Belle," I mentioned that I had written to the_Mylera, now in Sydney, who was formerly my clerk, if he has any recollection of the personal appearance of Ellen Harty.

3. Mrs. Harty, the wife of a former chief constable of Gladstone, was a woman, I suppose, about forty years of age, and her daughter would be now, if alive, between six and seven years old; she was a fair child, with large blue eyes, and remarkably stout; she could hardly, I should say, by this time, have forgotten her name, and as before she left this she had commenced to learn her alphabet, it is equally unlikely she should have lost all recollection of her mother tongue.

4. Mrs. Harty's other child was an infant at the breast, and a boy, so that it does not appear at all probable the children whose case the Board was investigating can be survivors from the "Sea Belle." Mrs. Harty's other child was an infant at the breast, and a boy, so that it does not appear at all probable the children whose case the Board was investigating can be survivors from the "Sea Belle."

5. I would recommend, however, your asking Mr. F. Garland Mylrea, now in Sydney, who was formerly my clerk, if he has any recollection of the personal appearance of Ellen Harty.

6. I think it probable he may be able to give a positive opinion on the question of the younger female's identity, or otherwise, with Hartly's child.

7. There are also in Sydney two men who were constables with Hartly in the Gladstone Police; one, John Horrigan, whom I perceive by the papers the Board has already examined; the other is Lawrence Finnegan, to be heard of most likely from Captain M'Lerie.

I have, &c.,

M. C. O'CONNELL,
Government Resident.

H. H. Browne, Esq.,
Government Immigration Office,
Sydney.

STATEMENT OF JAMES DAVIS.

James Davis states that he questioned Billy the black boy, whom he supposes to belong to Frazer's Island, on the mainland adjacent; Billy said he came in a boat from the island to Sydney; asked if he came by himself, and he said he did, but that there were two girls in the town, pointing in the direction of the building; I asked him if they were black girls, and he laughed; asked him what he laughed at; he replied, at his asking the question; asked again, were they black? he said, "No": asked if they were natives of the island; he said, "Yes": asked who brought them from the island, and whether their parents were alive; he said, "Yes": asked what color they were; he said black; told him I wished to see them, and he pointed in the direction where I could see them, and asked me to see him in the afternoon as he was about returning to the island; saw the two girls and have conversed with them, and can understand all they say; both girls say they are sisters, and were taken from the island by white men in a boat; said that their parents were on the island and were blacks, and that they wished to go back to them; said he would come and see them the next morning; states that he is sure and certain that the girls are neither blacks nor half-castes.

Witness—
Thos. J. Moppett.

How long can they remember being on the island? Have been on the island from infancy; cannot recollect how they got there.
How long does the elder girl remember the young one? From infancy; recollects her when at the breast.

Was she born on the island, or did she know her as a small child? Says she was born on the island, at a place called Duckera.

Had either of them any white parents or relatives on the island, or are there any white people now there? No.

Do they know anything about any people who came ashore from any wreck, and, if so, what became of them? No.

Have they any white brothers and sisters on the island? No.

James Davis further states that having remarried to the black-fellow, Billy, that he had seen the two girls, and that he thought he told him they were blacks, Billy said, "Oh, no, they are ghosts," meaning white people.

MINUTE.

Board met pursuant to summons. Present—H. H. Browne, W. S. Deolitte, S. North, Thomas Watson, and Dr. Alleyne.

Davis, the interpreter from Moreton Bay, having been called in, the statements which he made as emanating from the girls, were read; and he further interrogated the girls in the presence of the Board, and they expressed themselves to the following effect—that they wished to go back to the Island.

He informed the Board that he was quite satisfied that they were white children, and that it would be impossible to obtain any further information, unless a party were sent to Frazer's Island to communicate with the native man and woman whom they supposed to be their parents. He thinks there are no other white persons on the island.

It was not considered necessary to detain him any longer, but it was resolved that, if possible, Fahey should be obtained, to see if any further clue to their origin can be obtained.

Immigration Office,
26 November, 1859.

Memorandum forwarded to the Inspector General of Police.

About twelve months since a small vessel called the "Swan," commanded by Captain Anderson, belonging to Lane & Co., touched at Frazer's Island on her way from Sydney to Rockingham—some of the passengers and crew landed frequently at the north end and were informed by the natives that three white women were with a tribe of blacks not far off. The natives exhibited various little things which once belonged to Europeans evidently—such as a knife, glass, &c., which they said they got from the white women—and amongst them a pocket-book containing a Chinaman's receipt for £20 for a horse sold—a bank note or two, and Mr. Walsh's informal cheque a cheque drawn by Messrs. Glichrist, Watt, & Co.; upon the Commercial Bank, all of which the master of the vessel secured, and probably appropriated. Mr. Walsh's informant was a gentleman who was staying at the Northumberland Hotel, Maitland, on Wednesday night last.

Detective Office,
Sydney, 8 November, 1859.

Sir,

I succeeded in finding Captain John Anderson on board the brig "Maria," now lying at the Grafton Wharf. He states that in October, 1858, he landed on Frazer's Island, and while there one of the natives gave him an old portmanteau, a receipt for a horse signed by a Chinaman, a one pound note, having, he believes, the signature "Clarence Holt," and a one pound order on Gilchrist, Watt, & Co. The papers were much worn and almost illegible, but they were of recent date when he saw them, they were about twelve months old. His wife who also saw them remembers the same particulars respecting them. The order appeared to be such an one as a shepherd or a bushman would have given. Whilst on the island he saw some articles of European manufacture, but does not remember what they were. The natives told him that there were some white "Mary's" on the island with the tribe, and they held up three fingers to denote the number. When Captain Anderson arrived in Sydney he showed the articles to several people, and offered to give them to Mr. Sawyer, the owner of the "Maria."

Captain Anderson brought a little boy from the island that trip. This lad learned to speak English, and frequently told him there were some white "Mary's" on the island. Captain Anderson could identify the islanders from whom he received the articles. He says his reason for not giving greater publicity to the matter was that he placed very little dependence on what the islanders said, and when he came to Sydney having made the affair known to his owners he thought nothing more of it. He searched his boxes to see if he could find either of the papers, but did not succeed in the search.

I have, &c.,
THOMAS ABCOTT,
Sub-Inspector, Detective Police.

The Inspector General of Police, Sydney.

ANOTHER WHITE WOMAN WITH THE BLACKS.—Captain Arnold, of the "Coquette," schooner, which arrived from Wide Bay yesterday afternoon, furnishes us with the following accounts received from the blacks of Frazer's Island, which is situated at the mouth
of Wide Bay:—They stated, that a white woman and two young children, females, had been living with the blacks on Frazer's Island for a length of time. From this account, it appears that the vessel by which they came, was wrecked on Break-Sea Spit. The crew and passengers came on shore with the boat to the island, and immediately on landing were surrounded by a great number of the blacks. By some cause, one of the natives was killed by one of the crew of the vessel; and, to have revenge for the death of one of their number, the blacks watched an opportunity, and killed the whole of the whites, with the exception of this woman and two children. The only description given of the woman is, that one of her large toes had been injured before her arrival on the island; that she winks, as though her eyes were also bad; she has two rings on her finger, and a spyglass in her possession. From the description given of the children, Captain Arnold supposes the eldest to be about ten or twelve years of age, and the youngest about six years. There was no beef and biscuit came on shore in the boat, but no tobacco. This account agrees with that given by twenty or thirty other blacks to Mr. Neil, of Maryborough, and who proffered to take him and Captain Arnold to the place where she is. Mr. Neil would render every assistance in getting her, but as Captain Arnold could not leave his vessel, he did not accompany them. The blacks further stated, that the woman cannot understand them, or they her, and Captain Arnold is of opinion that she is a foreigner, as the most of the blacks on this island can speak good English; they say that her name is "Mandi." It is to be hoped that the Government will cause search to be made without delay for this woman, who, probably, has been under the control of the blacks for a length of time.—Empire, August 19.

TENDER for the Rescue of Female and Two Children, said to be on Frazer's Island.

Sydney, 26 August, 1859.

Sir,

Under instructions from Mr. W. H. Sawyer, owner of the schooner "Coquette," we have the honor to tender the services of that vessel for the rescue of a white female and two children reported to be on Frazer's Island, upon the following terms:—

1. The schooner "Coquette" to proceed within a week from Sydney to Wide Bay, and there obtain the necessary assistance, including an interpreter. And as soon after as possible to go from Wide Bay to Frazer's Island to make search for and rescue if possible the woman and children mentioned.

2. The said vessel to be furnished with everything necessary for the expedition, together with "peace offerings" to the aborigines, at the expense of the owner.

3. Payment for said services to be made as follows:—The sum of £150 sterling should the woman and children not be recovered, on proof of due exertion having been made. The sum of £300 sterling if they are rescued and landed in Sydney.

4. Bond given if required for the due performance of the above.

We are, &c.,

MOLISON & BLACK.

The Hon. E. C. Weekes,
Colonial Treasurer.

The Cabinet have decided to allow a premium of £100, on satisfactory proof being adduced to the Pilot Board that the schooner had visited Frazer's Island, and that every exertion had been used for the discovery and rescue of the woman and children, even although the result be unsuccessful.

If, however, the people be recovered, and landed in Sydney, the Cabinet authorize the increase of the premium, from £100 to £300.

The Board will have the goodness to communicate with Messrs. Molison and Black, and in the event of an agreement being made, and the minimum premium afterwards claimed, will take measures to satisfy themselves that the service has been effectively performed.

29 May.

H. L.

Mr. W. Wilshire.

The Office of the Pilot Board, 30 August, 1859.

Gentlemen,

With reference to your letter of the 26th instant, I am directed to inform you that the Government have decided to allow you a premium of one hundred pounds on satisfactory proof being adduced to the Pilot Board that the "Coquette" had visited Frazer's Island, and that every exertion had been made for the discovery and rescue of the woman and children, even although the result be unsuccessful.

If, however, they be recovered and landed in Sydney, the Government authorize the increase of the premium from one to three hundred pounds. An agreement to this effect will have to be entered into.

If you agree to these terms, will you be kind enough to state how you intend to obtain access to the camp of the natives, what preparation you are about to make, and when you will be prepared to carry the same into effect.

I have, &c.,

W. J. WILSHIRE,
Secretary.

Messrs. Molison and Black.

No. 4, Bridge-street, Sydney, 31 August, 1859.

Dear Sir,

We have the pleasure to acknowledge your communication of yesterday's date, and, on behalf of Mr. W. H. Sawyer, agree to the terms therein proposed, in respect to the discovery and rescue of the woman and children supposed to be on Frazer's Island:

The means which Mr. Sawyer proposes to adopt are as follows:—

After discharge of the "Coquette's" inward cargo, at Wide Bay, he will proceed to Frazer's Island, accompanied by a white man (who understands the language spoken by these people, and is acquainted with the locality), together with several blacks; and, by means of offering presents of tea, sugar, and tobacco, obtain access to the camp of the natives. It is also his intention to traverse the island.

Mr. Sawyer's idea is, that the desired result will be best attained by acts of kindness, at the same time, to provide against surprise, he would solicit from the Government the use of three or four revolvers, to be paid for or returned.

Likewise, should the assistance of the Police be required, the Government to instruct the Police Magistrate at Maryborough to act in concert and assist Mr. Sawyer in this matter.

The "Coquette" will sail from Sydney on the 3rd of September, and will be joined by Mr. Sawyer, at Wide Bay, on the 15th of September.

We are, &c.,

MOLISON & BLACK.

W. J. Wilshire, Esq.,
Secretary of the Pilot Board.

Although the Board are of opinion that such a delicate undertaking as this should not be accomplished by the use of arms and police, they cannot object to proper precaution being taken, and recommend that four revolvers be supplied from the Government stores, to be returned or paid for out of any amount coming to Messrs. Molison and Black; and that the Bench at Maryborough be instructed to assist with the Police, should they be required.

Approved
5th.

W. J. W.

E. C. W., 8 Sept., 1859.

The Bench at Maryborough will be written to.

W. E. 5th.

Mr. Wilshire.

5, H. L.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported on 17 October 1859: The appearance of the unfortunate young girls corresponded with the description given of them by Captain Arnold after his previous voyage which induced the expedition. Both appeared to have forgotten their own language and their features have been disfigured by the blacks in endeavouring apparently to make them resemble their own race. Thus, the bridges of their noses have been broken and flattened, and their mouths cut in some manner which gives an appearance resembling Aborigines, of whom they have become so alike as to afford the impression first that they were half castes. Their faces also have been discoloured, but the colouring is now wearing off. Their eyes were practically closed in the manner of those who have been long exposed to the strong glare of the sun, and they seem also to have suffered from sunstroke which fact perhaps only can account for a certain vacant peculiarity in their look and manner.

The Herald also stated that 'The elder girl called herself "Kitty", and the younger "Maria", which is nearly all the English they can speak'.

The Board of Inquiry, in its report, stated there were no white persons then on Fraser Island in captivity amongst the
Aborigines. The grounds on which this definite statement was based are unknown. The only evidence substantiating this before the Board was that of the two children through interpreter Davis. Both Captain Arnold and Captain Anderson gave evidence that they had been informed by Aborigines, although at various times previously, there were three white ‘Marys’ on the Island. No subsequent official action was taken to check the information of the existence of three white women, or one white woman and two female children, as was supplied by Aborigines to Captain Arnold, Captain Anderson, and Mr Neil of Maryborough respectively. That information had been supplied at different times by at least twenty or thirty Aborigines. Captain Arnold had been told by Aborigines that the white woman had two rings on her finger and that she could not understand them nor they her. This had caused Arnold to believe that she was a foreigner as most of the Aborigines could speak English.

Sawyer stated before the Board that from what he could learn, he believed the mother of the girls rescued died about twelve months previously. This statement apparently was not examined. It is not very convincing when it is remembered that Captain Arnold reported that Sawyer, on returning to the Coquette from the first search on Fraser Island, had stated he was satisfied there were no white people on the Island. Reliance cannot be placed on the results of the interrogation of the two girls by interpreter Davis. The elder girl was described by the Board itself as ‘completely habited to native life’ and ‘somewhat imbecile’.

In the meantime, the news of the Coquette’s search had provoked an official reaction in Maryborough. On 19 September 1859, the Commissioner of Crown Lands wrote to the Colonial Secretary:

59/5142. Mr Commr HALLORAN to the Hon the Col Sec respecting a White Woman and Children supposed to be on FRASER’S ISLAND.

Commr’s Office, TINANA, 19 Sept 1859.

No. 59/102.

Sir,

1. Referring to your letter of the 5th instant No. 521 addressed to the Bench of Magistrates Maryborough, acquainting them that an arrangement has been made with a Mr Sawyer to attempt to recover the woman and children supposed to be on Fraser’s Island, I do myself the honour to acquaint you that in March last I received information that two White women, supposed to be the wife and daughter of the Chief Constable at Gladstone, who left that port about two years and a half ago, as passengers by the Schooner Sea Belle, which vessel was never heard of afterwards, were amongst the Blacks on Fraser’s Island. I immediately communicated with Lieut BLIGH of the N.Police, who was fortunately at the Barracks at the time on the subject, and the same evening that Gentleman left for Fraser’s Island with a party of his Police, and made active search for the women supposed to be there but without success, and from all the information he was able to gain, he was of the opinion that the report was without any foundation.

2. Within the last four or five weeks the report of two white women being on Fraser’s Island has been again current in Mboro, and having made strict enquiries from the Blacks, from the contradictory nature of their statements, I am inclined to discredit the report.

3. I may add, that had these reports been credited in Maryborough parties would have been long ago organised to go to the rescue of the unfortunate women, and I beg to say, that if it meets with your approbation, I will form a party to scour the Island, and set the matter at rest.

C HALLORAN CCL

Archibald Meston, Southern Protector of Aboriginals in Queensland, in a report which was tabled in the Queensland Parliament in 1905, forty years later, briefly referred to the two girls who had been taken from Fraser Island:

In 1859, a white man reported two half-caste girls on the outer coast, one about seventeen, the other about eight. The New South Wales Government paid Molison and Black £300 to bring them to Sydney, and Captain Sawyer went for them in the cutter Coquette.

Durambi received £20 to go to Sydney and report on them. They were actually two Aboriginal albinos whose mother, ‘War-ann-oong’, had never even seen a white man. They were never returned to the Island, a gross breach of faith with the parents, and both died in New South Wales.

Their Aboriginal names were ‘Mundi’ and ‘Coyeen’, and an old man, a brother of the girls, died only two years ago on Fraser Island 27.

If Meston’s opinion is right, and the girls were Aboriginal albinos, their appearance as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald is explained. The evidence of John and Catherine Hourigan before the Board of Inquiry was that the younger girl brought from Fraser Island had sandy or light hair and hazel eyes. No description of the colouring of the hair and eyes of the elder girl appears in the records now available. The hazel eyes of the younger girl do not appear to match the expected pink eyes of an albino. When found, the elder girl only had an English worsted net jacket covering her down to the waist. The Board appears to have made no enquiry in relation to the origin of this garment. It may have been given to her by the Aborigines on account of her white appearance. The similar appearance of the two girls could account for their claim that they were sisters. Moreover, sistership in Aboriginal tribes went much further than these degrees of consanguinity in the English race. If the two girls were albinos then the taxpayers of New South Wales had to meet a bill for what amounted to a kidnapping of two inhabitants of the new colony of Queensland.

Meston differed from the Board’s opinion that the girls were children of white parents. The bringing of the girls from Fraser Island had received publicity and the Proceedings and Report of the Board was presented later to both Houses of Parliament of New South Wales. Considerable public interest must have been engendered. Although many people then lived close to Aboriginal tribes and knew Aborigines, the possibility of the two girls being albinos apparently was never raised at the time. Interpreter Davis remained quite satisfied they were white children.

Unfortunately, little is known of the girls’ later lives. The following is an extract from a letter to The Queenslander by W. Arnold, son of Captain Arnold then deceased:

The girls, on arriving in Sydney, were handed over to the Government who had them educated. The eldest, Kitty, did not live long. The terrible exposure to which she had been subjected while on the Island fatally did this work. The poor girl lost her reason and died an imbecile. The youngest girl, Maria, lived for about twenty years. She was sent to domestic service and was most intelligent. She died in Sydney hospital in 1878. The girls, when they came from the Island, could scarcely speak a word of English, but after being educated they could speak as well as any ordinary English woman, and after many years Maria forgot the language she had learnt on Fraser Island 28.

Was Meston right as to both of the girls being albinos? If not, from where did one or both, as the case may be, come? From what wrecked ship? Was the younger girl the Harty’s child? What happened to the Sea Belle? Those who knew the answers have passed on. The events occurred long ago and from the scanty information now available any attempt to supply the answers would be but conjectural.

The three illustrations used in the above article originally appeared in John Graham, convict, published in 1937 by Faber and Faber Limited. Grateful acknowledgement is made to J. M. Dent and Sons Limited, the holders of the reproduction rights, for permission to reprint these illustrations.
1803 H.M.S. *Porpoise* and the ship *Cato* were lost on Wreck Reef (22° 13' S. 155° 17' E.) whilst in company with the ship *Bridgewater*. The latter vessel did not come to their assistance and Matthew Flinders, a passenger in *Porpoise*, and thirteen others sailed the decked cutter from *Porpoise* to Sydney to obtain rescue for the remaining crews. Flinders sighted Indian Head on 28 August 1803, but did not land on Fraser Island, although he had visited the Island in 1802 from H.M.S. *Investigator*.

1820 *Echo*. Ship. Lost on Wreck Reef (as above) on 21 April 1820 while on passage from London to New Zealand. Of two boatloads of survivors, one reached Sydney on 5 July 1820, while the other was sighted and picked up by the Colonial Schooner *Cumberland* off Moreton Island.

1825 *Royal Charlotte*. Ship. Wrecked on Frederick Reef (20° 58' S. 154° 23' E.) on 20 June 1825. The long boat voyaged to Moreton Bay seeking assistance and Pilot John Gray took the brig *Amity* to the Reef to rescue the ship's company. There were two fatalities, a baby and a soldier drowned at the Reef.

1829 *Valetta*. Ship. Wrecked near Cape Gloucester (20° 04' S. 148° 27' E.) on 10 July 1825. Eleven crew reached Sydney by long boat and obtained stores sufficient to repair and refloat the ship.

1828 *Woodlark*. Brig. Wrecked on Saumarez Reef (21° 50' S. 153° 40' E.) on 18 April 1828. A boat with eighteen survivors and a raft carrying seven left the wreck, but the raft and its occupants were lost. The boat reached Brisbane on 14 May 1828.

1831 *America*. Ship. Wrecked on one of the Bunker Group (23° 51' 8' S. 152° 20' E.) on 20 June 1831, while on passage from Sydney to Batavia. The survivors reached Moreton Bay in a long boat on 27 July 1831.

1831 *Madeira Packet*. Schooner. Wrecked on Bampton Reef (19° 08' S. 150° 38' E.) December 1831. Three boats with survivors left the wreck, but only two reached Moreton Bay.

1836 *Stirling Castle*. Brig. While on passage to Singapore, wrecked on Swain Reefs (21° 40' S. 152° 19' E.) on 21 May 1836. The survivors left the wreck in two boats, landed in the Bunker Group (as above) and then were separated. One boat landed subsequently on Fraser Island and after severe privations only eight of the crew survived. See references in endnote 10.

1837 *Duke of York*. Barque. Wrecked off Port Curtis (23° 51' 15' S. 151° 15' E.) on 14 July 1837. Of thirty-two survivors in three boats, two were killed by Aborigines, probably at Wide Bay.

1844 *Clarence*. Brig. Wrecked on either Chesterfield Reefs (19° 58' S. 158° 28' E.) or Bampton Reef (as above) on 9/10 June 1844. Of the survivors reached Fraser Island on 2 July 1844, where the Aborigines coveted them of their possessions, but from whom they managed to escape to sea. They reached Brisbane on 7 July 1844. Of three other boats which left the wreck, two were picked up by the *Sovereign*, one other had two occupants wounded by Aborigines on landing on the coast but was eventually picked up by the whaler *Woodlark*.

1845 *Elizabeth*. Schooner. Whilst at the wreck of the *Clarence* for salvage, the vessel with only two or three crew aboard was driven off by a gale and was lost. The Master and six crew who were on the Reef sailed the long boat to Moreton Bay, reaching there on 26 March 1845. The Master's report of a wreck seen on Fraser Island led Thompson and his party to attempt salvage. One member was killed by the Island Aborigines, Thompson and his wife and two others were lost at sea, and one survivor was rescued by the schooner *Ariel* and taken to Hong Kong.

1847 *Selina*. Left Moreton Bay for Sydney on 3 July 1847 and went missing until she was found dismasted at Keppel Bay (23° 21' S. 150° 55' E.) on 20 October 1848. No survivors from a crew of six.

1850 *Jenny Lind*. Barque. On passage from Melbourne to Singapore, lost on Kenn Reef (21° 12' S. 155° 46' E.) on 21 September 1850. Two boatloads of survivors reached Moreton Bay on 6 November 1850.

1851 *Countess of Minto*. Schooner. Wrecked by a gale at Lady Elliott Island (24° 07' S. 152° 42' E.) while most of the crew were on shore gathering guano. A companion vessel the *Roebey Castle* disappeared from the anchorage in the same gale.

1852 *Thomas King*. Barque. Wrecked Cato Island (23° 15' S. 155° 32' E.) on 17 April 1852. The Master and six crew attempted to reach Moreton Bay but only two succeeded. The remainder of the crew left at the Island were rescued by the whaler *Lady Blackwood* seventeen days after the wreck.

1854 *Hester* and *Doelwyck*. Ships. Both vessels struck Kenn Reef (as above) on 21 April 1854, while on passage from Sydney to Batavia. Some of the *Hester*'s crew reached Gladstone after being rescued by the brigantine *Jenny Lind* (same name as the barque lost in 1850), but the *Doelwyck*’s boats disappeared.

1856 *Sable Chief*. Schooner. Wrecked on Facing Island (23° 49' S. 151° 22' E.) in 1856. The survivors reached Gladstone.

1857 *Jenny Lind*. Brigantine. Wrecked Bustard Bay (24° 05' S. 151° 48' E.) on 8 February 1857. The crew reached Gladstone three days later.

1857 *Sea Belle*. Brig. Sailed from Gladstone for Sydney on 2 April 1857 and then disappeared.

The above list is not intended to be exhaustive and further reference should be made to the following:


A. S. Pixley, *Shipping Wreck Locations*, typed list held in Queensland State Archives.

ENDNOTES

1. Date of appointment as Chief Constable, Port Curtis, does not appear in the *New South Wales Government Gazette*, but James Harty was appointed Inspector of slaughter houses on 4 September 1855, which would approximate his appointment as Chief Constable. *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 3 September 1885, p. 2353.
2. Statement by John Hourigan, 'Rescue of two female children from Frazer's Island', Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 1859-60, IV, p. 990. (In this Parliamentary Paper, the name is invariably spelt Hourigan, although the Government Resident at Gladstone used Horrigan in his correspondence.)

3. James Gordon, How Port Denison was discovered, no imprint. Bound pamphlet held in Oxley Memorial Library, Brisbane, in Queensland alphabetical section.

4. N.S.W.V.P., 1859-60, IV, p. 993. Account reprinted from The Empire, 19 August 1859.


9. Swain Reefs are a coral complex located around 21° 40'S., 152° 00'E. at the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef.


11. Bracewell was the name used by Acting Police Magistrate Simpson in his report, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Moreton Bay, 30 May 1842. [Letterbook held by Survey Office, Brisbane]. Bracewell's Convict Number was 519 of the transport Layton. His Aboriginal name was 'Wandi'. James Davis' Aboriginal name was 'Duramboi'.


13. Commissioner of Crown Lands, Moreton Bay to Colonial Secretary, 30 May 1842, in-letter 4284 of 1842. [N.S.W.A.O. 4/2581-2 held on O.M.L. Microfilm Reel A2.12, frame 745].