



# BUSH HERITAGE AUSTRALIA



## Carnarvon Station:

A history of European settlement since 1863

Libby Smith, 2003



*Our heart & soul*

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## CONTENTS

		<i>Page</i>
Introduction		1
Chapter 1	The Early Years	2
Chapter 2	The Tyson Era	5
Chapter 3	John Collins & Sons	9
Chapter 4	The Kenniff Story	19
Chapter 5	1928-1963 Consolidation with Babbiloora	23
Chapter 6	The Last 40 Years	27
Chapter 7	The Australian Bush Heritage Fund	35
Notes		

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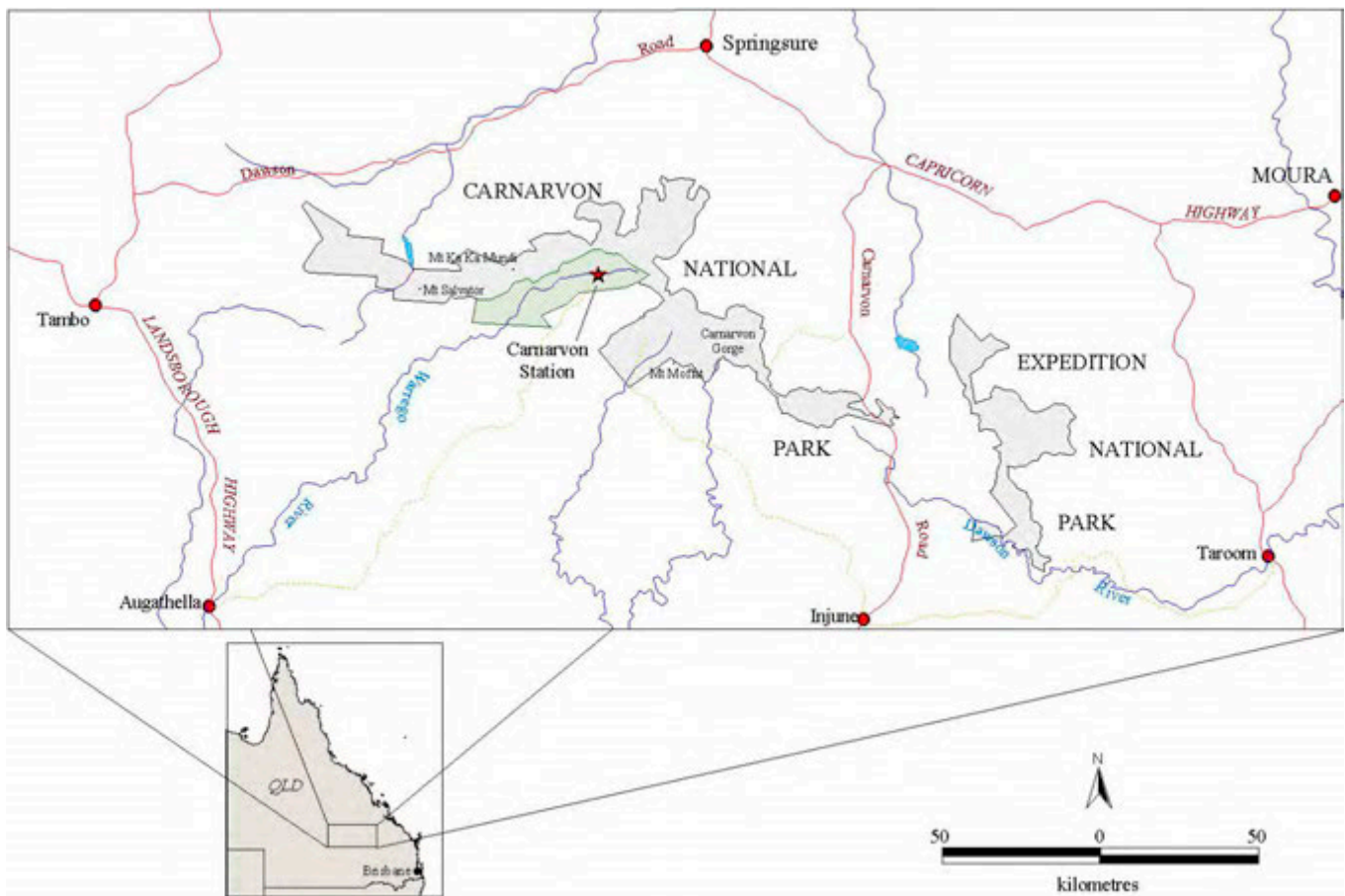
## INTRODUCTION

In 2001 the Australian Bush Heritage Fund purchased Carnarvon Station in central Queensland in order to protect its outstanding natural values. Carnarvon Station is a pastoral leasehold property of 59 051 hectares situated in central Queensland adjacent to the southern border of the Ka Ka Mundi section of the Carnarvon National Park. The Channin Creek, a tributary of the Warrego River and part of the headwaters of the Murray-Darling river system, runs through the property.

The following is an account of the history of European settlement at Carnarvon Station. The Aboriginal history of Carnarvon both precedes and is interwoven with the ongoing history of European settlement. It is a detailed and important story and is most appropriately told by the Aboriginal people themselves. We therefore do not try to tell it here, and focus only on the pastoral history in the region. Ultimately, we hope that the two stories, that of European settlement and that of the Aboriginal people of the area, can be brought together in one comprehensive document.

It is worth noting that Carnarvon's history, for much of the first one hundred years of its occupation as a pastoral lease, is shared with that of neighbouring properties Babbiloora and Dooloogarah due to the three properties having had common owners. Moreover, in reading the history of Carnarvon Station it should be borne in mind that the borders of the property have changed substantially over the years. Between 1889 and 1963 the pastoral lease of Carnarvon occupied a greater area to the east and less to the west than is the case today.

Information has been drawn from a number of sources including government files related to the monitoring of the lease held at the Department of Natural Resources and Mines in Charleville and Brisbane, the Queensland State Archives and the John Oxley Library in Brisbane and relevant published material. In addition a wide range of people, who have either personally or through their families had connection with Carnarvon Station, have been interviewed.



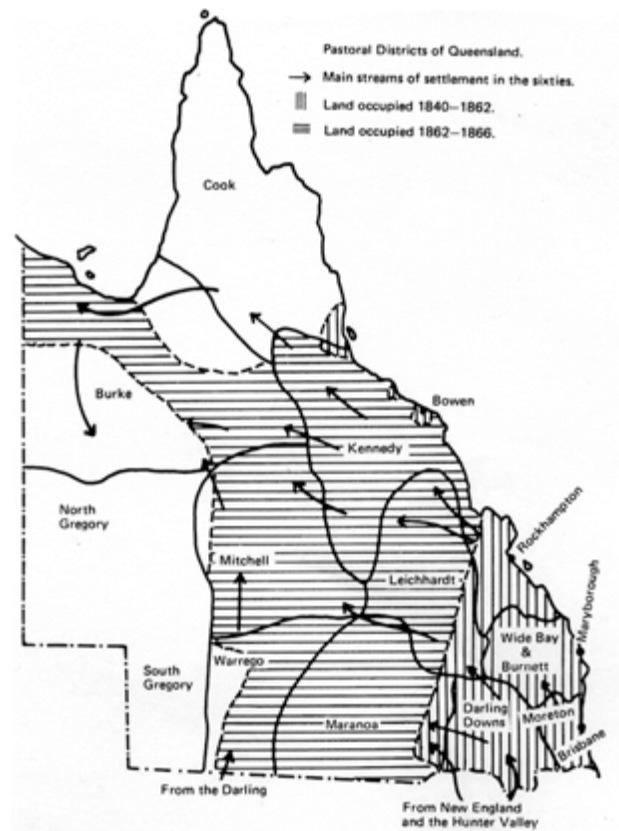
## Chapter 1: THE EARLY YEARS

The first non-Aboriginal to explore the area of the Warrego River was Sir Thomas Mitchell on his 1845-6 expedition, an expedition focused on finding a great river that flowed from southern Queensland to the Gulf of Carpentaria. In mid 1846 Mitchell explored and named the peaks of the Great Dividing Range where the Warrego, Maranoa and other rivers rise. In his journal he reported favourably of the country through which he passed, making references to 'excellent open forest' and fine open grassy plains.<sup>1</sup> The first settler in the area was Allan Macpherson, a family friend of Sir Thomas Mitchell who in 1847, guided by a sketch map supplied by Sir Thomas Mitchell, claimed two huge stations at Mount Abundance near Roma.<sup>2</sup>

When Queensland became a separate colony from New South Wales in December 1859 the white population numbered about 28 000 people of whom only 6 000 lived in Brisbane. There were some 3 500 000 sheep and 500 000 cattle in the new colony.<sup>3</sup> Settlement was focused around the Darling Downs, Moreton Bay and Burnett areas and the coastal and near-coastal areas from the New South Wales border to just beyond Rockhampton. The pastoral industry contributed more than 70 per cent of the revenue of the state and was seen by the new government as its opportunity for development. To promote the advance of the new colony the government promptly introduced the 1860 Land Acts to encourage squatters in the south to move to Queensland and open up unoccupied lands. These Acts set down the policy of the new Queensland Government in respect of the settlement and alienation of Crown Land. Their objective was to secure real settlement rather than speculation in pastoral land. To discourage speculation a system of temporary licences was introduced whereby settlers could apply for a one-year licence to occupy a run of up to 100 square miles. The occupier had nine months to apply for a fourteen-year lease; the granting of the lease being conditional on having stocked the property to one-quarter of its assumed capacity of 100 sheep or twenty cattle per square mile.\* There were no limitations as to the number of licences that settlers could apply for, hence a single settler or group of settlers could hold licences for huge tracts of country, parts or all of which might be later forfeited later if the owner failed to comply with the stocking conditions of the lease.

The 1860 Land Bill encouraged the rapid spread of pastoral settlement. Land was divided into pastoral districts each controlled by a Lands Commission. This was similar to the structure in place in New South Wales.

The following map depicts the spread of settlement across the pastoral districts in the 1860s.



Early pastoral occupation of Queensland<sup>3</sup>

The Maranoa and Warrego districts both developed rapidly after being opened up in 1860. Such was the hunger for pastoral land in the 1860s that, despite its inaccessibility, much of the upper Warrego was taken up within a few years of the 1860 legislation. The towns of Springsure to the north of Carnarvon Station and Roma to the south were both established in the early 1860s.

\* One square mile or 640 acres is equivalent to 292 hectares. Currency was the pound (£). Twenty shillings comprised £1. With decimalisation in 1966, £1 converted to \$2.



**The Royal Mail Service at Springsure** JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY NO 72053

The boundaries of Carnarvon Station as they are today incorporated, in the 1860s, a number of blocks or runs. From 1860 to 1889 the property comprised the run blocks of Channin No 1, Channin No 2, Carnarvon North, Watershed, Rangeland and parts of Kent and Walla Wallena.

The Run Registers show that John Fraser of Tamboreen, Logan River was the first settler to apply for the leases of the Carnarvon blocks. Together with West Bernard Copeland he applied for Carnarvon, Channin No 1 and Channin No 2 in 1863. The blocks were then transferred solely to John Fraser in 1864 and then to John Fraser, Charles Brown and John Monkton Brown in 1865. John Fraser also applied for Carnarvon East and Carnarvon North in 1865 and Carnarvon Downs in 1866 and these three blocks were soon after transferred to John Fraser, Charles Brown and John Monkton Brown. The same three settlers applied for Watershed in 1874. These three partners also had licences for some of the blocks comprising Babbiloorra. The first time Rangeland was entered in the records was in 1885 when William Kelman was shown as the lessee.<sup>4</sup>

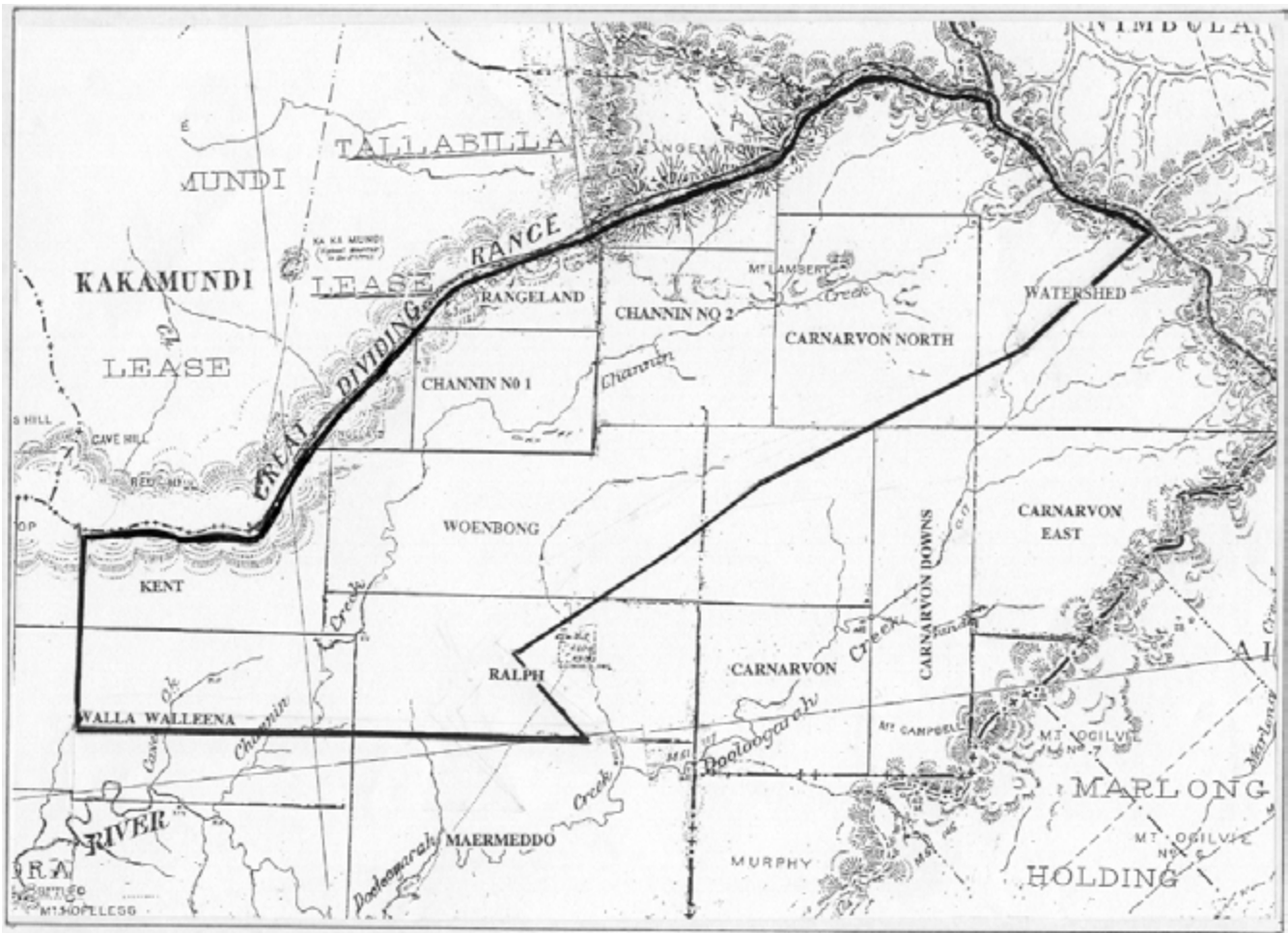
John Fraser, Charles Brown and John Monkton Brown surrendered the leases on Channin No 1, Channin No 2, Carnarvon East, Carnarvon North and Carnarvon Downs in 1870. Leases on these five blocks were then taken up by

Thomas Walker in 1871 and then subsequently transferred to James Tyson.

Further land acts in the 1860s, including the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868, probably had little impact on the early leaseholders of the Carnarvon blocks due to their lack of suitability for agriculture. The Act allowed for the resumption of eight square miles of any pastoral lease for free selection with the possibility of a further resumption after ten years.<sup>5</sup> The Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 extended leases in unsettled districts from fourteen to 21 years and introduced a low rental for unwatered districts.

Life in the Warrego area at this time was isolated and hard. Living conditions were rudimentary and stock was vulnerable to being stolen by organised gangs or Aborigines or by being taken by dingos. In 1872, the introduction of enforced registration of brands and tighter droving regulations (Brands Act) was a first attempt to address the problem of stock loss.

We know very little about the activities on the Carnarvon blocks in these early years of settlement. Records with respect to run blocks were limited to Run Registers and Treasury Rental Sheets. The Lands Department did not create files on run blocks. Files were only created when runs were consolidated and consolidation of the Carnarvon blocks did not occur until 1889.



**1863 – 1889 Run blocks with an overlay of the approximate Carnarvon boundary since 1963**

We can reasonably assume that sheep were the dominant stock on Carnarvon in the 1860s and 1870s. Australia experienced a wool and pastoral boom in the 1860s and the scramble for land infected the entire colony, driving squatters to relatively remote areas in the quest for grazing land.

Blocks in remote areas such as the Upper Warrego were unfenced and shepherds managed the sheep. The living conditions of the shepherds were no doubt primitive. They lived in groups of huts comprising an out-station. These tended to be named according to the distance from the main homestead. Hence, at Carnarvon Station we talk of 9 Mile, 15 Mile and 16 Mile as locations. It is likely that the huts would have been built from timber with bark roofs and earthen floors. At night the sheep were all brought to a common yard or yards near the hut where they could be guarded against attack by dingos and Aborigines. Next morning they were divided into as many mobs as there were shepherds and taken to fresh pastures, returning again in the evening to be yarded. In central and western Queensland these mobs were often large, numbering 1 500 to 2 000 sheep in size. The range of grazing land was limited to areas adjacent to water which left large areas of country untouched.

In the early days most shepherds had been assigned convicts, who had no choice of occupation, but by the 1840s this source of labour was no longer available. This led graziers in the Darling Downs to arrange the importation of Chinese labour to take over shepherding. However, the Chinese were not obliging pastoral employees and by 1861 only five hundred remained in the entire colony.<sup>6</sup> Oral history of the early days of settlement in the Upper Warrego purports that Chinese shepherds were also used in the district. However, they are likely to have been recruited in the area as they looked for work after the gold rushes in Victoria and New South Wales. It is the packhorses of the Chinese shepherds that are said to form the original breeding stock of the Carnarvon brumbies.

There are a number of sites on Carnarvon Station that bear witness to the time when sheep grazed there. Those with past associations to Carnarvon recall how it was possible to see the remains of sheep breaks where the grass would no longer grow at 4 Mile, 6 Mile, 16 Mile and beyond where the Big Shed is currently located. It is also told that a pot of sovereigns still lies buried at the site of the encampment near the Big Shed, left from the time when a shepherd became ill and was taken to the homestead where he died. Hence he never returned to claim his sovereigns<sup>7</sup>.

## Chapter 2: THE TYSON ERA

By 1886 the majority of blocks comprising modern day Carnarvon Station had passed into the hands of James Tyson, together with a number of neighbouring blocks (Carnarvon Downs, Carnarvon East, Carnarvon, Bridgelands, Maermeddo and Woonboeng). In addition, he controlled ten blocks within what would become Babbiloorra.

James Tyson is a large figure in Queensland history and stories about him abound. He became Queensland's first millionaire, the richest Australian-born pastoralist and had a persistent reputation for meanness and yet some people attributed him with generosity. He was born to a settler father and convict mother in 1819 at Narellan on the Nepean River west of Sydney, the seventh of nine children. He began his working life as a semi-nomadic pastoral worker in southern and western New South Wales. The acquisition of his property empire began when he and his brothers William and Charles took up squatters rights on Bundoolah, a property near the confluence of the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Rivers. They then moved on to nearby Geramy. In the early 1850s the Tyson brothers started taking cattle to the Bendigo goldfields to supply the miners, set up a slaughter house and butchery and were so successful that they sold the business in 1858 purportedly for some £80 000. In 1855 James and another brother John Tyson bought three properties on the Edward River at Deniliquin and stocked them with sheep. By 1860 James Tyson was considered to be an established pastoralist in the district. When John Tyson died in the same year, James became outright owner of the Deniliquin properties. These he sold in 1862 and then diversified, extending his holdings around the Lachlan River to fifteen runs by 1867. He also became a pastoral financier, extending mortgages to other landholders. Throughout the late 1860s and 1870s his property portfolio continued to expand as did the geographical area of his interests. He acquired property from Heyfield in Gippsland to Cunnamulla in Western Queensland. In 1872 he bought Felton on the Darling Downs and this was to be his home until his death in 1899. By 1887 he was the largest owner of freehold land in Queensland and owned approximately 230 000 acres.<sup>8</sup>

In 1879 James Tyson took over the leases of Channin No 1 and Channin No 2 blocks, followed by Maermeddo and Woonboeng in 1883 and all other Carnarvon blocks by 1886.

In 1884 the Queensland Government passed the Crown Lands Act that provided *inter alia* for lessees to apply to have their runs consolidated and brought under the Act. A consequence of bringing a run under the Act was that it was divided into a leased part, for which a new rental was set, and a resumed part that could be opened up for selection as agricultural or grazing lands if considered suitable. If the resumed part was considered unsuitable for selection in the immediate future, the lessee could apply for, and was likely to be granted, an occupation licence.

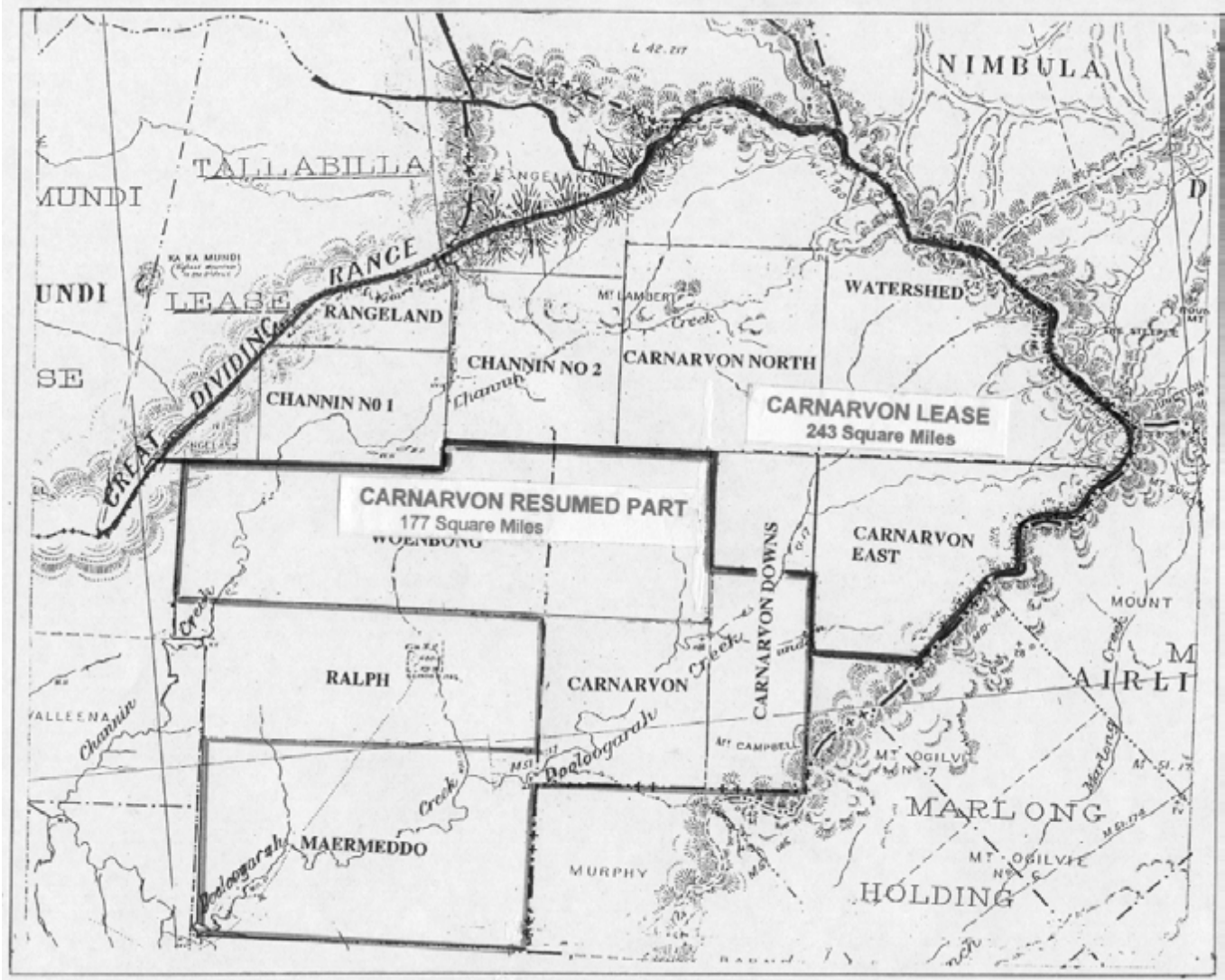


Runs held by Tyson in Queensland.<sup>9</sup>

Tyson applied to the Department of Public Lands to have the eleven Carnarvon runs consolidated and the consolidation was concluded in August 1889. The consolidated holding was divided into two parts:

- the leased part of 243 square miles comprising the run blocks of Channin No 1, Channin No 2, Carnarvon North, Watershed, Carnarvon East, Rangeland and part of Carnarvon Downs. It is this area that was designated as the Carnarvon Lease for the next seventy-five years.
- the resumed part of 177 square miles comprising the run blocks of Carnarvon, Woonboeng, Maermeddo and part of Carnarvon Downs.





The 1889 consolidation showing the leased part and resumed part of Carnarvon

Tyson received a pastoral lease for the leased part while the resumed part was available for smaller holdings at some time in the future, but was effectively controlled by Tyson. Like many early leases the boundaries were described in terms of natural features such as springs and creeks, marks on trees, compass bearings and distances. These descriptions served until the lease was surveyed.

Hence, the Carnarvon leased part is described in the following terms.

*Commencing on the right bank of the Channin Creek at a gum tree marked broad-arrow over XVI in triangle, and bounded thence by an east line crossing the creek five miles; thence by a north line one mile thirty chains to a point one mile forty-six chains south of a tree on the last named creek marked broad arrow over XVII in a triangle; thence by an east line eight miles; thence by a south line about three miles forty-two chains to a*

*point two miles four chains north of an apple-tree marked broad arrow over triangle III in triangle on the right bank of the Dooloogarah Creek; thence by an east line three miles; thence by a south line two miles thirty eight chains; thence by an east line to the range dividing the waters of the Maranoa and Warrego Rivers; thence by that range in a north-easterly direction to the range dividing the Warrego and Nogoia Rivers; thence by that range in a general north-westerly and south-westerly direction to a point west of starting point; and thence by an east line about three miles sixty chains to Channin Creek at the point of commencement.*

Stories suggest that, at least in the early years of his ownership, Tyson mostly ran sheep on Carnarvon. Legend has it that at this time there was a paved cobblestone road up Mt Lyon and down into Deepdale. Bullock drays used to cart the wool out to



The locomotive named 'Pioneer' on the Western Railway construction site between Roma and Mitchell, ca 1885 JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY NO 1334

Springsure via this road. Stones from the road can still be seen on Mt Moffat.

During the Tyson era Carnarvon made the transition from being predominantly a sheep property to being a cattle property. This transition was already well underway in the district when Tyson took over Carnarvon and is shown by the official Lands Office stock figures for the Springsure district:

10

Year	Cattle	Sheep
1868	10,373	554,428
1873	14,782	644,702
1878	30,566	564,274
1883	65,192	244,025

Carnarvon was probably never particularly well suited to sheep because of its large dingo population and the expense of fencing. The task of shepherding sheep in such country must have been demanding. In central Queensland a flock of sheep under the control of one shepherd was often as large as 2 000 in number. Moreover, as areas around sheepfolds became more

heavily grazed and the best grasses were eaten out, spear grass tended to take over. Spear grass and sheep were not good compatriots as spear grass seeds embed into the skin of the sheep and depreciated the value of the hide and wool.<sup>11</sup>

While dingos and spear grass reduced the likelihood of the success of sheep grazing on Carnarvon, new developments were opening up opportunities for cattle. In the early 1880s, the later owners of Carnarvon, the Collins brothers William and Robert, were involved in trialling the export of frozen meat and the establishment of the Central Queensland Meat Export Company in Rockhampton.<sup>12</sup> The advent of effective refrigerated transport for meat, the increased demand for meat resulting from the Franco-Prussian war<sup>13</sup> and the growth of the railways all played a role in encouraging a shift from sheep to cattle. Plummeting wool prices in the mid-1880s, from £20 to £7 per bale, further encouraged the change to cattle. By 1891, both Charleville and Springsure were connected to the coast by railway, Charleville to Brisbane and Springsure to Rockhampton. The potential for the transport of livestock by rail also encouraged the stocking of cattle.

By 1887 the stocking figure for Carnarvon was 6 000 cattle and Tyson was using Carnarvon and his other central Queensland properties of Babbiloora, Meteor Downs and Albinia Downs as breeding areas for his stock.<sup>14</sup> Cattle numbers continued to

increase. They exceeded 8 500 in 1891 and 12 800 in 1896<sup>15</sup>. In the late 1890s cattle prices were down and work to brand cattle on Carnarvon and Babbiloorra declined, resulting in large numbers of unbranded stock on the two properties.

The first Land Board report on Carnarvon dated 27 September 1888 noted that improvements to the block were fairly minimal and were restricted to Channin No 2 block. There was a 'home station slab house of seven rooms with bark roof, slab kitchen with iron roof, cart shed and meat house, horse yards, stockyards'.<sup>16</sup> The site of the home station house later moved to Carnarvon North block and to the area where the current homestead is situated. The Land Board Report of 1897 described Carnarvon as 'a first class cattle breeding run and during the spring and summer months should fatten well'.

Improvements were noted as 'a very old house, old and dilapidated horse paddock and yards, one or two mustering yards with drop rail fences'.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1880s and 1890s Tyson became a more and more powerful figure in Queensland. In June 1893 he became a member of Queensland's nominated Legislative Council and in the same year bailed the Queensland National Bank and Queensland Government out of financial difficulties by taking up government bonds.

He died in 1898 without leaving a will. The leases of Carnarvon and Babbiloorra were transferred into the hands of another major Queensland pastoral family, the Collins, under their family company, John Collins & Sons.

## Chapter 3: JOHN COLLINS & SONS

After the death of James Tyson in 1898, John Collins & Sons purchased Carnarvon and Babbiloorra including the stock. The company paid £600 for the 21-year lease for Carnarvon, an area of 243 square miles. The annual rental for the first five years was £275.16.0.<sup>18</sup> In addition the company held the Occupation Licence for the resumed part of Carnarvon. John Collins & Co also acquired the leases on neighbouring properties, Babbiloorra, and later, Barngo.

The partners in John Collins & Sons were brothers William, Robert and John Collins. They already owned Westgrove Station north-west of Roma and Tamrookum, a property in the Beaudesert area of southern Queensland where they were based. They were astute businessmen and were aware when they took over Carnarvon and Babbiloorra that the properties were experiencing substantial stock loss due to cattle duffing.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, it is said that between 500 and 1 000 head of cleanskins (unbranded cattle) were taken off the properties in 1899 and the Kenniff family, who owned the Ralph block in the middle of the Carnarvon resumed part, were seen as the likely culprits.<sup>20</sup>

In late 1899 the Collins family appointed Alfred Dahlke as manager of Carnarvon. Dahlke was 24 years old and had previously worked as overseer at Tamrookum. His immediate tasks were to put the properties in order by mustering and branding the cattle and to deal with the cattle duffing. Dahlke

based himself at Carnarvon and appointed a stockman McLean to look after Babbiloorra. In March 1902, less than two and a half years after he had taken over at Carnarvon, Dahlke was murdered and thus the Kenniff story was born.

The Kenniff story is an important episode in the history of central Queensland and Carnarvon Station plays a significant role in the story. Patrick Kenniff was hung for the murder of Alfred Dahlke and Constable George Doyle. Whether or not he and his brother James were guilty of the murder is debated to this day. For this reason the Kenniff story is described in some detail in Chapter 4.

While stock losses were occurring due to cattle duffing, drought also caused difficulties for pastoralists in the 1890s and early years of the new century. The Great Drought, lasting almost five years from 1898 to 1902-3, followed a number of very dry years and brought devastation to central and western Queensland. Between 1894 and 1901 nearly three million cattle were lost.<sup>21</sup> Carnarvon was one of the few properties in the Warrego district to still retain pasture for stock up until 1902 and stories tell of how men arrived with their horses from all over the district and camped on the property and in the ranges in an attempt to save their working horses and brood mares. It is likely that some of these horses joined the Carnarvon brumbies and increased their numbers.



The effects of drought at Cunnamulla, 1902 JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY No 87352





**The Carnarvon homestead** PHOTO THEA WEARING

Ted McCann took over as manager of Carnarvon following the death of Alfred Dalhke. He was replaced in turn by J. Paul Lawless Pyne who remained in charge at Carnarvon until the late 1920s. During this time Pyne maintained a regular correspondence with Chris (C.J.) Collins<sup>22</sup> at Tamrookum and this correspondence is preserved in company files now held at the John Oxley Library in Brisbane. In the correspondence Pyne informed Collins of the weather conditions, staffing issues, condition of the cattle and cattle movements while Collins responded with advice and instructions. During the war years when labour was scarce Collins recruited staff and sent them to Pyne.<sup>23</sup> Collins visited the property from time to time.

In 1905 the Land Board report on Carnarvon noted that Carnarvon North was the head station with house (not the Channin No 2 block). It described the improvements to the property as: 'dwelling house, outbuildings, horse yards, milking yards, horse and cattle paddock, 6 miles of barbed wire fencing, stockyard to work 900 head of cattle, 320 acres of ringbarked country'.<sup>24</sup> We can assume that the house mentioned in this report was probably the house seen in the photograph above taken sometime later, perhaps in the 1920s.

The correspondence between Pyne and Collins provides some insight into life on Carnarvon during Pyne's time as manager.

During this time Carnarvon was not only head station of the Carnarvon blocks but the Babbiloorra and Barnago holdings were also under the control of Carnarvon. Pyne employed between five and eight full-time stockmen, a couple to look after the house and a boy to do the garden. There was a separate manager at Babbiloorra. In 1916 the properties ran some 12 000 head of cattle, selling nearly 4 000 head in that year. Pyne's salary in 1916 was £250 per annum. Stockmen were paid £1/10/- per week in wages plus their keep.

The agent of the District Land Office in Charleville who inspected Carnarvon in 1920 gave a favourable report of the property:

'Carnarvon comprises high mountainous country on the east, north and west boundaries with the tablelands throughout being well-watered by springs, soakages and waterholes in the Dooloogarah, Channin and Sunday Creeks. The whole is good grazing country being well suited for breeding but not as fattening country; the tablelands are well grassed with Blue, Star and Nut grasses and the creek frontages with Nut, Summer and other good grasses.



Scattered zamia throughout the rangy country,  
no prickly pear. Dingos are numerous.<sup>25</sup>

The isolated life on Carnarvon was alleviated slightly in 1919-20 by the installation of the telephone line. Correspondence between Pyne and D.M. Fraser<sup>26</sup> at Tamrookum refers to the acceptance of a quote of £7/10 /- for the installation of the line.<sup>27</sup> The line was a party line that ran up from Babbiloora with connections at 16 Mile, Caves Creek and the Carnarvon homestead. At Caves Creek the phone was in a raised wooden box near the stockyards.

The telephone allowed supplies to be ordered and delivered or picked up with the mail from Babbiloora. However, in all other

respects it was a self-sufficient lifestyle. The homestead boasted a large vegetable garden and stock were slaughtered on the property and the meat salted to store. There were milking cows and hens. As well as the manager and his family, there was usually a cook and cowboy/general help and stockmen. The latter were mostly indigenous and lived on Carnarvon with their families.

The photographs below shows Paul Lawless Pyne's two children Blanche and Jack at Carnarvon. The photograph on the right shows Blanche Pyne with some of the 42 cats her brother Jack kept as pets as a child. Jack snared wallabies to feed the cats.<sup>28</sup>



**Blanche and Jack Pyne, late 1920s** COURTESY BLANCHE McNELLEY



**Blanche Pyne feeding the cats** COURTESY BLANCHE McNELLEY





**Rev. Cecil Cohen, Christmas 1921** COURTESY BLANCHE MCNELLEY



**Rev. Cecil Cohen with his horses** COURTESY BLANCHE MCNELLEY

In 1913, the six-month-old Vivian William Norman, son of a Carnarvon employee James Taylor and his wife Margaret, died of dysentery. He was buried south of the old house. Another grave, supposedly of a boundary rider, is also reported up the creek gully from the house toward Mt Lambert.

The correspondence between Pyne and Collins tells the story of the removal of the old Police Barracks building from the Ralph block and its subsequent reconstruction onto the back of the Carnarvon house where it became the kitchen building. In the photo on page 25 the old Police Barracks is visible at the back of the main building and shows a separate roofline.

In July 1914 the Government Architects Office, Brisbane advertised a tender for the 'Specification of Purchase and Removal of Buildings at Police Station, Ralph'. The document specified that tenders were to be delivered compliant with the following conditions.

'The building to be sold is known as the Police Station, Ralph including all outbuildings and furniture. The whole of the materials of the above mentioned buildings are to be taken down and removed from the site at once. The site is to be left clean and free from materials and rubbish. All holes caused by the removal of buildings to be filled up and rammed solid to the

satisfaction of the Government Architect or his supervising officer at completion.'<sup>29</sup>

Subsequent correspondence between Pyne and Collins refers to the purchase of the Ralph Police Station, its reconstruction at Carnarvon and the materials to be used. In a letter of November 1914 Chris Collins wrote to Pyne expressing concern about white ants and voicing the idea that cypress pine slabs rather than sawn timber might be the better material to use in the Ralph building.<sup>30</sup>

Paul Lawless Pyne remained manager at Carnarvon for the remainder of the time that the lease was in the hands of John Collins & Sons.

The three brothers Robert, John and William Collins all died between 1909 and 1913 and the management of the family company passed into the hands of the next generation.



**Paul Lawless Pyne ca 1950, Rockhampton** COURTESY BLANCHE MCNELLEY



**Mrs Blanche Pyne ca 1950, Rockhampton** COURTESY BLANCHE MCNELLEY

In 1915 two years after his death, the long-held dream of Robert Collins, to protect part of the MacPherson Ranges in south-east Queensland, was achieved with the declaration of the Lamington National Park. He had explored the MacPherson Ranges with his brothers in his youth and began promoting the idea of reserving part of this area in letters to the Brisbane Courier Mail as early as the 1880s. He was elected president of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (Queensland) in 1896 and subsequently read papers to the Society describing the natural history of the MacPherson Range and its early exploration. His efforts promoting the area prompted the government to seek a report on the attributes of the Lamington Plateau. He continued to seek the secure protection of the Lamington Plateau area until his death.

In 1915 the Queensland Government declared an open season for possums and koalas. This too provoked correspondence between Pyne and Collins with Collins instructing Pyne that 'none of the regular station hands should be allowed to either snare, trap or poison dingos for their scalps or trap possums for their skins'.<sup>31</sup>

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the 1930s there was a thriving trade in the skins of native animals. The 1877 Marsupial Destruction Act gave official sanction to the slaughter of native fauna. In 1894 Lydekker reported that 10 000 to 30 000 koala skins were being imported annually into London. Possum skins were also popular.<sup>32</sup> The koala was protected in Victoria in 1898, in New South Wales in 1903 but despite some protection in Queensland from 1906, the slaughter of the koala continued. One million koala skins were sold in the open season in 1919 and as many as two million were estimated to have been exported in 1924.<sup>33</sup>

The prevalent attitude of Queenslanders to native fauna was illustrated in the following extract from the Brisbane Courier and describes some of Queensland's display at the British Empire exhibition at Wembley Park, London during April to October, 1924.



## QUEENSLAND FURS EXHIBIT FOR THE EMPIRE EXHIBITION

*A handsome selection of Queensland furs will be sent to the British Empire Exhibition, to be held at Wembley Park next year. Some of the choicest of the furs, all of which have been prepared by Messrs J. Jackson, Albert Square, Brisbane are now on exhibit in the window of Messrs Beale and Co., Queen Street, where they have attracted much attention.*

*Among the fine specimens special interest attaches to the superb super blue opossum rug, made from 40 specially selected skins. As mentioned in the "Courier" recently, the rug is 6ft by 4ft, and presents a most handsome appearance. There is also a very fine super-blue opossum stole, made of 12 opossum skins and lined with crepe de Chine. A wallaby rug has been made from 35 skins from the Atherton Tableland, and another interesting exhibit is a rug made from North Queensland spotted opossum skins, some being a creamy colour with light brown spots and others a darker brown. A unique collection also includes a grey kangaroo rug, made from 20 well-furred winter skins; a scrub wallaby mat, an emu skin specimen mat; six emu eggs suitably mounted, a Cape York spotted opossum*

*mat, made of uncommonly marked skins, only obtainable in the farthest north; a native cat mat (which is brown with white spots, the heads being mounted with realistic glass eyes); a Queensland iguana skin; a specimen kangaroo mat, and several other small articles including snake skins. The collection is an interesting example both of the furs of Queensland and the excellence of the art of the Queensland furrier and tanner.<sup>34</sup>*

Statistics collected by the government in respect of bounties paid for animal scalps indicate the scale of destruction of native fauna in Queensland. Between 1877 and 1924 bounties were paid for the scalps of 18 million wallabies, 8 million kangaroos and 1.3 million bandicoots, pademelons and kangaroo rats.<sup>35</sup> In addition, vast numbers of possums and koalas were slaughtered, over 5 million in 1919 and 1920 alone.<sup>36</sup> These statistics provide some insight into what was once the population of native fauna in Queensland and allow us to imagine what Carnarvon Station may have been like in its early days of European settlement.

In 1927 the McCormack government declared an open season on koalas and possums without consulting any native fauna authorities. This resulted in the wholesale destruction of wildlife. In August 1927 alone over 1 million possums and nearly 600 000 koalas were slaughtered, an episode from which the koala population of Queensland has never recovered.<sup>37</sup>



Truck load of 3,600 koala skins obtained by a party of hunters in the Clermont area in the month of August, 1927 JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY No 18937



There was however a public outcry in respect of the slaughter of the koala, orchestrated by the *Brisbane Courier* and seen in the following excerpt from the paper:

### **THE NATIVE BEAR POLICY OF EXTERMINATION, GOVERNMENT CRITICIZED**

The refusal of the Government to reprieve the native bear has not settled the matter. It has simply added to the indignation of the large number of people who think this typical animal ought to be protected, and not submitted to the process of elimination represented by a Government open-order for slaughter. There is evidence which cannot be disproved that the native bear is fast disappearing and only Ministers too stubborn to bow to facts and public opinion are capable of thinking that the destruction of another million or two will not hasten the final doom of one of the most appealing and most popular of the unique fauna of Australia. The Government may console itself that it is only a matter of sitting tight and doing nothing and the public will soon forget but the correspondence makes it clear and emphatic what people think at the present time. Whether they will remember it at the next election and ask responsible Ministers, "Who killed the native bear?" remains to be seen.<sup>38</sup>

The government defended its policy with arguments of the fur industry being lucrative for the state. The *Brisbane Courier* of July 16, 1927 ran the following piece, having approached Mr. Forgan Smith, the Acting Premier and Minister for Agriculture and Stock for comment.

'On this occasion, the Minister endeavoured to justify the Government's actions. Mr Forgan Smith claimed that the Animal and Birds Act of Queensland provided a degree of protection for native fauna equal to that accorded to the fauna of any other country in the world. The fur industry was a valuable one in Queensland, he said, and it was worthy of note that the royalty collected therefrom does not go into general revenue, but was earmarked for the purpose of providing funds for the further protection of our fauna and the supervision of sanctuaries.'<sup>39</sup>

Public opinion did in the end win the battle for the koala and the 1927 open season for koalas was the last.

Possum hunting continued until 1936. In a statewide open season in 1931 some 750 000 possums are estimated to have been killed.<sup>40</sup> When possums were protected in 1936 it was in part at least for economic reasons. Possums eat sawfly lava and pressure for their protection came from rural areas which were experiencing problems controlling the sawfly. Further, the overseas fur market had been depressed for a number of years making the trade less profitable.



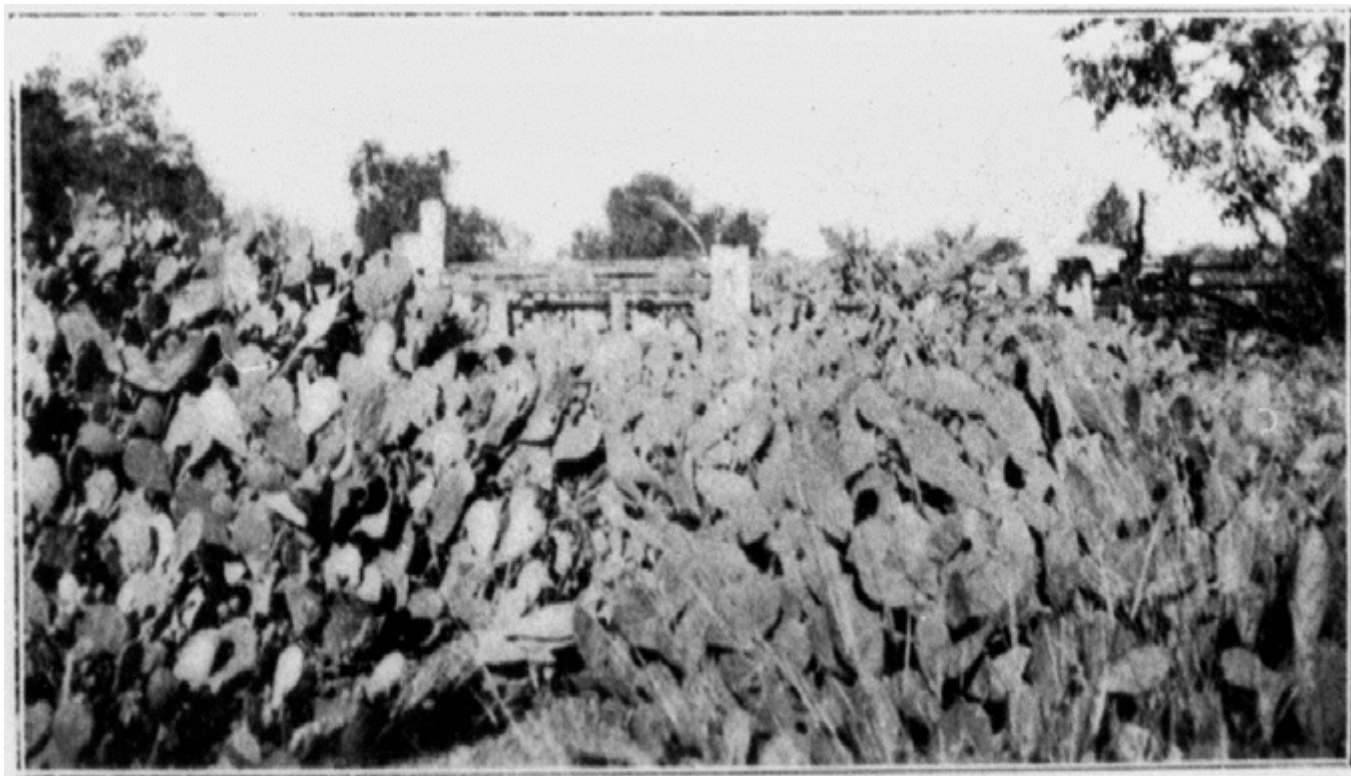
**Child holding two possums** JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY No 61095

Carnarvon possums were highly sought after. The cooler temperatures gave them thick pelts and their fur was tinged with blue. They were commonly referred to as 'Carnarvon Blues'. The article from the *Brisbane Courier* cited above notes the superiority and higher prices paid for the blue 'opossum' skins. During the Depression years of the 1930s when work was scarce, possum hunting was an easy way of making a very respectable income. In the last season in 1936 good quality possum skins were bringing £10 a dozen when average wages were less than 10 shillings a week.<sup>41</sup> Stories tell of how possum hunters used to stretch the skins out on boards in the caves of the Carnarvon ranges to dry them. They were particularly popular for making rugs and also used in articles of clothing.

Local legend has it that not all possum-hunting expeditions were innocently focused on possums. Some were a convenient way of disposing of people who had become a nuisance or, for some reason, were wanted out of the way. And so the story goes that one night in 1915 two young men went out possuming on Carnarvon. They were mates. One, named Pocock was engaged,

the other was in love with Pocock's fiancé. They were seen riding out by a local stockman Billy Geebung, two riders and three horses. Billy Geebung saw one rider return with three horses. Pocock's companion declared that Pocock had left him and taken off. Later, his companion is said to have married the girl wearing Pocock's suit. This story lay dormant until 1972 when, in the aftermath of fires, a rasp, pincers, saddle tree, gun barrel and other remains were found in a burnt out tree trunk in the vicinity of Caves Creek near 16 Mile on Carnarvon. The metal remains were identified as possibly having belonged to Pocock.<sup>42</sup>

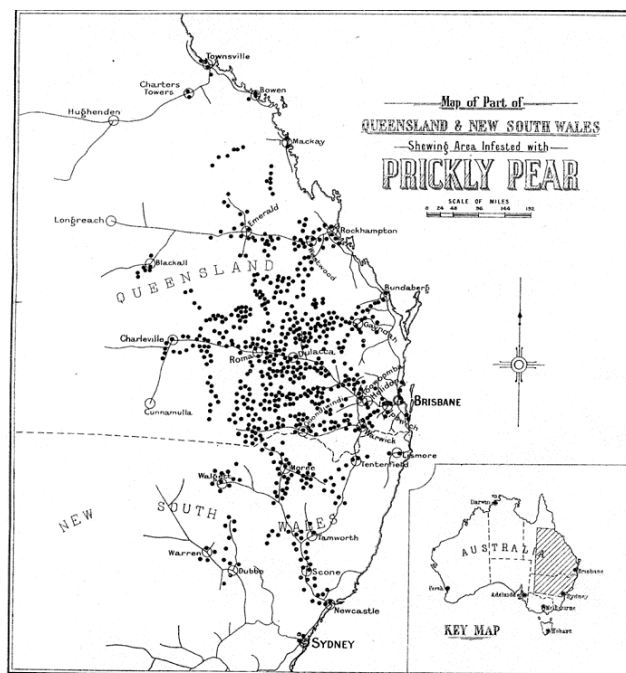
While the marsupial population was being destroyed by poison and guns, the 1920s brought to a climax another environmental disaster, the prickly pear. The prickly pear first came to Queensland (or as it was then, northern New South Wales) in the late 1840s. By 1918 it had infested some 20 million hectares in Queensland and was threatening to overwhelm vast areas of the state. Prickly pear tended to infest brigalow scrubs and open eucalyptus forests and the following map shows the strong concentration of the plant in southern and central Queensland.



An infestation of Prickly Pear, ca 1925 JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY NO 62852

The battle against the prickly pear resulted in a further depletion of local fauna. In February 1927 bonuses were offered to encourage the shooting of large birds in many shires of central Queensland. These were held responsible for the spread of the prickly pear rather than blame being laid at the feet of people or cattle. The Commonwealth Prickly Pear Board was formed in 1919 and extensive research was undertaken on natural enemies of the species. In 1926–29 the *cactoblastis* was released, a voracious cactus bug and by 1930 the march of the prickly pear had been reversed, leaving vast areas of bare soil where the cactus had previously been.<sup>43</sup>

While there were strong concentrations of prickly pear around Roma and Injune and on the northern side of the Carnarvon Range, Carnarvon Station was not infested with the plant. Land Board reports from 1906 through to the late 1920s certified that Carnarvon Station was free from prickly pear. In 1924 the Charleville District Land Officer's Report to the Prickly Pear commission noted that: 'The manager informed me that they have found odd plants of tree pear on this holding but these have been destroyed as found. I saw no pear whatever during my inspection'.<sup>44</sup> By comparison, Carnarvon's neighbour Babbiloorra had problems with prickly pear as late as 1930 as evidenced in the following report by the agent of the District Land Office: 'In the south-west portion of the holding (Babbiloorra) I found a good deal of scattered pear, about 20% of which were infested with *cactoblastis* ... On Mt Hopeless and in the vicinity of it there were odd bunches of fruiting pear and some scattered pear'.<sup>45</sup>



Area infested with Prickly Pear circa 1919<sup>46</sup>

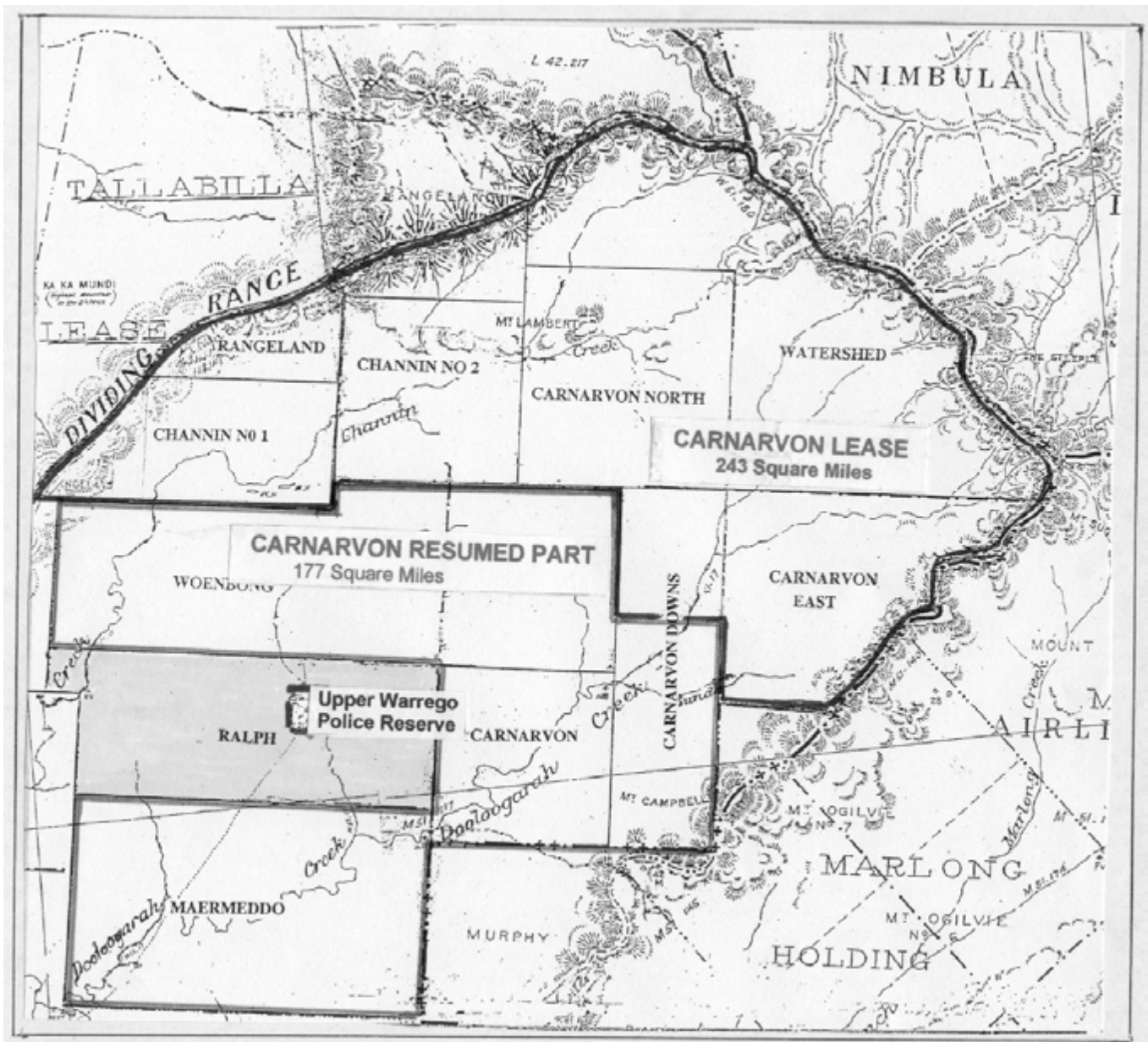
## Chapter 4: THE KENNIFF STORY<sup>47</sup>

The Kenniff family, father James and brothers Patrick and Jimmy first settled in the Springsure district in 1891. They came from the Clarence River in New South Wales and were later joined by two younger brothers Thomas and John. They worked in the usual bush occupations of the day as stockmen, kangaroo shooters, scalpers (snaring and shooting possums, koalas and dingos) and later as horse-breakers.

Initially things worked out well. James Kenniff worked as a camp minder and Patrick and Jimmy picked up work where they could. However, in 1895 Patrick and James were

convicted of horse stealing. Patrick was sentenced to three years gaol and Jimmy to two years hard labour. Patrick was released after two years but was back in gaol in 1899 convicted of receiving a stolen cheque. He was released in late 1901.

While Patrick and Jimmy were in gaol, father James applied for, and was successful in gaining, the occupation licence for the 39 square mile block known as Ralph in the middle of Carnarvon. The family had previously held occupation licences for two smaller blocks, Hoganthulla and Killarney, but these expired.



Ralph Block and Upper Warrego Police Reserve

Cattle stealing, or cattle duffing as it was known, and horse stealing were both common in the area and large herds of cattle were able to be built up by taking unbranded cattle (cleanskins) from neighbouring properties and branding them. The Kenniff boys had a reputation as cattle duffers and horse thieves. One of the local landholders Charles Tom at Mt Moffat Station had complained to the Lands Department and requested that the Kenniff's occupation licence for the Ralph block be cancelled when it expired at the end of 1899.

The Collins family had taken over the Carnarvon and Babbiloorra leases in 1899 aware that the properties were not well managed and had been experiencing severe stock loss problems. William Collins convinced the Lands Department not to cancel the licence for Ralph but to allow his family company to buy it. Hence, John Collins & Sons took over the Ralph block and ensured that the Kenniffs would not be able to squat on the land.

So in December 1899 the Kenniffs found the Ralph block transferred to William Collins and they were without grazing land for their cattle and horses. Insult was added to injury when, a year later, the government announced that 640 acres in the middle of Ralph would be reserved for a police station. The Upper Warrego Police Station, as it became known, was erected in 1900 and comprised three rooms including sleeping quarters, a cell and a kitchen plus a verandah. Three staff were stationed there, Constable George Doyle who was in charge, Constable Millard and Sam Johnson an aboriginal tracker.

Some time after the Kenniffs lost their occupation of Ralph the new manager for Carnarvon Alfred Dahlke arrived on the property determined to restore good management. He proceeded to organise a muster and asked Jimmy Kenniff to remove his cattle from Ralph. The muster started at Babbiloorra and Jimmy Kenniff attended. A heated argument and fistfight broke out between Jimmy Kenniff and Alfred Dahlke over 400 cattle found on Babbiloorra with the Kenniff brand. These cattle could hardly have wandered off the Ralph block to Babbiloorra. Dahlke won the day with a clear demonstration of superior strength and skill. This incident left Jimmy Kenniff carrying a grudge against Dahlke.

In April 1900 James and Jimmy Kenniff left Ralph, sold their cattle and set up camp in Lethbridges Pocket across the range. They spent the next year dealing in horses and attending race meetings and their funds were soon dissipated.

Patrick Kenniff was released from gaol in November 1901 and headed to the Carnarvon Ranges. Instead of finding his family at Ralph he found the Upper Warrego Police Station and learnt that his father and brothers were camped at Lethbridges Pocket. The Kenniff clan were short of cash and decided to lift a mob of horses, brand them with their own brand, retain them long

enough for the brand marks to heal and then sell them. In January 1902 Patrick Kenniff was arrested on Merrivale Station while he was travelling with the mob of recently branded horses. He was taken to Mitchell but allowed to leave with all but eight horses, as there was insufficient evidence at the time to convict him. In late March 1902, one of the eight retained horses was identified and warrants were issued for the arrest of Patrick and Jimmy Kenniff.

Constable Doyle, tracker Sam Johnson of the Upper Warrego Police Station and Alfred Dahlke, manager of Carnarvon, left the Upper Warrego Police Station on March 28 to ride to Lethbridges Pocket to arrest the Kenniffs. On the same day as they left Tom, Jimmy and Patrick Kenniff visited Carnarvon homestead and threatened Joe Ryan, the head stockman.

On March 30 Doyle, Dahlke and Johnson reached Lethbridges Pocket and found the Kenniffs. The Kenniffs spread out and Doyle and Dahlke pursued and caught Jimmy Kenniff. Sam Johnson was sent back to the packhorse to fetch the handcuffs and while he was in the process of extracting them from the saddlebags he heard a series of shots. While riding back to see what had happened he was confronted by Patrick and Jimmy Kenniff galloping in his direction and he fled. He went to Pumphole, a spring on the Carnarvon lease (now on Dooloogarah) where Dahlke had organised to rendezvous with Joe Ryan and the stockman Burke next day. He found Burke there. Ryan was out with cattle. Burke went back to Lethbridges Pocket and found Dahlke's horse, with blood on the saddle, the police packhorse, a hat and empty saddlebags from the packhorse. He returned to Pumphole to tell Ryan and to warn him in view of Jimmy Kenniff's threats and then went on to the Upper Warrego Police Station to inform Constable Millard. Johnson went to Mt Moffat and then to Mitchell to make a statement.

Subsequent visits to the site over the following days found the remains of three small fires, bloodstains and bone fragments. Bullet marks were found in surrounding trees. When Constable Doyle's horse was found, its pack-bags contained 200 pounds of charcoal, later identified as burnt human remains, including some personal belongings of Doyle's and Dahlke's.

The Commissioner of Police and the Government were determined to track down the Kenniff brothers and to bring them to court. A huge reward of £1,000 was offered for information leading to their arrest. A massive manhunt was organised involving over 50 police including fifteen trackers. The Kenniffs were pursued for three months. They were finally arrested just south of the town of Mitchell where they were surprised and gave up without a fight.





**Rocks where the Kenniffs burnt Dahlke's body** COURTESY BLANCHE MCNELLEY



**Scene of the shooting (note the cross on the tree)**  
COURTESY BLANCHE MCNELLEY

The Kenniffs were transported to Rockhampton where they were committed for trial at the Supreme Court in Brisbane for the wilful murder of Constable George Doyle and Alfred Dahlke. The only witness to the events at Lethbridges Pocket was Aboriginal tracker, Sam Johnson. The jury took only one hour to return a verdict of guilty. A subsequent Full Court hearing of four judges, including the trial judge, Sir Samuel Griffith considered two matters of law arising out of the trial—whether there was sufficient evidence of death and whether there was sufficient evidence to convict both Patrick and James Kenniff. All members agreed that there was sufficient evidence of death and sufficient evidence to uphold the jury's verdict of guilty against Patrick Kenniff. However, one of the four judges Justice Real did not accept that Jimmy Kenniff's guilt had been proven beyond reasonable doubt and this resulted in the Government deciding that Jimmy Kenniff would not receive the death sentence.

Patrick Kenniff was hanged in Boggo Road gaol on 12 January 1903. Jimmy was sentenced to life imprisonment. His sentence was commuted to sixteen years and he was released with good conduct in November 1914. After his release, he returned to central Queensland and worked as a stockman. In the 1920s he moved to Charters Towers and became a miner. He died in 1940.

The Kenniff story however lived on long after the death of Patrick Kenniff and the imprisonment of Jimmy. The publicity surrounding the trial gave impetus to the campaign for the abolition of capital punishment in Queensland. Public sympathy began to flow toward the Kenniffs. This was evident when James Kenniff and his sons Thomas and John were brought to trial. Two ballads were written which generated great sympathy for Patrick and Jimmy and cast doubt on their guilt. They became depicted as small settlers who had gone in to battle with the large and powerful pastoral companies of the day. Thus they became part of a legend and were given the title by some of 'Queensland's Ned Kelly'.<sup>48</sup>

A hundred years later the issue of whether or not Patrick Kenniff was guilty of murder is still debated in central Queensland.

The Kenniff case has moreover continued to be the subject of discussion because aspects of the trial were considered to be unsatisfactory by the legal fraternity and led to the fairness of the trial procedure being questioned. Anthony Morris QC identified five faults in the legal process in this context:

- The fact that the trial was conducted before a 'special jury' composed of professional men including accountants, merchants and brokers who were better educated and more affluent than the Kenniffs rather than men of a similar social standing. This was considered to be a tactical manoeuvre by the prosecuting authorities and it consequently deprived the Kenniffs of their fundamental right to a trial by a 'jury of their peers'.
- The defence case was not conducted competently and included several tactical errors.
- The prosecution case was legally flawed, being based on the premise that there was a common intention formed by Patrick and James to prosecute an unlawful purpose in conjunction with one another, but there is no evidence from which the existence of such a common intention could be inferred.
- The course of the trial was seriously irregular. The prosecution should have been required to elect at the commencement of proceedings whether or not they were proceeding on the charge related to Doyle's death or Dahlke's rather than nominating this at the conclusion of the prosecution case. This had the potential to seriously prejudice the Kenniff's defence.
- The proceedings of the Full Court (which sat to review questions of law arising from the trial) were seriously

flawed. Sir Samuel Griffith who presided over the trial should not have participated in the Full Court proceedings particularly as he had already expressed views on the issues reserved for the Full Court's consideration.<sup>49</sup>

Hence, justice was not seen to be done in the case of the Kenniffs and some may still doubt their guilt because they did not receive a fair trial

## Chapter 5: 1928-1963 CONSOLIDATION WITH BABBILOORA

Information regarding Carnarvon during the years 1928 to 1963 is relatively scant as official land tenure records for this period are missing from the Department of Natural Resources & Mines archives. What we do know about Carnarvon in this period is drawn from the memories of those who had some association with the property. There is no supporting documentary evidence.

In 1928 the Carnarvon lease passed from the Collins family to William Naughton. William Naughton was born in Victoria in 1862. When he acquired the leases on Carnarvon, Babbiloorra and Dooloogarah in 1928 he had been buying and selling pastoral properties across Australia for some 45 years. He was essentially a businessman dealing in land and stock. At times his portfolio included properties in New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australia and Victoria. Often he held properties only for a short time before selling them again. In Victoria he owned the 1870s mansion 'Rupertswood' at Sunbury for a time before selling it (at less half the market value) to the Salesian Community of the Roman Catholic Church to be used as an agricultural training college for the disadvantaged.<sup>50</sup>

Having acquired the leases on the Babbiloorra and Dooloogarah Holdings as well as Carnarvon, Naughton applied to the Department of Public Lands to have the holdings consolidated as a Pastoral Development Lease under the Lands Act Amendment Act of 1927. The District Land Office in Charleville recommended the consolidation in February 1930 and two years later on March 1932 a 30-year lease was granted. The conditions of the lease were:

- the holding was to be maintained free from prickly pear for the currency of the lease;
- the lessee should spend £6 500 in the first seven years on water and other improvements to increase the carrying capacity of the holding;
- the lessee should spend £3 500 on ringbarking in the first seven years.

Correspondence related to the property suggests that, prior to the new consolidated lease being officially assigned, the leasehold passed to William Naughton's eldest son William Frank Naughton. His involvement is recorded in correspondence between the Queensland Cattle Growers Association and the Land Administration Board on 10 January 1929:

'This leasehold was purchased by Mr. W. Naughton to obtain possession of the cattle thereon. Mr Frank Naughton, the lessee is the son of Mr. W. Naughton and has approached me to know if he can get an extension of the lease under the new improvement scheme.'

There was also correspondence between Gordon Graham & Co, Pastoral Experts, Brisbane and the Prickly Pear Land Commission dated 5 September 1929:

'These holdings (Babbiloorra, Dooloogarah, Carnarvon, Mon) have recently been purchased by Mr. W. Frank Naughton, son of Mr. William Naughton, who will go ahead immediately with the proposed improvements...'<sup>51</sup>

For the next thirty years Carnarvon was run as part of the Babbiloorra Holding. In addition to the leased land, a further 813 square miles of resumed land was rented.

While the problem of the prickly pear was being tackled with the introduction of the *cactoblastis*, the landscape was being further modified with the encouragement of government legislation. In 1929 the Queensland Government passed an Act to encourage the clearing of timber and vegetation. In the Roma district one million acres of timbered land was cleared and trees and scrub were burnt.<sup>52</sup>

It was also during the 1920s that the Queensland public began to appreciate the value of native vegetation and landscapes and naturalists and conservationists began to lobby for the gazetting of more forested areas as conservation reserves or national parks. In 1930 the National Parks Association of Queensland was formed. The first moves to have the Carnarvon Range recognised for its conservation values occurred during the 1930s. On 30 April 1932, Carnarvon Gorge was declared a national park of some 160 600 acres. This area had previously been part of surrounding grazing leases. Bauhinia Shire councillors Kavangah and Wills attempted to have koalas living in the ranges protected from hunting and advised the Nature Lovers League that a ten-year moratorium was required to save them.<sup>53</sup>

The old house that is currently on Carnarvon was probably erected on the property in the late 1920s or early 1930s as stockmen's quarters.

At 16 Mile there was a hut and usually at least a stockman to pump water and check on cattle. Stockman Jim Laffin recalls in his memoir pumping the bore at 16 Mile on Carnarvon in late 1935. He lived there in a bark hut and with the help of two other stockmen built the stockyards. While carrying rails he developed a severe hernia condition and was later rushed to Charleville where he was operated on. He returned to Carnarvon in late 1945 as relieving manager for two months at a time when all the station hands had walked off the property refusing to muster any more cattle.<sup>54</sup>

In the 1930s and 1940s there was a manager and his family resident at Carnarvon homestead together with a cook, a cowboy and up to six stockmen. The homestead buildings comprised the main house with kitchen annexe, men's quarters, meat house made of sawn logs with a budgeroo bark roof, blacksmith's shop, wagon shed, saddle shed, horse yards and cow yards for the two or three milking cows.<sup>55</sup>

Mail and supplies came up from Babbiloorra once a week. Stock were slaughtered on the property and salted in a vat of brine or in bags. The extent of the vegetable garden was limited by lack of water. By the mid 1940s the house was dependent on rainwater tanks and water for the garden had to be carted from a well in 44-gallon drums. By the mid 1940s the water problems were serious.



**Budgeroo bark 'butcher shop' at Babbiloora, 1938** COURTESY BLANCHE MCNELLEY

The manager at Babbiloora reported the following in correspondence to T.A. Field Estates in 1946:

'I regret to advise that the (Carnarvon) homestead is practically out of water. The only supply available to people is from a well which supplies two 44 gallon drums of water per day for house consumption. Apart from this the well has to water a few horses and cows totalling 10 in number. When the camp is operating in the homestead area, the horses have to be taken 7 miles to water.... You will appreciate how difficult it is it is for Mallet (manager at Carnarvon) to do his work in these circumstances.'

The solution proposed was 'an earth and log overshot in the Channin as near the house as practicable'.<sup>56</sup>

In the 1930s the lease changed hands. The new lessee was T. A. Field Queensland Estates Pty Ltd, a Sydney company with extensive interests in abattoirs and a number of other properties. They stocked their central Queensland properties with shorthorn cattle.

The brumby population caused considerable concern at this time because of its impact on stock feed. For a period of time Carnarvon employed a man Dave Hallam specifically to shoot brumbies. Estimates of the number of brumbies shot by Dave Hallam range from several hundred to one or two thousand.<sup>57</sup>

The main improvements to the property during this period of the lease related to water. A number of dams were built between 9 Mile and 16 Mile, also near 9 Mile and over the creek from the homestead. There was also work undertaken on the dam at Caves Creek. Roads around the properties were also improved and extended.

In the late 1940s the leases for Carnarvon, Babbiloora and Dooloogarah were assigned to Babbiloora Pastoral Holdings owned by a number of families including the Craigs, Webbs and others. They ran the holding until the end of the lease in 1963 when it was broken up into separate blocks and put to ballot. A total of 12 000 shorthorn cattle were run on the three properties. Some 5 000 sheep were added to the stock in the late 1950s but did not do well.<sup>58</sup>



In the early 1950s the original Carnarvon homestead building was demolished and transported to Babbiloorra in pieces on old army blitzes. At Babbiloorra the materials from the homestead were used to construct the office building.<sup>59</sup> The separate kitchen building, which had been attached to the old homestead by a landing, was left at Carnarvon. This was the old Police Barracks that had been moved from Ralph in 1915. It is assumed that problems with water supply were at least a contributing reason for the decision to move the house and permanent staff from Carnarvon. The photograph below of the homestead without a garden suggests a lack of water during this period.

For the next ten years one or two stockmen were camped at the Carnarvon homestead site for most of the year. Their number increased to six or more, plus a cook, during the muster.

With the removal of the house, the telephone line was taken out and the line used by yard builders to tie wires to fence posts. Access continued to be poor and indeed probably became more difficult as some tracks became overgrown. The old men's quarters remained on the site but were rarely used, as there was no water. At muster, the stockmen chose to camp at the springs near the old kitchen building.



**The Carnarvon homestead late 1940s** COURTESY THEA WEARING





**Trevor Godfery camped at old Police Barracks for the 1961 muster** COURTESY JEANETTE GODFERY

The 1950s saw the arrival of ticks on Carnarvon during a particularly wet year. Indeed, it was so wet on one occasion that the manager Jack Boggs took five days to get from neighbouring Babbiloorra to Carnarvon.<sup>60</sup> In order to dip the Carnarvon cattle against the ticks, a cattle dip was installed and more cattle yards were built across the river from the house.

Interestingly, there were those who held a vision that the Carnarvon Range area could become far more than an area whose economy was focused on grazing and pastoral activity. In the 1940s the Mayor of Roma Mr F.R.V. Timbury was promoting the area as the opportunity for a post-war nation. Mr Timbury's vision was that the Roma-Springsure area of Queensland could supply most of the eastern and south-eastern Australian requirements for cheap electricity from its coal

resources, that it could produce oil and rubber, harness water resources for irrigation and that 10 million people could be supported between Springsure and the New South Wales border.

Mr Timbury's enthusiasm was limitless and included the following statement about the scenic resources of the Carnarvon area:

'I have seen grander and more imposing scenery in the Yosemite Valley, in the Rocky Mountains, and in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales – but I saw nothing in any of these places to excel the Carnarvons in quiet grandeur and beauty.'<sup>61</sup>

## Chapter 6: THE LAST 40 YEARS

During the late 1950s the issue of leasehold land was examined by a Land Settlement Advisory Commission established in 1959. As a result, the Land Administration Commission was set up and, under the 1959 Land Acts, pastoral leases were granted for a 30-year period with the possibility of one-third resumption after fifteen years. A special scheme was introduced for the brigalow belt. To encourage clearing on smaller holdings of five to ten thousand acres 40-year 'brigalow leases' were granted subject to the owners clearing all or part of the land of brigalow scrub.<sup>62</sup>

The 1960s and 1970s also saw the extension of the Carnarvon National Park. The Salvatore Rosa National Park had been established in 1957 when 48 300 acres (19 555 hectares) of the Cungelella Holding was surrendered. This was enlarged in 1963-64. Ka Ka Mundi was added to the Carnarvon National Park group in 1973. Further extensions were made to the extreme western end of the Carnarvon National Park in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>63</sup> It is noted that in the 1970s and 1980s any proposal for national parks in the pastoral zone was met with fierce opposition. There was a fear of any change in land use and 'locking-up country'. These fears were eventually overcome through demonstrating that the expansion of the park system was not a land grab but was based on scientific evidence for ensuring representation of biodiversity.<sup>64</sup>

### 1963-1979 DOUGLAS TWIST<sup>65</sup>

In 1963 the Queensland Government decided to break up the consolidated holding and to offer Carnarvon, Babbiloorra and Dooloogarah as separate pastoral holdings. The boundaries of Carnarvon were substantially redrawn to site the holding west of its previous location. A ballot was conducted for the leases and the lease for Carnarvon was drawn by Douglas Twist. The Carnarvon lease was for 53 years (30 years plus three years plus twenty years) and the annual rental for the first ten years was £484.10.0. In addition, Douglas Twist was required to pay £5 928 to Mary Webb and others of Babbiloorra Pastoral Holdings for improvements to Carnarvon. These were described as:

- 13 miles of boundary fence

- 32.7 miles of subdivisional fencings
- outstation buildings of old homestead and quarters, dips and yards
- 9 mile bore, engine, pump shed, 2 x 30 000 gallon tanks and troughing.<sup>66</sup>

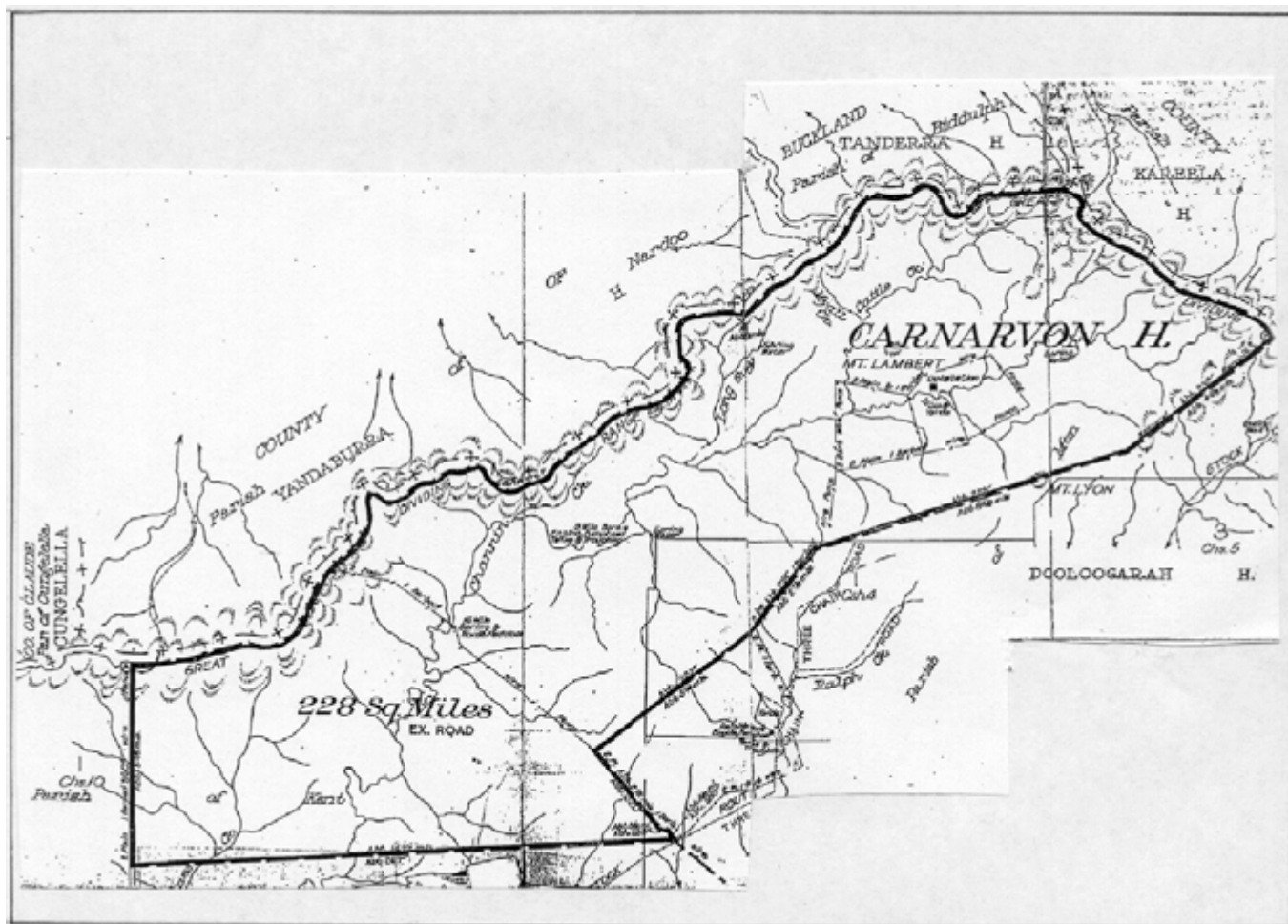
The lease required that at least 7 500 acres of trees be cleared from the holding within five years of the date of commencement of the lease and in equal proportions each year. The destruction of all zamia on the property within five years was also a lease requirement.<sup>67</sup>

The outstation buildings consisted of the old kitchen/Police Barracks building that had formed part of the old homestead and the men's quarters. The latter were sleeping quarters only and was without a bathroom as there was no water supply. For the first few years on Carnarvon Doug Twist camped and focused his energy on getting the property going. Life in winter was extremely cold, particularly in 1965 when snow fell at Carnarvon.

Cecil Russell, who later had the mail contract to Carnarvon, recalls taking out the first load of cattle for Doug Twist in 1964 and also the state of the road in these early years. He remembered once loading cattle at Carnarvon early in the morning, then setting out and being bogged in sand three or four times. It took him all day to reach Mt Tabor.<sup>68</sup>

By 1965 Doug Twist had stocked Carnarvon with 2 500 head of herefords and shorthorns. Over the next five years he proceeded to improve the water supply on the property and construct boundary and internal fences. He also began to meet the land-clearing requirements of his lease, ringbarking 1 150 acres of broad-leaved ironbark, mountain coolibah and narrow-leaved ironbark on Cattle Creek west of the homestead.<sup>69</sup>

The current main access road into Carnarvon was cleared from the Binalong turnoff by Doug Twist in 1968-9. However, the road was still rough and sandy in parts and it could easily take a day to make the journey to Augathella. The number of gates also affected the time taken to travel to and from Carnarvon. The Twists recall that in the 1970s there were nineteen gates to open and close between Carnarvon and Lorne Downs.



**Area and position of Carnarvon Holding as per 1963 lease**

In 1971 Doug married Karen and the men's quarters was converted into a house. A bathroom and toilet were added and a large steel open fireplace built in the living room. A pipeline to Blue Water Spring, eight kilometres from the house was laid with much effort to bring water to the house. In 1972 a 240-volt lighting plant was installed, replacing the 32-volt plant that had been used for the previous four years. However, life at Carnarvon was as isolated as it had been fifty years earlier. The nearest phone was at Chesterton Station, some 70 kilometres away and even that was a party line of dubious reliability. Mail had to be picked up from Mt Tabor and trips for supplies might be made every six to eight weeks. For emergencies there was the two-way radio connection to the Flying Doctor service. To obtain fuel Doug Twist went with tractor and trailer to pick up a 44-gallon drum at Barngo.

While the Twists were at Carnarvon, the site at 16 Mile was also developed. Given its distance from the homestead 16 Mile had historically been considered a separate outstation. The surrounding land was approximately 35 000 acres of mainly sand country. In 1968-9 'Snow' MacDonald was agisting his cattle on the 16 Mile block and erected a house there with materials from a house that had been demolished in Charleville. The house was finished off by Don and Marie Cameron who took over 16 Mile a year or so later. They put in flooring, a fireplace and closed off the verandah. From 1972 to 1979 Trevor and Jeanette Godfery and their two sons were at 16 Mile with some 300 head of cattle. The house at 16 Mile burnt down shortly after they left in 1979.





**Jeanette Godfery at the ruins of the house she lived in at 16 Mile in the 1970s (May 2003)**

In 1972 fire burnt out Carnarvon and the surrounding properties of Babbiloorra, Dooloogarah and Kareela. The house was not threatened but water supply to the house was interrupted and the new polythene pipe that had been laid to Blue Water Spring had to be patched. It was this fire which revealed the remains of the rasp, pincers, saddle tree, gun barrel and other items which were identified as possibly belonging to Pocock who disappeared in 1915 (see Chapter 3 p17).

Both houses, the Carnarvon homestead and the 16 Mile house, had substantial vegetable gardens and raised pigs and fowls. Mice were a problem and dry goods had to be carefully stored in flour barrels or high on shelves to protect them. Snakes were also common (and unwelcome) visitors with one particularly large python favouring a position on top of the hay used to feed the horses. Meat was slaughtered on the property and most of it salted. Karen Twist also talked of keeping some meat in the fridge and preserving it over the short term. This was achieved by regularly wiping the meat with a rag soaked in vinegar so that a crust formed on it. The crust was then cut off when the meat was used.

In the mid 1970s cattle prices were depressed and the Twists were experiencing financial difficulties. Doug Twist's attention turned to the Carnarvon brumbies. Over the four years between 1974 and 1978 Doug Twist, helped by stockmen such as Dave Hagger, rounded up over 2 500 brumbies for sale in stock markets from Dubbo to Toowoomba and Brisbane. The brumbies were trapped around the natural mineral lick areas at night. Doug and Dave Hagger spent months sleeping on iron

beds suspended up to nine metres high in the trees to enable them to pull the gates closed once the horses had entered the mineral lick trap. The springs were taken off the beds and replaced with bags to prevent any squeaking springs alarming and scaring the horses. The horses were then trucked to the cattle yards near the homestead, fed on hay to quieten them, dipped twice to meet the cattle tick regulations and then trucked out to auctions. The income from the sale of brumbies enabled Doug to pay off his cattle truck.<sup>70</sup> The vast majority of the brumbies were sold for breeding and as stockhorses. Very few went to the knackery. Studs were anxious to obtain Carnarvon roans for breeding and Elders would regularly contact Doug in this period querying when he might have another load of brumbies.

At 16 Mile Jeanette and Trevor Godfery built additional brumby traps and Trevor also camped out in the trees. The trapped brumbies were used by the Godferys to pay Doug Twist for the agistment at 16 Mile.

During this period there were two Carnarvon children attending School of the Air. Both Shane Twist and Grant Godfery received their first two years of primary school education from School of the Air before both families left the property.

An airstrip was put in near 4 Mile but was little used as it was too short. The vet landed a couple of times but had trouble taking off. The Twists had no need to call in the Flying Doctor during their time on Carnarvon.





**A stretcher nine metres up a tree (arrowed) where Doug Twist slept to capture brumbies at a mineral lick** BRISBANE COURIER MAIL 20/3/1979

Visitors to Carnarvon were few and unexpected. Both Karen Twist at Carnarvon and Jeanette Godfery at 16 Mile recall being surprised one day to see two men approaching. Both women were home alone at the time. Jeanette Godfery recalls hearing the dogs growling and, thinking it was dingos, she reached for the rifle. In walked two lost hikers who in turn were surprised to be confronted by a woman with a gun. The hikers had walked from Salvatore Rosa and wanted to know if they were on the track to Carnarvon Station. They were crossing the range and heading for Carnarvon Gorge National Park. They went on to camp at 9 Mile Bore then, caught by rain, stayed at Carnarvon Station for two days. Karen Twist used the two-way radio to let rangers at Carnarvon National Park know that the hikers had been delayed.

In late 1978 Doug Twist and neighbour Ozzie Rhodes offered their respective properties, Carnarvon and Dooloogarah, to the National Parks Service. Both offers were in response to interest by National Parks to extend Carnarvon National Park and to protect more land in the area. The offers were not however taken up and in mid 1979 Doug Twist sold Carnarvon Station to Terence Rauchle for \$310 000 with 3 000 head of cattle.<sup>71</sup>

#### **1979-1984 TERENCE RAUCHLE<sup>72</sup>**

For the first three years of the period in which he owned the lease to Carnarvon Station, Terence Rauchle was not living permanently on the property. He visited for a few days each

month or came up to the property for a fortnight or so every two months. From 1982 he spent most of his time on Carnarvon.

Rauchle brought a bulldozer and grader onto Carnarvon that enabled him to upgrade existing roads, put in firebreaks and grade the airstrip. He used a Cessna 172 as his means of access but mostly operated from the all-weather strip at Dooloogarah rather than from Carnarvon. Mail and supplies were collected from Dooloogarah.

Rauchle also brought in an ATCO demountable building and located it near the old kitchen/Police Barracks building. The Department of Natural Resources & Mines records state that there were four permanent employees on Carnarvon in 1983.<sup>73</sup>

Rauchle ran about 3 000 hereford-shorthorn cross cattle on Carnarvon. At muster time about a dozen stockmen, most on horseback and a couple on bikes, would gather at Carnarvon. A helicopter was used to round up the stragglers and to bring cattle out of the ranges. Once or twice a year when stock feed was getting short efforts would be made to reduce brumby numbers. With the co-operation of neighbours the brumbies would be trapped using salt licks and spear traps. They were trucked to Roma or Toowoomba for sale.

In 1983 Rauchle sold Carnarvon to Lionel and Douglas Hart for \$992 000.<sup>74</sup>



## 1984 –1988 LIONEL & DOUGLAS HART<sup>75</sup>

Lionel Hart and his family moved onto Carnarvon in the year following their purchase of the lease. Lionel's son Douglas was originally a partner in the property but his wife's ill health precluded living at Carnarvon. As a result he took over his brother Barry's property at Emerald that was nearer to medical treatment. The Harts were attracted to the property because of its climate, size and isolation and the fact that it was free from *parthenium* weed. They stocked the property with 2 500 brahmin-cross cattle that they walked across the range from another property they owned near Marlborough. Wanting a northern access route to Carnarvon they sought to re-open an old road into Carnarvon and Dooloogarah through Ka Ka Mundi. This was bulldozed and cleared and became their main access route.

Over the next four years Hart cleared over 10 000 acres of mountain coolibah, box, silverleaf ironbark, apple, brigalow and wilga<sup>76</sup>. Dams were built, including the Big Dam. Some 1 200 acres were placed under cultivation; mostly oats with the remaining 150 acres planted to safflower. The oats were used as stock fodder and the cattle raised on Carnarvon in this period topped the market in Toowoomba, exceeding the price of feedlot cattle<sup>77</sup>.

Some renovations were made to the house and improvements were made to the fencing. The Big Shed was erected in the period of Hart's ownership of the Carnarvon lease. There were plans to extend the area of land under crops and to build a house near the Big Shed for Lionel's son Barry and his family. Tragically, Barry was killed in an accident in Emerald. As it had been intended that Barry would run Carnarvon, his sudden

death caused the Harts to re-think their plans for the future and they decided to sell.

The brumbies caused problems similar to those experienced by previous owners. They reduced stock feed and pulled out fences. Some brumbies were shot but this had little impact on their total numbers. Ticks were also initially a problem but these were satisfactorily dealt with by using a pesticide.

The Harts lived a fairly self-sufficient lifestyle. They had an extensive vegetable garden and killed stock for meat. They picked up their mail and supplies from Dooloogarah, which had in turn been picked up from Mt Moffat. The two-way radio provided a means of communication in an emergency. On two occasions the Flying Doctor was called—when a stockman broke an ankle and when Lionel's son Ian and his governess were involved in a car accident on the way to pick up the mail at Dooloogarah.

In 1984 Lionel Hart applied to the Land Administration Council to have the Carnarvon lease converted to a Grazing Homestead Perpetual Lease. This required both the National Parks & Wildlife Service and Forestry to consider their interests in the Carnarvon property. National Parks put forward a proposal to excise the range area from the Carnarvon lease, being 3 350 hectares on the northern boundary adjacent to Ka Ka Mundi, 3 900 hectares on the northern and eastern boundary and 8 500 hectares in the Caves Creek catchment. Hart agreed to surrender these areas in exchange for a Perpetual Lease.<sup>78</sup> However, the property was sold without this agreement with National Parks being part of the contract of sale and the subsequent owners did not agree to surrender the three areas as proposed.



**The Big Shed** COURTESY LIONEL HART



**Oats crop on the flats** COURTESY LIONEL HART



**The homestead ca 1986. The old Police Barracks are on the left, ATCO demountable on the right** COURTESY LIONEL HART

#### **1987-2001 THE WEARINGS<sup>79</sup>**

In late 1987 Tony and Thea Wearing, and Tony's parents Walter and Lucy, bought Carnarvon Station for \$1.34 million<sup>80</sup>. They had previously been at Laguna north west of Augathella. When they moved to the property in 1988 Tony was fulfilling a long-held dream. His name, together with those of some forty or fifty other contenders, had been in the ballot for Carnarvon Station in 1963 but he had been unsuccessful.

The property was stocked with some 4 000 cattle, with mixed brahmin and santa gertrudus blood lines. In initial years calf numbers were low with a survival rate of only 50 per cent due to dingos. This prompted the Wearings to undertake an aerial baiting program, with baits being laid near water, near the top of the range and along the National Park boundary. This program was highly successful and calf survival rates subsequently climbed to 85 per cent.

The brumbies too were a problem. The Wearings made some attempts to trap them but found it too difficult to trap sufficient numbers to make up a truckload and hence transporting them to market was not an economic proposition. However, they were aware of the value of Carnarvon brumbies and their potential to fetch good prices if they could reach market. They were reputed to have good bloodlines due to the release of mainly thoroughbred stallions into the ranges as well as some appaloosas, quarter horses and arabs. Indeed, the Wearings had heard that a Carnarvon brumby had become a top jumper in the United States of America.

Sorghum, oats and barley were grown for stock feed on the areas previously used by Lionel Hart for cropping. Additional clearing took place mostly along the river flats and regrowth was also cleared.

Carnarvon was still isolated and without a telephone. The mail came to Mt Moffat and had to be collected from there (a round trip of over three hours) or at Dooloogarah. Over the next seven years communications and facilities at the homestead would be considerably improved. A second house (the current Manager's house) was moved onto the site in about 1990, brought in on two low-loaders. Prior to its arrival Tony's parents had lived in the ATCO portable hut. Mains electricity was connected in the early 1990s and the telephone shortly after. The mail service improved dramatically in 1995 with Carnarvon receiving a twice-weekly delivery from Augathella direct to the property. This enabled the Wearings to have groceries and any other items delivered twice a week.

The orientation of the airstrip was changed to make landing and take-off easier. The Flying Doctor was called in twice while the Wearings were at Carnarvon but on neither occasion could the plane land due to low cloud and rain. Consequently at both times it was necessary to drive the injured person—once a friend and once the Wearings son Clint—to Augathella. On other occasions Thea managed injuries with the help of the Flying Doctor kit and advice over the HF radio.





**Tony and Thea Wearing, May 2003**

During the 1990s the isolation of Carnarvon came to an end, not just by the arrival of mains electricity, the telephone and satellite television, but also by the fact that the Wearings encouraged visitors. Many local people took the opportunity to come out to Carnarvon to camp for a few days and enjoy the peace of the bush and the cooler climate. Families came from the nearby district, and from Charleville to Morven. Policemen came out to escape the stress and others just to get away from the routine of daily life. They were welcomed by the Wearings who enjoyed the company and the chance to meet new people. As a result, many people in the area feel a particular affection for Carnarvon Station.

The old kitchen/Police Barracks building was in a state of total disrepair and unusable with the timbers rotting away. While the Wearings originally had plans to repair and restore it, they were unable to find the time to do so. In 1998 they arranged with the Mitchell Shire to exchange the Police Barracks building for the single men's quarters which are now located near the second house. The Police Barracks was jacked up and transported to Mitchell where it is to be restored by the Mitchell Shire.



**The old Police Barracks at Carnarvon prior to being moved to Mitchell (courtesy Historic House, Charleville)**

During the Wearings' time at Carnarvon they experienced two significant floods in 1990 and 1997. The 1990 flood broke records and exceeded the 1956 flood that was the biggest up until that time. In 1997, in the week from January 28 to February 3 some 253 mm of rain fell at Carnarvon Station while Chesterton Station, a little to the south, recorded 370 mm in the same period.<sup>81</sup> These two floods were the largest

since 1900 when flood records were started. There were also a number of fires. Particularly serious were the 1997 fires which started near Springsure, came over the range and down Cave Creek.

In 2001 the Wearings sold Carnarvon Station to the Australian Bush Heritage Fund.

## Chapter 7: THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH HERITAGE FUND

As part of its property acquisition process, the Australian Bush Heritage Fund maintains contact with a network of conservation agencies, individuals and groups who are informed about rural properties with high conservation values. The Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service (QNPWS) and other agencies within the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in Queensland are part of this network of contacts. Within the EPA there existed, and continues to exist, considerable knowledge of the properties adjacent to the Carnarvon National Park due to an historical interest in expanding the boundaries of the park. During the 1970s the QNPWS were interested in purchasing both Carnarvon and Dooloogarah and in 1978 they were offered both properties. Their incorporation into Carnarvon National Park would have led to more manageable boundaries and the protection of a range of spring systems, high altitude grasslands on basalt and spectacular scenery.<sup>82</sup> However, the purchase did not go ahead.

Hence there has been a long-standing awareness within QNPWS of Carnarvon Station as a valuable property for conservation. Paul Sattler (formerly of QNPWS) remarked that Carnarvon Station was 'the hole in the doughnut' between the Ka Ka Mundi and Mt Moffat sections of the Carnarvon National Park. However it was Rod Fensham, Principal Botanist of the Queensland Herbarium (part of the EPA) who first discovered that Carnarvon Station was on the market and brought the property to the attention of Bush Heritage. Rod had visited Carnarvon in January 1999 as part of a research project assessing the status and condition of the natural springs of the great Artesian Basin. He had met the current owners Tony and Thea Wearing and been told that the property was then on the market. It was subsequently withdrawn from sale for a time. Some six months later Rod was briefed by Greg Blake (former Bush Heritage Conservation Programs Manager) that Bush Heritage was looking to make a major acquisition in Queensland in areas most threatened by land clearing. Rod and his colleagues had been keeping on eye on properties that had survived the onslaught of broadacre clearing and still held large areas of highly threatened vegetation. Carnarvon was one such property.

In early 2000 Bush Heritage was in the position where it could consider making a major property acquisition. A donation of \$1.3 million was pledged by the end of the financial year by an anonymous donor, the organisation was well on the way to having a senior management team capable of managing a large property acquisition. There was also the potential to apply for National Reserve System Program (NRSP) funding from the Australian Government to offset some of the purchase price. The search for a property became focused and active.

In mid 2000 Rod took Greg Blake to see four or five properties that were on the EPA's short list of properties in central Queensland and that were considered to be suitable as reserves for Bush Heritage. Carnarvon was among them. Rod comments 'I think Greg and I both knew after our tour that Carnarvon seemed perfect for Bush Heritage. It was large and affordable ... It had cultural as well as natural values, including

springs. The flats were certainly threatened, and to a lesser extent the woodlands... It was the head of the catchment, and it was beautifully scenic.'<sup>83</sup> Negotiations for the purchase of the property were then left in the hands of Bush Heritage management. Bush Heritage CEO Doug Humann and the land management staff went to Carnarvon both to talk to the Wearings and to evaluate the attributes of the property from a conservation viewpoint. Negotiations took some months and the property was settled in early 2001.

At the time of its purchase Carnarvon Station became the largest of the Bush Heritage reserves at 59 000 hectares. It was known to contain seventeen regional ecosystems, seven of which are endangered. Twenty-five have now been identified. Preliminary surveys have found 93 bird species, sixteen native mammal species, six frog species and eight reptile species.

Steve Heggie and Mel Sheppard were appointed as Carnarvon Station Reserve's first reserve managers. As the first people to take up such a position with Bush Heritage their first year at Carnarvon was a learning experience for them personally and also for Bush Heritage. It was an important time for working out how to bridge the distance between a national office in Hobart and a remote reserve. It was important that the management in Hobart became familiar with the challenges faced by staff living on the property.

Steve and Mel came to Carnarvon from Kakadu National Park where they had been rangers. Both were trained in environmental management and were familiar with living and working in remote environments. Steve had been a ranger at Kakadu for nine years and Mel for five years. Mel had also worked as a land manager for Traditional Owners in the plateau and gorge country of West Arnhem Land. They had little knowledge of the property prior to their arrival other than that it had mains power and the mail was dropped at the front door. Given that in Kakadu they were on generator power and the mail was a one and a half hour drive away, they expected Carnarvon to be less remote than Kakadu. However, it was precisely the remoteness of Carnarvon that was their first, and one of their most lasting, impressions of the property. It took four hours of 4 x 4 driving 'to hit the blacktop'.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, it was the remoteness of Carnarvon that was also one of the main challenges Steve and Mel faced during their time on the property. Steve commented that the 'remoteness of the property and the inability to enter or exit after the rains because of the black soil plains presented the biggest physical and psychological challenge. We had to plan for adequate supplies of food, fuel and work stores, medical emergencies and for volunteers stranded after rain'.<sup>85</sup>

Another challenge was the water system at the house, twelve kilometres of poly-pipe running mostly above the ground from a tiny spring to header tanks at the house. It was constantly breaking, splitting and freezing. It stopped flowing, became air-locked or took days to reach the header tank and had to be treated for 'nasties'. The water system was in constant need of attention and consumed some time nearly every day to ensure that there was drinking water to the house.





**Mel Sheppard and Steve Heggie at Carnarvon Station in 2001**

Settling into life on Carnarvon meant adapting to a different pattern of living. Steve commented: ‘We slipped out of a nine to five go-to-work schedule where time after hours is your own, into a lifestyle that was more akin to that of a generation or two previously (but not dissimilar to some other remote properties). We didn’t knock off as such. The job was part work duties and part the everyday living requirements necessitated by the remoteness of Carnarvon. If you didn’t get the water going, you couldn’t shower. If you didn’t organise gas or fuel you couldn’t drive or cook. The supermarket wasn’t nearby so we made bread, grew vegies, killed scrubber cattle and butchered them to fill the freezer. There was a lot of after hours contact with locals as they were difficult to catch during the day. It was more a lifestyle than a job as the old cliché goes.’<sup>86</sup>

Despite Carnarvon’s remoteness Steve and Mel found that there was a stream of unexpected visitors. They were often caught by surprise by someone knocking on the door. Sometimes it was the locals and sometimes people whose parents, grandparents or other relatives had worked on the property years ago. On one occasion a travelling church minister and his wife called to check on the spiritual needs of the property’s residents. Steve

and Mel often witnessed the impact that Carnarvon had on those who have lived, visited and experienced the property—the lasting impression that the landscape and the remoteness leaves.

While there were challenges, Steve and Mel found their time on Carnarvon to be fulfilling. They noted: ‘We both had an overwhelming sense that we were contributing to something very special both on the reserve and in the overall philosophy of Bush Heritage. There was also the increased profile for Bush Heritage that came with the purchase of Carnarvon’.<sup>87</sup> They had the satisfaction of presiding over some major achievements. These included the development of feral animal and weed control programs, a volunteer rangers program and proper fire management. They conducted risk assessments, formulated emergency response plans, prepared an inventory of requirements for the houses, workshops, plant and equipment and helped develop a plan of management for the property. They began a program to build relationships with the local community. Through their efforts the conservation and volunteer work programs began.

After a year or so at Carnarvon, Steve and Mel decided to return to work in Kakadu and Mick Blackman took up the

reins as manager at Carnarvon Station Reserve. Mick and his wife Clare had previously been park rangers at Lakefield and Iron Range National Parks in far north Queensland. Work at Carnarvon continues under Mick's management.

The 440 kilometres of vehicle tracks, fence lines and firebreaks on Carnarvon are now regularly maintained. New piping brings water from a bore to the house through fifteen kilometres of polypipe. The water-storage capacity has been doubled and grey water recycling installed to reduce the water use. The men's quarters have been moved to a better location and hooked up to the power supply. They now provide an accommodation complex for the growing number of volunteers.



**Mick Blackman and son connecting the water storage tank in 2003**  
PHOTO: CLARE BLACKMAN

The bores, pumps and trapping yards are all operational.

Controlled burns have been set to protect the house complex and to patch burn around fire-sensitive communities like vine scrubs. Different burning techniques and burn intervals are being trialled to achieve the desired conservation results. Three wild fires have occurred on the property between 2001 and 2003. The big fire of 2003 was alight for over a month and burnt in patches over a total area of about 20 000 hectares but without major ecological damage.

The weeds, buffel and johnson grass, mimosa bush, mexican poppy and fierce thorn apple are being controlled. Two 'wash-down' facilities now reduce the risk of seeds being dispersed from vehicles coming on to the reserve.

Hundreds of pigs have been caught and twelve kilometres of fencing has been strengthened to help deter the wild horses.

Photo reference points have been established at key sites around the reserve to monitor the results of the Bush Heritage management strategies. Regular plant and animal surveys also

increase the understanding about how management actions are affecting the wildlife.

Volunteers are a vital part of the management team on the reserve. Collectively they contribute thousands of hours doing plant and animal surveys, building fences, repairing and painting the buildings, maintaining vehicles and weeding.



**Volunteers Peter and Margaret Calder fencing Orange-tree Spring**  
PHOTO: WAYNE LAWLER / ECOPIX

There is an ongoing program for the volunteers to fence off the natural springs on the property to protect them from damage caused by feral animals, and particularly pigs. Those that have been fenced are recovering their beauty and usefulness.

Since the camping area opened in late 2002 groups of campers, as well as many other visitors, have marvelled at the spectacular scenery and watched the daily activities of the wildlife. Directional signs, maps and an information booklet guide them around the reserve.

At the time of printing Bush Heritage has owned Carnarvon Station Reserve for nearly three years. The management has passed the stage of 'quick fixes' and has moved on to the planning and implementation of longer-term projects that will bring results within decades rather than years. Planning, innovation and teamwork will see many more positive changes for the conservation of the reserve's threatened ecosystems and wildlife.

The future of the reserve is bright. Bush Heritage will now manage Carnarvon Station Reserve into the future. After about 150 years of pastoral settlement Carnarvon has been returned to the wildlife and its natural splendour will be protected for all Australians to enjoy.

# NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Mitchell. *Journal of an expedition into the interior of tropical Australia in search of a route to the Gulf of Carpentaria*. London. Longmans, 1848.
- <sup>2</sup> E.G.Heap. *The Ranges were the Best. The Kenniff Story* Queensland Heritage. 1964. Vol 1, no 1, p. 3.
- <sup>3</sup> Ross Fitzgerald. *History of Queensland from the dreaming to 1915*. St. Lucia, Qld. Queensland University Press, 1982. Vol 1, p. 133.
- <sup>4</sup> Queensland State Archives. *Pastoral Runs Registers*.
- <sup>5</sup> Ross Fitzgerald. op. cit. p. 145.
- <sup>6</sup> Ross Fitzgerald. op. cit. p. 221.
- <sup>7</sup> Interview with Grahame Walsh, 19 May 2003.
- <sup>8</sup> Zita Denholm T.Y.S.O.N. *Wagga Wagga*, NSW. Triple D Books, 2002. p. 118.
- <sup>9</sup> *ibid*, p. 124.
- <sup>10</sup> Lands Office Reports, Queensland Parliamentary Papers.
- <sup>11</sup> Zita Denholm. op. cit. pp. 130-131.
- <sup>12</sup> Harry C. Perry 'Pioneering' *The Life of the Hon. R.M.Collins MLC*. Brisbane. Watson, Ferguson & Co Ltd, 1923. p. 239.
- <sup>13</sup> Ross Fitzgerald. op. cit. p. 147.
- <sup>14</sup> Harry C. Perry. op. cit. p. 130.
- <sup>15</sup> E.G. Heap. op cit. p. 8.
- <sup>16</sup> Queensland State Archives. LAN/AF 1045.
- <sup>17</sup> Queensland State Archives. LAN/1045.
- <sup>18</sup> Queensland State Archives. PRV 9880 Carnarvon 1805.
- <sup>19</sup> R.P.J. Good *Ketching the Kenniffs*. Mitchell, Qld. Booringa Shire Council & Booringa Action Group, 1996. p. 84
- <sup>20</sup> E.G.Heap. op. cit. p. 8.
- <sup>21</sup> Ross Fitzgerald. op. cit. p. 153.
- <sup>22</sup> Chris Collins was the son of Robert Collins. He died of influenza in 1919.
- <sup>23</sup> John Collins & Sons papers 1874-1955. John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
- <sup>24</sup> Queensland State Archives. LAN/AF 1045.
- <sup>25</sup> Queensland State Archives. LAN/AF 1045.
- <sup>26</sup> Douglas Fraser was the son-in-law of Robert Collins, married to his youngest daughter.
- <sup>27</sup> John Collins & Sons papers 1874-1955. op. cit. Letter from D.M. Fraser to Paul Pyne 12 November 1919.
- <sup>28</sup> Blanche McNelley (nee Pyne), letter to author of 16 June 2003.
- <sup>29</sup> John Collins & Sons papers 1874-1955 op. cit. Tender document dated 30 July 1914.
- <sup>30</sup> John Collins & Sons papers 1874-1955 op. cit.
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid*.
- <sup>32</sup> R. Lydekker *A Handbook of the Marsupulia and Montremata*. London. H Allen & Co, 1894.
- <sup>33</sup> Roger Martin & Kathrine Handasyde. *THE KOALA Natural History, Conservation & Management*, Sydney. UNSW Press. 1999. p. 23.
- <sup>34</sup> Brisbane Courier, 18 December 1923.
- <sup>35</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Papers. Annual Report of Department of Agriculture & Stock, 1924/25. p. 13.
- <sup>36</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Papers. Annual Report of Department of Agriculture Stock, 1923/24, p. 26.
- <sup>37</sup> Ross Fitzgerald. *From 1915 to the early 1980s: a history of Queensland*. St. Lucia, Qld. University of Queensland Press. 1984. p. 77
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid*. p. 75.
- <sup>39</sup> A.J. Marshall, ed. *The Great Extermination A guide to Anglo-Australian Cupidity, Wickedness & Waste*. Melbourne. Heinemann, 1966.
- <sup>40</sup> Ellis Troughton. *Furred Animals of Australia*. Sydney. Angus & Robertson, 1943. p. xxvi.
- <sup>41</sup> Interview with Grahame Walsh, 19 May 2003.
- <sup>42</sup> *ibid*.
- <sup>43</sup> Ross Fitzgerald. *From 1915 to the early 1980s: a history of Queensland*. op. cit. p. 77.
- <sup>44</sup> District Land Office Report, Charleville to Prickly Pear Commission, 2 August 1924.
- <sup>45</sup> District Land Office Report 2 October 1930. Queensland State Archives LAN/AF 1023.
- <sup>46</sup> W.B. Alexander. *The Prickly Pear in Australia*. Melbourne. Executive Committee of the Advisory Council of Science and Industry, 1919. Plate 1.
- <sup>47</sup> This section is based on information in E.A. Heap. *The Ranges are the best. The Kenniff Story*. op. cit., R.P.J. Good. *Ketching the Kenniffs*, op. cit. and [www.kenniff.info/kenniffs.html](http://www.kenniff.info/kenniffs.html).
- <sup>48</sup> Colin Newsome, *Paddy Kenniff: Queensland's Ned Kelly*. 1996.
- <sup>49</sup> Anthony J Morris QC. *The Trial of Australia's Last Bushrangers*. Presented to the Queensland Museum's Queensland 1901 Lunchtime Lecture Series, 31 January 2002. [www.lexscripta.com/articles/kenniff.html](http://www.lexscripta.com/articles/kenniff.html).

- <sup>50</sup> Information from the family history of William Naughton provided by Patricia Johnson. Patricia Johnson is a granddaughter of William Naughton.
- <sup>51</sup> Queensland State Archives. LAN/AF 1023.
- <sup>52</sup> Ross Fitzgerald. From 1915 to the early 1980s: a history of Queensland. op. cit. p 80.
- <sup>53</sup> Dr David Cameron. Report on the Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage of the Western Hardwoods Region and Overview History. Queensland Government Environment Protection Agency, QPWS Forestry and Wildlife Division, June 2002. p. 90.
- <sup>54</sup> J.A. Laffin, The J.A. Laffin Story, A Kidman Drover. Ipswich, QLD. M.J. Dargush and L.J. Laffin, 1996, p. 40 and p. 62.
- <sup>55</sup> Conversation with Des Mallet, Charleville. 9 June 2003.
- <sup>56</sup> Babbiloorra papers, OMFC, John Oxley Library, Brisbane.
- <sup>57</sup> Interviews Iinterview with Des Mallet, 9 June 2003 and Gordon Young, Springsure, 23 June 2003.
- <sup>58</sup> Interviews with Henry Harkin, 15 and 22 June 2003.
- <sup>59</sup> ibid.
- <sup>60</sup> ibid.
- <sup>61</sup> Ion Idriess, Onward Australia. Developing a Continent. Battle for Australia Series. Sydney. Angus and Robertson Ltd. 1944. p. 150.
- <sup>62</sup> Ross Fitzgerald. From 1915 to the early 1980s: a history of Queensland. op. cit. pp. 410-12.
- <sup>63</sup> Dr David Cameron. Report on the Non-Indigenous Cultural Heritage of the Western Hardwoods Region and Overview History. op. cit. p. 108, p. 121.
- <sup>64</sup> Paul Sattler. Queensland's National Parks: An Investment in Our Future. Thirteenth Romeo Hahey Memorial Lecture to the National Parks Association of Queensland Inc. 19 April 2000.
- <sup>65</sup> Interviews with Doug & Karen Twist, Charleville, 22 May and 24 May 2003, Jeanette Godfery and Grant Godfery, Injune, 27 and 28 May 2003, Cecil and Ailsa Russell, Augathella, 21 May 2003 and Dave Hagger, Mt Tabor, 27 May 2003.
- <sup>66</sup> Department of Natural Resources & Mines, Charleville. PPH 10/5023.
- <sup>67</sup> ibid.
- <sup>68</sup> Interview with Cecil & Ailsa Russell, 22 May 2003.
- <sup>69</sup> Department of Natural Resources & Mines, Charleville. PPH 10/5023.
- <sup>70</sup> Courier Mail, 20 March 1979.
- <sup>71</sup> Department of Natural Resources & Mines, Charleville op. cit.
- <sup>72</sup> Interview with Terence Rauchle, 14 June 2003.
- <sup>73</sup> ibid.
- <sup>74</sup> ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> Interviews with Lionel Hart, 14 and 23 June 2003.
- <sup>76</sup> Department of Natural Resources & Mines, Charleville. op. cit.
- <sup>77</sup> Interview with Lionel Hart, op. cit.
- <sup>78</sup> Department of Natural Resources & Mines, Charleville. op. cit.
- <sup>79</sup> Conversation with Tony & Thea Wearing, Bollon. 25 May 2003.
- <sup>80</sup> Department of Natural Resources & Mines, Charleville. op. cit.
- <sup>81</sup> Bureau of Meteorology. Queensland Regional Office, Hydrology & Severe Weather Sections. Flooding in Western Queensland. January to February 1997.
- <sup>82</sup> Interview with Paul Sattler, 5 August 2003.
- <sup>83</sup> Rod Fensham, comments in email to author, 27 August 2003.
- <sup>84</sup> Steve Heggie, comments in email to author, 11 August 2003.
- <sup>85</sup> ibid.
- <sup>86</sup> ibid.
- <sup>87</sup> ibid.