

THE HISTORY OF THE PEACHESTER AND CROHAMHURST DISTRICT

(By Mr. W. P. H. HARDEN)

(Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Queensland on November 28th, 1939, by Mr. Inigo Jones)

The Peachester and Crohamhurst district, although known only to a few people, dates back almost to the foundation of the country as the neighbouring Durundur Station was taken up by the Archers in the early forties and part of the old station is now included in the district proper (said Mr. Inigo Jones in an introductory address). It then came into commercial activity owing to the enormous quantities of pine and cedar which grew in the scrubs and rain forests of which it is composed and the Mellor family, afterwards prominently associated with the Gympie goldfield were among the men who worked the timber. To this family it is said Mellum Mountain owed its name and also the town of Mellum now known as Landsborough. William Landsborough himself settled the other side of Landsborough on the Caloundra side when he took up that unhappily chosen piece of land as a reward for his intrepid work of exploration. Although the district of Peachester and Crohamhurst is very little larger than a paddock of an ordinary pastoral property, there are in that small compass, so many unusual features as to render it one of the

most remarkable valleys in Australia if not in the world. It is a triangular valley about seven miles long from east to west and about three miles wide at its eastern end and containing in its boundaries the upper reaches of the Stanley River. The eastern part is Peachester and the western half is the Vale of Crohamhurst. Its northern boundary is the southern wall of the Maleny Plateau which runs east and west; and the southern boundary is a spur of the Durundur Range running towards Beerwah Mountain, the principal summit of the Glass House Mountains but separated from it by the Stanley River while the eastern limit is formed by the D'Aguilar Range which across this entrance is depressed to an elevation of about 300 feet.

Upheaval In Bygone Age.

The western end of the valley is surmounted by Mount Livingstone in which the Stanley River takes its rise and it seems evident that, in a bygone age when the Glass House Mountains rose in eruption, this area sank, creating a sudden depressed valley at right angles to the coast range. It is because of this depression that from Beerwah Railway Station platform the eminence of Mount Livingstone can be seen without interruption. Geologically the highlands of eastern Queensland run north and south as part of the layout of the Tasman Massif and this plan is carried out in the adjoining Durundur and D'Aguilar Ranges, and further east by the Moreton—Stradbroke line of elevation which projects out to sea owing to the easterly trend of the coast. As a result the coastal cyclones are apt to be deflected as they come south on their course along the New South Wales current. They are then stopped by the heights of the Glass House Mountains and Mt. Samson, which form the southern part of the Gateway of the Valley, and are driven into it and up to the western end—the Vale of Crohamhurst—with the result that this station holds the record rainfall of Australia for a day, a wet period, and a month. This effect is emphasised by the fact that the northern gateway of the Valley consists of a group of three mountains—Mount Mellum, Mount Sunrise, and Bald Knob—the last of which appears from the abnormal telephone effects experienced locally to be radio-active. The intensification of meteorological effects makes it possible to sense from here the rain groups which are so important to pastoral Australia.

Effect of Phenomenal Rainfall.

The rainfall, too, is of great importance to Brisbane as it is this valley which is entirely responsible

In the early days here the aboriginals had a legend to the effect that once upon a time Beerwah and Conowri, the two principal peaks of the Glass House Mountains, used to throw firesticks at each other. As aboriginal legends are always based on actual observation and then handed down orally; this throws a strange light on the possible antiquity of the Human Race. These mountains are believed to be volcanoes which have been so long extinct that the cones have been washed away and only the central cores remain and it is considered that the extinction dates back possibly five million years. As the blacks must have seen this occurrence, it would mean that intelligent human life must have existed for that period. Fairfield Osborn, however, far exceeded this and estimated the length of human existence in an intelligent state as fifteen hundred million years.

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for the greater floods which visit the city from time to time as an analysis thereof clearly shows; and in order to intercept and control these the Somerset Dam is now being constructed lower down the Stanley River. Another almost unique feature of the district is the nature of the course of the Stanley River which makes that stream one of the most remarkable rivers in the world.

The river rises in the northern slopes of Mount Livingstone and flows for a little distance in a north-erly direction towards the Blackall Range from which a tributary which some people deem the real river flows. This stream has a special peculiarity, too, as it has its source on a hill in a paddock belonging to

Mr. John Grigor—at one time Chairman of Lands-borough Shire Council; and in this same paddock are two other springs one of which forms the head waters of the Obi Creek—a twin stream to the Stanley—and the other is one of the sources of the Mary River which is analogous to the Brisbane River itself. The Obi—Mary system bears a very strong resemblance to the Stanley—Brisbane system—one flowing north and the other south.

After this northerly sweep, the river then turns again south and is joined by the Ewen Creek, called by the early settlers "The Little River." This stream rises in the Bald Knob and Mount Sunrise and is fed along its northern border by a series of powerful springs which act as drainage from the Maleny Plateau and whose added contributions cause the Stanley in its upper courses to have more than 100 per cent, run-off in relation to its rainfall.

The Ewen joins the Stanley at the end of this first southward flow and it then turns east and runs almost to the eastern end of the valley; and it is only by a very small amount of rise that it is prevented from flowing at this point straight to the Pacific. Here, however, the rise is just sufficient to divert it and by how little can be judged when, on planning the Peachester Dam about five miles further down the river, it was found that if the dam was raised one hundred feet, that established its limit of height as at that point the water would escape over the range at the entrance of the Valley. These convolutions are sufficiently remarkable but a further extraordinary feature now claims attention as from this turn again

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to the south and west the river ceases to be engorged—a state of things almost unheard of in the upper courses of rivers. It has only one hilly side, the west-ern (formed by the Durundur Range) while on the eastern side is a level ground rising very slightly to the depressed section of the D'Aguilar Range as already described. It flows south in this state to Woodford and then turns due west and on passing Mount Archer and the Villeneuve heights, which on either side of it form a second gate, it again becomes normally engorged and flows south and then west until it joins the Brisbane River at Esk. It thus by this remarkable course gives an example of a completely retrograde river to which the

Obi is similar though on a very reduced scale. Another extraordinary phenomenon resulting from this engorged and unengorged stage and the presence of the Glass House Mountains, the Moreton—Stradbroke elevation and the radio-active state of the Bald Knob is the rainfall gradient from Esk to the last named mountain.

At Esk on the Brisbane River the average annual rainfall is just under forty inches, and at Kilcoy is just over forty. At Woodford it has risen at the rate of an inch a mile to fifty-two. At Peachester it is nearly sixty-eight, having risen two inches per mile and at Crohamhurst it is just on seventy-six, rising from Peachester nearly three inches per mile. At Bald Knob, two miles distant, the average is now ninety inches, which is a rise of seven inches per mile, and this average is for only the last ten years which was a notably dry period. In the wettest year,

1931, Crohamhurst recorded 98 inches and Bald Knob 114.

This remarkable district in its early days was covered with impenetrable forests, where one walked through timber tracks between forest giants rising 200 and 300 feet and creating a perpetual twilight.

The contours and general configuration of the country at this Gate Tjetween Mount Archer and Villeneuve make possible a plan to divert the upper Stanley in flood time entirely by building a wall at this point which would back the river up and cause it to flow over the low part of the D'Aguilar Range east of Woodford. It would then flow through comparatively unoccupied country and the whole of the water from the heavy rainfall >rea would be diverted from the course of the Brisbane River and yet be allowed to flow down its normal course at other than flood times. This would act automatically and be a means of entirely preventing floods in Brisbane. In other rivers this kind of diversion presents legal difficulties

but here they do not exist as, owing to the peculiar configuration, the flow would be distributed without causing any specially increased flow in the land over which the diverted water would run.

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Clearing and erosion have in most of the area devastated the fauna and flora very considerably, but in the northern and western limits there still is an abundance of marsupials and koalas and the district has now been proclaimed a sanctuary.

Mr. Harden's Story.

Mr. Harden, in his paper, said—

On the night of Sunday, November 4th, 1888, my mother, my eldest brother Ernest, and myself, walked from Clay Street, New Farm, to board Messrs. James Campbell and Sons' steamer "Mavis," which then conveyed us by way of Bribie Passage to their sawmill at Campbellville on Coochin Creek. We left from Campbell's Wharf, known to-day as the Brisbane Tug Company's wharf. As we passed through Bribie Passage, the sun was rising and, shining on the top of Beerwah Mountain, produced a very beautiful effect. We passed the s.s. "Bribie" near the mouth of Coochin Creek. Further along we met a sailing boat on which was Mr. George Campbell who had come to join his father, Mr. James Campbell, Senior, on the "Mavis." The Coochin Creek wharf was reached about noon, the journey having taken about nine hours. My mother and myself remained at Campbellville for two days, and then after having loaded up our furniture and belongings on a bullock team, arrived duly at what was then known as the Peach Trees. The district then had no other name. It was so-called because it was the general camping ground of the timber getters, one of whom had come over from Toowoomba and brought some of the peaches for which Toowoomba was then very famous. The stones of these had germinated and the camping ground was named from the fact that a group of peach trees had grown there.

The timber getters travelled from there to the rafting ground on Coochin Creek. The address for letters was Blackall Range Road, via Woodford, and the mail was carried on horseback by W. Guilfoyle who delivered letters and collected them for transit to Brisbane via Woodford, then the nearest town to the railhead which was then at Caboolture. The residents from Campbellville to Peach Trees were Messrs. Mawhinney and Stirling and Simpson at Coochin Creek where the school was opened the same

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week as I arrived there. Mr. John Simpson kept the hotel on the corner of the Gympie and Blackall Range Roads. Further along the road were F. Waldron, A. Careo, W. Raddatz, C Weyer and H. Hume while at the top of the D'Aguilar Range, after surmounting a very steep pinch, was the store kept by the Otto family.

Another road had been attempted up the range to the north and this ascent was known as Alf's Pinch. On this road were W. Dabbs, W. Karrasch and the Ives family and T. O'Brien. Along the road to Woodford were the families of Page, C and F. Vieritz, while along the main road above the Peach Trees were S. Shuttlewood, D. K. Cahill, D. Kenny, W. Robinson, P. Casey, T. Beverley, W. Cusack, J. Kynoch, W. Bickford, our own property and W. Brown.

On the Cemetery Road (then known as the Back Road) were J. Bennett, J. C. Jave Bennett, W. Gregg, and W. and H. Streek, while along the river road were D. Gourley, T. Murphy, and W. Innes, the other side of the river being still included in Durundur Station, taken up by the Archer family in 1842.

Durundur subdivided.

Durundur Station was repurchased from the banks and surveyed into farms and thrown open by the State in the drought of 1898—1902 when a number of families became added to the community.

The Peachester School of Arts was built about 1891 the prime mover in the matter being Mr. John Grigor, of Maleny, who first made the suggestion to a number of young men who were bathing in the Stanley River at the Peach Trees. A committee was formed and a dance was held at the residence of the late Mr. D. K. Cahill. This was followed by others and eventually the School of Arts was built. When it was finished the district was called Peachester— an anagram on Peach Trees. The School of Arts building was utilised for the first State school, and Mr. H. Hume was appointed teacher. The school, however, was closed shortly afterwards owing to lack of pupils; but it was soon reopened and Miss Grace Houghton, who came from the Warwick district, was appointed as teacher. The school was located in the same building until Mr. Norman Law was appointed

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its teacher. He organised a series of entertainments and travelled quite widely with his local team of entertainers trained by himself. By this means the necessary share of local contributions was raised and the present State school was erected.

North Coast Railway.

The North Coast Railway was only built as far as Caboolture when I came here. This section had been built under a contract let to Mr. John Robb, on 9th February, 1886. The line was opened to North Pine (now Petrie) on 1st March, 1888, and to Caboolture on 11th June, of the same year. The second and third sections between Caboolture and Yandina were let to Jesser and Co. on 6th December, 1888, and Section 4 was let to G. C. Wilcocks on 8th May, 1890. By arrangement with the contractor, that portion of the section from Cooran to Cooroy (nine miles) was opened on 1st April, 1891, and the whole line was completed and opened on the 17th July, 1891, two months ahead of contract time. Thus was completed the link which gave communication between Brisbane, Gympie, Maryborough, Bundaberg and Mount Perry.

Section 5 of 16f miles was from Gympie Station to a point on the Noosa Road, Cooran, about 98 miles by road from Brisbane, and the contract was let to G. C Wilcocks and Co. on 22nd July, 1887. This section was opened to traffic on 10th June, 1889. To facilitate travel between Brisbane and Gympie, the Railway Department, early in 1889, put in hand the work of constructing and improving the direct road between Yandina and Cooran and by arrangement with the Widgee and Caboolture Divisional Boards, these local authorities bore three-fifths of the cost incurred through their respective divisions. This work was completed about May, 1889.

Section 2, Caboolture to Landsborough, was opened on 1st February, 1890. This is the section which includes Beerwah. Section 3, Landsborough to Yandina, was opened on 1st January, 1891.

Road Communications.

The story of the road communications of the district is also a rather romantic one. In the early times the difficulties of the descent from the Maleny Tableland at the southern end were very great, and

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it was the custom to draw the logs to the top of the range at Wootha, where Mr. Joseph McCarthy resided, and let them slide down the chute where they were loaded on the waggons and brought down through what was afterwards Crohamhurst and Peach Trees and Beerwah to the raft ground at Coochin, and taken to Campbellville where they were sawn up and taken to Brisbane in Messrs. James Campbell and Sons' steamers.

The descent of the D'Aguilar Range near the Otto's family residence was very steep indeed—so much so that drays had to be assisted up by chocking and on the downward trip a small tree or sapling had to be dragged behind to prevent the vehicle over-running the horse or horses. The road was then under the control of the Caboolture Divisional Board. In 1914 the Landsborough Shire Council came into existence, and the district was represented by Messrs. William A. Grigor and Owen Jones. Mr. Grigor was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Grigor of Glass House Mountains, who had kept a change house on the Old Gympie Road, having come there in 1864. They lived there for many years and were universally respected. The difficulties of the road were a source of much complaint and Mr. Grigor, thinking that the time was not ripe for a first-class modern road, advocated and secured the construction of a deviation which was a marked improvement though not altogether satisfactory. Through the efforts of Mr. Owen Jones, who was a highly qualified civil engineer, this was later replaced by the present modern road.

The advent of motors has made a passable road imperative and the old timber tracks have now given way to more or less smooth ways to every farm, and now a loan is to be obtained to make all weather roads available, at any rate to every cream supplier.

The institution of co-operative dairy factories just before the close of the last century made slightly better tracks necessary, but people of to-day have not the faintest idea of the disabilities with which their predecessors were confronted.

The subsequent history of some of the individuals previously mentioned is a matter of some interest. The Campbell family have ceased to visit the district and the old mill was abandoned and removed to Albion in Brisbane many years ago. Mr. J. D. Campbell

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represented the district in Parliament for some years, but his generation has now gone the way of all flesh. The Mawhinneys father and mother have passed away, and two sons met with tragic death, one dying from the bite of a death adder and another, James, being killed by a log falling in unloading. Mr. and Mrs. John Simpson who were so well known to

road travellers have also gone on the lonely trail. Mr. John Simpson had very strong business instincts. He conducted the Redbank Inn, as well as that at Coochin, and had interests in the Redbank meat works and coal. He also owned the Beerwah sawmill. His sons and grandsons are widely spread over the district and in other parts of the State. The old Coochin Hotel was given up and built at Beerwah township near the railway and the license is held by their eldest son William, who when in the police force, was active in the arrest of the notorious Kennifs. When the Bruce Highway was built it was kept on the eastern side of the railway and the hotel is now in almost palatial premises on the new road.

The Hume family were of old Methodist missionary stock and are now represented by Mr. Harry Hume, of Eumundi, who has done important work in supplying hardwood for the British Admiralty. Mrs. Hume did sterling service as a bush nurse and died recently at a very advanced age.

The Otto family is represented nowadays by Ernest Otto, son of Mr. and Mrs. Otto, previously referred to. His wife is in charge of the Peachester Post Office, which has been moved from the old Grigor sawmilling hamlet (now abandoned) to a central position in the township of Peachester at the junction of the Beerwah—Peachester and Woodford roads. Mr. S. Shuttlewood is survived by his widow, who lives partly in Peachester and partly in Sydney. Her husband had been an enthusiastic breeder of racing stock and had the distinction of winning the Stradbroke Handicap with "Storm King."

Mr. D. K. Cahill was at one time orderly to Queensland's first Governor (Sir George Bowen), and his wife was a relative of the family of Chambers of Chambers' Journal fame. She had been in Australia for a great many years and had very interesting links with the early history of Queensland, having come overland from New England in a bullock dray nearly

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100 years ago. Their son, Mr. Dan Cahill, J.P., still lives at the old home of Hulme Villa, called after Mr. Cahill senior's old Manchester home. Behind Mr. Cahill's property was that of Mr. Thomas O'Brien which is now held by Mr. Probert from the Darling Downs. Adjoining is a property opened up as an orchard by Mr. H. Atthow, well-known in the Brisbane marketing community, and this is now in the hands of Mr. Stewart Watson, son of the Under-Secretary to the Premier. Next door again is the property taken up among the early group of settlers by Mr. W. Robinson, who was of Cumberland yeoman stock, and this is now in the possession of a Tweedside man, Mr. Duncan Macdonald, M.L.A., for the electoral division of Stanley. Across the road is the property taken up by Mr. James Leigh and later in possession of a local notability Mr. (generally known as "Doctor") August Aubry, the son of a chef to the King of Bavaria. Below, on the river bank, were some properties held by Messrs. J. and J. C. Bennett and W. Gregg. At the end of the road was Mr. H. Streek, who later sold out to Mr. W. Magnus Craig, formerly well known in Brisbane.

A road branches north past Mr. Aubry's property which is now in the hands of Mr. James Ferguson who, for some time, was the mail contractor. This road serves the property of Mr. Roycroft, a north of Ireland man whose son now farms it. Then comes the property held for a time by Mrs. Geddes Crawford, and later by Mr. Spiers, both well known in Brisbane. Further on is "Ashdown," the property of Mrs. Owen Jenner, also the properties of the Giblin family and of Mr. John Collins, J.P., of Widbury farm.

A prominent part was played by Mr. Collins in securing the building of St. Andrew's Church of England which stands on the road past Mr. Cahill's property and which was opened by Bishop Le Fanu, and visited by Archbishop Donaldson.

The properties of three German settlers adjoined this—those of W. Meiss, A. Ostwald (formerly a Uhlan) and Robert Breton (a cultured man whose father had held a high military post in Silesia). Mr. Meiss lived here only a short while, and the other properties are now in the hands of the sons of the original owners.

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Crohamhurst House.

A property which originally had been selected by Mr. Thomas Beverley was bought in 1892 by Mr. Owen Jones, Assoc. M. Inst. C.E., who improved it considerably and brought some well-bred cattle. Mr. Jones had formerly been in the Roads Department and had designed the Fitzroy Bridge at Roekhampton, and, as consulting engineer to Messrs. J. W. Sutton and Coy., had designed several steamers for that well-known firm of shipowners in Brisbane. Mr. Owen Jones was an enthusiastic supporter of the Church of England, and services were conducted in Crohamhurst House for many years until the Church of St. Andrew was built. Mr. Owen Jones and Mr. Grigor were original members of the Landsborough Shire Council. His son, Mr. Inigo Jones, went to Brisbane for some years to organise the building of Crohamhurst Observatory and while there held many important positions, becoming the third President of the Historical Society of Queensland. He returned to Crohamhurst early in 1935 to take up the directorship of the Observatory which was opened by Sir Leslie Wilson on 13th August of that year. He has since been made Fellow of many learned societies in England and America, and was given the Jubilee medal by His Majesty King George V.

The property was called Crohamhurst after a property of Lord Goschen, once Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the name has now been given to the whole of that part of the district. A school was built on ground donated by Mr. Jones, Senior, and opened by Mr. J. D. Story, I.S.O., Under-Secretary for Public Instruction, in July, 1913. The Observatory is very widely known and has been visited by more than one thousand people since its establishment.

On the mountain overlooking this region is Mr. W. Hedges, who hails from Kent and is very proud of the fact. The mountain is named Candle Mountain, and was for some years well known as a holiday and health resort.

Among the properties carved out of the old Durundur Station is that taken up by Mr. Denny, who came from Riverina (N.S.W.) This is now held by his son, Mr. R. G. Denny, whose brother is a prominent Methodist minister in the Brisbane circuit.

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